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Seeking Relations: Law and Feminism Roundtables

Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack

re-la-tion 1. a narrating, recounting, or telling 2. what is narrated or told; account; recital 3. connection or manner of being connected or related, as in thought, meaning, etc. 4. connection of persons by blood or marriage; kinship 5. a person connected with another or others by blood or marriage; member of the same family; relative. [Webster's New World Dictionary]

Introduction

CURRENTLY the rhetoric of difference and diversity among women dominates discussions in legal feminism about where women stand in relation to each other. The words *difference* and *diversity* organize the relationship among women in ways that can eclipse the differential impact of ableism, economic exploitation, heterosexism, racism, and sexism in women's lives. Differences among women are taken into account, for example, in the recognition that some women are doubly and triply disadvantaged. Ultimately, however, the multiple ways in which we as women actually are implicated in maintaining structures of domination in each other's lives can remain uninterrogated. Consequently, while women often seek solidarity, we frequently find it difficult to sustain collective action, given our respective differences. Presuming innocence, each of us is consistently surprised when we are viewed by other women as agents of oppression. The difference impasse, as the confronting of our different socially produced locations might be called, emerges on a daily basis in our relations with each other as women and as members of diverse communities and, more

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generally, in how we understand social change. It is the urgency of probing further into our interlocking histories that prompted us, the writers of this report and co-organizers of the roundtables discussed below, to explore how the difference impasse emerged in the three roundtable discussions. The purpose of our report of these law and feminism roundtables is to consider ways to avoid displacing an inquiry into domination when we confront issues of difference and diversity.

Creating the possibility for dialogue

As the process of selecting articles for this special issue of *Signs* was drawing to a close and we began to take stock of the wealth of ideas in the manuscripts, we wished that we would have an opportunity to explore how these ideas could make a difference to feminist practice. Out of this grew a set of roundtables intended to facilitate a dialogue among the authors, academics from various disciplines, activists, artists, judges, and legal practitioners, many of whom were located centrally in struggles for social change in their respective communities. In organizing these roundtables, we hoped to promote a cross-fertilization of ideas and practices among various oppressed groups. We were aware that such a project would require feminists to examine critically what we share and do not share, and that this necessarily would be difficult. Nevertheless, we felt strongly that in exploring the relations women have to each other and to their own communities, we could uncover the relations of power and the dominant narratives that constitute us and find ways to work together to disrupt them.

The metaphor of "seeking relations" that we use to describe the project of finding common cause among women grew out of two assumptions: first, we assumed that the participants shared a political commitment to improving women's lives; second, we assumed that because our everyday lives are shaped by the conditions that affect the communities to which we belong—communities that stand in unequal relation to each other—the differences among participants would be significant. Anticipating that the discussions would begin by an exploration of shared and contested positions, we did not probe any further into what would make such an undertaking difficult.

We designed the roundtables around three themes that emerged from the articles *Signs* had accepted for the special issue: violence against women (Rosemary Ofeibe Ofei-Aboagye, Sherene Razack, Bronwyn Winter), family and community (Ruthann Robson, Farida Shaheed), and pedagogy and scholarship (Sharon K. Hom, Maivân Clech Lãm). While segregating these issues reflects traditional feminist categorization, we recognized that it obscured the interconnectedness of the themes and the

interlocking systems of domination that shape them. Ableism, colonialism, economic exploitation, heterosexism, imperialism, racism, and sexism operate together to support violence and to interrupt family and community. They also are reinscribed in pedagogy and scholarship. Exploring any one of the themes provides an opportunity to move through an understanding of self, family, community, and collective. For example, in examining the violence of excision, as Winter has done, we can begin to think about a woman's relationship to her family, to her community, and to colonial powers, and to consider how her identity is constructed through these multiple relations. To sustain the interconnections of the themes, we urged participants to be present for all three discussions and to explore the links among them; we invited participants who had a keen interest in two or more of the themes; and we sent to all participants all of the articles of the special issue in advance, asking them to reflect on the multiple themes contained in them.

Twenty-seven women participated in the roundtable discussions, which took place October 2-3, 1993. The tone and substance of these discussions were shaped by the academic context in which they were organized. Both of us, the organizers, are university professors. The roundtables took place at the University of Minnesota Law School in Minneapolis, under the sponsorship of the law school's Center for Legal Studies and the University of Chicago Press on behalf of *Signs*.¹ When we accepted funding to support the roundtables on the condition that the event be open to the university community and that it take place at the university, we did not anticipate that these conditions, and the sponsorship of an academic journal, would discourage community participation and would contribute to the perception that the roundtables were an academic event, especially to the nonacademic participants. The numbers of participants and the process were also important regulators. Each roundtable involved eleven or twelve participants and a moderator who was responsible for recognizing who could speak and in what order. Little spontaneous exchange was possible in this public space, although it occurred informally outside of the roundtables and among the audience.

A court reporter transcribed the discussions and it is from the four-hundred-page transcription that we have constructed this report. Our account is, of course, contrived, involving as it does a reduction of the words of participants to a fraction of their original volume. Not all participants are present in this account to the same extent they were

¹ Other sponsors at the University of Minnesota were the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies, College of Liberal Arts, Commission on Women, Disability Services, Graduate School, Human Rights Center, School of Social Work, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, and Women Law Students Association. A contribution was also made by the Gay and Lesbian Elders Active in Minnesota (GLEAM).

during the actual discussions; conversely, others have a greater prominence here than they might have had then. As the co-organizers of the roundtables and as parties to the discussion, we are not disinterested commentators. As we worked with the written text and our own experiences of the roundtables, we inevitably became gatekeepers—eliminating parts of the discussion we considered peripheral to what we came to identify as the central issue, namely, the difference impasse.

How we came to see the difference impasse as central to the roundtables warrants explanation here. As co-organizers, we set out to ensure that this event would be racially mixed and include disabled and non-disabled women, lesbians and heterosexual women, and women of varying ages. Because the context for the discussion was legal feminism we also strived to include participants who had a range of relationships with the legal system. To broaden the discussion to a more general one about social change, we included the perspectives of artists and nonlegal academics whose work took up themes of oppression. The participants' different locations, then, were uppermost in our minds at the conception of the roundtables, but we were aware that women from dominant groups could control the agenda. In seeking to avert this possibility, we tried to balance each roundtable racially and tried to ensure that lesbians and women with disabilities were represented at all the panels. Yet, with respect to one another, every participant was simultaneously a member of a subordinate as well as a dominant group. Failing to take this into account, we did not consider how to facilitate a dialogue in which multiple locations, that is, our points of dominance and subordination, could be interrogated. For a number of reasons, and contrary to our expectations, the environment was not an easy one in which to confront ourselves and each other about what we knew and did not know about one another's realities. This type of questioning is only possible with trust and mutual respect. There was little opportunity to build either during the short weekend. Reflecting on this, and on the gap between what we expected and what in fact took place, we felt compelled in writing this report to interrogate the specific ways in which the responses of the participants to one another were socially produced, everyone's good intentions notwithstanding. Far from being pessimistic, this report springs from our belief that women can hear one another, providing we do not underestimate the strength of the systems of domination that produce us all.

Violence against women

Participants: Gina Dent, Anne Finger, Kathleen Gullivan, Evelina Giobbe, Kim Hines, Shirley Masuda, Vivien Ng, Rosemary Ofei-Aboagye, Sherene Razack, Beverly Sellars, Joanne Smith, Cassandra Thomas.

Moderator: Mary Jo Maynes. (Biographies of the participants can be found at the end of this report.)

As the three articles that formed the initial basis to this roundtable argue, violence against women is supported by cultural and legal institutions in the society. The articles also show that sexual violence emerges out of a web of interlocking systems of domination. Thus not only are various sites of violence against women related—so that, for example, battering in the home is sustained by women's vulnerability to violence on the streets and in the workplace—but this violence is also simultaneously sexualized, racialized, and deeply connected to society's maintenance of heterosexuality and systems of economic exploitation. These interconnections produce the batterer who charges his wife with being a "dyke" or a "whore" to justify his beatings just as they produce white colonialists, white missionaries, and white teachers who sexually abuse members of aboriginal communities and in turn produce aboriginal men who abuse their own wives, sisters, and children.

Linked as it is to all systems of domination, sexual violence is pervasive and central to the functioning of major social systems such as marriage and the racial and gendered stratification of the labor force. Law's role, given the pervasiveness of violence, is to determine how much violence is too much, warranting state intervention. Making such a determination involves marking the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable violence. For example, the law often treats rape without physical force as noncriminal when the perpetrator is white or when both the victim and perpetrator are persons of color or aboriginal, reflecting society's view that these activities are within the ambit of normal social relations.

