

DISSERTATION

CONFLICT OR SOLIDARITY:
MULTICULTURAL FEMINISM AND SISTERHOOD AMONG WOMEN OF COLOR

Submitted by
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Colorado State University
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CONFLICT OR SOLIDARITY:
MULTICULTURAL FEMINISM AND SISTERHOOD AMONG WOMEN OF COLOR

ABSTRACT

According to a proverb of unknown origin:

"Two are better than one because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can lift her up."

This adage defines the essence of a multicultural feminism that encourages collective voice to benefit women of Color by facilitating an improved quality of life for them. Evidence is lacking, however, about whether women of Color practice multicultural feminism to affect change.

To collect information to support or deny the practice of multicultural feminism in the lives of women of Color, ethnographic interviews of a total of 24 women of Color in New York City and Los Angeles were used. The research was designed to study three questions:

1. Do women of Color believe that multicultural feminism is a way to improve their collective status?
2. Do women of Color attempt to unite in an effort to raise their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status?
3. If women of Color do not unite, are there either external societal factors or factors internal to women of Color as a group that keep them from uniting?

The research shows support for multicultural feminism, but women of Color indicate they lack the time for or belief in the success of a multicultural feminism. Women of Color do not attempt to unite in multicultural feminism because of external pressures such as the oppression of people of Color by the dominant majority. Oppression affects whether women of Color organize. Oppression leads to comparisons among the women of Color of perceived minority inequality issues. The result is often the external appearance of complacency among women of Color about working together to improve their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status.

This research study also explores the relationships among women of Color. Central to the findings is the recognition of the complex interaction of feelings of women of Color about their similarities and differences, reasons for the existence of internalized racism and cross-racial hostility, and the effects of competition among them that denigrates solidarity and spurs conflict.

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**To My Family, Friends and Professors
with Thanks, Peace, Love and Friendship**

Diversity

Diversity is a part of the natural order of things - as natural as the trillion shapes and shades of the flowers of spring or the leaves of autumn.

Diversity brings new solutions to an ever-changing environment, and that sameness is not only uninteresting but limiting.

To deny diversity is to deny life with all its richness and manifold opportunities. Citizenship in a world of diversity includes a responsibility to...

Be tolerant. Live and let live. Understand that those who cause no harm should not be feared, ridiculed or harmed - even if they are different. Look for the best in others.

Be just in dealings with poor and rich, weak and strong, and whenever possible, to defend the young, the old, the frail, the defenseless.

Be kind, remembering how fragile the human spirit is. Live the examined life, subjecting all motives and actions to the scrutiny of mind and heart so to rise above prejudice and hatred.

Care.

-Author Unknown

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
Abstract of Dissertation.....	iii
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Multicultural Feminism and Women of Color.....	2
Forming Multicultural Alliances.....	3
Research Questions.....	5
Personal Disclosure.....	6
II. THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
A Multicultural Feminist Perspective.....	9
African American Women Speak about Feminism.....	15
Asian American Women Speak about Feminism.....	17
Hispanic American Women Speak about Feminism.....	19
Native American Women Speak about Feminism.....	21
Multicultural Feminism and Social Change.....	22
Limitations of Multicultural Feminism.....	26
III. RESEARCH DESIGN.....	33
Sample Selection.....	33
The Research Instrument.....	36
The Procedure.....	37
Proposed Data Analysis.....	39
Data Analysis.....	40
IV. PRESENTATION OF DATA	43
Belief in Multicultural Feminism.....	43
Attempts to Unite.....	44
Why They Don't Unite.....	46
V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	55
Discussion.....	57
Recommendations.....	86

Limitations.....93
Conclusions.....95
REFERENCES.....103
APPENDICES.....103
A. Interview Guide..... 120
B. Additional Answers..... 122

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In most societies around the world, women have been relegated to lower status positions compared to those of men. Feminism has long held that women and men are equal and therefore should have equal rights and opportunities. Betty Friedan, founder and first president of the National Organization for Women, made no mention of any significant differences among women that could explain their inferior treatment (Friedan, 1963).

Early feminists regarded women as an undifferentiated collective as they fought for greater equality with men. No attempt was made to account for the differential treatment of women based on race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Friedan and other feminists at the time also apparently assumed that all women held similar positions of second-class citizens and thereby would reap similar rewards in their fight for greater equality.

While many scholars acknowledged the sisterhood of all women in the United States, others believed that women of Color had distinct characteristics and life experiences not shared by white Anglo women. The additional factors of race and a lower social class status resulted in women of Color being discriminated against much more severely than their Anglo sisters. Women of Color refers to those women of African heritage (African/Caribbean American); those descended from countries that have a Spanish and Spanish-speaking origin (Hispanic/Latina American); those descended from the native peoples of the original

inhabitants of North and South America (American Indian/Alaskan Native Americans); and those who immigrated from or were descendants of people of Asia (Asian/Pacific Islander American).

Multicultural feminism, like women of Color theory, holds that the experiences of women of Color are so different from those of Anglo women that traditional feminists theories fail to explain adequately the plight of women of Color. For women of Color, the effect of their statuses of race, class and gender simultaneously oppress the group. The women are not merely doubly or triply jeopardized. The effects of race, class and gender issues are not added to each other (race + class + gender), but are multiplicative in nature (race x class x gender). The lived experiences of women of Color, previously silenced people, must be heard and examined (Kendall, 2003). The extent to which women of Color identify with one another and mobilize their resources to lessen the discrimination against them is the major question addressed in this study.

Multicultural Feminism and Women of Color

We know that women of Color are not a homogeneous group. Asian Americans come from a wide variety of countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, each with its own distinct culture. The same is true of other women of Color groups in the United States. And, within any given group such as African Americans, their historical experiences and treatment, at present, may not be the same. Despite these differences, however, the question remains: Do women of Color share a sufficiently similar plight that they identify with one another and act collectively to better their socioeconomic situation long enough to achieve greater equity for the whole? Multicultural feminism suggests that they should.

