

# 'Anthropologists Are Talking' About Feminist Anthropology

**T**he series 'Anthropologists Are Talking' is a roundtable feature in which anthropologists talk candidly and spontaneously about issues of relevance to the discipline. The aim of the series is to reflect the kinds of conversations we all have (or wish we had) with colleagues – the fun and engaging ones in which we recount, joke, agree, dispute and formulate part of a broader vision of what anthropology is or could be.

This conversation was held to mark the fact that the two landmark books in feminist anthropology, *Woman, Culture and Society*, edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, and *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna R. Reiter (later Rapp) had celebrated their 30 year anniversaries in 2004 and 2005, respectively. Former *Ethnos* editor Don Kulick asked two of the books' editors and the author of one of the most celebrated articles to appear in one of them to talk about the history of the volumes, about what happened next, and about their sense of feminist anthropology today. The participants are:

**LOUISE LAMPHERE** Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico and past President of the American Anthropological Association. Louise has studied issues of women and work for 20 years, beginning with her book on women workers in Rhode Island industry, *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers* (1987). Among her other books are *Sunbelt Working Mothers: Reconciling Family and Factory* (1993, coauthored with Patricia Zavella, Felipe Gonzales and Peter Evans), and *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life* (1997, co-edited with Helena Ragoné and Patricia Zavella). Her most recent book is a biography of three Navajo women titled *Weaving Women's Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family* (2007).

**RAYNA RAPP** Professor of Anthropology at New York University. Since the publication of *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1975), Rayna has researched new reproductive technologies, the human genome project, and the inter-

section of reproduction and disability consciousness in American life. Her books include *Testing Women, Testing the Fetus: the Social Impact of Amniocentesis in America* (2001) and *Conceiving the New World Order: the Global Politics of Reproduction* (1995, co-edited with Faye Ginsburg). She is currently conducting fieldwork with anthropologist Faye Ginsburg on the perceived cultural epidemic in learning disabilities.

GAYLE RUBIN Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Women's Studies at the University of Michigan. Gayle's ongoing field research focuses on the impact of industrial dispersion on the spatial distribution of urban sexual populations. She is working to complete a book based on her fieldwork on the gay male leather population in San Francisco and a book of collected essays. Her essays include 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex' (1975), 'Thinking Sex' (1984), 'Elegy for the Valley of the Kings: AIDS and the Leather Community in San Francisco, 1981-1996,' (1997), 'Studying Sexual Subcultures: the Ethnography of Gay Communities in Urban North America' (2002) and 'Geologies of Queer Studies: It's Déjà Vu All Over Again' (2004).

\* \* \*

DON Louise and Rayna, can we begin by talking a bit about the prehistory of the *Woman, Culture and Society* and *Toward an Anthropology of Women*? Were they conceived separately? How did you come to know about each other's work? How did you co-operate?

RAYNA Louise's volume came out a year earlier, so you should start.

LOUISE OK, I actually got in on this slightly late because its original genesis was, of course, at Stanford, where Shelly Rosaldo, Jane Collier, Ellen Lewin and several other folks taught in the spring of 1971. They gave papers out of their course at the AAA meetings in 1971. I was in England on a post-doc at that time and I went to that session and I knew Shelly because we had been to Harvard together – she was an undergraduate when I was a graduate student. And I said to her, I think at that meeting, that this is a bunch of papers that could be a book!

I went back to England and Shelly went back to California, because she was at Stanford. She didn't have an appointment in the department. Renato [anthropologist Renato Rosaldo, Shelly's husband] had the appointment and she was still working on her dissertation. She was

much younger than Renato and I. So one of the things we did right away was we started recruiting papers not just in that session but even from other sessions. There must have been fifteen to twenty papers given on women in other sessions. Shelly said she would work on an introduction, and she also thought that maybe Sherry Ortner would have something that she would want to write. And also that Nancy could do something because she was working on gender personality. And so...

