An Interview with Deborah Bergoffen: Refocusing (on) the Center

Terry Z.: As someone who does postmodern work in philosophy, how would you interpret the meaning of a center, as in "Women's Center?"

Deborah B.: I think about all the teaching I've done that says there are no centers, and here I am directing one, yet it seems to me that the Women's Center has been postmodern from its very inception; it never envisioned itself as having authoritative power or envisioned itself as being controlling. It's always envisioned itself as having multiple roles within the university, as an academic program and as what we would now call a "University Life" series of programs. We've been always engaged with other disciplines and interdisciplinary work, so I guess "center" for the Women's Center designates a place from which all of these things can happen, rather than a source of authority or a ground that justifies whatever happens.

TZ: With an increasingly over committed and over "activated" faculty, do you have plans to bring the WMST faculty back to the Center?

DB: You've just identified a problem we've been talking about. I guess it's a credit to our program that our faculty is very talented and sought after, and therefore, overextended and very frazzled. We are looking at that and trying to think of ways to get people to reconnect and to bump us up on their priority list. At the Coolfont Retreat in February we'll do some stock taking. It's been ten years. We need to look at what we've been doing and what we want to do.

The Women's Center is a place that we all see as a home; nevertheless, it's a place we don't get to go very often because of all that the university demands. The thought that we have is that if we can get off the campus for a day and a half, without the phones, and the emails, and all the other things, we can just get together and focus - focus on connecting with each other and refocus on the program and how we need to work with it and for it. The retreat is one way to open up the issue; that is, since we're working in an environment which is pulling us in so many directions, what can we [WMST] do to make your lives a little less crazy? What can we do to get you to feel reconnected to the center? -- A report on the Retreat will appear in the next Matrix.

TZ: Besides the retreat, do you have any other ideas about what kinds of participation and visibility you see for WMST?

DB: One of the places we're very visible is in University Life events. In the community, interestingly enough, we're also very visible with programs like Sister to Sister, the Leadership Conference, Women's History month. We're somewhat concerned, though, that we're not seeing many faculty at those events. That's a gradual change; we used to have more faculty coming to those events. We need to get the faculty to see that their presence at these events is important. Students need to see faculty involved outside of the Classroom.

I also think curricular development is the place where we need to become more proactive - this is something that his faculty where it counts, because it matters. We want the faculty to feel that they own this curriculum more than they do now. We're also hosting the First Annual Women's Scholar's Lecture [see Peg Brinig article], where WMST faculty will talk about their work.

TZ: Are there plans for any new WMST courses?

DB: This is something of a catch 22. On one hand, we don't have the resources to offer any more courses than those that are on the books. On the other hand, we can't argue for more resources unless we have more courses. This is something the curriculum committee needs to look at. I think we also need to look at WMST courses in terms of general education. Much of the talk about the general education uses "linking" as a model. We're looking for places where WMST can link with other courses because it would be a mistake for us to measure our academic success only in terms of "our courses" and "our program." We need to think about WMST throughout the curriculum.

TZ: President Merten spoke about the university in the year 2000 as a "learning centered environment" with an expectation that students will engage in a variety of citizenship-type experiences. That seems like another way for WMST to link to other programs.

DB: Yes, we just talked the other day with Peggy Stalitz, who is the lobbying coordinator for the AAUW. They have a wonderful internship program that we're going to promote. There are lots of opportunities like that available for WMST students. I quite agree that it's a real strength that we fit into Merten's vision of the future, and I think we have to make that clear to people who may not understand.

TZ: Since you've been directing the Liberal Studies program within MAIS, I wonder if you have any further plans for a WMST graduate program.