What becomes obscured when legal and social boundaries demarcating violence are drawn is the relationship between the legal and illegal, between the deviant and the nondeviant. It is tempting to view these categories as opposites rather than as interconnected and necessary to each other. The categories enable us to individualize violence and to mask how both good girls and bad girls, and good men and bad men, are produced in systems that sacrifice some for the benefit of others. Our individual and collective complicity and investment become difficult to trace in these social arrangements. We see the difficulty of this tracing in the roundtable discussion specifically concerning aboriginal communities, disability, race, and prostitution. Consideration of how women are located differently in the realm of violence, and the implications of our different locations, seems to us central to understanding the discussion.

In her analysis of violence in aboriginal women's lives, Beverly Sellars, past chief of the Soda Creek Indian Band and a participant at the round-

table, identified some of the interconnections between systems of oppression that we, as writers of the report, want to bring to this account. Sellars underscored why differences are not merely ways of seeing differently, but also ways in which domination is organized. Her analysis helped us to see the critical need to trace processes of domination and our complicity in them:

SELLARS: When you strip away all the academic categories, the problem comes down to the same thing in every community. . . . If you're poor and a minority, the system doesn't work for you. Most of the native people in Canada would be considered poor, and a minority, and if you're a woman, that makes it all the more difficult. . . . Poverty beats people down, it makes them cynical, it just drains people of hope, and I came to this conference hoping to get some ideas, some fresh ideas. We have tried different things in our community, and some things work and some things don't. In Canada we're still under the Indian Act which leaves us not in control of our lives. If you make a will and if the government doesn't agree with it, they can overturn it; that's the kind of oppression that we're faced with. . . .

Just this past Christmas day, when it was minus 40 degrees, my sister and her pregnant daughter and her daughter's boyfriend were going back home to a community about thirty-five miles away. My sister was driving, but because of a snowstorm she asked her daughter's boyfriend to drive. The boyfriend didn't have a driver's license, but considering the circumstances she allowed him to drive. They were pulled over for some reason; my sister doesn't know exactly why. I think she said there was a taillight broken. The RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officer, who was white, asked for the guy's driver's license. He didn't have one, so the officer impounded the car. My sister had a driver's license and she said, "I will drive; my daughter is pregnant." She was about seven months pregnant. He said no. So there they were left standing on the side of the road, in minus 40 degrees weather, with her daughter being pregnant. Her daughter had to trudge through three feet of snow to get to a phone booth. Things like this are allowed to happen in the system.

Another time, I was at a community hall having dinner, and my ex-husband showed up and started hitting me. I called the police. Two of them came, but they refused to arrest him because they said that they didn't see him committing the crime. . . . If you're poor and a minority, the system doesn't work for you; it just doesn't work for you.

Sellars's stories demonstrate that violence is produced at a number of different sites by individual actors as well as by the state.

The multiple ways in which domination is organized is also affected by how women who are differently located come to understand and name what is done to them as violence. In explaining how she came to focus her scholarly work on domestic violence, Rosemary Ofei-Aboagye described how disturbed she felt when she witnessed a domestic assault that the victim denied the next day, ascribing her injuries to an accident of falling down the stairs. About her subsequent encounters with other battered women who denied having been battered, Ofei-Aboagye asked, "Were they being cowards? What was preventing them from talking?" These questions reemerge in Ofei-Aboagye's study that explores the extent of domestic violence in Ghana (in this issue, 924-38). When asked whether they were beaten by their husbands, Ghanaian women responded no but changed their reply to yes when the word *beaten* was replaced by the word *disciplined*. The reluctance to name violence in this context may have a number of origins, among them the risk of further violence, the prioritizing of economic survival, and shame.

As the discussion proceeded, participants contextualized the naming of violence, drawing attention to historical and cultural factors that shape what is named. Beverly Sellars described her and her community's process of coming to voice and to analyze violence as one of digging deeper and deeper for its historical sources.

SELLARS: [I began to look at violence when I was] coming out of an abusive relationship and not really understanding it, and not really questioning it either, just accepting it, and then getting out of it and then sitting back and looking at other people in abusive relationships. Then I was elected chief of my community. Looking at the social problems and not understanding why all this violence was taking place, our tribal council sat down and started questioning why this was happening: why is there so much [violence]; why do we have so many social problems in our community? That's how we started looking at the issues of violence—there seemed to be something like an ulcer inside our community and we just couldn't put our finger on it. . . . [We] started saying, well, that's a symptom, that's not the cause; that's a symptom, that's not the cause, and it got so that it came down to one thing: residential schools [for aboriginal children].

Sellars described how aboriginal children between the ages of four and six (as she noted, "a time when children are the most vulnerable") were sent to eighty or more residential schools across Canada where they were

subject to emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. As her tribal council focused on the lingering effects of this experience, Sellars came to understand the legacy of violence that the schools had fostered: "I started understanding not only myself; I started understanding my mother, I started understanding my grandmother, and I started understanding the people in the community."

The interconnections Sellars described made it clear that the legal and social definitions of violence have to be broadened. Anne Finger, teacher, writer, and disability-rights activist, developed this theme further with regard to women with disabilities.

FINGER: I'm really concerned about how narrow our definition of physical and sexual abuse is and that it shuts out a lot of the experiences that disabled women, and disabled men, have. There's been recently some attention to this in the disabled community. . . . There is sexual abuse that happens in hospitals that is what we traditionally think of as sexual abuse: a doctor comes in, an orderly comes in, a nurse comes in, and molests a patient. . . . But there is also the experience of public stripping, being taken for grand rounds, which is when a group of doctors, medical people, get together and examine a case. And if you're the case, you're often put up there naked in front of a room full of doctors. This is not considered sexual abuse, although certainly it should be. It is experienced by the patient, the victim, as extremely damaging to their self-esteem, extremely damaging to their sexual identity. So I'm really concerned that we expand those definitions of what sexual abuse is.

In our view, expanding the definition of violence as Finger suggested would mean that we must ask how public stripping of women with disabilities comes to be described as nonviolent, as well as who benefits from the boundary between violence and nonviolence being drawn where it is. If public stripping of women with disabilities in hospital wards does not constitute violence, then doctors can enjoy public access to such women with impunity under the guise of medical training. Disability is central to the charade, serving in this instance to desexualize what would otherwise be a sexualized act of violence. In a similar way, public strip-searching of a black woman suspected by the police of possessing drugs is justified in the name of law enforcement, and racism facilitates the disregard for the humanity of the woman involved. Public stripping in clubs, pornography, and prostitution also depend on viewing these activities as other than violence—as entertainment, art, free speech, and employment. And here too, the masking of violence is facilitated by

viewing the women involved as racialized and/or economically disadvantaged Others. For those of us women who are differently located, we must consider how we too benefit from the failure to name violence in these contexts.

The question of complicity became especially difficult and urgent when the participants discussed prostitution. There was considerable conflict over whether prostitution was always violence and, thus, whether it could ever reflect women's agency. Moreover, our own ability as writers of this report to thread our way through this conflict was limited by the ways in which our locations intersected and produced different responses. For Sherene Razack, it was especially difficult to pursue the theme of complicity in prostitution given some of the circumstances surrounding the roundtable debate: The position that prostitution was always violent was articulated by Evelina Giobbe, whom Razack initially saw exclusively as a white woman who is a nationally known feminist activist. Moreover, Giobbe had refused to participate further when her position was challenged by others, including Gina Dent, an African-American graduate student. Sherene came later to understand that her reaction to the conflict was connected to the fact that Giobbe is a survivor of prostitution while she herself has not been prostituted. We believe that each of the participants at the roundtable and each of the members of the audience inhabited a variety of subject positions that made her differently invested, influencing how she was able to hear others.

Coming to this analysis of violence—an analysis that problematizes the difference impasse and the question of complicity—did not come easily to Sherene. It was not immediately apparent to her that if prostitution were not called violence and if prostituted women were considered to have made a choice, albeit from admittedly limited options, then prostituted women who named their experience as violence were women who in the words of Giobbe “didn’t quite do it right or get it right.” The steps Sherene took to unravel complicity and to confront the possibility that she was denying the brutal violence of prostitution began by examining the violence inherent in prostitution itself. Feminist legal theorist Margaret A. Baldwin usefully reminds us that unless we are to discount the violence of prostitution (and the stories we do not often hear) by relying on the stories we do hear from some prostituted women about choice and employment, we must examine what a prostitute is selling and a john buying. That is, a man who buys sexual services is buying the right to treat a prostitute exactly as he wants, regardless of her personal sexual wishes. He is buying, in other words, sexual authority and the right to dominate. From this first step, Sherene then explored how the activity that is prostitution—the buying of sexual authority—is connected to her own life. Baldwin argues that our lives as women very

often depend on our maintaining the distinction between ourselves and prostitutes: "Other women' [nonprostituted women] don't want to hear, perhaps, that our boyfriends and husbands are buying sex from women in prostitution. 'Other women' don't want to hear, perhaps, that the 'straight' jobs we have are sexualized top to bottom. 'Other women' don't want to hear, perhaps, that we are each one man from the street. But if our stories are to gain in boldness and integrity, we all need to be able to hear all of that" (1992, 116-17).