Women of Color should be somewhat unified and possess some degree of solidarity based on their similar positions and experiences in society as a self-conscious collection of people united, or closely related, by this experience. Their experiences are most often but not always

usually ones of deprivation. The women may be materially deprived, culturally denuded, politically neutered, or, quite often, all of these (Cashmore, 1996). In the political sphere of domination and deprivation, they are similar. The struggle against the sociopolitical forces that constitute racism is articulated as a powerful political project that can be a unifying force among women of Color toward a multicultural feminism (Harris and Ordonez, 1990). Women of Color are embedded in structures of inequality and discrimination that limit them in two independent but simultaneous ways (Davis, 1983).

While some women of Color belong to minority groups identified primarily by cultural characteristics such as language or religion, other minority group women are identified primarily by physical characteristics such as skin color. At one time or another, however, women in each of the racial, ethnic minority groups have taken the least desirable, lowest status positions available in the economy, often while trying to raise children and attend to other family needs at the same time. They have been expected to provide support for other members of their families, kinship groups and communities, often sacrificing their own self-interest to the welfare of others.

The core interests and issues of women of Color revolve around material conditions. Multicultural feminism professes to explain the interests of women of Color better than other forms of feminism - liberal social or radical feminism. While the latter may have been useful in helping us understand the interests of white women, they may have had the opposite effect on women of Color by actually inhibiting their ability to achieve equitable treatment in society notwithstanding race and class.

Forming Multicultural Alliances

The bonds that may link women of Color to one another in solidarity include shared interests, shared institutions and shared culture (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). Shared interests

defines the process of group members seeing themselves with common interests at stake. Shared institutions involves the sets of social relations organized specifically to solve the problems group members face in achieving their objectives.

The women may also be bound to one another by their participation in a common culture, explained as a set of more or less shared understandings and interpretations that include ideas about what is important and what is real as well as strategic and stylistic guides to action. Members are linked by a perception that to a large degree they think alike and view aspects of their lives similarly (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998). Women of Color activists for change in their life conditions imposed by inequality share interests (e.g., equal rights), institutions (e.g., educational systems) and cultures (e.g., ideas about what is important and what is real).

Multicultural feminism stresses a recognition of difference within difference (Moraga, 1983) and the concept of "De Colores Means all of Us" that signifies women of Color working together (Martinez, 1998). Women of Color are called upon to define themselves through a matrix that encompasses gendered particularities while still finding unity among them. They also are asked to form a collective when the information provided for and about some women is dismissive; when all women are called upon to judge themselves by a single standard. In the midst of finding voice, women of Color must find themselves and the collective must be defined before it can be voiced.

It seems clear that while similarities of domination and oppression abound among women of Color, so too do the politics that can be the catalyst for strife among ethnicities. Dissonance can be triggered by a system ingrained with conflict, win-lose situations and a selective reality idealized in the systems of power. As women of Color form alliances, they share a way to overcome the antagonisms that cause conflict - the fuel that divides and conquers. They

are called upon to ignore the barriers to a common struggle that may exist as factors used to mitigate the concept of their sisterhood. Sisterhood can be activated through politics, social movements and a common need for social change.

Research Questions

Is there empathy among women of Color for one another? We can hear a rallying cry for sisterhood that makes sense from a "united we stand, divided we fall" concept. Or, is there a lack of empathy among women of Color?

Three major research questions are addressed in the present study to ascertain whether women of Color identify with one another in a common struggle:

1. Do women of Color believe that multicultural feminism is a useful way to improve their collective status?
2. Do women of Color attempt to unite in an effort to raise their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status?
3. If women of Color do not unite, are there either external societal factors or factors internal to women of Color as a group that keep them from uniting?

An underlying question becomes, "Ain't I a Woman?" Women of Color share a different agenda than their white "sisters," but may not have a common agenda among themselves. Why, aren't they all women? Does the answer rely on who tells the story?

Consider the tale of the little boy [sic] who loved to hear his mother read tales to him about lions:

The boy was simply fascinated with the lion, king of the jungle. A regal and most beautiful animal who never, absolutely never, lost in battle when in combat with another animal.

But one thing was most perplexing to the little boy about these stories. It was the fact that the lion always lost battles in which the opponent was a man.

How could it be, the boy wondered, that the most powerful animal warrior, who never lost a battle when in combat with other animals, would invariably lose when in combat with man?

With a slight smile, his mother replied, "Son, that's an easy question to answer. You see, as long as men write the books in which these stories appear, the lion will always lose!"

-Author Unknown

The meaning of the mother's answer should not escape people or women of Color. The metaphor of the melting pot has been challenged by social movements that not only celebrate multiculturalism, but also engage in a critique of the assimilationist tradition (Gonzalez, Houston and Chen, 2000). Often, similarities can bring about coalition, solidarity, and order, but differences as well as unrecognized similarities just as often can tear down a common identity and cause conflict.

Personal Disclosure

This study is personally, professionally and politically important to me. As I stand before my students in the classroom and respond to the ideology of dominant students, it becomes painfully clear that knowledge, respect and understanding of "others" is sorely lacking. What is even harder to accept is the fact that this dominant ideology may cause conflict among those who are marginalized. It is past the time for alternative voices to be heard.

I ascribe to the belief that one of the tenets of education is to develop open minds. I want my students to assume a standpoint that acknowledges the positives of difference. I would like my female students to believe in themselves and for my women of Color students to be able to say, "I love me!" I would like to begin the questions, the critical thinking and a consciousness of the rights, values and citizenship of all people.

To this end, I seek to understand the interaction of cultural similarity and difference. As a researcher, it is important not only to recognize my viewpoints and assumptions, but also to

reveal these to the reader. I have a vested interest in facilitating positive social change in an important American social problem. This is not only a personal goal, but also a clear, personal mandate.

*Accept one another then...
As you yourself are accepted in love.
-Book of Romans*

CHAPTER TWO

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research on women of Color can be placed in five broad categories that include:

1. Studies about feminism and the feminist ideas of black, yellow, brown and red ethnic, minority and cultural groups,
2. Studies that focus on women in gendered situations and as gendered selves,
3. Research about the nature of race relations and the causes of prejudice and discrimination conducted through a black/white analysis only,
4. Information regarding diversity and multiculturalism trends, and
5. Studies of social stratification on issues such as race, gender and class.