DB: We're going to pick up the issue of developing a grad program again, after letting it drop to the sidelines. A couple years ago, we envisioned WMST as a track in the Liberal Studies degree, but, since then, there has been a shake up in the whole configuration of MAIS although LS has not been affected by this. The interesting change, for us, is that MAIS is now administered from departments, or through faculties, which may give us the opportunity to say we would like to offer a degree in WMST under the MAIS program. Just as LS is interdisciplinary, WMST is interdisciplinary. Nevertheless, in LS we determined that before doing interdisciplinary work, you had to have a core. You had to be coming at it with some knowledge base, so we set LS up as having a series of

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A Note From the Director, Debra Bergoffen

What a time to become Director of the Women’s Center. It is our tenth year. Hard to believe that ten years ago there were no courses in Women’s Studies, there was no celebration of Women’s History Month, there was no place where faculty, students and staff could gather to discuss women’s issues, no place where events such as Take Back the Night could be organized. Paul Gilbert’s foresight and Karen Rosenblum’s and Anita Taylor’s leadership have created something from nothing (who said God was not a woman). But, we need to keep things stirring. We, not me.

As I look down the list of our faculty and affiliates, I see the names of people who are active in their departments, engaged in other interdisciplinary programs (Cultural Studies, African American Studies, Honors, etc.) I see the names of people working on committees and task forces and in offices throughout the university. As I look down the list of our faculty and affiliates I also see the names of people who are spread very thin. I am afraid they may be spread too thin and I am afraid that they may take the Center for granted. We cannot afford the luxury of thinking someone else will take care of the Center and its programs. Odd as it sounds I am more concerned with losing momentum internally than I am with attacks from the outside. I believe that we can hold our own in the face of such attacks. Our programs are solid. Our courses are rigorous. We do not serve a small interest group. We are not a fringe academic movement. The challenge is to continue to be an academic and community resource for women at the university.

We think that we have done a better job of being a community resource than of being an academic resource and so we are focusing on the intellectual life of the Center in the following ways:

As a way of recognizing the work of our faculty we inaugurated the Women’s Scholars Series with Margaret Brinig’s lecture, “Forbidden Fruit? Economics, Women, and the Law.” Dinner, time to enjoy each other and food for thought -- a way to slow down and engage each other.

Believing that the intellectual life of the University would be well served if students at the undergraduate and graduate levels had the chance to explore feminist scholarship in depth, we are developing proposals for an undergraduate major and a Master’s in Women’s Studies under the MAIS rubric.

Finding common ground between our concern that women are under represented in the fields of science and technology and the University’s interest in developing links with the business and technology community, we are forming a research seminar. This seminar will develop an interdisciplinary agenda focused on an area of concern to women. It will explore this issue for its own sake and for its public policy implications. The focus of the seminar will change every several years to reflect the interests of the faculty and the concerns of the times. The seminar will begin by taking up the question of women and science and technology.

Now here’s the pitch. There are small groups of people getting these initiatives started. They will be putting out calls to join committees. Please read these calls as calls to you. We don’t think it’s a matter of life and death, but we do think it’s a matter of creating more opportunities for the kind of life we want to lead and the kind of community we want to foster at the university. So – y’all come – bring your ideas and your energy. We’ll put the kettle up.

Women’s History Month Speakers Announced

March 3:
Keynote address: Professor Alison Booth, University of Virginia.
"Who’s Who in the History Months: Performing Representative Women and African Americans?"

March 24:
Reading by poet Davi Walders, whose work has been featured in Ms. Feminist Studies, and Women and Language.

March 27:
9th Annual Leadership Conference: "Building Bridges."

MATRIX
WOMEN’S STUDIES PROGRAM
WOMEN’S STUDIES RESEARCH AND RESOURCE CENTER
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
JANUARY 1999

Guest Editors: Terry Zawacki and Cindy Lont

Production/Paginator: Rachel Campbell

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News from the Center

The Women's Studies Associate Director position continues to be shared by Rose Pasearell and Kristin Flieger Samuelian. Rose divides her time between Women's Studies and her position as Assistant to Karen Rosenblum, Vice President of University Life; Kristin is on half-time release from the English Department, where she is a Visiting Assistant Professor. Administrative Assistant and Program Support Technician Cheryl Seerist, assisted by staff members Barbara Davis and Erica Adegbite, continues to oversee activities and projects in the Center, which has added some new programs to its regular fall schedule. In addition to coordinating the Take Back the Night rally and march and the Clothesline Project, the center is hosting free video screenings every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. Films by and/or about women are screened twice a week, from noon until 2:00 pm. This semester's screenings have featured films such as Raise the Red Lantern, Heavenly Creatures, Paris is Burning, and Ju Dou. The center also offers free coffee and donuts during midterm and final exam weeks.