By focusing on the relation between prostituted and nonprostituted women, Sherene came ultimately to see her own investment in believing that prostituted women had chosen prostitution: If they had not chosen, and their experience was one of violence, then Sherene's enjoyment of a less violent life was based on the illusion of her autonomy—the belief that her advantages were of her own making and unconnected to other women's sexual exploitation. She would have to answer yes to the question, Do prostituted women keep other women off the streets in an elaborate system of threats and rewards that are connected integrally with economic, gender, and racial exploitation?

Baldwin further problematizes feminist discussions about prostitution and agency when she asks: "Who are we talking to? Who is it, who cares so much, that we should care to convince? The men, it seems: the men who feel license to destroy us if we fail to convince them. . . . The law, too, we hope to convince. Our stories of 'consent,' of 'work,' of 'intimacy,' have been crafted with the law in mind, placating its demand that we not 'really' be sluts" (119). She also makes the connection to feminists' responses to prostitution and our complicity in it when she argues that the prostitution debate is not only a problem of "short-sighted feminism."

My belief, also my fear, is that within the existing political and legal order, and the possibilities for change afforded some women, is embedded a profound bargain: take what you can, but it will always be at the price of abandoning prostitutes, of gaining your advantage at her expense. There is a term for women who accept bargains like that. It's called being a pimp's "bottom woman," the one who treasures his highest regard, and sometimes gets off the street herself, but only if she helps run the less lucky girls. There is also a term for the arrangement which makes this bargain compelling. It's called pimping, period. If my intuition is correct, this is the arrangement women presently have with the state, motivating the "not a prostitute" content of our legal stories as a condition of our legal citizenship. My question for all of us, in love and struggle, is this: if I am right, in this intuition, do we love our pimp so much, after all? What stories would we tell, if not for him? [Baldwin 1992, 119-20]

What Baldwin's analysis does not adequately address is how the prostitution/nonprostitution relation also is conditioned by ableism, economic exploitation, heterosexism, and racism. The exchanges among Giobbe, Dent, and Finger illustrate these complexities and conflicts. In the dialogue quoted below, each participant occupies multiple subject positions (Giobbe, a survivor of prostitution, a white woman, and a nationally known activist; Dent, an African-American doctoral student; Finger, a white woman with a physical disability who is a published writer and activist on disability issues) as they challenged one another on prostitution.

GIOBBE: I'm a survivor of prostitution and pornography; not a sex worker, not a whore, not a sexually liberated woman, but a survivor of an exploitive industry that's directly connected to women's social, sexual, and economic subordination by the patriarchy. . . .

I want to go back to the original question: How do women come to voice . . . violence and how does our dialogue affect that as academics, as organizers, as attorneys, and historians? . . . One way that our dialogue as a movement affects prostituted women finding their voices is by ignoring them; [another way is by] setting [the discussion] up as a debate about whether the violence that they describe their lives as is actually true or whether it is only true for those who didn't quite do it right or get it right. . . .

We have learned so well from men what prostituted women are for—that they are something that you project your sexual desires on, that you use your race, class, and gender privilege to then turn that blank screen that you've bought into something that complies with all of your wishes—that we treat them the same way. So the stripper is sexual expression, the women who are used in porn are not women who are being sexually abused and displayed, they are expressions of our First Amendment rights. And the prostituted women essentially are—for those of us who don't "choose" to give five, ten, twenty blow jobs a day—an expression of our sexual autonomy on the cutting edge of radical feminism, to whom we have to allow choices, a wide range of choices, when these are the women who have no choices.

DENT: In the feminist community one of the sticky issues around prostitution certainly is the question of women's agency. And it's not just the silly question of women choosing to [be prostitutes], I think that's a greatly reduced way of putting that, but it is about if someone is not naming what they are experiencing as harm, then having to speak . . . "in their interest" . . . without their corroborating in that definition, is a specific feminist problem that we come

up against all the time. I don't think it's just with the issue of prostitution. . . . I think it's come up in many of the other discussions that we have had here. . . . I might look at someone who experienced very much what I experienced and say that that's hurt because I now define what I went through, or I did even at the time, as being harm. But when, for example, Rosemary [Ofei-Aboagye] says what do I do with the woman who wants to tell me that she fell down the stairs, even when I'm willing to stand there and defend her, even when I'm willing to say to her, you know, how are you and what happened to you, she wants to lie to me again and say something else. That to me is an issue about whether or not violence is also that force that we exert on other people about defining what it is that they are experiencing. Now, I'm not telling you [Giobbe] that what you're saying is wrong, what I'm saying is that it is a very sticky situation. I don't think the only reason why people back away from such a difficult issue as prostitution is because they want to say that women shouldn't [be prostitutes]. I would never say that. I think the choices for most of the women that we're talking about at this table . . . are very few but I still think that we have to come to a way to describe what it is that we're doing and in whose interest we're doing it in ways that are more honest about our own empowerment to be sitting at this table . . . [about] what it is in my own history, even though I've survived certain kinds of abuse, that allows me to be on the side of those who would be sitting at this table.

Anne Finger elaborated on "the problem of our victimizing women by naming their experience in certain ways." Discussing the Glen Ridge, New Jersey, case in which a group of men were put on trial in 1992 for raping a developmentally disabled woman, Finger noted that the victim did not perceive what had happened to her as rape.

FINGER: How then do we talk about that, how do we talk about people who are going through a situation that we would name as violence, and how do we keep from creating a new class of victims, and especially how do we hear the multiplicity of women's voices? I know women who have worked as prostitutes and who have found it terribly exploitive, and I know women who have worked in the sex industry and have said, "It was a job, and I made more money than any other job I've ever had and I didn't mind doing it. I didn't like it, but it sure beat being a secretary." And I think we have to find a way where we can hear all those women's different voices.

At this time Giobbe left the roundtable, visibly upset. Some participants, momentarily paralyzed, continued the discussion but privately passed notes to each other wondering how to respond publicly to her departure. Subsequently, there were several passionate interventions that we summarize here only to convey the range of responses to the exchanges among Giobbe, Dent, and Finger. Cassandra Thomas, a nationally known activist on sexual assault, made the point that many victims/survivors of sexual assault do not see themselves as being victimized; instead they view what happened as a normal part of life. Activists, she noted, often had to work with such contradictions and "do not have the luxury of theorizing" as she felt academics have. Joanne Smith, a trial court judge, agreed with Thomas and added that she herself felt "a particular and very strong responsibility to let that individual know she's been victimized." Audience members interrupted the discussion at several points to convey their discomfort with Giobbe's departure, and many of them applauded Shirley Masuda when, referring to Giobbe, she admonished academic participants to "hear that woman who is here talking about her experience."

Mary Louise Fellows, who had left the room to speak with Giobbe, returned and reported that Giobbe had felt "discounted" and "silenced" and would not be returning. Gina Dent then responded that she, as a young black student, felt that Mary Louise's comments—the comments of a white woman—on discounting and silencing were accusatory. The discussion of Giobbe's departure became clearly polarized into Giobbe versus Dent, activists versus academics, and a white woman versus a black woman, notwithstanding the intervention of Finger, a white woman speaking against Giobbe's position, and Thomas, a black woman speaking in support of activists naming other women's violence.

It is evident to us, in reflecting on the discussion about prostitution and the subsequent departure of Giobbe, that what participants (among whom was Sherene) and audience members (among whom was Mary Louise) all consistently wove into the discussion was an analysis of points of marginality, which made it more difficult to examine the consequences of being located at a point of domination. For example, Mary Louise did not pay attention to the racial subtext of the event. She did not consider the possible responses of the participants of color to Giobbe, a white woman leaving the room when challenged, or the effect of her own statements about silencing, statements of a white woman who was a co-organizer of the event. Sherene did not consider what she did not know about the realities of prostitution. Each remained anchored in a position at the margins—Mary Louise focused on the sexual exploitation of prostitution and Sherene, a woman of color, focused on the domination of white women in this setting. Neither could easily cede her position

on the margins in order to hear about her complicity in keeping the Other at the margins. We can only speculate about the difficulties experienced by the other participants and members of the audience. It seems that confronting the differences of our socially produced locations required building a trust. With such a trust, we might have profitably explored the relations that produce prostituted women and nonprostituted women, white women and black women, women with disabilities and women without, and the violence in each of their lives. Without the trust, we could not ask questions publicly about our differing responses and, more important, about the implications for political action.