Because much of the research data from these studies has generated quantitative results and virtually none actually studies women of Color as a unique group, if we are to understand sisterhood as collective mobilization for change, it is essential that, as researchers, we examine and understand women of Color as a multicultural alliance.

Multicultural feminism encompasses similarity as likeness or sameness, exchange as communication and sharing of similarities, solidarity as order and unity, and coalition as alliance. If it is in the best interest of Americans to seek a path that leads to a workable truce for society that is more workable for all, then it is of great value to understand the ties that bind groups.

According to cultural critic Cornel West (1993):

We must acknowledge that people - E Pluribus Unum - we are on a slippery slope toward economic strife, social turmoil and cultural chaos. If we go down, we all go down together...we are not only not connected in ways we would like to be, but also, in a more profound sense, that this failure to connect binds us even tighter together. The paradox of race in America is that our common destiny is more pronounced and imperiled precisely when our divisions are deeper...And our divisions are growing deeper.

The Need for a Multicultural Feminist Perspective

Traditional feminists perspectives hold that men and women are equal and therefore should have equal rights. Furthermore, all women are viewed as a unified whole facing the same impediments and challenges as they strive for greater equity with men. This study questions whether any mainstream feminist perspective that is useful in explaining the plight of white women is equally applicable for women of Color.

Multicultural feminism differs from mainstream feminism in that it is broad, embracing many communities and practices and multiple oppressions. An alliance based on multicultural feminism could improve the quality of life of women of Color. Multicultural feminism aims to address the knowledge about and definitions of women of Color among other women of Color. While this study has its focus in feminist theory as the action of sisterhood between women in a common struggle, representatives from each of the women of Color groups deny the mainstream theory that describes feminist thought.

It should be recognized that women of Color subscribe to feminist epistemologies (the philosophical theory of knowledge about women; how we know what we know about women) from a "colored" standpoint (an account of the social world from different points of view; in this case, from the perspective of women of Color). According to Anzaldua (1990), diversity and difference as qualities of heterogeneity are vague, ambiguous terms defined differently by white

women and women of Color. Race is the number one qualifier that precedes gender that precedes class. Traditional feminist theories are incomplete without an analysis of the intersections of race, class and gender in society (Andersen, 1997).

Multicultural feminism corresponds to the need for a generalizing articulation of common experiences that can enable political mobilization. Just as families can both liberate and oppress, the multicultural “family” of women of Color feminism should cover cultural differences and social contradictions (Shohat, 1998). Women of Color writers advocate a “rainbow” community (borrowed from the different colors of a rainbow that are collective) in which women of Color come together in a transformative, feminist worldview to struggle for a multiracial democracy (Martinez, 1998).

Martinez (1998) says:

The oppressed have always survived by becoming experts on the oppressor’s ways. But that can become a prison of sorts, a trap of compulsive vigilance. Let us liberate ourselves, then, from the tunnel vision of whiteness and behold the many colors around us! Let us summon the courage to reject outdated ideas....

Different from theories about race or people of Color theory, other women of Color writers call for a “bridge,” the impetus to forge links among women of Color (Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983), or an “interface” that provides support and stability for binding together different “parts” (Anzaldua, 1990). Yuri Kochiyama (1997) defines struggle as a way of life particularly for women of Color in a white-dominated world, and Cherrie Moraga (1983) acknowledges the difficulties and possibilities of solidarity as a shedding of one’s own particular roots. Moraga defines solidarity as a willingness to acknowledge the culture and life of the worlds contained in someone else’s roots.

Juilliana Pegues (1997) suggests, as an answer to solidarity, coalition and alliance, that women of Color feminists create affinity groups. Creating loose affinity groups allows for both a sense of community belonging and a sense of purpose within identity-based organizations useful

for networking and finding like-minded individuals. Coalitions are vital to larger movement organizing, and affinity groups with expressed political agendas allow for solidarity with others in bottom-up, grassroots mobilizations (Shah, 1997). If women of Color are to be successful in improving their socioeconomic condition, they must organize collectively to generate sufficient power. Power is described as collective energy. Because one or two voices are not enough, it is essential that women of Color feminists and activists understand that similarity is that raw and powerful connection from which personal power is forged (Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983).

According to Winona LaDuke (1996), a feminist who is also a Native American Indian, solidarity work is hard to do, but the lessons of actually learning how to use power past one's own backyard need to be actualized. The issue of solidarity is about commitment to a shared vision of social justice among different identities. There can be linkages and common ground among women because of the shared belief that the prosperity seen in society ought to benefit all the people in some way and overcome the "I'll get mine and forget the rest" attitude popular in identity politics and acted out in the way public policy is articulated (South End Press Collective, 1998).

Anzaldua (1990) speaks about the need for a unity in building bridges instead of submitting to the balkanization, fragmentation and competition prevalent within the American system of capitalism. A basis for collective action might be found among women of Color in believing that (1) wealth has accumulated at the top; (2) there is discrepancy between the gross national product and conditions of at least half the population; (3) tax breaks go to the rich instead of the poor and middle class; and (4) that the country is rich enough to guarantee everyone a decent quality of life (South End Press Collective, 1998). A collective spirit can vocalize best the depredations and horrors that racism inflicts and the various ways it has wounded and scarred women of Color by its corrosive legacy. Alliances can expand an understanding of how to combat racism and sexism, how to work through internalized racism,

how to decolonize women of Color and how to help them find ways to survive personally, culturally and racially with love, humor and optimism as a source of togetherness found in coalition (Anzaldua, 1990).

The concept of multicultural feminism is: Only in alliance and in solidarity with others like themselves can women of Color find power. Power is born from collective voice. Women of Color feminists who faced racially based conflicts with white feminists understand the need for unity and dialogue between and among them. Developments in feminist theory stem from a fundamental recognition that knowledge is socially constructed and, therefore, must be seen in the context of social relations in which knowledge production occurs. Conceptualizing feminist theory from the experience of women of Color requires analyses that interpret race, class and gender as intersecting and interlocking systems of oppression (Andersen, 1997).

