

Winter 1986

The Costs of Exclusionary Practices in Women's Studies

Maxine Baca Zinn

Lynn Weber

University of South Carolina - Columbia, weberl@mailbox.sc.edu

Elizabeth Higginbotham

Bonnie Thornton Dill

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/psyc_facpub



Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Psychology Commons](#)

Publication Info

Published in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Volume 11, Issue 2, Winter 1986, pages 290-303.

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/index.html>

© 1986 by University of Chicago Press

This Article is brought to you by the Psychology, Department of at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

VIEWPOINT

The Costs of Exclusionary Practices in Women's Studies

**Maxine Baca Zinn, Lynn Weber Cannon, Elizabeth
Higginbotham, and Bonnie Thornton Dill**

As women who came to maturity during the social upheavals of the late sixties and early seventies, we entered academia to continue—in a different arena—the struggles that our foreparents had begun centuries earlier. We sought to reveal untold tales and unearth hidden images, and we believed (or at least hoped) that, once illuminated, the truths of the lives of our people—Black, brown, and working-class white—would combat the myths and stereotypes that haunted us. We were, in that sense, scholars with a special mission. In the tradition of W. E. B. DuBois, Oliver Cox, Joyce Ladner, and other pioneers, we sought to use the tools of history and social science and the media of literature and the arts to improve our people's future and more accurately portray their past.

We each had developed critical perspectives on society and sought theoretical explanations for the continued poverty and oppression of our people. We had different but related foci for our research: on Chicanos and the impact of outside resources on family structure and ethnicity; on working-class consciousness and class conflict; on Black women achieving a college education; and on the relationship of work and family for Black women private household workers. In the process of conducting it, we became acutely aware of the limitations of traditional social science with

The authors wish to thank Barrie Thorne and an anonymous reviewer for their encouragement and helpful suggestions on this piece.

[Signs: *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1986, vol. 11, no. 2]
© 1986 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. 0097-9740/86/1102-0009\$01.00

regard to working-class women and women of color.¹ More profoundly, however, we realized that the experiences of these groups of women were virtually excluded from consideration as vital building blocks in feminist theory.

In the past, many working-class women and women of color have been critical of women's studies for the lack of attention given "their" women.² This "Viewpoint" draws from those arguments and adds our own perspectives. Our effort is not only to voice discontent but also to elaborate on some of the implications of the exclusionary nature of women's studies. There are many issues that must be addressed regarding the need for attention to race and class in women's studies. This "Viewpoint" can only attend to some of them. If dialogue is reopened in these or related areas, our goal will have been realized.

The Institutionalization of Privilege

Many recent studies have documented organizational barriers to women's full and equal participation in society. Institutions are organized to facilitate white middle-class men's smooth entry into and mobility in positions of power. These men establish criteria for the entry of others into similar positions, defining success, the reward system, the distribution of resources, and institutional goals and priorities in a way that perpetuates their power. In higher education, as in other areas, women—even white middle-class women—have been excluded from many of these

1. Maxine Baca Zinn, "Review Essay: Mexican American Women in the Social Sciences," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8, no. 2 (Winter 1982): 259–72, "Social Research on Chicanos: Its Development and Directions," *Social Science Journal* 19, no. 2 (April 1982): 1–7, "Sociological Theory in Emergent Chicano Perspectives," *Pacific Sociological Review* 24, no. 2 (April 1981): 255–69, and "Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological, and Political Observations by an Insider," *Social Problems* 27, no. 2 (December 1979): 209–19; Lynn Weber Cannon, "Trends in Class Identification among Black Americans from 1952 to 1978," *Social Science Quarterly* 65 (March 1984): 112–26; and Reeve Vanneman and Lynn Weber Cannon, "The American Perception of Class" (Memphis State University, Center for Research on Women, 1985, typescript); Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Race and Class Barriers to Black Women's College Attendance," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* (in press), "Issues in Contemporary Sociological Work on Black Women," *Humanity and Society* 4, no. 3 (November 1980): 226–42, and "Educated Black Women: An Exploration into Life Chance and Choices" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1980); Bonnie Thornton Dill, "We Must Redefine Feminism," *Sojourner, the Women's Forum* (September 1984): 10–11, "Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-inclusive Sisterhood," *Feminist Studies* 9 (Spring 1983): 131–50, and "On the Hem of Life: Race, Class, and the Prospects for Sisterhood," in *Class, Race, and Sex*, ed. Amy Swerdlow and Hanna Lessinger (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1983), pp. 173–88.