Family/community

Participants: Akua Benjamin, Rose Brewer, Avvy Yao-Yao Go, Laura Hershey, Homa Hoodfar, Phyllis Lyon, Del Martin, Ruthann Robson, Eleanor Savage, Beverly Sellars, Rosalie Wahl, Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré. Moderator: Toni McNaron.

Community means the racial or cultural group to which we belong, but it also has a broader meaning, as a descriptor of the interdependence of individuals organized collectively. Individuals exist only in relation to others, and community is that relation. Farida Shaheed and Ruthann Robson, the authors of the two articles considered by this roundtable, explore family and community from two different perspectives. Shaheed, on the one hand, emphasizes the ethic of interdependence, noting that it is important to protect women's individual rights in ways that do not isolate them from their families and communities. Robson, on the other hand, underscores the risks to lesbian autonomy of pursuing the right to have a legal family. She sees that risk as not only limiting individual choice but also constraining the development of the lesbian community. How is the goal of personal autonomy related to the goal of preserving family and community? We suggest that this relationship is usefully explored within the framework of the difference impasse. As Roxanna Ng has contended in reviewing the historical development of Canadian society, "family and kinship, perceived or real, are means people deploy to exert their domination or overcome their subordination" (1993, 51). Once we understand that the context in which we make choices about family and community is one in which a number of communities stand in unequal relation to each other, we can begin to scrutinize the choices available to us and the impact of the choices we make in order to uncover how each of us is implicated in the dominance of others.

The way the participants talked about what family and community meant to them showed how relations of domination affected each one's understanding of family and community, raising the question of whether

their different conceptions could coexist. Two approaches to family emerged fairly quickly in the discussion, although there were speakers whose perspectives incorporated both. The first of these was a perspective that emphasized the connection between family and community and looked to the place where they connect as an important site for social change. Akua Benjamin, a community activist and social work professor, said, "community and family are really intertwined and very, very important in terms of development and identity. Actually I see this as perhaps one of the transformative kind of structures for change within a black community context." Benjamin's thoughts were echoed by others, from differing cultural perspectives.

SELLARS: My community is my family. I'm a Shuswap from the interior of British Columbia. Most of the people in my community are related; they are my parents, my grandparents, my cousins, brothers, sisters, and that extends to other communities. My grandmother is from another tribe, so my relations extend there to the seventeen bands of the Shuswap area and then we're related to tribes around us, so my community is a big family.

Laura Hershey, writer, poet, and part-time organizer on disability rights, made the connection between family and community differently but emphasized nonetheless their interconnectedness.

HERSHEY: I grew up with a physical disability in a family that was loving and supportive but that did not share that condition—in other words, I grew up in an able-bodied family and in that sense feel like I had something of a bicultural upbringing. I was very isolated from any community of people with disabilities. As an adult I've worked really hard to connect both with an extended community of people with disabilities, . . . but also to create my own family, which includes my partner as well as personal attendants who assist me, friends, and other important people. So for me, there's a blur between family and community; both are extremely important to me. I have had to work hard to find that community of people with disabilities, which has helped me understand myself as a person of disability, and as I've come to understand myself as a lesbian, [I have worked] to find that community too, and to find within both communities a sense of belonging and identity.

While for many the notion of family had to be directly linked to community, other participants saw a more distinct line between the two

and focused their comments on the family as a unit, a structure perhaps linked to a wider community, but autonomous nonetheless. For example, state Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Wahl described family and community this way: "Somehow there's this need and this yearning for a unit, and I think it has to be some kind of a unit, although it's connected with wider community, in which persons are safe and in which there are other persons who are always there for them, and in which you can live constructive lives." Moderator Toni McNaron, a professor of English and women's studies, introduced her own relationship to the topic as that of someone "fleeing a hothouse nuclear family." Her experience of the traditional family structure as oppressive resonated with several other participants, who strongly advocated transforming the family unit or helping alternate structures to flourish. For instance, Phyllis Lyon, a community activist for lesbian, gay, and women's rights, considered that from the standpoint of lesbians, it is important to look for a new way of creating families that could "tap into all the benefits that [traditional] heterosexual families have." In contrast, Ruthann Robson, law professor and the author of one of the articles being discussed, critiqued the idea of family for lesbians, asking: "Do I want a law that talks about spouse equivalent? . . . To tell you the truth, I don't know what a spouse is, let alone a spouse equivalent. . . . [What] I would like to see is that when we speak that we are careful to talk about the legal regime as one piece of it and our extralegal or nonlegal lives to the extent that we try to live them . . . as separate."

Regardless of which concept of family one holds, it was clear to participants that the law regulates both families and communities and establishes which families and communities can exist with societal and legal support. Rose Brewer, professor and chair of a university department of African-American studies and African studies, reacted to Robson's argument that lesbians should be wary of pursuing legal recognition of family by urging Robson not to restrict her critique to the expression of family without duly regarding that the law "represents the values of the dominant class and dominant social forces." As Brewer reminded Robson, "historically, African-American families have been defined out of the legal construction of family; they weren't even a part of that consideration." Avvy Go, director of a Chinese and Southeast Asian legal clinic, shared Brewer's perspective and through examples showed that the legal attack on families had to be seen in the context of a series of laws and social practices that combined to threaten the very survival of certain communities.

Go: I remember last summer the Canadian government brought a new immigration bill. One of the amendments was to impose quotas

on the sponsorship of parents because parents are not considered as the immediate family. My sister and I went to the standing committee in Ottawa to talk about that as a problem, and we were asked the question, if you had to choose between your father and your husband, which one would you choose? . . . [Another example is] a single mom can only get assistance if there's no man living in the house. If there's a man living there for more than three years, [they say] he's your husband and so they impose a family when it's necessary and they break down a family when it's necessary. So I think we should be talking about those things rather than just talking about the problem with the family.

Beverly Sellars reinforced Go's point that legal intervention breaking up families is one of the ways in which communities are attacked: "I am the first generation [of aboriginal women in Canada] who has been able legally to keep their children at home. Under the Indian Act in Canada our children were taken from us and it was not until 1967 when that law was changed." Laura Hershey had a similar perspective with respect to women with disabilities.

HERSHEY: Women with disabilities have been systematically and legally deprived of the right to have children, to raise the children that they have had, through all kinds of force. A couple who decides to marry can lose their disability benefits, a woman with a disability who gets pregnant is often compelled to either abort or to give up that child after it's born.

Hershey cited a case in Michigan in which the state refused to provide necessary personal assistance services to enable a severely disabled heterosexual married couple to raise a child. Instead, the state placed the couple's child in foster care, a more expensive decision. She noted, however, that the law can also enforce dependency of persons with disabilities on their families: "For people with disabilities . . . , we're historically both not of the family and very much of the family. In other words, we're dependent. There . . . is an enforced dependency on other family members both for legal rights and for resources and support and all those kinds of things."

The breaking up of families through legal and social intervention has meant that, for some communities, maintaining families is an act of resistance. In having an understanding that an individual exists in community, and that many communities are under siege, some of the participants saw the costs of an individualist framework that emphasized women's agency and autonomy. Knowing the value of community, it became

important to envision a society built on an ethic of interdependence. Akua Benjamin put it this way:

For some of us, woman as individual really destroys the very fabric of who you are as a person in your own right . . . [and makes it] more difficult for the law to see us in terms of the extended [community in which we exist]. I also think that the difficulty for us as women is [in] the area of exploitation and oppression once we start to talk about being part of the collective. . . . On the one hand [being part of the collective] is a trap for oppression, on the other it [offers] a sense of redemptiveness.

For us, as writers of this report, equality and autonomy emerged consistently in this discussion as problematic concepts. When some participants considered the problem of inequality—that is, not all structures and communities are treated equally in law—they suggested pursuing antidiscrimination strategies. For example, they proposed enshrining in law our right to an equal position within families or the right to any family form we choose. The problem we see with this approach is that it does little to ensure that some families will not still encounter colonialism, economic exploitation, and racism in ways that destroy their family units. For these families, we think we must consider, as Benjamin emphasized, how to achieve a collective in which these families flourish.