Women of Color are defined by multiple inequalities that are embroiled in conflict. Progressive actions to encourage and promote coalition building between people of color may be thwarted by a system or organization that divides the populace into competing camps wanting rewards for itself even at the expense of other groups (hooks, 1995). Mainstream feminism generally fails to recognize or give voice to race and class. The intersections of race, class and gender cannot be overlooked (Andersen, 1997). Thus, concepts of women of Color theory include a variety of political perspectives and ideas. There is no single women of Color perspective, and programs for social change sometimes differ quite substantially from one another, not only between women of Color and white women, but also among white women and among women of Color (Andersen, 1997). A multicultural feminism implies that regardless of differences that divide women of Color, all are affected by intersecting oppressions of race, gender and class.

Multicultural feminism adds an additional dimension to the other perspectives by recognizing the need to include the diversity of women's voices. As more activists of color and

various social classes became involved in the women's movement, a new focus evolved on understanding and addressing the needs of all women, regardless of race, class, sexual orientation, age, physical ability or other characteristics. The term "multiculturalism" was coined in recognition of the varied circumstances of women's lives and the need to include all women in women's movements. In theory and practice, there are as many shared ideas and politics among feminists as there are differences, including the perspectives of women of Color (Stolley, 1999). Any discussion of the different feminist perspectives demonstrates that the questions that feminists raise have different answers and that they are as complex as the systems they seek to change (Andersen, 1997).

In the United States and Europe, feminism also is described across eras or "waves" (Andersen, 1997). According to Andersen (1997), the first wave was a social movement to achieve equality between the sexes and the second wave was responsible for feminist critiques of the male-centered nature of research. Third-wave feminism refers to critical and theoretical statements within the women's movement, primarily in the 1980s, that continue to build on the theme of difference. Third-wave feminism criticizes work done in the 1960s and 1970s that used a generalized, monolithic concept of "woman" as a generic category of stratification and focuses instead on the factual and theoretical implications of differences among women. The differences considered are those that result from an unequal distribution of socially produced goods and services based on position. Referring to women's movementS may more easily capture the multiple facets of feminist politics dating back to the beginning of the "movementS." Thus, feminismS may actually begin to address the notion defied by Sojourner Truth that slaves were male and women were white. A standpoint position may help to enhance an often-unrecognized concept in early feminism that among blacks there are women; among women, there are blacks.

We can take this notion one step further ~ among women, there are endless varieties including a group of women of Color who share multiple inequalities. It is clear that there have been numerous struggles within the ranks of feminist thought, ideas and actions. Those same struggles as philosophical differences may hinder the formation of friendships and may nullify the power of friendship and community among women of Color against the scourges of white supremacy, patriarchy and class domination. From all that is known throughout history about social movements and social change, the message is one of coalition building among groups subject to social domination. Women of Color are urged not to engage in "Oppression Olympics" to try to outdo other women of Color groups for the title of most oppressed group and to try not to create a futile hierarchy to determine which group suffers most. They are encouraged to harness their rage at persisting injustices in order to strengthen their opposition to an increasingly complex system of domination. As feminists; as activists; as radicals, revolutionaries and socialists; and above all as women in common and the oppressed in tandem; for women of Color, the call for collective power must be actualized (Martinez, 1998).

In theory, the activism of women of Color does not subscribe to divide-and-conquer concepts nor does it advocate oppression. In order to differentiate themselves from other feminists with a different standpoint, some women of Color call themselves womanists. The goals of womanists are to make others aware of the exclusionary nature of feminism as it has been articulated by middle-class white women and to educate others about the ways in which gender and race oppression intersect in the lives of women of Color. Their goals include improving the material conditions of their lives, consciousness-raising and support among women of Color, lobbying decision makers, and community organizing to build grassroots leadership of, by and for women of Color (Wing, 1997). Although womanists are committed to racial unity (Collins, 1991), it is important to note that the concept of womanists was started and

fueled by African American women. Womanists claim that the agenda of white feminists ignores the experiences of women of Color and inadvertently practices the kind of oppression they claim to oppose (Joseph and Lewis, 1981).

The explicit need for multicultural feminism and thought is best explained in the voices of women writers from each of the women of Color groups. Each points to the inadequacies of traditional feminist theories in explaining the plight of women of Color.

These voices represent the "colored" standpoint.

African American/African Caribbean Women's Thoughts about Feminism

From *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought* (1995):

The history of American feminism has been primarily a narrative about the heroic deeds of white women (Guy-Sheftall).

Much has been written recently about the white women's liberation movement in the United States, and the question arises whether there are any parallels between this struggle and the movement on the part of black women for total emancipation. While there are certain similarities that one can make, simply because we all live under the exploitative system, there are certain differences some of which are quite basic.... Another major differentiation is that the white women's liberation movement is basically middle class (Beale).

The argument that African American women confront both a "woman question" and a race problem captures the essence of black feminist thought in the 19th century... (Guy-Sheftall).

...black women both shape and are shaped by it... [they] create their own black feminist theory. They come to feminist theory and practice out of the opposition they experience as people who are poor and black women...black feminism has evolved historically over centuries, outside traditional white feminine roles, white social institutions and white feminist cultural theory (Scott).

While black feminism is not a monolithic, static ideology, and there is considerable diversity among African American feminists, certain premises are constant: 1) Blacks experience a special kind of oppression and suffering in this country which is racist, sexist, and classist because of their dual racial and gender identity and their limited access to economic resources; 2) This "triple jeopardy" has meant that the problems, concerns, and needs of black women are different in many ways from those of both white women and black men; 3) Black women must struggle for black liberation and gender equality simultaneously; 4) There is no inherent contradiction in the struggle to eradicate sexism and racism as well as the other "isms" which plague the human community, such as classism and heterosexism; and 5) Black women's commitment to liberation of black women is profoundly rooted in lived experience (Guy-Sheftall).

Despite their commitment to ending sexism, however, some black women continued to be alienated by the term “feminist.” Alice Walker provided the alternative term “womanist” as a more culturally appropriate label for black feminists or feminists of color... (Guy-Sheftall).

Perhaps a multicultural women’s movement is somewhere in the future.... But for now, black feminists, of necessity it seems, exist as individuals.... We exist as women who are black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle – because, being on the bottom, we would have to do what no one else has done: we would have to fight the world (Wallace).