2. See, e.g., Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1984); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981).

activities. They continue to struggle to move out of token positions of authority and into the true centers of power as presidents, administrators, trustees, members of state governing boards, officers of professional associations, editors of prestigious journals, and members on policy-making boards and on review panels of granting agencies. Over the past decade, women have made gains in approaching those centers of power, but the institutional barriers have been formidable, and the fight to break them down has left many women scarred.

The obstacles white middle-class women face are compounded many times over for women of color and working-class women. For these two groups, completing college and graduate education itself poses financial, emotional, and intellectual challenges.³ As students, they are more likely than middle-class white women to attend public institutions—community colleges and state universities—or, in the case of Blacks, traditionally Black institutions. As faculty, they are more likely to be employed in public institutions and in those that do not grant doctorates. A 1970 study estimated that Blacks made up only 0.9 percent of faculty in universities and 5.4 percent in four-year colleges. This number drops to only 2.0 percent when traditionally Black institutions are eliminated.⁴ Among these less prestigious schools, few have the financial and other resources necessary to facilitate and encourage research and scholarship. In fact, these settings are characterized by high teaching loads, heavy demand for institutional service, and limited dollars for travel, computer facilities, research libraries, secretarial support, or research assistance.

Most of the scholarly research and writing that take place in the United States are conducted at a relatively small number of institutions. To a large extent, research and other scholarly production in women's studies have also been closely tied to the resources and prestige of these academic centers. Indeed, women's studies, partly because of its marginal position in the academy, has sought to validate the field through association with prestigious institutions of higher education. In these schools, there are very few women of color, and while we cannot know how many of the women faculty at these institutions are from working-class backgrounds, it is safe to assume that their numbers also are relatively small.⁵

The result is that women of color and women from working-class backgrounds have few opportunities to become part of the networks that

3. Higginbotham, "Educated Black Women."

4. William H. Exum, "Climbing the Crystal Stair: Values, Affirmative Action and Minority Faculty," *Social Problems* 30, no. 4 (April 1983): 383–97.

5. For a discussion of the experiences of scholars from working-class backgrounds in the academy, see Jake Ryan and Charles Sackrey, *Strangers in Paradise* (Boston: South End Press, 1984); and Carol Sternhell, "The Women Who Won't Disappear," *Ms.* (October 1984): 94–98.

produce or monitor knowledge in women's studies. In addition, those who have the advantage of being researchers and gatekeepers are primarily located at privileged institutions, where they get little exposure to working-class and ethnically diverse students. As a result, they tend to develop and teach concepts divorced from the realities of women of color and working-class women's lives.

For example, a concept such as the "positive effect of the multiple negative" could not have survived the scrutiny of professional Black women or Black women students. The theory suggests that the negative status of being Black combines with the negative status of being female to give professional Black women an advantage in the labor market.⁶ Although this may have appeared to be the case for the researcher isolated from significant numbers of Black women as colleagues or students, Blacks' life experiences would have suggested many alternate interpretations. Such cases clearly illustrate that the current organization of the academy perpetuates the production and distribution of knowledge that is both Anglo and middle-class centered.

To explore further the institutional structures that limit the contributions of women of color and women from working-class backgrounds to the field of women's studies, we engaged in a simple exercise. We looked at the published information about the official gatekeepers of two leading interdisciplinary journals in the field of women's studies: *Signs* and *Feminist Studies*. These groups of editors, associate editors, and consultants make important decisions about which individual pieces of scholarship will be contained in the journals' pages and what special issues will be undertaken, officially sanctioning and defining important concerns and critical scholarship in the field. We asked, "Where are women of color located within these publications generated out of the women's movement and its accompanying scholarship?"