DON Nancy?

LOUISE Nancy Chodorow, who just retired from Berkeley like last spring.

RAYNA Wow, she retired?

LOUISE Yeah, she just retired. We had a big retirement party for her.

RAYNA Hard to believe.

LOUISA Yeah, in September. It was great.

RAYNA Whew, makes me feel old.

LOUISE Yeah, right...

RAYNA Guess I *am* old. [Laughter]

LOUISE So the initial way that the book was conceived was that we would do a section on 'Women and Politics', 'Women and the Family', 'Women and Religion' – those kinds of traditional categories. The first outline was sort of like: we'll put these papers there because they have to do with the family, and put some there because they have to do with politics, and so on. We started shopping around the outline, but one of the problems was that we were young, inexperienced people. We had no idea how to get a book published. Shelly wrote to a trade publisher, I can't remember which one. But in any case, they wrote back and said sorry this all sounds very interesting but we don't think there is a market for this. So that was the end of the trade publishers. And then there was this small press in Boston that we thought might be okay. But then finally she managed to convince Stanford that they might be interested.

Then sometime after we got the papers, we thought about redoing the order of things because Shelly and Sherry and Nancy had these

papers that were beginning to seem like they were a troika that would fit together as the introductory pieces, partly because they had three different kinds of explanations about women's status. Shelly conceived hers as a structural analysis, Sherry's was a cultural analysis and Nancy's was a sort of psychological analysis, so we had this kind of three-layer-cake thing now. So now we were going to have those divisions and try to write introductions to them. But in the end, it looked like the best thing to do would be just to order the papers into what became the way they appeared in the book.

Another really influential person in all this was Margery Wolf. Part of what was going on at Stanford was they were beginning to create a women's community through the course and then through association with women who were faculty wives. Margery was married to [anthropologist] Arthur Wolf, but she did not define herself as an anthropologist herself; she just accompanied her husband to the field.

RAYNA She defined herself as just a wife even though her first book was a best seller, *House of Lim*.<sup>1</sup> She constantly, constantly defined herself as just an anthropologist's wife.

LOUISE Well she was from a working-class family, she put her husband through graduate school and then she became a Stanford wife, right? And she had accompanied Arthur on this trip to Taiwan and...

RAYNA and she wrote a really great book.

LOUISE Yes, and she also wrote a very interesting short story, the one she published in *Thrice Told Tale*.<sup>2</sup> She was an incredibly good writer. But the other thing is she and Jane Collier together had this sort of idea about women as strategists. The way Jane put it in her article was that women are the worms inside the patrilineal apple and they can eat out the middle because they come into conflict with each other because they don't have power and authority on their own, so they have to influence men. And so daughters-in-law become in conflict with their mothers-in-law over who is going to get the son's loyalty. Is he going to be loyal to his mother who has spent 25 years raising this kid to be a loyal son and to do her bidding, or is his new wife actually going to get some influence over this son?

That whole set of ideas came out of Margery's work, but Jane, with her kind of legal analysis that she worked out through her research in Chiapas, had a similar way of thinking about women in the domestic sphere actually doing what she was calling 'political work', by which she meant strategizing, trying to get power in places where they don't have it. So that influenced me to write my piece. So like the articles by Shelly, Sherry and Nancy, my piece, Margery and Jane's were like a complimentary set and they came next in the book.

As for the rest of it, a lot of it came out of our own personal networks. I ended up meeting Carol Stack because she had just gotten a job at Boston University and she was writing this book that became *All our Kin*.<sup>3</sup> Nancy Leis was married to my department chair. She was another wife who went to the field with her husband, but she actually was doing work on women – unlike the rest of us who were doing work on something else – and so she had a really interesting paper. And so that's how we got most of the people either through the Stanford network that included for example Lois Paul, who was another wife. So we had at least three or four wives in the book.

RAYNA Wives who were actually crackshot anthropologists but who didn't define themselves as such.