Peg Brinig Talk First of WMST Series on "Women in the Academy"

Speaking on the topic "Forbidden Fruit? Economics, Women, and the Law," Peg Brinig, from the School of Law, opened the first of a series of talks on women by Mason's WMST faculty. Peg's talk, which followed a relaxing dinner at the Crossroads, was co-sponsored by the Office of the Provost as part of the Celebration of Learning. In attendance were Women's Studies faculty, members of the External Advisory Board, and Alan and Sally Metten.

Peg began her remarks by reading a paper submitted to her by a female student in her course "Perspectives on the Individual, the Family, and Social Institutions." In the process of reflecting on the materials read and discussed in the course, this third year Law student wrote an anguished account of trying to balance a husband, a family, a job, and law school and fearing she was disappointing everyone, including herself. "Where do I go from here?" the student asked. This question provided the background for Peg's discussion of how she and her co-authors of a book in progress—an economist and a sociologist—approach questions about marriage and the family, divorce and custody standards.

The legal solution Peg advocates in From Contract To Convenant involves "forgetting about dealing with divorce grounds. Instead law reformers should work on custody standards, and particularly concentrate on relationships." This theme, that family relationships are much more permanent than contracts "because what is given is not conditional," framed Peg's discussion of the relationship between the household's division of labor and marital stability or instability. If women or men are working long hours outside the home, there tends to be marital instability, Peg said. Interestingly, if either the husband is perceived by himself or by the wife as spending an inordinate amount of time doing "women's work," the marriage tendency to become unstable. Another strong predictor of instability was either the men's or women's perception that the other spouse was treated unfairly.

In closing, Peg asked whether feminists can use the tools of economics and the law as both "empirically" and "empirically" disciplines. Her answer is that feminism is itself empirical if "it refuses to entertain the usefulness of these other, older, and therefore male-dominated tools." Law's failure to "recognize the permanence of families...and the level of societal problems" while economics "has theorized that families behave just like markets and firms." Speaking as a feminist with degrees in law and economics, Peg suggests families are not the same as contracts because "spouses and parents love unconditionally" and the "most important thing they produce, in addition to love itself, is children. Children aren't ordinary goods, they aren't commodities...they are something all of us, as a community (or a village) vitally care about."

reported by TZ

"How To Can Do" Retreat Focuses on WMST within Gen. Ed. and at the Graduate Level

Acting on the goal to revitalize WMST, faculty met at the Coolfont Lodge February 6th and 7th to discuss WMST's role in general education; plans for a WMST major and MA; and an exploration of faculty's interdisciplinary research and possible grant sources. Keynote speaker Claire Moses, Chair of WMST at University of Maryland and Editor of Feminist Studies, detailed the status of WMST programs across the country and alerted faculty to current debates regarding curricula and research issues. The two-day event was funded by CAS and the Provost's Office. (Note: more details on Moses' talk and "How To Can Do" sessions will appear in the next Matrix issue.)
Of Note: WMST Faculty Lont and Palkovich Tapped to Direct DoIIIT Centers

DollIT, Department of Instructional Improvement and Instructional Technology, consists of the IRC (Institutional Resource Center, previously, the IDO), Electronic Classrooms (previously part of UCIS), AV, GMU-TV, and STAR (Student Technology Assistance and Resource Center) which arose from the Media Authoring Center and the Student Video Center. Notably, DollIT, this technology based organization is directed predominantly by women. Under Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer Joy Hughes, DollIT’s newest addition is Executive Director Anne Agee. The Directors who oversee the various DollIT units include Susan Kehoe (GMU-TV), Cindy Lont (STAR), Ann Palkovich (IRC), and Walt Sevon (Electronic Classrooms and AV). When asked how faculty from Communication and Anthropology happened to be directing technology centers, Cindy and Anne provided some background on their expertise. Cindy explained she started at George Mason not only teaching mass communication classes but also advising the student radio station, WGMU-AM. Soon after, she created the Student Video Center which became part of STAR. Explaining how she sees her Communication Scholarship, Cindy explains “I see technology as a tool in teaching, not the driving force.” Ann Palkovich is a biological anthropologist whose content area may seem a bit further afield than Cindy’s but the need for faculty members in DollIT, especially in IRC where instructional improvement, not instructional technology, is the driving force, means faculty outside of the technology driven fields are extremely important to IRC’s mission.