Despite white, middle-class feminists' frequent expressions of interest and concern over the plight of minority and working-class women, those holding the gatekeeping positions at these journals are as white as are those at any mainstream social science or humanities publication. The most important groups within the hierarchies of the two journals—that is, the groups most involved in policy decisions—are the eleven editors of *Feminist Studies* and the editor and eight associate editors of *Signs*. Among those twenty women, in 1983–84, there was not a single Black woman, there were no Hispanic women, no Native American women, and no

6. Cynthia Epstein, "The Positive Effects of the Multiple Negative: Explaining the Success of Black Professional Women," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 4 (January 1973): 912–33. Although this article serves as a useful example of failure in the applicability of a theory to reality, we single it out as one among many that could demonstrate the same phenomenon. See below for further discussion of this point in a related context.

Chinese American women. The only woman of color was a Japanese-American woman, an associate editor of *Signs*.⁷

As reported in table 1, token representation also occurs at positions below those of the editors themselves. The primary function of those in these groups is to review articles and on occasion to give advice to the editors. *Feminist Studies* has fifty-nine whites and five women of color serving as associate editors and consultants, whereas *Signs* has thirty-eight whites and three women of color in those categories. Regardless of position, the total number of editors and consultants for both journals combined shows that there are 119 whites, six Blacks, one Hispanic, and two Asian Americans.

It is much easier to designate the ways that women of color have been excluded than it is to show the ways that white working-class women have been kept out of the mainstream. Furthermore, it is more difficult to delineate the ways that classism excludes both whites and women of color who are from the working class. The information that *Signs* gives about the institutional affiliations of its editors and consultants, however, can be used to illustrate other biases in the gatekeeping positions. None of the fifty women in these positions represents a traditionally Black institution; only about six represent schools whose student bodies are primarily constituted of working-class students (i.e., the first in their families to attend college); and only three are from the South—where the highest concentrations of minorities continue to live.

The major implication of these figures is that women of color are rarely sitting around the table when problems are defined and strategies

Table 1
Representation of Minorities on *Signs* and *Feminist Studies* Editorial Boards, 1983–84

	Editor(s)		Associate Editor(s)		Consultants		Total	
	Minor-ity	White	Minor-ity	White	Minor-ity	White	Minor-ity	White
	<i>Feminist Studies</i>	0	11	2	13	3	46	5
<i>Signs</i>	1	8	3	38	4	46
Both journals . . .	1	19	2	13	6	84	9	116

NOTE.—*Signs*'s associate editors were included under the heading of "Editors" because their functions match more closely those performed by editors of *Feminist Studies*. The data were obtained from the lists published in recent issues of these journals.

7. The new group of associate editors for *Signs*, when it moves to Duke University, will include three Black women, one of whom is a faculty member at a traditionally Black institution. *Feminist Studies* reports that their current (1985) group of editors and consultants includes two women of color as editors (out of twelve), one woman of color as an associate editor (out of fifteen), and fifteen women of color as consultants (out of a total of sixty-four).

suggested. They are not in positions to engage in the theoretical discourse behind specific decisions on what will be published. Thus, even when white feminists attempt to include women of color, there are often difficulties because women of color reject the dominant paradigms and approach problems from divergent perspectives. Typically, women of color then find their work rejected on the grounds that it does not conform to the established ways of thinking. This clash of paradigms resounds through the following example.

In 1981, the planners of a conference on communities of women asked Elizabeth Higginbotham to submit an abstract for a paper.⁸ The expectation communicated in the letter of invitation was that her research would demonstrate the applicability to Black women of a concept of women's communities set forth by white feminists. Instead of attempting to alter her work to fit such a model, Higginbotham wrote to the organizers and challenged their narrow definition of communities of women.