One issue that is of major concern to us and that we have begun to publicly address is racism in the white woman’s movement. As black feminists we are more constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial; comprehension of race, color, and black history and culture (The Combahee River Collective).

The multi-issued approach to politics has probably been used most often by other women of Color who face very similar dynamics, at least as far as institutionalized oppression is concerned. It has also altered the women’s movement as a whole.... The necessity for coalitions has pushed many groups to rigorously examine the attitudes and ignorance within themselves that prevent coalitions from succeeding (Smith).

The exclusionary practices of women who dominate feminist discourse have made it practically impossible for new and varied theories to emerge.... Though I criticize aspects of the feminist movement, as we have known it so far, a critique that is sometimes harsh and unrelenting, I do so not in an attempt to diminish feminist struggle but to enrich, to share in the work of making a liberatory ideology and a liberatory movement (hooks).

At one level, black women, other women of Color, and white women share many common contemporary concerns about their legal status and rights, encounters with discrimination, and sexual victimization. It is on these shared concerns that feminists have sought to forge a sense of sisterhood and to foster solidarity...the slogan of “sisterhood is powerful” best exemplifies the importance and the hoped for efficacy of such solidarity in the achievement of women’s equality and liberation (King).

Black women’s everyday acts of resistance challenge two prevailing approaches to studying the consciousness of oppressed groups. One approach claims that subordinate groups identify with the powerful and have no valid independent interpretation of their own oppression. The second approach assumes that the oppressed are less human than their rulers and, therefore, are less capable of articulating their own standpoint.... One key reason standpoints of oppressed groups are discredited and suppressed by the more powerful is that self-defined standpoints can stimulate oppressed groups to resist their domination (Collins).

Surely, the most tenacious misconception about feminism is that to be a feminist is to hate men... an enormous difference in the experiences of black and white women is that black women also witness countless ways in which...every black man they know is also victimized by racism. So, African American women feel a bond with black men, which comes from being called the same name, from being denied access to similar opportunities, from so often receiving the poorest of what America has to offer in terms of jobs, education, health care and housing. ...One response of African American women is to end the tyrannies of all women of all racial and ethnic groups, of every sexual orientation, of various ages and economic conditions of women who are fully able and those who are differently able (Cole).

Feminism Defined by Asian American/Pacific Islander Women

From *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* (1997):

...an Asian American feminist perspective, more than being Asian American or a woman, can animate and unite Asian American women into a lasting and fruitful social movement (Shah)

To successfully form issue-based identity groups, we must clearly define whom we are willing to work with, both in terms of identity and political beliefs, pro-actively designating our own space (Pegues).

...there is a real problem of white privilege and racism that exists in the women's organizations that are predominately one. An "old girls' network has evolved (Chiang, Cho, Kim, Lui, and Zia).

In contemporary US society, there is an ongoing danger of Asians and other immigrants being labeled deviants simply because they have acted in accordance with their cultural understandings. Furthermore, because of the increasing fragmentation of social services, there is always a chance that no one person (or group) will monitor an evolving situation (Purkayastha, Raman and Bhide).

Not too long after the inception of second-wave feminism, US women of Color and Third World women called attention to and repeatedly challenged exclusionary tendencies in feminist theory and practice. Now understood as the problem of universalization or essentialism, this ahistorical approach examines white, middle-class women's lives through the singular prism of gender and extends its findings to all womankind. It should be observed, however, that racist as its effects undoubtedly were, essentialism had currency at a time when "progressive politics" meant, above all else, having a vision of an alternative society (Aguilar).

...my attempts at consciousness-raising around inequalities of gender had produced the reductive notion that, since women share a common oppression, all women are sisters.... Extolling universal sisterhood... attests to the notion that "a victory for women anywhere is a victory for us" (Aguilar).

To place this assumption of sisterhood in perspective, I sought to draw out the women's similarities and differences.... Having explored the issues, I expected the women to now apprehend commonalities and differences in another light.... Not only had they withdrawn subscription to a universal sisterhood with "women everywhere," ... but also when they articulated "difference," the tone was not celebratory, and not a soul proclaimed the wonders of diversity (Aguilar).

As an Asian woman, I often did not seem to exist. When I spoke up in a discussion, my words often fell into a vacuum. No one would follow up on what I said. Yet, a white person would make a similar point, and everyone else would respond. Often when I was with other white people, they would be greeted and I would be ignored. I would be asked to be part of a group or sit on a Board because I am Asian, but nothing in the way the group or Board did business changed to reflect my reality and participation. When discussions on racism were held, people referred only to racism against Blacks. No one said the issues I brought up were unimportant, but no one would respond and there was simply no follow-up discussion or corrective action...Because racism against Asians has not been acknowledged publicly, there is no framework, no context, no language in which to place our experiences. We know that something is wrong, but we can't name it. We begin to think we are crazy, blame ourselves, internalize the message that we must really be at fault and that we are less smart, less good, less capable, less knowledgeable, less everything (Tan).

Feminism itself was mostly a white construct that had to be translated for cultural, racial, and class relevancy. Western feminism's focus on personal choice and personal freedom is very individualistic. ...From a culture that stresses relationships – of the individual to the family, the family to society, the personal to the communal – Western feminists' focus on personal choice and personal freedom missed the bigger picture. It is the art of balancing the personal and the communal that makes Asian communities work (Tan).

It is very important to me to have an international perspective on women's liberation. It is only when we understand the connections and uncover how women around the world have been used and pitted against each other that we can begin to stand in solidarity and stand up for each other (Tan).

...culture and history inform my activism and my spirituality. I am connected to and affected by the history and experiences of my ancestors and my people.... The divisions of gender, color, ethnicity – the differences that have been used to divide and pit human beings against one another – are fundamentally superficial differences...We exist in a relationship with all life, with every expression of the universe. If this is true, how can I turn away if a part of the universe is being abused? If a member of my human family is hurt? Is being oppressed? Unfortunately, we live in a world that has lost the sense... of our wholeness and interconnectedness. We live in a culture that loves to divide and separate.... We live in a world that is full of pain, violence, competition, alienation, exploitation and fear.... But how to clearly see and act effectively against injustice, inequality and oppression is not an easy task... Only in the place of unconditional acceptance is there transformation (Tan).