LOUISE They had done a lot of fieldwork. The period in anthropology after World War II was one when a lot of women accompanied their husbands to the field – something which wasn't true back in Ruth Benedict's and Elsie Clews Parson's day, when women ended up in the field by themselves because they were single or because they were not spending time with their husbands. But this couple business was really a kind of post-war deal. So some of these women were actually pretty good ethnographers because they spent a lot of time collecting data.

DON For their husbands' projects?

LOUISE Oh yes, absolutely for their husbands' projects. And so for some of these people like Margery and Lois this was a period when they were beginning to write some of this material themselves and also being acknowledged by their husbands as having a legitimate role.

GAYLE This is very interesting to me because I know the Michigan genesis of the other book, having been part of it, but I never knew the genesis of your book. I had this vague notion that it had something to do with Stanford, that was clear, but I didn't understand the other networking that went into it. I have one question though: you said there was this course that led to the papers at the meeting. Could you say a little about the course? Was it an anthropology course?

LOUISE Yes, it was an anthropology course but none of the people that taught the course were on the faculty.

GAYLE And it was on women?

LOUISE It was on women. Everyone gave lectures, so Jane for example gave this 'women are the worms in the apple core' lecture. They had ten weeks and they had like 3 sessions a week, so everybody gave two or three lectures. Ellen Lewin was in it, a woman named Julia Howell who was one of the graduate students, Janet Fjellman who was married to Steve Fjellman at the time, and Kim Kramer. Originally the idea was all those people were going to write pieces, but none of them did except Jane and Shelly.

DON OK, what about *Toward an Anthropology of Women*?

RAYNA Well to begin with it's important to remember that feminism was in the air at that time. Gayle and I first met at a women's meeting and we were in study groups and women's consciousness-raising groups together for a year – which could have been the year before I went off to do my initial fieldwork. You kept trying to talk to me about kinship. I was your Teaching Fellow.

GAYLE But wait, we were in this group before then.

RAYNA Before then? The Thursday night group, or another group?

GAYLE The Thursday night group started earlier.

RAYNA But then we were in 'Resist', and you kept talking to me...

GAYLE No, there was a women's group of which many of the women were...

RAYNA Faculty...

GAYLE No, that was later.

RAYNA That's Thursday night?

GAYLE No, Thursday night's another group [Laughter]. This point I *do* know, because it was mostly people from 'Resistance' who had boyfriends or husbands in 'Resistance'. There was a bunch of us who got together. I think it was about '68. What I remember though was that we were in the group before I discovered anthropology. I was an undergrad and most of the others were grad students. I was doing women's studies. I hadn't really discovered anthropology yet. And you are right, feminism was in the air.

RAYNA As was the anti-war movement.

DON Is that what 'Resist' was?

RAYNA Yes, 'Resist' was the anti-war movement.

GAYLE 'Resist' was draft resistance. And many of the CR [consciousness raising] groups of the era came from women who were involved in 'Resist' partly because draft resistance was something only men could do.

RAYNA 'Chicks Say Yes To Guys Who Say No'.

GAYLE Yeah...[Laughter]. But there was kind of disquiet among a lot of the women in the New Left which I think was particularly acute among a lot of the women associated with men who were in draft resistance<sup>4</sup> (see e.g. Thorne 1975). And so we were in this group, which was sort of an inchoate CR group.

RAYNA But this is the part I remember, which is the pre-history of me and Gayle: we were in this women's group and you kept trying to talk to me about kinship – this is when you had gotten into anthropology. And I was like, 'Don't bother me, I'm busy making the revolution, who cares about kinship!', right? Whereupon I became your Teaching Fellow, because I was working for Marshall Sahlins, and I sat down and read the class papers late one night in my pajamas and discovered what became the embryonic cell of 'Traffic in Women', co-authored by Gayle and two of her roommates who had been students and spent their whole time stoned out trying to

figure out Lévi-Strauss. And I stood up, put on my clothes, got on my bicycle and went over to Gayle to apologize and said, 'You're right, you do have to talk to me about anthropology. You've just turned the goddamn field upside down'. Because I understood what I was holding in my hand.