Ann explained, “I think it has been useful to have a faculty member whose field is not heavily based in technology be involved as a DollIT director. Like, Cindy I see learning as the primary issue, and can imagine ways in which technology is a useful tool in that process. At the same time, I tend to ask the naive questions about developing and adopting various technology-based tools -- the same questions that many faculty have and do ask. For example, rather than imagine an entirely technology based course, which would be a daunting task to develop for anyone, I tend to think in terms of trying out one modest tool. I'll learn that tool, see if it works for my students and then seek to further enhance that class. It gives both me and my students a chance to master technology until it becomes second nature without compromising the central intent of my courses in Anthropology.”

Both Cindy and Ann mentioned that working in a technology-based organization which consisted primarily of women worked well. This is an unusual circumstance for both women, as Cindy is the only woman advisor in the Telecommunications graduate program (another technology heavy program) and Ann is one of the few women in the Anthropology Program. Ann notes, “I think it is good to be in an organization (DollIT) that has the kind of grounding where it now seems second nature to have women in director roles.”

Is There Life After Directing WMST? News from Anita Taylor

This Spring semester, Anita Taylor, former Director of WMST, is part of a faculty exchange with Evergreen College in Olympia, Washington. Anita will team with another professor whose focus is writing and women's literary studies to teach a two-semester course called "Private Hearts, Public Voices: Women Communicating Across the Centuries." The course will look at the ways women communicated and either were heard or not heard across time. Students will read women's writing (including, Anita writes, "of course diaries and letters") and will examine both the "fine" arts and the crafts ("quilts, clothing, and food--including gardens") women have produced. The first trimester will focus on historical women while the second trimester will focus on women in public life. In this trimester, students will be encouraged to work with women in government, social movements, and service organizations. Anita notes that she will continue as Editor of Women and Language while she is gone, doing most of the work electronically. --reported by TZ

Three-Year Black Women and Work Project Nears Completion

Originally called "Representations and Meanings of Black Women's Work," the Black Women and Work Project is an interdisciplinary collaborative research project designed to promote research that substantively engages race, gender, class, and sexuality as categories of analysis. The project, which is sponsored by the Afro-American Studies Department at University of Maryland and funded by the Ford Foundation, includes 20 scholars from a consortium including professors from University of Maryland, College Park and Baltimore, American University, Howard University, the Smithsonian, and George Mason University. My research "Who's Quoting My Sisters? The Politics of Labor and the Work of Black Feminist Criticism in the Academy" began as a look at the politics of citation, the kinds of work Black women do, and are expected to do, and the implications of that work for their scholarship their teaching, and the institutions for which they work. The first funded year of the project began with a retreat and featured eight seminars in which selected scholars shared their research in progress, received feedback from fellow participants, and shaped the direction of the project. The second year featured preparation and presentation of our collaborative process and selected research for a colloquium at the Smithsonian that was open to the public and scholars around the country. In this way, we have organized an editorial board to prepare selected articles for publication. Publication will focus both on the collaborative process we used to do our work and on the work itself. As a result of the process, my own article is now entitled: "Above and Beyond the Call: The Politics of Labor for Black Women Scholars in the Academy."
The Silence of Teachers in Public Debates about Education: A Teacher Educator’s Challenge

by Diane Wood, Institute for Educational Transformation

All are turned away from the dark-skinned people laboring in fields behind them.

Both narrative and the arts have the capacity to contain moral intention and agency. Public school education is an inescapably moral undertaking, involving as it does the vulnerability and potential of children. Conventional rhetoric centered on standardized test scores obfuscates this. But as sociological studies attest (Cohn & Kottkamp, 1993; Goodlad, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Walter, 1932), teachers experience rewards in their teaching only if they are convinced they are contributing to children’s learning and well-being. Teachers in our program embrace with welcome relief the normative qualities embedded in the discourses of story and art, finding in them the inspirations that drew them to teaching in the first place.