Struggle is a way of life for all who inhabit this world, but particularly for women of Color in a white-dominated world. Asian/Pacific Island women, like their colored counterparts, have had to fight to participate as equals with whites in US society (Kochiyama).

Many Asian American women refute the label “feminist” although their work pays special attention to the experience of women. Sometimes this feeling reflects a fear of alienating men... at other times, the antipathy toward feminism reflects the cultural insensitivity and racism of white, European feminists (Aguilar-San Juan).

An Asian American feminist paradigm with its own cultural and political reference points... should not be referred to as an “addendum” to Asian American politics or as a “variant” of white feminism, because those terms force Asian American feminism into the margins of other political frameworks. A point that bears repeating is that Asian American feminism, like other movements initiated by women of Color, does not depend on a mechanical process of adding up oppressions.... Because Asian American feminism emerges in a context that is not only encapsulated by the prevailing sites of feminist struggle, the ideas and accomplishments of Asian American feminists need to be considered on their own terms (Aguilar-San Juan).

Hispanic/Latina Critiques of Feminism

From *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century* (1998):

...critical analysis shows the pivotal struggles of Latino/a peoples against the scourges of White Supremacy, patriarchy and class domination (Davis).

The oppressed have always survived by becoming experts on the oppressor’s ways. But that can become a prison of sorts, a trap of compulsive vigilance. Let us liberate ourselves, then, from the tunnel vision of whiteness and behold the many colors around us. Let us summon the courage to reject outdated ideas and stretch our imaginations into the next century (Martinez).

Transformation will elude us until we envision our society in very new ways. This requires ending the inequality-based system called capitalism, a monstrous task when we recall that our nation was born capitalist.... It was also born racist, thanks to unbridled genocide. We need a vision, then, in which we abolish the prevailing definition of the United States as a nation with a single, Euro-American culture and identity.... Think *sin fronteras* – without borders (Martinez).

...speak to you of a transformative, feminist worldview that can help move us toward a rainbow century. The rainbow is a symbol of unity-in-diversity.... (Martinez).

In answer to the Great Terminology question... we are thus left with no all-embracing term acceptable to everyone. In the end, the most common, popular identification is by specific nationality: Puerto Rican, Mexican, Guatemalan, Columbian and so forth. But those of us who seek to build continental unity stubbornly cling to some broadly inclusive way of defining ourselves (Martinez).

The intensity of the terminology debate comes as no surprise... for it echoes people’s struggles for non-racist – indeed, antiracist – ways of defining themselves (Martinez).

Today it remains painful to see how divide-and-conquer strategies succeed among people of color. It is painful to see how prejudice, resentment, petty competitiveness and sheer ignorance fester. It is positively pitiful to see how we echo Anglo stereotypes about each other (Martinez).

Many Latinas might not have defined themselves with a term like “feminist,” but their lives express great strength and defiance of male restriction (Martinez). Latina feminism, like other forms of feminism, has been sabotaged by backlash forces that rage everywhere. We can thank those forces for making the term “feminist” so unpopular, for making so many... accept today’s bra-burning, man-hating labels (Martinez). We see close ties between gender-related attitudes and political ideology (Martinez). Chicana workers and other community women who do not define themselves as feminists but lead objectively feminist lives... have provided the backbone of male-dominated groups but also formed all-women’s groups (Martinez).

For the women of a colonized group, even the most politicized, their oppression as women is usually overshadowed by the common oppression of both male and female...often see themselves as fighting for sheer survival against the physical genocide of racism, war, police brutality, hunger and deprivation, and against the cultural genocide of Anglo institutions and values. As a result, most colonized women will feel an impulse toward unity with, rather than enmity toward, their brothers. When the colonized group is in the minority, as in the United States, this becomes even more true (Martinez).

Neither Latina nor Anglo should yield to the temptation of making a hierarchy of oppressions where battles are fought over whether racism is “worse” than sexism, or class oppression is “deeper” than racism (Martinez).

Many people of communities of color agree on the need to build alliances, but they say, in effect, “We can’t work with others until we have our own community together.... Why should we have to choose between “getting our own act together” and working with others? (Martinez)

From Making Face, Making Soul (1990):

“Diversity” and “difference” are vague, ambiguous terms, defined differently by white feminists and feminists of color. Often white feminists want to minimize racial difference by taking comfort in the fact that we are all women and/or lesbians and suffer similar sexual-gender oppression. They are usually annoyed with the actuality (though not the concept) of “differences,” want to blur racial difference, want to smooth things out – they seem to want a complete, totalizing identity. Yet, in their eager attempt to highlight similarities, they create or accentuate “other” differences such as class. These unacknowledged or unarticulated differences further widen the gap between white and colored (Anzaldua).

The contemporary women’s movement was constructed with the best of intentions. But underlying contradictions began to emerge as US feminists of color denounced the racism and classism inherent in a “unified women’s movement” which could only be unified within perimeters of white women’s values. Ideological differences divided and helped to dissipate the movement (Sandoval).

From The Bridge Called My Back (1983):

We want to express to all women – especially to white middle-class women – the experiences which divide us as feminists: we want to examine incidents of tolerance, prejudice and denial of differences within the feminist movement.... We want to create a definition that expands what “feminist” means to me (Moraga and Anzaldua).

What began as a reaction to the racism of white feminists soon became a positive affirmation of the commitment of women of Color to our own feminism... we intend to reflect an uncompromised definition of feminism by women of Color in the United States (Moraga and Anzaldua).

What Feminism Means to Native American/Alaskan Native Indian Women

From *I am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (1996):

Liberation is not simple. Re-feminizing our original being is not a matter of gaining equality with native men, sharing the work of providing for family, obtaining decent jobs and education, moving out into the world and struggling to make the law work fairly for us. First, we must understand the conditions under which we currently live. It is difficult to critically examine our current condition while the power to alter or maintain it rests with those outside ourselves. It is particularly difficult to face the absurdities of belief and disbelief we have internalized while we are still besieged from outside. But examine it we all must (Maracle).