Higginbotham noted that, unlike their white sisters who are often excluded from male-dominated spheres or retreat from them, the majority of Black women are ordinarily full participants in mixed-sex spheres and make unique contributions both to the definitions of problems and to solutions. Typically, Black women's vision of their situation leads them not to seek solace from Black males but to create spheres where men, women, and children are relatively protected from racist cultural and physical assaults. Historically, white people, male and female, have rarely validated the humanness of Black people; therefore, it was and is critical for Black people and other people of color to nurture each other. This is a primary fact about the communities of racially oppressed peoples. Thus, as white feminists defined the focus of the conference, only the research of a few Black scholars seemed appropriate—and that research did not necessarily capture the most typical and common experiences of Black women.

The Limitations of Popular Feminist Theory

Practices that exclude women of color and working-class women from the mainstream of women's studies have important consequences for feminist theory. Ultimately, they prevent a full understanding of gender and society. The failure to explore fully the interplay of race, class, and gender has cost the field the ability to provide a broad and truly complex analysis of women's lives and of social organization. It has rendered feminist theory incomplete and incorrect.

8. This conference was held in February 1982. The proceedings can be found in *Signs*, vol. 10, no. 4 (Summer 1985).

Until the past few years, women of color have been virtually hidden in feminist scholarship, made invisible by the erroneous notion of universal womanhood. In an effort to emphasize the shared experiences of sexism, scholars passed over the differences in women's situations.⁹ Knowledge assumed to be "universal" was actually based for the most part on the experiences of women who were white and primarily middle class. Feminist scholarship, a center of a developing critical intellectual tradition, increasingly came under fire for this myopia from other critical scholarships, namely, the scholarship on people of color and on the working class. As a result, there now exists in women's studies an increased awareness of the variability of womanhood. Women's studies journals and classroom texts are more likely at present to contain material about minority women. Still, such work is often tacked on, its significance for feminist knowledge still unrecognized and unregarded.

A close look at feminist social science reveals three common approaches to race and class. The first treats race and class as secondary features in social organization with primacy given to universal female subordination. Such thinking establishes what is taken to be a common feminist ground and labels any divergence from it, in Phyllis Palmer's phrase, a "diversionary special interest."¹⁰ To make gender relations primary is to assume that they create a set of universal experiences more important than those of other inequalities.

A second approach acknowledges that inequalities of race, class, and gender generate different experiences and that women have a race-specific and a class-specific relation to the sex-gender system. However, it then sets race and class inequalities aside on the grounds that, while they are important, we lack information that would allow us to incorporate them in the analysis. As Bonnie Thornton Dill puts it, inequalities other than sex and gender are recognized, but they are not explicated.¹¹ After a perfunctory acknowledgment of differences, those taking this position make no further attempt to incorporate the insights generated by critical scholarship on race and class into a framework that would deal with women generally.¹²

9. Margaret A. Simons, "Racism and Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 4, no. 2 (1979): 384-401, esp. 388.

10. Phyllis Marynick Palmer, "White Women/Black Women: The Dualism of Female Identity and Experience in the United States," *Feminist Studies* 9 (Spring 1983): 151-70, esp. 152.

11. Dill (n. 1 above), "On the Hem of Life," p. 179.

12. For a recent popular example, see Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). The problem of the exclusion of race and class from this work is discussed in a review by Maxine Baca Zinn in *Newsletter of the Center for Research on Women* (Memphis State University, Tenn.), vol. 2, no. 1 (November 1983).

The third approach, often found in conjunction with the first two, focuses on descriptive aspects of the ways of life, values, customs, and problems of women in subordinate race and class categories. Here differences are detailed with little attempt to explain their source or their broader meaning. Such discussions of women are "confined to a pre-theoretical presentation of concrete problems."¹³

Each of these conceptualizations is inadequate for the development of feminist theory. They create an illusion of comprehensiveness and thereby stifle the development of scholarship about women of color. Moreover, when race and class are set aside, even the analysis of white middle-class women's lives is incomplete. A woman's "place" in society, her opportunities and her experiences, must be understood in relation to the societal placement of men as well as of other classes and races of people.