Meanwhile Lembi Kongas-Speth – who dropped out of anthropology but was married to John Speth, an archaeologist and who was a graduate student way ahead of me – and I team-taught – it's in there, it's in the Acknowledgments – in '71, so the same time as the Stanford course. We taught a course which had a pre-history in Norma Diamond's work, 'cause Norma had taught a course called 'Second Sex/Third World' and we were trying to find readings. This was a graduate-student-initiated course: we were given credits if we could find a reading list, we taught undergraduates and we spent years – we would find two pages on banana leaves in Malinowski and then go looking, and there was nothing to assign. So it was in that context that we started calling people. We called people for hunter-gatherer articles, we called people for archaeology articles, we called people to try and do stuff. We had made a kind of a women's study group, because women's studies was in the air. Gayle and I worked on the initial women's studies program at the University of Michigan, which was probably the second or third in the country. They all came out of public universities, basically, again around about '70, '71, '72.

GAYLE I think our first actual women's studies course was '72.

RAYNA Right and this would have been right before, this was '71.

GAYLE I actually took your course. Norma sponsored it.

RAYNA That's right, you were in that course. And yes, Norma sponsored it and Norma had done that course before, but there was very little to read and it was our desire to find stuff to read that got us to write to a lot of people who became the backbone of the network in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. So that's really our genealogy.

DON So there were basically two different spheres?

RAYNA We met at the Toronto meetings which would have been '72 I think,



LOUISE '72, yeah, right.

RAYNA and discovered that we both were doing books and that we both had networks and in a way joined forces, not formally but just kind of knew each other. And that summer, when I was finishing my dissertation, Shelly came to the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Ann Arbor and called me up and said, 'Let's have lunch'. And we sat and we fought about everything that we could fight about and we loved each other, but we completely agreed that we didn't agree because our book came out of a kind of Michigan, pseudo-evolutionary, four-field integrative, very, very political sense that the data itself was suspect. And we saw you guys coming out of a very structural-functionalist, realist understanding of what the data were – taking it for what it was. Our concern was that the data itself were not going to make it because it was so problematic. There was a lot of cross-over between our perspectives but they weren't the same. But they also weren't nearly as far apart as we thought they were at the time. I remember Shelly saying to me, 'You know that I'm going to win or you're going to win but whoever wins, we're going to meet somewhere in the middle'. Because we both agreed that we and our whole generation were re-configuring the field'.

DON Win what?

RAYNA Win how we should interpret the history of the field. Whose shoulders we should be reading over. We then all got together when Shelly was still alive, I came out to a conference at Stanford when the books either were just out or not quite out, and we planned the Bellagio conference which was going to lead to the thing that became *Gender and Kinship*,<sup>5</sup> but then she died in between and that conference, alas, became a dedication to Shelly. But we came out of this network, Gayle, you're absolutely right, that was the CR groups.

GAYLE You know, I was looking back at it and realizing how much your book came out of this confluence of Michigan anthropology.

RAYNA Yes, very evolutionary.

GAYLE Well, and also very Marxist. It came out of Michigan anthropology and it came out of this particular Michigan feminism that was happening. Although, one of the things that is really true of that period

is that independently, people were doing the same thing, in lots of local contexts. So they were locally inflected, but the project was a common one, and it was one of those historical tectonic shifts where you don't understand the forces that are impinging on all these different people in different places but they clearly were.

DON But given those different genealogies of the books, and going back to the disagreement that you mentioned, Rayna, when you spoke about your lunch conversation with Shelly, what do you all see as some of the main differences between the books?

LOUISE I think the differences that are there have to do with the differences between Harvard anthropology and Michigan anthropology...