...feminism, indeed womanhood itself, was meaningless to me. Racist ideology had defined womanhood for the Native American woman as nonexistent, therefore neither the woman question nor the European rebel's response held any meaning for me (Maracle).

Native women do not even like the words "women's liberation" (Maracle).

Whereas Native men have been victims of the age-old racist, remark "lazy drunken Indian," about Native women white folks ask, "Do they have feelings?" How many times do you hear from our own brothers, "Indian women don't whine and cry around, nag or complain" At least not "real" or "true" Indian women. Embodied in that kind of language is the negation of our femininity - the denial of our womanhood... (Maracle).

Racism is not an essential by-product of colonialism. That Europeans came here to escape something may be true, but it was not the real reason for erecting a colonial colossus all over the world (Maracle).

The desire of our people to gain a foothold in this society is arrogantly interpreted as a desire to be like Europeans. We have never feared or rejected new things, new knowledge.... We seek knowledge that we may turn it to our own use. Do not be surprised when I tell you that your knowledge is not the only knowledge we seek (Maracle).

I am not insensitive to the plight of the early white immigrants. I know that your own people threw you into filthy, disease-ridden, ex-slave ships and sent you here, penniless. (Womanless too.) I know that you were dumped here because your own compatriots did not want wretched paupers messing up their system. But, quite frankly, the persecution you suffered you perpetrated on me (Maracle).

When white people do not have to give up anything and we are expected to compromise, that is called injustice. If we go along with it, it is called selling out (Maracle).

A good number of non-white women have addressed the women's movement and decried the fact that we are outside the women's movement.... The white women of North America are racist and that they define the movement in accordance with their own narrow perspective should not surprise us. White people define everything in terms of their own people, and then very magnanimously open the door to a select number of others (Maracle).

We are part of a global movement of women in the world, struggling for emancipation. Women worldwide will define the movement, and we among them. Until white women can come to us on our own terms, we ought to leave the door closed. Do we really want to be part of a movement that sees the majority as the periphery and the minority as the center (Maracle)?

There are some white women who truly wish to struggle with the effect that racism has had on their consciousness.... The redneck practices of the so-called feminist movement are already becoming history in some circles (Maracle).

Sojourner Truth told you already, "Ain't I a woman?" She asked the white feminist movement on our behalf, 100 years ago, and the white women of North America have yet to face the answer. She served up the question: we need do no more (Maracle).

The world is a dark world. It is an impoverished world. It is a world fighting for survival. It is not concerned about America's definition of "women's issues." It is a world at war. (Maracle).

White women figure too largely in our minds. Let us stop chasing them and challenging their humanity at every turn. Let us begin by talking to each other about ourselves. Let us cleanse the dirty shack that racism left us. Let us deal with our men-folk and the refuse of patriarchy they borrowed from white men (Maracle).

That white women only want to hear from me as a Native and not as a voice in the women's movement is their loss. Embodied in my truth is the brilliance of hundreds of Native women who faced the worst... and dealt with it. Embodied in my brilliance is the great sea of knowledge that it took to overcome the paralysis of a colonized mind. I did not come to this clearing alone. Hundreds walked alongside me - Black, Asian and Native women whose tide of knowledge was bestowed upon me are the key... emancipation (Maracle).

Audre Lorde and I were destined to be close. The combined knowledge of African ex-slaves and colonized Natives in North America is going to tear asunder the holy citadel of patriarchy. Who can understand the pain of this land better than a Native woman? Who can understand the oppression that capitalism metes out to working people than a Black woman? (Maracle).

The road to freedom is paved with the intimate knowledge of the oppressed (Maracle).

Multicultural Feminism and Social Change

There is change - change in attitudes, change over time, change of definition, changing epistemologies and changes in differences and commonalities. The notion of standpoint is of

paramount importance today. Social change can mean different things to different people. Any definition of social change, therefore, should have relevance to social experience across different social locations. Social change must be defined with an attention to history and time.

From as early as the 80s, radical women of Color have called for a movement to bridge the differences among and between women of Color (Anzaldúa, 1990). In 1998, women of Color were still advocating a multi-colored century (Martinez, 1998). Does this mean that the alliances called for have failed, are buried in histories or have played an undefined significant part in social change and social movement for women of Color?

Change is multidimensional. For those who believe the old adages such as “the more things change, the more they stay the same,” “there is nothing new under the sun,” “history repeats itself,” “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” “a leopard can’t change its spots,” and “you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink,” the question arises, how is significant change possible? It appears that while it is true that “the times they are a changing,” systemic patterns of discrimination maintain the power and privilege of dominant group members while perpetuating powerlessness and oppression for those groups subordinated by race, class and gender. The pervasiveness and extensiveness of social inequality viewed in a social-structural context can provide a fuller understanding of the non-changes in social inequality that accompany social change.

Audre Lorde said in *Sister Outsider* (1984), “The true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations that we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor that is planted deep within each of us.” In a nation born racist and competitive, it is probably essential to envision a community of communities that recognize their inter-dependence and relate based on mutual respect (Martinez, 1998). Yet, as a racist, capitalistic nation, the coming together of “different” women of Color may be a daunting task. Women of Color are called upon to think of a transformative, feminist worldview that envisions a rainbow coalition of

warriors. The rainbow can be a symbol of unity-in-diversity with respect for one another (Martinez, 1998). Disregarding empathy stifles prospects for effective coalition and social change (Ferrante and Brown, 1998), while self-indulgence is a precursor of conflict.

We speak of change when we say something is significantly different today than it has been in the past. We think of social change when a social pattern (structure, culture, institutions) is different. The dictionary defines change as "to make different; to alter" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*). A sociological definition of social change is defined as "the alteration of society over time" (Thio, 1994). Both definitions appear to offer a view of change as ordered or progressive with change representing an underlying pattern of social progress. Sociological analyses, however, show that improvement does not always follow from change (Calhoun, 1995). The United States has always confronted a dilemma: freedom and equality for all versus freedom for some and inequality for others. No matter what national changes may have occurred, this dilemma has remained a constant dilemma.