An approach to the study of women in culture and society should begin at the level of social organization. From this vantage point one can appreciate the complex web of hierarchical social arrangements that generate different experiences for women. For example, Denise Segura has recently documented the ways in which gender and race produce distinctive consequences in the labor force experiences of Chicanas. Using a four-way comparison, she examines the occupational profiles of Chicanas, Chicanos, white women, and white men. Her findings reveal that while Chicanas are triply oppressed, the dynamics of class, race, and gender oppression are different. Racial barriers impede access to professional and managerial occupations, whereas gender produces an earnings gap at all occupational levels.¹⁴

The integration of race and class into the study of gender creates different questions and new conceptualizations of many problems. For instance, in the last few years, there has been a great deal of attention to the entrance of women into professional and managerial occupations. In fact, the levels of female professional and managerial employment are often the standard used to evaluate women's success. In such conceptualizations, Black women are frequently held up as exemplars because they are more concentrated in professional employment than Black males. White women, in contrast, are less concentrated than white males in such positions and are viewed as less "successful" than their Black sisters.¹⁵

Black professional women understand such seemingly favorable

13. Simons, p. 388.

14. Denise Segura, "Labor Market Stratification: The Chicana Experience," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 29 (Spring 1984): 57-91.

15. Marion Kilson, "Black Women in the Professions," *Monthly Labor Review* 100 (May 1977): 38-41. Relevant also is Epstein (n. 6 above).

comparisons differently. The analysis behind them lacks a sense of Black history and of racial stratification and thus ignores a number of underlying factors: the racial barriers that limit educational attainment for Black men; a history of limited employment options for Black women who have only a high school education; and the high concentration of Black professional and managerial women in the public sector and in traditionally female occupations. Each of these realities suggests that professional or managerial work will have a different meaning to Black women.¹⁶ In short, an analysis of gender and occupation that also incorporates race would have raised a variety of other issues and avoided the narrow focus on Black women's "success."

Classism, Racism, and Privileged Groups of Women

We recognize that there are significant reasons behind the fact that a synthesis of class, race, and gender perspectives into a holistic and inclusive feminist theory and practice has not yet taken place. Some derive from both the short- and long-term costs of struggling to overcome institutionally supported and historically reproduced hierarchies of inequality. Others have to do with the benefits that accrue to those in a group with relative power.

White middle-class women profit in several ways from the exclusion of upwardly mobile women and women of color from the ranks of academic equals in their universities, from the pages of women's studies journals, from positions of power in our professional associations, and from a central place in feminist theories. Foremost among these advantages is the elimination of direct competition for the few "women's jobs" in universities; for the limited number of tenure-track and tenured jobs; for the small number of places for women among the higher professorial ranks; for the meager number of pages devoted to research and writing on women in the mainstream professional journals; and for the precious, limited space in women's studies journals. White women, struggling for acceptance by male peers, a secure job, and a living wage in the academy—especially since many are forced to work part-time or on a series of one-year appointments—may not "feel" that they are in a privileged position. Indeed, in many ways and in many cases there is little privilege. However, their relative disadvantage in comparison with white men should not obscure the advantages of race and class that remain.

16. Sharon M. Collins, "The Making of the Black Middle Class," *Social Problems* 30, no. 4 (April 1983): 369–82; Elizabeth Higginbotham, "Employment for Professional Black Women in the Twentieth Century" (paper delivered at the Ingredients for Women's Employment Policy Conference, State University of New York at Albany, 1985).

Despite the benefits to some that derive from exclusionary practices, there are also costs to feminist theory and to women's lives—even to the lives of privileged groups of women. Scholarship that overlooks the diversity of women's experiences cannot reveal the magnitude, complexity, or interdependence of systems of oppression. Such work underestimates the obstacles to be confronted and helps little in developing practical strategies to overcome the sexist barriers that even privileged women inevitably confront.

As women in academia, we are obliged to compete for rewards individually in a system where we are not among the power brokers. Individual competition in a hierarchical scheme based on "merit" may work well to explain the experiences and structure of the lives of middle- or upper-class white men. As a theoretical perspective or guiding principle, it does not explain the life experiences of groups—including that of white middle-class women—who lack power. In this situation, the merit, motivation, and work of an individual who suffers discrimination are not relevant, since discrimination, like all other forms of oppression, operates against a whole group. Thus, as a group, women find themselves up against barriers to success.