RAYNA Harvard, Stanford and Michigan.

LOUISE Right, right. Harvard and Stanford is the same thing.

RAYNA So is Michigan-Columbia. But really I think the books were far more similar than we understood at the time. If you look at that piece of Shelly's that came out in '80, the one in *Signs* about how Woman the Gatherer is not ourselves stripped naked, it really, in the footnotes, is an incredible genealogy about Spencer in anthropology that really takes evolutionism to task very carefully and coherently.<sup>6</sup> And I think that Gayle's piece, even in the embryonic form which you then developed on your own, was similar, even though it was much more radical in its treatment of what theory already had to offer us that we had yet to understand. Gayle really taught us how to both engage and critique at the same time.

GAYLE Well it also has to do with the fact that some of the ways that different anthropology departments were becoming less so. The field was undergoing some important shifts. So for example, the person who brought me into anthropology, of course, was Marshall Sahlins, who was the person for whom you were TA-ing – that was the term I discovered anthropology. And he was in the process of shifting from a kind of Marxist evolutionary perspective to a much more culturally inflected structuralist perspective. Part of what attracted me to anthropology was that particular meeting of those theoretical structures that he embodied in that moment of time for me.

RAYNA And I think none of us understood what was about to happen to the field that was a kind of reflexivity about our role as anthropologists, American imperialism, development, a critique of modernisation, all in the glow cast by the viciousness of the Vietnam War. But also the movement of 'the field' to become 'the Third World' and 'developing nations' meant that a lot less people went casually to 'the field' and more people started thinking about what John Cole described as 'anthropology comes part of the way home'. And that's what I think happened to a lot of us. Your next project, Louise, after having worked on the Navaho, was you started to work in Providence on the state of the immigrant labor force. My first project was in the south of France, but by the second one I was working on pregnancies in New York City.

DON How were the two books received?

RAYNA This is *me* speaking now, you guys can correct me, but I think we were very lucky that anthropology has a critique of ethnocentrism which enabled us to get a place at the table instantly. By '75 I remember Dick Fox, who was then editor of *American Ethnologist*, begging me to come on the board, because he wanted a signal about publishing articles on women. I think once you said, 'Oh that's ethnocentric', or 'Oh, that's Victorian anthropology', then the waters parted and they said 'OK you can teach a course', 'OK, you can have a book', 'OK you can have an appointment'. It took Economics another 30 years to do that. I think in Women's Studies the early years were Literature, History and Anthropology.

LOUISE Well this was over the dead bodies of some.

RAYNA Yeah, exactly, I don't think it was without struggle.

LOUISE I didn't get tenure at Brown because I did feminist anthropology.

RAYNA She moved to New Mexico because the boys didn't want to take her out for beer.

LOUISE Oh, I used to go out for beer with them [Laughter]. It was OK when I wasn't a feminist. In '74, which was the year *Woman, Culture and Society* came out, I was denied tenure. I was the first woman that came up for tenure in what was a new anthropology department.

The department was six tenured men, three of whom were on leave. They didn't actually have a vote on my tenure case because in those days of course, there were no rules about anything. But when I didn't get tenure I did a year grieving the case internally. It was a very weak grievance procedure which got me nowhere. So I filed a Title VII suit.

DON And won?

LOUISE We settled it out of court in the fall of '77 and I got tenure. It was a class action suit. Three other women came in with me, two of them got tenure and the other gal, who was an instructor in the German department, took a three-year-salary settlement. So Brown was under a consent decree for over ten years. We had goals and timetables and were supposed to get 57 tenured women by '87. We ended up getting about 50, so the whole thing dragged on until the early 90s.

DON But that's something that I think is important to remember. When I was re-reading the books the other day in preparation for this conversation, I was struck by an argument made in both introductions that can be summed up as, 'Yes, women are people too, women are actually human beings and therefore anthropologists should look at them'. I was both startled and moved that that argument actually had to be made in anthropology in the 1970s. It's particularly hard to appreciate those years now, when at least 60 percent of the anthropology doctorates granted in the United States are to women.