Freedom is, as Patricia Williams writes, a relation (1991, 21). On whose backs does my freedom rest? The freedom to act autonomously very easily can maintain the status quo, leaving many relations of domination untouched and even strengthened, because those who have choices and can pursue them most easily are invariably of the dominant groups. As we concluded earlier about the roundtable on violence against women, we need to remind ourselves of the difference impasse: to ask, in other words, what our responsibility is to each other, and how each of us is implicated in the dominance of others. The personal autonomy, family forms, and communities we each want to protect, whether in law or not, are goals that require us to examine how various communities coexist and how the pursuit of specific goals has an impact on these broader relations of domination and subordination.

Pedagogy and scholarship

Participants: Akua Benjamin, Rose Brewer, Anne Finger, Sharon Hom, Homa Hoodfar, Carol Miller, Vivien Ng, Sherene Razack, Ruthann Robson, Toni Williams, Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré. Moderator: Janet Spector.

The difference impasse goes to the heart of the central issues around pedagogy and scholarship. Because differences do not have equal political consequences, how is domination organized in the classroom, in research, and in the many gatekeeping functions academics perform that limit the access of subordinated groups to educational institutions and to the teaching profession? The two articles by Sharon Hom and Maivân Clech Lâm that formed the basis of discussion for this roundtable both directly ask questions about the construction of knowledge and argue that domination is organized through the privileging of some narratives and the exclusion of others.

The roundtable discussion straddled two central themes: educational access and knowledge production. For those participants who spoke about educational access, a major priority had to be how to open educational institutions to communities who are currently largely excluded, specifically, aboriginal peoples, African-Americans, African-Canadians, and large segments of the working class and poor. Curriculum reform had to be connected to the learning needs and the social change agendas of these groups. For those participants who spoke about knowledge production, the issues surrounding gatekeeping in publishing were most critical because of the public exposure of the review process surrounding Lâm's article through a coda she had added to her piece. Lâm's coda arrived too late to be included in the mailing of articles for discussion and only became available to participants the night before the roundtable. (Lâm argues in her coda that her article speaks to the unequal distribution of power through political stories and that some of the reviewers' criticisms of those political stories and her analysis of them reinscribed the same relations of domination and subordination she was uncovering in her article. Lâm's complete piece can be found in this issue, 865-93.)

Many participants began by speaking passionately about the meaning to them of pedagogy and scholarship, offering examples of their own work on issues of educational access. For many, pedagogy has had a historical role in efforts for social change. Recalling the U.S. civil rights movement and the ongoing struggles by African-Americans, Rose Brewer said:

Although formally I came to curriculum transformation work through [Ford Foundation and MacArthur Foundation] grants and through the effort of the university [of Minnesota] to transform its curriculum in some way, shape, and form, I have a long-standing involvement with questions of emancipation and struggle and [with] issues of subverting the institutional structures that constrain us. And a great deal of that has to do with coming of age in the late sixties and early seventies, when African-American studies was put-

ting on the agenda these very questions. . . . Right here [in Minneapolis] students on campus in the late sixties took over Morrill Hall, demanding a department that would reflect their histories and their experiences. . . . The most recent attempts to transform the curriculum sometimes lose that early essence of history, which is very long-standing in this country, of people trying to get educational equity. . . . I grew up in a state where the formal apartheid of this country was in place, American Jim Crow; where educational equity was not even in the discussion because there was black education and there was white education. . . . This recent expression of curricular transformation and pedagogy in this country for me is a part of a long-standing struggle for educational equity and educational access.

Importantly, Brewer went on to express her misgivings about recent efforts to improve educational access. She spoke of her fear that projects of the last few years may be cosmetic ones, leaving institutions cloaked in a mantle of progressive practices but resulting in no greater access for African-Americans: "There is an infinite ability in this institutional structure to absorb, to co-opt, and to take what is resistant and to normalize it." Further, Brewer recognized that because we are often "dealing with students who want to reproduce the social order," it is difficult to disrupt the multiple ways in which domination is organized. One potential strategy in her view is to find ways to open the university to those consistently denied access.

In the Twin Cities, there is a community of African-Americans who are largely working class and poor and who are hungry for an educational experience which involves some pedagogy of the oppressed, [teaching] a way of thinking about the world. And there clearly is a group of African-American women who are not formally a part of this educational structure who will never get access to this institution. I believe we have a role in terms of making that connection. So it seems to me that curriculum transformation is . . . [about forging connections between] a community of people who are looking and who want a way of thinking about and acting in the world . . . and people who have thought about this.

Juanita Westmoreland-Traoré, equity commissioner and lawyer for the Canadian province of Ontario, agreed with Brewer's view that we do not have a representative student body in universities. For Westmoreland-Traoré, when we think of pedagogy, we must think about "how universities operate as a means of transmitting power," educating elites

and, to a much smaller extent, educating members of oppressed groups: "We [professors and policy makers] determine who is professional, who are actors who speak, and we do have a responsibility to think of how we can make our pedagogy appropriate to the different clientele that we have. I think that that means that when we speak in terms of excellence, we have to question that dialogue. Is excellence democratic? My sense is that in this particular turning in society, we need to look at some of the democratic issues." Westmoreland-Traoré's consciousness of the relationship between pedagogy and the exclusion of oppressed groups from higher education sparked a discussion about education for social change. Akua Benjamin usefully summarized the direction of this discussion with her comment that "it is our responsibility [as teachers] to shape courses in a way so that students become self-reflective and begin to look at what their role and responsibility is in transforming not only their communities but their societies; and I think that that is what is not happening."

The narratives of law professor Sharon Hom and anthropology professor Homa Hoodfar took the discussion about educational equity down another path, exploring how knowledge is created and who creates it. Important limits are always placed on what can be said and heard and by whom, as Hom illustrates by telling of her father's power over her and the power of one of her colleagues to construct her as an Asian stereotype. Hoodfar, as a "foreign" student in Great Britain, encountered similar constraints in terms of what comprises knowledge production and whose voices were considered legitimate in anthropological and feminist discourse.

Hom related three stories from her own life to illustrate the profound connections among scholarship, educational access and pedagogy, and the subtexts of gender, race, and violence. She first told of how she and her mother had emigrated to the United States from their native Hong Kong when Hom was five, joining Hom's father, who had made his own emigration before Hom's birth. She subsequently saw her father only periodically; he lived away from the family most of the week while working as a waiter at faraway restaurants. Hom remembers occasional family drives, however, and particularly recalls a time when her father took the family out for ice cream.

HOM: And he said, "Vanilla ice cream for everybody." And I said, "I want chocolate." And he started cursing me out; he got in a rage. He said, "You have to be different. If you don't want to eat vanilla, don't eat." I thought, I just want chocolate. Somehow that stayed with me, in thinking about what can be said and what cannot be said. The second incident that I think of in thinking about pedagogy and teaching is when I was [a teenager] . . . , and we were in the

kitchen of my father's takeout, and my brother was helping out as a cook and I was helping out as a cashier. And I got into an argument, which I don't remember at all the substance of (it was irrelevant) . . . and he slammed me across my face. . . . I remember saying to him, "Don't touch me again." So he slammed me again. And I was shocked. I said, "I said don't touch me." So he slammed me again. I think this went on, and I just refused to cry and I refused to stop saying don't slam me—until my older brother, who was crying and couldn't take any more, yanked me out of the restaurant and started shaking me really hard, and he said, "Shut up. Shut up. Don't you know when to shut up?" And I just said, "I told him not to touch me again." And it was so clear to me what I said and he didn't get it. The third [incident that I recall when I think about pedagogy occurred] many, many years later when I was teaching at CUNY [City University of New York], and I experienced myself very much as coming from a working-class background where there were no . . . books, there was no newspaper. . . . And there I was at CUNY, [thinking] how could I be a law professor. . . . I'm not an academic, I'm not an intellectual, I'm not any of these things, and there I was supposedly trying to teach. A colleague took me aside . . . when I was trying to work on a problem. . . . He said, "You know, Sharon, you are really concrete. . . . But Asians are like that, Asians are concrete. Asians don't have that kind of cognitive [ability] of thinking abstractly." I remember thinking, "Is that why I can't be an intellectual? Oh, maybe that's what it is, I'm not abstract."

So I carried these three [stories] into my thinking about teaching and scholarship, because I think it very much has shaped the way I think about power and speaking and about how hard it is to speak, and also [has shaped] the resistance that I feel, [the feeling] that I'm constantly resisting the way in which others in some relatively greater position of power tell me how I think and what are my inherent . . . limitations.

Hoodfar, focusing specifically on knowledge creation, described her experiences in graduate school. Her stories reveal how white Western scholars place themselves at the center of narratives, giving no evidence that they have considered how their social locations limit their ability to know. In Hoodfar's first story, Clifford Geertz, an internationally known anthropologist, received wide acclaim for his accounts of Iranian culture, accounts that impressed his Western audience as insightful and important new information. Hoodfar, herself of Iranian origin, thought that "what he said, even my grandmother could tell them." As she read more in her

field, she concluded, "This may be knowledge for them, but it is not knowledge for me, because I grew up with this." She wondered what might be her own role in knowledge production in academe. Returning from her doctoral fieldwork in Egypt, Hoodfar again confronted this question when she was challenged by a well-known feminist scholar.