Relatively privileged groups of women are nonetheless shielded from awareness of the institutional barriers that their working-class and minority sisters come to recognize early. Many middle-class white women "buy into" the system and assume that it will work for them. Linda Nielsen's comments on her tenure battle show her recognition that she had made just this error: "During those beginning years I was not seriously worried about my future, since I had been exceptionally successful at publishing and teaching, and I believed that this guaranteed my professional security. It did not." She was denied reappointment even though she met objective university criteria.

The experience, she came to realize, found her unprepared for the reality and consequences of sexism and ready, furthermore, to blame herself for the serious blow she had received. "Women continue to look for the enemy as though it were only in themselves, I was no exception."¹⁷ While Nielsen's generalization may be true of many women, the literature shows that minority women are much more likely to blame the system when things go wrong than are white women.¹⁸

Nielsen also describes herself as experiencing the need for white male approval so common among white women: "I feel my colleagues'

17. Linda L. Nielsen, "Sexism and Self-Healing in the University," *Harvard Educational Review* 49, no. 4 (November 1979): 467–76, esp. 467. Again this account is singled out as only one among many possible examples, useful because it is so forthright.

18. Patricia Gurin, Arthur Miller, and Gerald Gurin, "Stratum Identification and Consciousness," *Social Psychological Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1980): 30–47.

lack of support would have been far less painful and less detrimental to my self-esteem had I not learned to define my worth so exclusively by men's judgments." After a brief look at some research and at autobiographical accounts, she draws some conclusions about the special difficulties that women have to overcome as a minority group. The characteristics are "over-reliance on male approval, passivity or non-assertiveness, ambivalence and anxiety over contradictory female roles, inclination toward self-blame and guilt, affiliative needs which interfere with achievement, motivation, and discrimination from other females."¹⁹

Unfortunately, although Nielsen's courageous account is a useful analysis of a white middle-class woman's experience, there is not a single reference in her bibliography to a work by a woman of color. Familiarity with research on minority groups immediately reveals that the reactions Nielsen lists contain responses that do not apply *uniquely* to women. Some, such as discrimination from members of one's own group, are common among other minorities, and others—such as overreliance on male approval, ambivalence and anxiety over contradictory female roles, and passivity or nonassertiveness—do not apply to many women of color. For example, numerous Black working-class women have not employed passivity as a survival mechanism—indeed, their aggressive actions in comparison with those of white middle-class women are often viewed antagonistically by whites as "unfeminine."

Thus, Nielsen's conclusions, while somewhat instructive to white middle-class women, actually shed little light on the circumstances and experiences of upwardly mobile women and women of color. Because she does not look at the latter's situations to understand the nature of all women's oppression, her observations and conclusions are incorrect. Nielsen rightly identifies some responses to discrimination as they are manifested in her own life and the lives of other middle-class white women. Yet from this narrow perspective she can only partially glimpse even her own plight, and her observations do little to recognize hers as part of a wider struggle shared with women who are different from her.

Some Goals and Strategies for Change

We seek to build a more diverse women's studies and an integrative feminist theory. Achievement of these goals requires many structural changes in the practices and policies of academic communities. In the present political climate, we cannot expect leadership in these areas to come from government or university administrations. Instead, we must ourselves make an effort at every level to build alliances, set priorities, and

19. Nielsen, p. 474.

work in whatever ways we can to create more diverse academic communities and a field of women's studies open to wide participation.

First, we need to establish and maintain heterogeneous college faculties. Frequently, feminists are ready to fight for women colleagues but do not extend such support to minorities and people from working-class backgrounds. We must learn about each other and appreciate our differences in order to form the types of alliances that will transform the composition of faculties at our institutions. Without such alliances, any group can be isolated and eliminated without much controversy on any particular campus. Above all, we must withstand the temptation to secure our individual futures by accommodating to the "principles" of the institution.