RAYNA Ah, but that's the deskilling of anthropology. Women get a ticket to ride as the gravy train leaves the station, as Susan Carter put it in 1970-something. I mean, it's just like what has happened in modern medicine, the lower echelons are now very female. Ask how many top level chairs and full professors there are, it's fewer, and if they move up – excuse my functionalism – but it'll be because the field is of less social value.

DON But I still think that it's interesting to consider how it's hard for young students today to really comprehend the sort of situation that women were facing back then.

GAYLE You have to realize that that is why there was a women's movement. At Michigan, when I was an undergrad, there were almost no women on the faculty. Anthropology had more women than most departments and there were two of them, there was Norma and there was Niara Sudarkasa. I think Psych had two of women, Judy Bardwick and Libby Douvan.

RAYNA Yes, do you remember?

GAYLE I think that Philosophy at that time probably had no women. I think that History had one, Silvia Thrupp. You know, you looked around the university and there were lots of qualified women, many of them faculty wives – who were not allowed to teach at the university because of the nepotism rules. There was a huge pool of underemployed women who were very competent, very qualified, and very capable. There were women grad students who had no visible future. It was a very different kind of society. I think people don't always realize how much has in fact changed. At that time just to say, 'Yes, there is a problem' and to try and explain it – that was a big deal. And that's the moment out of which these books emerged.

DON Are the books still in print?

ALL Oh yeah, absolutely.

LOUISE Ours was a huge best-seller for Stanford.

RAYNA Well exactly, as was ours for Monthly Review. It kept MR alive for many years when it was in financial difficulties, and it put MR onto the scholarly roadmap for a kind of feminism that it had not been known for before.

I'm trying to think what replaced them. I think in some ways the book you did, Louise, with Pat and Helena.

LOUISE Yes it's a Reader but it doesn't really sell that much though.<sup>7</sup>

RAYNA Micaela did another one, *Gender at the Crossroads*,<sup>8</sup> there's also the Collier and Yanagisako book, *Gender and Kinship*.

DON And *Sexual Meanings*, remember that from the early '80s?<sup>9</sup>

RAYNA *Sexual Meanings*, yeah. There was a bunch of stuff that happened in the decade afterwards.

LOUISE Thinking about what came next makes me remember that one of the things I've always felt about our book is that it gets misconstrued, partly because the first three pieces are so strong and they had such a big impact. And that stuff has been critiqued so much. We chose the title *Woman, Culture and Society* because there was Shapiro's textbook that had the title *Man, Culture and Society*.<sup>10</sup> Well it turns out that 'Woman' is essentializing! How did we know? So it gets critiqued because it has the wrong title. It gets critiqued because it's about universalization. But I've always made the argument that the rest of the pieces in the book are really about variability, and that there is a really strong tradition in the book about looking at women's situations in a bunch of different cultures and building some comparative stuff.

RAYNA That's why I don't think they're as far apart as they initially appeared. Both of them insisted on a range of variation, and whether you go in one theoretical direction or another to explain it, you still first start with the assumption that in some senses grounded data are a critique of anything that is too simple as an explanation.

LOUISE Whenever I write something about the book I always say that it's about variability *and* universality. But I can't get people to hear that. I just can't. Whenever people write about it now, they always refer to it by saying, 'In the beginning of feminist anthropology, everything was about universalization'.

GAYLE Well, I think that at the time, both the field and the environment were much more obsessed with what Freud called 'the narcissism of small differences'. There was so much argument about which interpretation of Marx was the correct one. One of the things in feminist anthropology was that we were all contending with a certain heritage of Marxist explanation – you know, Lenin's conversations with Clara Zetkin, as well as with the 'Wages for Housework' folks, or the hangover of Engels and the *Origins of the Family*, and also the theories of matriarchy which are addressed in those books. People argued very heavily about things like this. I remember being attacked by some of the pro-Engels people in that panel we

did in '76 on women and the origins of the state because I talked about the lack of a basis to Engels's claims about the matriarchy. Some of the older-generation women in the field who had more commitment to that were very upset.