HOODFAR: I didn't find exploitation of women amongst the poor in Cairo, at least not in my neighborhood. If I had to choose to be a male or female and to remain among the poor in Egypt, I would certainly choose to be a woman and not a man, because men went to work from six in the morning to ten at night in two or three jobs. . . . Women at least stayed home, they had their work in the vegetable markets and they had their kids, and women were very aware that they had a better deal than their husbands. This is not to say that those who were female heads of household didn't have a hard time, but I'm talking about male/female relations in the family.

When I came back from the field I was invited to give a talk about my findings. A well-established feminist said, "And you call yourself a feminist? . . . This is not a feminist work. You may as well have sent any male to the field."

In other words, as a Third World native, Hoodfar had no place in Western knowledge creation. She cannot approximate Geertz's authority as Western scientist, possessing neither his embodied authority nor the advantages of his location that enabled him to present, and to be heard as presenting, everyday Iranian life as new and exotic knowledge. It is as if, in anthropology, entry into the halls of academe is conditional upon operating in a framework in which the Third World is "Othered," a framework Hoodfar contradicts merely by her presence as a scholar. As a Third World woman doing fieldwork in another part of the Third World, Hoodfar has difficulty achieving legitimacy for all of these reasons. She cannot reproduce Western interpretive frameworks, such as the entrenched, if contested, feminist view that work outside the home is inevitably more liberating than work done in the home.

How do some voices come to be constructed as illegitimate? In writing this report and reflecting on Hom's and Hoodfar's stories, we, Sherene and Mary Louise, see an important relationship between those who can speak and those who cannot. The striking feature of this relationship is that it is symbiotic: those who can speak can do so only on the condition that suppressed voices stay suppressed. Third World narratives would invalidate the stories that are told in white, Western academe. When Hoodfar concluded that in academic work about Third World peoples

the "picture that is painted of us is not actually any of us" and told of responses to her own research, it becomes clear that for her to speak as a scholar, she must be disruptive. Third World scholars pose a challenge to knowledge creation in the white, Western academy not only because their scholarly narratives are different, but also because they have refused to stay in their place as objects of study. As in a zoo, such scholars are required to remain, as Trinh Minh-Ha writes, "behind the safety grille for the visitors' security and marvel" (1989, 88). To speak as scholars, indeed to speak at all, is to expose the relation between the First World and the Third World: that is, there is a First World as mind, because a Third World has been cast into the role of heart. Trinh observes an important process at work in this relation when she writes,

The Third World representative the modern sophisticated public ideally seeks is the *unspoiled* African, Asian, or Native American, who remains more preoccupied with her/his image of the *real* native—the *truly different*—than with the issues of hegemony, racism, feminism, and social change (which s/he lightly touches on in conformance to the reigning fashion of liberal discourse). [1989, 88]

Academe requires authentic Third World others, that is, others clearly unlike Western scholars, and who possess a unitary, undifferentiated, silent subjectivity. As Hoodfar said during the discussion, a minority woman professor is a contradiction in terms, as is an Iranian woman with a Ph.D. Because uncomplicated others do not exist and so cannot speak, the space must be filled—and it is filled by those who have set the standards. What must also be recognized is that a solid material base—political and economic power—underlies the practices of exclusion and inclusion. What is increasingly at issue is livelihood.

Responses within the academic community to women of color or to women from the Third World have been characterized by oppositions that ensure the white people of the First World their position of dominance. Thus, as Hom commented during the discussion, her work as a Chinese-American scholar working on Chinese legal education was assessed by some of the reviewers for *Signs* as belonging to the realm of praxis, hence implying that it was insufficiently theoretical. Hom saw her reviewers' comments about her work as meaning that she cannot be an authentic other since she is too close to the West for comfort and too readily employs Western discourses. Hom asked, "Why am I not legitimate to write about Chinese women? Because I am one? Or, am I not really one because I am Westernized so therefore I am no longer really a Chinese woman?" Hoodfar also identified the operation of such oppositions when she discussed responses to her doctoral work. She was

condemned by her doctoral thesis supervisor as lacking in subtlety and nuance, as representing the crudeness of the East in contrast to the sophistication of the West; Lâm found that she was criticized on similar grounds by some *Signs* reviewers. Hoodfar refused to stay on the appropriate side of these oppositions in her research and teaching, and therefore she was delegitimated. Both Hom and Hoodfar said that they have paid a price for resisting the frames to which they are confined, for being unauthentic Third World subjects.

Hom and Hoodfar both encountered the practices that Lâm saw operating in the responses of some *Signs* reviewers to her article. The points raised by Hoodfar and Hom, and to a lesser extent by others at the roundtable, illustrated the importance of Lâm's article to some of the participants. When the moderator cautioned the group at the break to think about how they wanted to use the short remaining time, some roundtable participants decided that they wanted to narrow the focus to gatekeeping in publishing. The impetus to focus the discussion this way came in part from the narratives of Hom and Hoodfar, and from Sherene, a participant at this roundtable, who had encountered in past years similar responses to her own work. All three were struck by the similarities between their experiences in academe and Lâm's; during the break they discussed briefly with a few other participants whether and how to address this at the roundtable. On behalf of this group, Sherene opened the last part of the discussion.

RAZACK: Underlying all of our stories [in the first part of this roundtable] was really an issue of power and privilege, and we wanted to find as a panel some way actually to speak to each other about that, so we thought we would start with something fairly concrete, which is the business of gatekeeping, and who gets to be published, how work is assessed. Those are the same issues underlying who gets to speak in the classroom. And we thought that since this is a forum sponsored by *Signs*, and since in fact one of the articles speaks directly to this process, that we might in fact begin with [Lâm's] article, where she presents from her point of view . . . what the response was to her article, "Feeling Foreign in Feminism," from reviewers, and how she felt she had to respond to that. . . . I think one thread in her response is that work is evaluated in a context that looks as though it's devoid of power relations, but in fact people read your piece from a certain subject position. We [some members of the roundtable] compared notes among us [throughout the weekend]. Those of us who are located in a marginal position find that our pieces or sometimes our speeches or our presentations are assessed with exactly the same criticisms to the

point that even the words are similar. So as Homa [Hoodfar] mentioned, "lacking in subtlety" is something that we have all heard, which is quite amazing. Maivân [Clech Lâm] also brings up that [our work] is experienced in some way as whining. . . . I'll just open with that, and I think others will want to respond. . . . I'm thinking particularly as a nondisabled woman, what will make it possible for me to learn to be self-critical or reflective or careful or respectful or all of those things. And I know one of the things that makes it really difficult for me to be those things, and that is when I'm unchallenged. So what we need to do is work at creating the conditions where that challenge is possible. I never have to answer to any woman with a disability in any way, because they are not there. They do not sit on the editorial committees on which I sit, they are not in my classrooms, they are very seldom in any of the activities in which I participate. There is no one who can call me on it. And that is not because they don't exist but because the conditions of power where I operate make sure that they are not there.

The discussion of the suppression of the knowledge produced by marginalized groups was directed away from race/ethnicity and disability and toward prostituted women when Mary Louise, as a member of the audience and a co-organizer of the event, followed up on what Sherene, her co-organizer, had just said. She made a connection between Sherene's wanting to work at creating the conditions to make challenge possible and the discussion of the previous day, which had culminated in Giobbe's departure.

FELLOWS: I really want to go to Sherene's point about being challenged. You were challenged yesterday, you were challenged early on yesterday with everyone in the room locating themselves as not a prostitute, and a prostituted woman [Evelina Giobbe] challenging you and being thrown out of the group. And I don't think what's so bad is that she was thrown out, although many of you think of her as walking out, I understand that, but what I think is unacceptable, going right to Sherene's point about needing to be challenged, is that she [Giobbe] did [challenge you] with her statements and [since she was "thrown out"], no one has challenged themselves, that I've heard, and asked what is it that went on that would have led to that. I've heard people saying she was particularly vulnerable; I've heard people saying she should have stayed, I wanted to hear her anger and pain; I have heard a number of things said, but [have heard no one] ask what is it that we did, or see it [the interaction with Giobbe as] having been challenged. . . . We had among us a

common case where we all experienced it, and we were all complicit in it, and yet we don't want to review it, because—and what I see from where I'm sitting here, I'm seeing us identifying various ways in which we are victimized, and I see it all the time in my work in the classroom. It is very difficult for us to take on the role of victimizer. And I just hope that we can spend some time thinking more about that.