Public conversations about education rarely include teachers’ perspectives, although the survival of educational policies and reform efforts are wholly dependent on them. The curriculum we have developed over a counter-cultural—more hospitable—ways of framing educational issues, raises and amplifies teachers’ voices and provides access to the more abstract, theoretical language of the academy. It is our hope that increasing numbers of teachers will think and operate as public intellectuals, capable of shaping opinion, affecting policy, and mobilizing public support for schooling. In fact, we have growing evidence that this indeed is happening.

Take Back the Night

Marty Langelau was the featured speaker for this year’s Take Back the Night Rally held Tuesday, October 6 at GMU. Langelau, author of Back Off: How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers, offered straightforward, practical advice on how to stop sexual harassment in its tracks. Langelau said that naming the offensive behavior and drawing attention to the fact that harassment is unacceptable without yelling, using profanity or insults is one of the most effective ways to stop harassment before it escalates.

This year’s rally was announced by Erica Adegbite, student assistant at the Women’s Center, and included musical performances by Deborah Gay and Powder Puff Derby, a demonstration by DC Self-Defense Karate Association, and poetry readings from the Women’s Coalition, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. and survivor Angela Clay. Speeches included remarks by representatives of Sexual Assault Services, the English Department, the Women’s Studies Research and Resource Center, and the Freshman Center.

Speakers addressed the need for increased awareness about sexual assault, the specific risks to college students, warning signs for dating violence, and general safety tips. The rally and march were well attended by an enthusiastic and attentive crowd. The Women’s Studies Research and Resource Center would like to thank all of the volunteers and university personnel that made Take Back the Night possible.

reported by Molly Dragiewicz
"Normalization" Violence: Abortion and the Reconstructionist Right

Don't let Satan steal that child!" the man yells. "There'll be a blood curse on you—and your family!" It's Saturday morning outside the Hillcrest clinic in Southeast DC—a clinic that provides abortion, along with other family planning services. Every Saturday, antiabortion demonstrators assemble on the sidewalk to harass women exercising what the Supreme Court has declared to be their Constitutional right—the right to end an unwanted pregnancy safely and legally. Their shouts are deadeningly repetitive. "Don't let Satan steal that child!" the man yells again. "Coward!" he screams at the woman's partner. "Take her out of there! Be a real man!

Anne Shaw is an MFA poet, clinic defender, Women's Studies scholar and a former co-editor of Matrix. She is a member of the GMU Pride Alliance and devotes much of her time to researching the far right. Her article on the link between clinic protest and antichoices violence, co-authored with Alane C. Spinney, is entitled "Rhetoric, Repetition, and Violence." It will appear in the Winter 1999 issue of College Literature.

The Hillcrest clinic is not alone in attracting antiabortion demonstrators—clinics across the country are surrounded by angry antichoices activists. Many of the activists, like those at Hillcrest, appear at the same clinic week after week. Last year the National Abortion Federation (NAF) reported in the results of its annual survey that clinic protest occurs on a weekly or even daily basis in at least 43 states. Harassing phone calls and hate mail reached their highest levels ever. Almost a third of the clinics surveyed reported incidents of violence at their facilities—bombings, bomb threats, stalking of doctors and staff, death threats, chemical attacks, and arson.

Because of the intense harassment that abortion providers face, the number of doctors willing to perform abortions has declined dramatically in recent years. Fewer than 80% of American counties now have abortion providers. As a result, clinics have become limited to urban areas—in some states, women must travel miles to reach the single, free-standing clinic that provides services. The restrictions are hardest on poor, rural, and young women. As the number of clinics declines, the remaining facilities and providers become visible and ever-more-vulnerable targets for antiabortion violence. In November, the shooting of Dr. Bernard Slepian made national headlines. Having returned from synagogue moments before, Slepian was shot in his home—in the back—as his wife and sons looked on. It was the fifth such shooting in three years. While not all of the shootings resulted in death, all targeted abortion providers in their homes. Four of the five providers, including Slepian, were Jewish. Behind the rise in violence, harassment, and picketing is a burgeoning movement known to insiders as Christian Reconstructionism. Reconstructionists believe that they must "return to Christian values"—values, like antiabortion protest, that Old Testament law. In their "reconstructed" society, death would be the penalty for numerous "crimes." Among others, Randall Terry, former head of Operation Rescue, advocates intimidation and violence towards "criminals" not qualifying for death penalty.