RAYNA Well, Eleanor Leacock, Helen Safa, Connie Sutton – they had all survived by the skin of their fingernails. They had really been abused, and they really believed that Marx would solve the question, that if people could bring Marxism back in after a kind of post-war 'McCarthyite' banishment, they really believed that that would solve the problem.

GAYLE That's true, but what I was thinking about was how people were very committed to particular interpretations and these were within larger frameworks, which were then set against one another as major formations. I remember we would all sit around in coffee houses and argue these fine points practically to the death. I just think that environment is not – well maybe it's because we are no longer graduate students – but I think there was a certain kind of intellectual factionalism that isn't really around anymore.

RAYNA I also think that the field moved on and that other debates took over, in anthropology and in other fields as well. I think women's studies developed in many new directions, including literary criticism, which had a whole other set of critiques which in turn then influenced anthropology. In anthropology, we all moved off, and people made their contributions ethnographically, which is what the field is most strengthened by. It's the heart of our discipline: 'You wanna fight about it? Go out to the field and get some data and we'll fight!' You can fight as a graduate student over a coffee table, but in the end you're going to have to go to the field and get some data.

LOUISE Yes, that's a difference between the situation before the books and what came next. A lot of us had done fieldwork, but we hadn't done fieldwork on women.

RAYNA So we went back and we did that.

LOUISE A lot of us did our second projects, sometimes in the same place and sometimes in different places, on gender. But at the same time,

we ourselves had students, and so there was this whole batch of new people doing new stuff. From '75 to '85 we started getting some really serious, good work out of people's dissertations. That's certainly continued.

RAYNA I think area studies was immeasurably strengthened. I think a lot of theoretical topics were strengthened, I think a lot of Marxists went into labor studies in one form or another. I think the question of migration having a specifically female aspect and gendered aspect emerged. It took a while to fight about switching from 'women' to 'gender', and I was certainly one of the last hold-outs on that one. I remember fighting with Joan Scott about gender as a category, me saying, 'It's too soon'. You know, 'until we are out of the ghetto we can't afford *not* to have the ghetto that says 'Women's Studies' not 'Gender Studies'. I was in some ways wrong about it, but it doesn't matter. It was a set of debates that was moving us forward. Gayle, you were working toward sexuality at that time. I was moving toward what I thought was going to be teen pregnancy and then became older women's pregnancies, out of my own experiences. People were working what was going to become nationalism or, later, other forms of identity politics. The whole question of the cross-cutting of nationality, sexual identity, child bearing or not, class-ness or not, and race, race, race, race.

LOUISE Yes, we started having a slightly more heterogeneous group of women; more women of color in the next generation. Those folks started in the field right in the early 70s, so in the mid-70s to early 80s, you get a few women of color who were the next generation down from there. And then we also began to have good stuff on lesbianism.

RAYNA Yes, I remember Gayle, when you discovered Esther Newton and made me read *Mother Camp* because it was the pre-history of the critique of heterosexuality.<sup>11</sup> As Esther says in that book, all these gay guys put on girdles and false eyelashes and lipstick to try and look like women. But then again, women do those things to look like women, too. [Laughter]

DON What about the field today? Is there a field that we can call feminist anthropology?