Mary Louise's views were shared by some in the audience who pressed for a discussion of the failure of the participants to acknowledge their own interest in maintaining that prostitution reflected agency and choice and not violence. As a result of the audience's intervention, a dialogue began among audience members and the participants that returned the discussion to the previous day and the issue of Giobbe's departure. For example, Hoodfar responded to Mary Louise with the comment that she felt that "a lot of people were silenced by [Giobbe's] walking out." Comparing Giobbe to the well-known white Western feminist scholar who had challenged her work on Egyptian women and then walked out of her lecture, Hoodfar said, "That moment [Giobbe's departure] to me meant that she wasn't prepared to hear my side, she wasn't prepared to give me a chance to talk [or to try to convince me]. I had to accept her power." Hoodfar's comment and others that followed focused on the meaning of Giobbe's departure. Prostitution, the issue of individual complicity in the violence experienced by prostituted women, and its connection to pedagogy never became part of the discussion. The roundtable also did not fully return to the gatekeeping issues raised earlier: educational equity and the exclusion of marginalized communities from the universities, the suppression of black and Third World women in academe, and specifically the barriers such scholars encounter in feminist journals.

By the end of the discussion, many of the women of color in the room felt—and later said—that a discussion of the issue of minority access to universities and the issue of their access to journals such as *Signs* had been effectively suppressed. (These views were expressed in conversations among the participants after the roundtable and subsequently at an informal lunch both of us attended with some participants.) Some participants resented that Mary Louise had raised the issue of prostitution just as they had decided to use the short remaining time to discuss racism in publishing and that her comments were followed by related remarks from many members of the audience (mostly white). The deep frustration experienced by many of the participants of color, including Sherene, that once again racist practices—related to feminist publishing or to educational access of oppressed communities—could not be interrogated because of the domination of white women was immediately understood by

Mary Louise during the lunch. Mary Louise and other members of the audience continued to be frustrated that prostitution was seen as an unrelated discussion rather than connected to what had been said throughout the morning about pedagogy, scholarship, and gatekeeping. As commentators on the event, we—Sherene and Mary Louise—both wondered whether the race fracture was too deep to enable some white women and some black women to hear each other and learn that both issues were integrally connected and only susceptible to resolution through an understanding of the difference impasse.

The direction of the discussion, the multiple frustrations experienced by the audience and the participants, and our own subsequent questioning about the value of the event are painfully ironic for us because one primary objective we had in organizing the roundtables was to create a forum in which a diversity of voices could be heard, voices normally not present in the pages of *Signs*. In reporting on the events of the roundtables, we found ourselves—as conference organizers, as coeditors of this issue, and as parties to the roundtable—grappling with how we each had experienced the events. Sherene recalled her frustration at what she experienced as a “derailment” of race issues by mainly white women. Mary Louise acknowledged that a “derailment” had occurred but felt nonetheless that most participants and some members of the audience had failed to confront their own investment in maintaining the institution of prostitution. Mary Louise immediately regretted the timing of her remarks, but not their substance. Her regret comes because she failed to understand that they would be experienced by the women of color as a variation of what often happens when white women and black women come together: women of color are discounted, silenced, and excluded. Sherene also regretted her inability, as Baldwin put it, “to learn and know and appreciate and politicize about the conditions of [her] own existence from women in prostitution” (1992, 116). The race fracture only allowed her to see Giobbe as a white woman and limited her willingness to explore her investment in maintaining the boundaries between prostituted and nonprostituted women.

As we noted at the beginning of this report, our reflections have taken us to what we have been calling the difference impasse. Difference and diversity, understood as variety, are not an analytical framework that enables women to explore and confront their complicity in each other’s subordination. At worst, it leads us to consider that women are equally different; at best, we come to see degrees of oppression, as in doubly or triply disadvantaged, but we do not then ask about our complicity and responsibility. Put another way, we operate with an analytical framework in which systems oppress but people do not. Instead, we have proposed that as feminists we must uncover more fully relations of domination,

defining our complicity, and mapping out what it might mean for working together for social change. Concretely, as this report shows, this proposal relies on our ability to move out of the subject position we claim on the margins and into the shifting and multiple subject positions of oppressed and oppressor. Sharon Hom expressed this view in the discussion that ensued toward the end of the third roundtable.

HOM: I don't know how helpful it is, but think about power. I had a reaction yesterday during the first panel discussion, which I put away and then I find that it's coming back to me. . . . As we talked about who we were and our primary identification as a Chinese-American woman, as a woman of color, as a disabled woman, as a woman who was prostituted, as any of these things, when I hear that I think that there's a way in which that starts sounding very static. . . . Some of us have been talking about this, that it's really relational, and it keeps shifting, and that we all occupy these shifting multiple positions. I am a Chinese-American woman, a distinct minority in the law teacher's profession. When I stand in front of the room, I'm a professor, and there's an authority position but . . . when I address a group of Sinologists on China, experts on China, the room will primarily be white men, . . . and suddenly my position shifts. . . . One of the things about speaking about accountability and responsibility for hearing and speaking is that we're not hearing and speaking from a static position, [static] identities of who we are, and that we shift. And I agree with Mary Lou[ise] that it's uncomfortable to say I have hurt someone or I've exercised power in a way which is disempowering to someone. And I agree that we need to look at that, but I also think that none of us are victims exclusively and none of us are victimizers exclusively, and I think that's the hard thing: to look at the ways in which we shift, [the ways we] exercise power and experience power.

Answering Hom's call to look at when we are victims and victimizers, we have explored in this report the processes we concluded to be at work when participants examined the boundaries between who suffers violence and who does not, who has a family and who does not, who are scholars and who are not, who comes to the university and who does not—drawing attention to the relationship between these categories in terms of how the sides of each dichotomy constituted the other as well as to how interrelated these categories all are.

Issues of violence, family/community, and pedagogy and scholarship are issues of relations of power. How does what is absent create what is present? Indeed, this relationship seems to describe the end points of all

three roundtable discussions and suggests how we might answer the questions with which we began: How can we work across our respective subject positions to stop the violence against women, enable our families and communities to flourish, and create scholarship and pedagogies that foster these goals? Benjamin referred in this discussion to the necessity of being armed with a notion of criticism and self-criticism, that is, to uncover how relations of power constitute us differently in relation to others. If we have drawn any one lesson from these discussions, it is that to be both critical and self-critical we have to pay careful attention to the multiple ways in which our listening and speaking are regulated, in Hom's words, to the moments when we are simultaneously powerless and powerful.

Law School
University of Minnesota (Fellows)
Department of Adult Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (Razack)

Appendix Roundtable participants

AKUA BENJAMIN is professor of social work at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and a private consultant/trainer who works with government, educational institutions, unions, and community agencies. She has worked for twenty years in Canada on projects related to multiculturalism, race relations, antiracism, anti-sexism, and community development. She was the employment equity coordinator for the National Action Committee on the Status of Women and is a founding member of the Coalition of Visible Minority Women and the Congress of Black Women.

ROSE BREWER is associate professor and chair of the African-American Studies and African Studies Department at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis/St. Paul. She has written extensively about the black family; race, class, and gender; and public policy. With Lisa Albrecht, she edited *Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990), and is working on a book-length manuscript titled "Race, Gender, and Political Economy: The African American Case since the New Deal." In 1993, she was one of ten faculty members recognized by her university for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education.

GINA DENT is assistant professor of English and Afro-American studies at Princeton University. Her current research project, *Developing African America*, is on the relationship between anthropology and African American literature, with a special focus on the impact of modernization narratives on black women.

She is the editor of *Black Popular Culture: A Project* by Michele Wallace (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992).

ANNE FINGER teaches creative writing at Wayne State University and is poetry and fiction editor for *Disability Rag*. She is the author of *Past Due: A Story of Disability, Pregnancy and Birth*, an autobiographical essay (Seattle: Seal, 1990), and *Basic Skills*, a collection of short stories (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1988). She also wrote the short stories "The Artist and the Dwarf" (*Southern Review* 29, no. 4, 691-705) and "Helen and Frida" (*Kenyon Review*, vol. 16, no. 3). Her as yet untitled novel is forthcoming in fall 1994 from Coffee House Press.

KATHLEEN GALLIVAN is a legal researcher and graduate student in political theory at the University of Toronto. Upon graduation from the University of Toronto Law School, she worked as a legal analyst for the Metro Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children (METRAC), focusing on criminal sentencing theory. Most recently, she was responsible for drafting sexual assault protocols for the University of Toronto. She is a member of the Feminist Working Group on the Criminal [In]justice System (Toronto).