While the idea of a Reconstructionist government sounds far-fetched, the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy reports that antiabortion advocacy groups have raised over $40 million in recent years. Money that is often spent on court cases whose outcomes could be pivotal in obscuring the boundaries between church and state. The Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision—the decision that legalized abortion in the US—is a key target. Because Roe is based on the right to privacy and the idea that women are entitled to law to equal treatment under the law, overturning the decision could have far-reaching consequences. As Janet Bencok, the report's executive director, told Reuters, the elimination of Roe could "eviscerate the Constitution." "Their goal is to change the Constitution," she said, "to become a Christian Constitution." Indeed, the influence of Reconstructionism has already been immense, spanning everything from the 1992 "Republican Revolution" to the elimination of affirmative action programs.

Not surprisingly, many of antiabortion demonstrators outside Hillcrest and other clinics are also Reconstructionist Christians. Most demonstrators are careful to distinguish their own activities from those of "lone extremists" who commit arson and bombings. At the same time, many antiabortion protesters continue to argue that such violence is "justifiable homicide." And, like clinic bombers, their goal is to force women to become childbearers and take on the responsibilities of motherhood—responsibilities that often severely restrict women's ability to obtain education, extricate themselves from the cycle of poverty, or leave abusive partners. As the monotonous repetition of their

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Rock for Choice Raises Over $5000

The December 4 Rock for Choice concert exceeded expectations for fund raising, according to Tara Harris, head of the GMU Women's Coalition, which sponsored the event along with Positive Force, an Arlington-based community service group. Proceeds from the concert totaled over $5000 and go directly to the clinic defense project of the Feminist Majority. Kristen Samuelson reports that Tara did "an amazing job" of putting the event together and is to be congratulated for her role in making the event a success.
Celebrating Hildegard of Bingen

On November 12, 1998, the George Mason University community joined the Women's University Chorale and members of the GMU faculty in commemorating the 900th anniversary of the birth of the most widely recognized woman of the medieval era. "Viriditas: A Celebration of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)" was sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, the Department of Music, and the Department of English.

Best known for her innovative music composed in honor of the Virgin Mary, the Church, and St. Disibod, the patron of her convent, Hildegard saw music and song as intrinsic to humans. Her last letters were a spirited defense of her convent against the Interdict that forbade her nun's any music in the spiritual work.

by Ruth Fischer and Amelia Rutledge

Sheri Neill directed the Women's University Chorale in chanting "Ave Viridissima" and "Ave Generosa." Neill conducted the group in a style called karokame, that is, circular motions to indicate phrases.

Ruth Fischer (English) read from the "Letter to the Prelates at Mainz." Sheryl Beach (Geography & Earth Science) and Kristen Samuelian (English) read antiphonally "About the Creation of Adam and Eve's Formation" and "About a Woman's Desire." Amelia Rutledge concluded the readings with "The Mouse" from The Natural History.

An Interview with Deborah Bergoffen

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core courses and from there the student developed the program. I think that may be a good model to explore for a master's program in WMST. Three courses are required and then students work with an advisor to design the kind of program they want. It's an exciting thought.

What we're doing is forming a curriculum committee for graduate work, and a curriculum committee for undergraduate work because it's too big a job for one committee. It's clear that at the graduate level we have to create the core courses and then we could look at running the core courses as masters/senior courses, thus putting more WMST courses at the undergraduate level as well. Again, we need to be very conscious of the fact that we don't have many resources, so we need to work out ways for courses to do double, triple the work.

TZ: With the relatively recent visibility of women in areas of the university which have previously been male-dominated, like Dol111 and SOM, do you have plans to invite some of these women to join the WMST faculty?