RAYNA I would say 'No', or 'Yes, but' or 'No, but'. I would say that the good news and the success is also the delusion, which is that we've all gone in many ways, and as you started to point out, Louise, there are genealogies by now, two and three generations deep, who've done really stunning work. I was back at the University of Michigan in May '05 at a fabulous conference on 'Disruptive Reproduction' organised by Marsha Inhorn who brought, I would say about 200 people, mostly women but some men, from around the world who were working on disrupted reproduction. The old gals gave the preliminaries. It was me and Margaret Locke, and Carole Browner and Caroline Sargent, and on and on. We looked around the room and I said to Margaret, who was planning her retirement from McGill, 'Okay Margaret, you can retire now, it's done, it's a done deal. They live and they're here and they come from many different countries and sometimes they're using our work and sometimes they're not, and it doesn't matter. We've created a space'.

We were lucky that we ended up in universities or other places where we could train another cohort. And that cohort, as you said, Louise, was far more heterogeneous – partly because the power was slipping on the part of all those white male guys. So we benefited, we personally benefited. And as for the books, I'm delighted if they still remain useful to young people coming into the field. But in some fundamental way, newer generations have already, I think, moved into an integrated, intersectional perspective in which the books are differentially useful.

DON Right, but what about a specifically feminist anthropology? What are your views of the role of feminism – any avatar of it – in anthropology today?

RAYNA Well the books were of their time and many transformations have occurred, which have been all to the good for the field. For some people who are much younger and just starting out, feminism has a very different meaning, which is why it's important to retell the story again and again of how both our books have their roots in the Women's Movement and how we were trying to both understand and change our position. We all got accused of not having enough diversity. And yet, when you look at what's in the books, what you see is the diversity that was pretty much available at the time, you

can say, 'Yeah but why weren't you theorizing diversity?' Well, we only learned to do that a little later on. It took time.

LOUISE It took a while, yeah, partly because there wasn't any overarching diversity theory. There wasn't any theory to go to at that point. There was Margaret Mead and Simone de Beauvoir. And, you know, nobody knew about women like Elsie Clews Parsons then. We had to excavate them.

GAYLE Hopefully people won't have to keep doing that and rediscovering the wheel.

One of the things I know from doing work on gay studies and the history of research on homosexuality is that it's not regularly taught and so people don't know their own histories. They continually have to rediscover them in the library. Feminist concerns have been more institutionalized in the field than gay ones and sexual ones. But one of the things that I'm hearing you say, Rayna, is that as long as there is sexism there needs to be feminism, and when there's less sexism feminism becomes less salient. From the time that these books were conceived to this moment in time, feminism has been extremely successful in anthropology. That is not necessarily a durable accomplishment.

RAYNA Right, things can change. But these books are in libraries, which is different.

GAYLE Yes, but even if books are in the library, they still have to be found. The easiest way to find them is if you are taking a course and someone tells you to go and look for them. As long as there is an institutional structure that can reproduce the discipline and teach a history, people don't have to keep going back and doing it themselves. When there is not that institutionalization, it tends to vanish. So I think we have to be careful to not write-off feminist anthropology prematurely. Not only is it the case that things could change again for the worse, but even if they don't, to keep the genealogy alive, feminist anthropology has to be taught.

**Notes**

1. Wolf, Margery. 1968. *The House of Lim: A Study of a Chinese Farm Family*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
2. Wolf, Margery. 1992. *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
3. Stack, Carol B. 1974. *All our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper & Row.
4. See for example Thorne, Barrie 1975. Women in the Draft Resistance Movement: A Case Study of Sex Roles and Social Movements. *Sex Roles*, 1(2):179-95.
5. Collier, Jane Fishburne & Sylvia Junko Yanagisako (eds). 1987. *Gender and Kinship: Essays Toward a Unified Analysis*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
6. Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist. 1980. The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding. *Signs*, 5(3):39-417.
7. Lamphere, Louise, Helena Ragoné, & Patricia Zavella (eds). 1997. *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.
8. di Leonardo, Micaela (ed.). 1991. *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
9. Ortner, Sherry B. & Harriet Whitehead (eds). 1981. *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
10. Shapiro, Harry L. 1956. *Man, Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.
11. Newton, Esther. 1972. *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Copyright of *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.