EVELINA GIOBBE is founder and program director of Women Hurt in System of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt (WHISPER). As that group's media liaison, she has appeared on numerous national and local television and radio programs. In 1991, she represented the Coalition against Trafficking in Women at a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, of the United Nations Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. She has published many articles on the violence of prostitution; her most recent article, "An Analysis of Individual, Institutional, and Cultural Pimping," is forthcoming in the *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*. She has taught classes on prostitution, pornography, and mental health issues at St. Cloud State University and the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis/St. Paul, where she is now an adjunct professor of law and co-teacher of a public policy seminar on prostitution. She is working on a book that will include oral histories of women used in prostitution and pornography.

AVVY YAO-YAO GO is director of the Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic and president of the Toronto chapter of the Chinese Canadian National Council. She also is a member of the board of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations and has been involved with other community groups and civic committees, including the Equality Panel of the Federal Court Challenges Program and the Employment Equity Regulations Drafting Committee.

LAURA HERSHEY is a writer, poet, and part-time political organizer. She has worked in the independent living/disability rights movement for ten years. She was the director of the Denver Commission for People with Disabilities and cofounder of the Domestic Violence Initiative for Women with Disabilities, also in Denver. She has published many articles, including "Exit the Nursing Home"

(*Progressive* 55 [August 1, 1991]: 24–27). Her poems have appeared in *Sinister Wisdom*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Disability Rag*, and the *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, among others. She also writes a monthly column on disability issues for the *Denver Post*.

KIM HINES is a playwright, actor, and director living in Minneapolis. She has worked with many theater companies in the Twin Cities, including Penumbra, At the Foot of the Mountain, Out and About, Frank Theatre Company, Children's Theatre Company—where she acted in plays and attended school as a teenager—and Mixed Blood Theatre Company, which she helped found. Among the many plays she has written are "Just Remember My Name" (about women and racism), "Brother, Brother" (about the African-American middle class), and "T'Aint Nobody's Bizness If I Do" (a play about Bessie Smith). In 1992, she wrote and performed a one-woman show, "Who Was I the Last Time I Saw You?" and wrote the book for a musical revue titled "Slavery to Freedom: Let Gospel Ring!" She received a Sumasil Grant in 1992 and is a McKnight member of the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis.

SHARON HOM is associate professor of law at City University of New York at Queens. Before that she worked at the Vera Institute of Justice on homelessness and low-income housing issues and was a Revson Fellow at the Greenberg Center for Legal Education and Urban Policy. She also has served on the faculties of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, the China University of Politics and Law (as a Fulbright Scholar in residence), and the China Center for American Law Study. She is on the board of the Asian American Arts Center and on the advisory board of Asia Watch, both in New York City, and a member of the Committee for Legal Education Exchange with China (CLEEC), based in Washington, D.C.

HOMA HOODFAR is a social anthropologist living in Montreal. She has carried out extensive fieldwork on the household economy and the impact of international migration in Tehran and Cairo. Her recent research focuses on the integration of Muslim minority women in North America. She also is examining the impact of the codification of Muslim laws on women in Iran as part of an international research program designed by Women Living under Muslim Laws network. Her publications include "Feminist Anthropology and Critical Pedagogy: Anthropology of Classrooms' Excluded Voices," *Canadian Journal of Education* 17, no. 3 (1992): 303–20; "Return to the Veil: Personal Strategy and Public Participation in Egypt," in *Working Women: International Perspectives on Labour and Gender Ideology*, ed. Nanneke Redclift and Thea Sinclair (London: Routledge, 1991); "Survival Strategies in Low-Income Households in Cairo," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 8, no. 4; and "The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads: The Persistence of Colonial Images of Muslim Women," *Resources for Feminist Research*, vol. 22, nos. 1–2.

PHYLLIS LYON is professor emerita at and one of the founders of the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, San Francisco. She was cofounder of the

Daughters of Bilitis, the first national lesbian organization in the United States, and of numerous other lesbian/gay organizations including the Alice B. Toklas Memorial Democratic Club and the Lesbian Mothers Union. She was a commissioner on San Francisco's Human Rights Commission from 1976 to 1987 and was its chair for two of those years. She is now active with Gay and Lesbian Outreach to Elders and Old Lesbians Organizing for Change. With Del Martin, she wrote *Lesbian/Woman*, now in a twentieth-anniversary edition (Volcano, Calif.: Volcano, 1991).

DEL MARTIN is an author, lecturer, and community organizer. For the past thirty-nine years, she has been active in the lesbian, gay, women's, and battered women's movements. She is a cofounder of the Daughters of Bilitis, the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, and the Coalition for Justice for Battered Women. She is the coauthor (with Phyllis Lyon) of *Lesbian/Woman*, which *Publisher's Weekly* named as one of the twenty most important women's books of the last twenty years (1972; reprint, Volcano, Calif.: Volcano, 1991). She also is the author of *Battered Wives*, a catalyst for the shelter movement (1976; reprint, Volcano, Calif.: Volcano, 1981). She served on San Francisco's Commission on the Status of Women from 1976 to 1979 and on the California Commission on Crime Control and Violence Prevention from 1980 to 1983. She is now a member of the Senior Services Plan Task Force of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and on the advisory board of Gay and Lesbian Outreach to Elders.

SHIRLEY MASUDA is hearing impaired and has been an activist for persons with disabilities for twenty-five years. She is the senior researcher for DisAbled Women's Network Canada (DAWN Canada), part of a coalition of women's groups in Canada and the only organization in that country that represents the concerns of women with disabilities at a national level. She has worked for many years with women survivors of violence and for the last six years has been researching violence against women with disabilities. She is now conducting research to determine if a link exists between suicidal feelings experienced by women with disabilities and their physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse and neglect.

CAROL MILLER is associate professor of American studies and American Indian studies and a former chair of the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis/St. Paul. She also is co-coordinator of the university's Bush Faculty Development Program on Excellence and Diversity in Teaching. She is working on a study of narrative writing by American Indian women including Ella Cara Deloria, Ignatia Broker, Paula Gunn Allen, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Marmon Silko.

VIVIEN NG is associate professor of history and women's studies at the University of Oklahoma. She is a past president of the National Women's Studies Association and since 1991 has been a member of the board of directors of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the City University of New York Graduate

School. She has published articles including "Ideology and Sexuality: Rape Laws in Qing China" (*Journal of Asian Studies* 46 [February 1987]: 57-70) and "Sexual Abuse of Daughters-in-Law in Qing China" (*Feminist Studies*). She is completing a book on feminist and conservative efforts to redefine womanhood in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China.

ROSEMARY OFEIBEA OFEI-ABOAGYE is a Ghanaian woman completing her doctorate in jurisprudence at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto. Her legal research is focused on the legal rights of disadvantaged groups, particularly African and Ghanaian women. She has conducted extensive research on domestic violence, constitutional rights, and gender equality discourse. She is the first director of the Equity Access Program and a scholar-in-residence at Queen's University Law School.

SHERENE RAZACK is assistant professor in the Department of Adult Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She teaches in the area of critical global and community issues, including antiracist studies, feminist theory, and community education and development. Her research focuses on women and law. She is the author of *Canadian Feminism and the Law: The Women's Legal Education and Action Fund and the Pursuit of Equality* (Toronto: Second Story, 1991) and articles on women, race, and culture in law. She also teaches trade unionists and community activists about human rights.

RUTHANN ROBSON is on the law faculty at the City University of New York at Queens, where she teaches courses on constitutional law, feminist legal theory, sexuality and law, and law and family relations. She is the author of *Lesbian (Out)Law: Survival under the Rule of Law* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand, 1992), as well as numerous law review articles exploring the possibilities of lesbian legal theories, including "Posner's Lesbians: Neither Sexy nor Reasonable," *Connecticut Law Review* 25 (Winter 1993): 491-502.

ELEANOR SAVAGE is a Southern (U.S.)-born lesbian now working in Minneapolis as production coordinator at the Walker Art Center. She also is a programmer for Fresh Fruit Radio at KFAI FM radio, an advocate at the Domestic Abuse Project, and a founding member of the Lesbian Avengers in Minneapolis. In addition, she runs a monthly lesbian-only performance and dance space in Minneapolis called Vulva Riot.

BEVERLY SELLARS recently completed a six-year term as Chief of the Soda Creek Indian Band in western Canada. Before that she supervised administrative matters for the band; she also worked with native and nonnative groups on issues of concern to native people. She participated on the Cariboo Tribal Council, which brought to public light issues involving Canada's residential schools for native children. She wrote related reports that were published by the Canadian Teacher's Federation and the University of Saskatchewan. She is at work on a book-length manuscript, "Growing up Indian," about her residential school