Second, we should actively encourage dialogue among academic centers, especially in local areas, by forming close links with faculty in different types of institutions. Faculty in elite schools particularly must reach out beyond their campuses to faculty and students in less prestigious centers of higher education. Faculty with low teaching loads, large research funds, and frequent opportunities to travel are indeed privileged; those without such "perks" are no less worthy of respect. In fact, scholars who are struggling to conduct research in institutions where the primary emphasis is on teaching merit our encouragement. Faculty are not distributed among colleges solely by talent and ability; racism, classism, and sexism all function to shape academic careers. Consequently, we have to reject the elitism so prevalent in academe, visit other campuses and learning centers, make friends with new colleagues, and share resources. There are reasons behind the pattern whereby faculty in research institutions conduct and produce research while faculty in teaching institutions fail to publish. The current structure of academia is indeed designed to produce that outcome, and strategies should be designed to change it.²⁰ The number of women and minorities hired in second-tier, four-year colleges and community colleges makes it imperative that we do everything possible to pull down the structural barriers that block their careers.

Third, efforts should continue to open up the gatekeeping positions in women's studies to include a broad representation of women. Editorial boards need to reject the tokenism that has characterized them so far, and

20. The Center for Research on Women, Memphis State University; the Women's Studies Research Center, Duke University—University of North Carolina; and the Women's Research and Resource Center, Spelman College, are developing a series of working papers on Southern women. To achieve this goal, we are identifying scholars of Southern women outside our institutions, bringing them into a network, providing feedback on their work, and publishing their articles as working papers. We also encourage them to submit their products to journals for publication. We are helping a small but isolated group of researchers to produce work and to participate in the growth of this new area of scholarship.

they must strive to solicit and publish feminist scholarship from all corners. Committees and organizations that plan conferences need diverse membership—members who will seriously address issues of age, race, class, and sexual preference in the definition and formation of programs and in the means used to recruit participants. Dill's comments on the "Common Differences" conference cosponsored by Duke University, the University of North Carolina, and North Carolina Central Universities are illustrative of this point and the positive consequences of such planning: "The most outstanding thing about this conference was . . . the commitment to an honest, frank, and equal exchange among black and white women. . . . It pervaded the entire organization of the conference from the planning committee through the workshops, films, lectures, and presentations. Workshops were led by a team consisting of one black and one white woman. The leaders played an important role in facilitating discussions of the commonalities in black and white women's lives, and presented approaches to the teaching of women's experiences that initiated the process of transforming curriculum to be more inclusive of racial differences."²¹

In everything we attempt, we must strive to welcome diversity rather than gather around us what is comforting and familiar. Without serious structural efforts to combat the racism and classism so prevalent in our society, women's studies will continue to replicate its biases and thus contribute to the persistence of inequality. We must commit ourselves to learning about each other so that we may accomplish our goals without paternalism, maternalism, or guilt. This requires a willingness to explore histories, novels, biographies, and other readings that will help us grasp the realities of class, race, and other dimensions of inequality.²² At the same time, we must take the personal and professional risks involved in building alliances, listening to and respecting people who have firsthand knowledge of how to cope with oppression, and overcoming the institutionalized barriers that divide us. Within this context, our efforts to

21. Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Director's Comments," *Newsletter of the Center for Research on Women* (Memphis State University, Tenn.), vol. 2, no. 2 (May 1984).

22. It is important that reading and learning about the diversity of women's experiences is integrated into our lives. You cannot take one week and learn this field, nor does it come from reading one novel. To assist people in this endeavor, the Center for Research on Women at Memphis State University has developed an extensive bibliography on women of color. It has also developed a research clearinghouse on women of color and Southern women. The clearinghouse is a computer-based resource containing up-to-date information on researchers working in these fields and their latest projects, as well as bibliographic references to relevant social science works published in the last ten years on these groups of women. For more information, write to: Research Clearinghouse, Center for Research on Women, Memphis State University, Memphis, Tenn. 38152.

develop common goals have the potential to produce a truly diverse community of people who study women and who understand their scholarship as part of the broader quest to arrest all forms of social inequality.

University of Michigan—Flint (Baca Zinn)
Memphis State University (Cannon, Higginbotham, and Dill)