DB: Because we are so lucky to have women in these key places in the university, such as Terry Domzal in SOM, we need a category for teaching/research faculty who are not working in WMST per se, but want to be affiliated. This is a new phenomenon that women are in administrative roles in fields that are not usually thought of as women's fields or which lend themselves to scholarship on women; hopefully we can make the connections. We've started talking to Terry about courses in SOM, and to Joy Hughes and Anne Agnec in technology. We need to make it clear that we want these women to identify with us; they're very important to us, just as are faculty who are women-centered in their scholarship and academic concerns.

"Normalizing" Violence

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slogans suggests, these protesters are more interested in perpetuating their own beliefs than in debating or learning why women often feel compelled to seek abortions.

The presence of antiabortion protesters at clinics is a firmly entrenched cultural institution, and one that is not likely to go away anytime soon. While some protesters are undoubtedly motivated more by their consciences than by part of a larger movement, the weekly protests put them in close contact with abortion militants. In this context, it is easy for moderate protesters to become radicalized, and for militant protesters to escalate. As clinic conflict comes to seem more and more "normal," violence against abortion providers becomes less and less surprising. And, as antiabortion slogans such as "abortion is murder" come to dominate both public debate and the space outside clinics, violent action comes to seem more justifiable. Repetition of these slogans also allows protesters to shut out the arguments of their opponents. But the idea that speech condoning violence can lead to violence, although brought to public attention after the beating death of Matthew Shepard last October, has yet to be widely accepted.

Luckily for women seeking abortion, many clinics also have clinic escorts—pro-choice volunteers who give up their time to walk women past the demonstrators. Research reported by the American Psychological Association shows that women who are walked in by escorts have lower rates of post-abortion depression—the very affliction antichoices often claim is caused by abortion—than women who are left to face the protesters alone. Thus, while the right to legal abortion hangs in the balance, volunteer activists do make a difference in the lives of women—one woman at a time.

Individuals wishing to be trained as volunteer escorts may contact the Washington Area Clinic Defense Task Force at (202) 797-6577.
What We've Been Doing:
Marilyn Mobley McKenzie
Received a Ford Foundation Three Year Grant on the theme "The Meanings and Representations of Black Women's Work." Marilyn's article "Labor Above and Beyond the Call: A Black Woman Scholar in the University" in which she discusses the politics of labor for black women scholars in the academy, is based on her own experiences and observations over the past two decades.
At the First Biennial Conference of the Toni Morrison Society, this past September at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia, Marilyn was one of sixteen authors recognized by the Toni Morrison Society for her work as a Toni Morrison Scholar and for her first book on Toni Morrison, Folk Tales and Mythic Wings in Sarah Orne Jewett and Toni Morrison: The Cultural Function of Narrative.

Cindy Lont

Debra Bergoffen
"A Feminist Interruption of Oedipal Logic", Oedipus Today Conference, Emory University, November 6-8, 1998
"After Beauvoir", American University, April 1998.
"The French Existentialist: Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus", Smithsonian Associate Series, (six session course), Fall, 1998

Janine Ricourant
October, 1998 organized a lecture by world-renowned author from Quebec: Marie-Claire Blais. Ms. Blais read from her latest book: These Festive Nights and spoke about her writing to GMU faculty and students.
Edited a collection of essays on Madeleine Monette entitled: "Reléctions de Madeleine Monette", published by Summa, and scheduled for publication in February 1999. Madeleine Monette will be invited by Professor Ricourant in March 1999 for a reading of her latest book: "La femme furieuse." Professor Ricourant will also read from her edited text, the first collection of essays ever published by Madeleine Monette.

Kim Eby

Connie Kirkland
Recognized in October, by the U.S. Department of Justice for her work in the area of stalking protocols. Her sexual assault research and programming has also been recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice, Violence Against Women Grants Office and the National Crime Prevention Council as a Promising Practices resource.
GMU Sexual Assault Services was highlighted as a proactive program in the 1997 book Tough Targets: The Street-Smart Guide to Staying Safe by Detective J.J. Bittenbinder, Running Press, Philadelphia.
September 22, 1998, presented a one day training at the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault Conference, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, "Campus Sexual Violence: Challenges, Concerns, and Federal Regulations"
November 6, 1997, Virginia Campus Sexual Assault Annual Conference, Richmond, Virginia, "Rohypnol/GHB: The Perpetrator's Hidden Weapon"