Change, then, can be seen as a dichotomy: where some see change, others see continuity or even equilibrium. Change also is viewed as a difficult and/or relatively rare occurrence. The same criteria are used to describe the status of social inequality and the difficulty of changing social inequality or a change in social inequality as a rare occurrence. Certainly, "the problems of identification and measurement of change are complicated by the rarity of the classically neat demonstration of a singular cause producing a singular effect under finitely specifiable and repeatable conditions" (Moore, 1976). Change involves questions of scale and direction. Social change, as it applies to social inequality, should be viewed in terms of the logistics of both continuity and change.

Change over time caused by different social factors, viewed critically, must include a focus that considers social differences. Change can be viewed as regressive, or destructive or confused as well as a from/to equation as in from traditional to modern with the suggestion of

progress. It is from this perspective of difference, or standpoint, as an assumption that no one's horizon of experience is likely to be fixed by a single collectivity or categorical framework, that social change, as it relates to social inequality, may be described as the idea of discontinuity between historical moments within the state or quality of things being continuous in society (Calhoun, 1995).

The twin concerns of social change (as the processes through which social forms are transformed) and continuity (as the processes that maintain and reproduce a stable social system) are important to the issue of women of Color. Multicultural perspectives of social change probably echo a passage written by W. E. B. DuBois in 1961.

According to DuBois (1961):

The forward movement of a social group is not the compact march of an army, where the distance covered is practically the same for all, but is rather the struggling of a crowd, where some of whom hasten, some linger, some turn back, some reach far-off goals before others even start, and yet the crowd moves on.

Politics is seen as a means for achieving compromise and coping with social change.

According to Patricia Hill Collins, change takes place over the long run. Short-term actions are needed, but the long term, institutional changes needed must be sustained by new visions (Andersen and Collins, 1995). Institutions change over time, both as societal conditions evolve and as groups challenge specific institutional structures, but they are enduring and persistent, even when there are active efforts to change them. Systems of social inequality instigate systems of social change aimed at altering them. Conversely, social change is measured by its impact on social systems. Social change movements act to promote or resist changes in society. Movements often emerge because of their members' perceived sense of injustice and their wish to effect changes that will redress such injustices.

According to Audre Lorde (1984), social change through common cause means:

Each of us is called upon to take a stand. So in these days ahead, as we examine ourselves and each other, our works, our fears, our differences, our sisterhood and survivals, I urge you to tackle what is most difficult for us all, self-scrutiny of our complacencies, the idea that since each of us believes she is on the side of right, she need not examine her position.

Limitations of Multicultural Feminism

Assumed to encompass all that “traditional feminism is not,” the idea for a multicultural feminism may be flawed. Women of Color, even as sisters, may not see a potential for political mobilization for change to rid them, collectively, of their oppressions. The relationship between particular identities and universal rights is a continuing problem for activists and theorists committed to feminist politics. Because in America there is little mixing of ethnic populations, most of the images that one ethnic group has of another are socially constructed from afar rather than from direct social experience. Cultural alterity (the state or quality of being different; oppositeness) challenges a women of Color, multicultural feminism and exploits differences.

In *Solidarity of Strangers*, Jodi Dean looks at feminist unity and identity politics. She proposes “reflective solidarity” as an alternative to identity politics (Dean, 1996). Reflective solidarity presumes a “we” that is “without labels” and “in process,” while recognizing that any “we” begins with an “us.” It refers to a mutual expectation of a responsible orientation to relationship exercised by including the perspective of “a situated, hypothetical third” in political discourse. Any “we” entails the recognition of an “us” composed of “a plural I” (Love, 1997). Discussion that acknowledges differences is viewed as a way to unite participants. Dean provides a framework for resolving tension between the importance ascribed to articulation of difference and the ideal of inclusion (Tamplin, 1993). For women of Color, current identity-based

movements may cause philosophical dilemmas. According to Martinez (1998), “alternative” communities such as a rainbow coalition produce a false unity that relies on the denial of difference. She maintains that “otherness” is a constant.

According to Anzaldua (1990), the failure of empathy among women of Color is due, in part, to selective reality, the narrow spectrum of reality that human beings select or chose to perceive and/or what their culture selects for them to see. Exploitation of differences, an inherent part of racism (Harris and Ordon, 1990), is one of the underlying conflicts between women of the same racial ethnic/group and among women of different racial/ethnic groups. Unity within the women of Color community also can be short-lived because of cross-racial hostility, internalized sexism, homophobia and heterosexism, the dynamics that keep women of Color from forming lasting coalitions and relationships. Interactions between women of the same racial group, between women of different racial groups and between heterosexual women of Color and lesbians of Color hamper the cause to eliminate the institution of racism (Anzaldua, 1990). The sameness that brings women of Color together can exacerbate differences that may drive them apart.

In a diverse society, social groups, including those representing economic, ethnic, racial, religious and regional interests among others, compete for resources and beneficial policies that are under the control of government (Kidder, 1997). This competition often causes conflicts, with each interest group vying to win in its competition with other groups in a battle based on legitimate “ownership” of the nation (Frankenberg, 1997). Laws operate chiefly with undemocratic effect because they are written principally to advance the interests of the dominant class (the haves) at the expense of the subordinate classes (the have nots) and because even if equitable in appearance, they are usually enforced in highly discriminatory ways (Parenti, 1977). Divide-and conquer tactics confirm the stability of the status quo, and the strength of divide-and-conquer tactics is stable and solid.

bell hooks states that a collectivity within the United States' people of Color strengthens the capacity to resist white supremacy. hooks also says that the fear that one's specific group among groups of Color might receive more attention has led to greater nationalism, the showing of concern for one's racial or ethnic plight without linking that concern to the plight of other non-white groups and their struggles for liberation. Bonds of solidarity between people of color are continuously ruptured by complicity with white racism (hooks, 1995).

Feminists who are radical women of Color may need to learn how to act equitably in a society that honors the hierarchical; they may need to learn and know their existence cannot be at the expense of another person (Anzaldua, 1990). This could be a long, painful process given dialogue that may provide a picture of self that is historically and socially constructed from a tainted viewpoint of those who seek to name and categorize women of Color. Toni Morrison provides a logic that explains that names and characteristics of groups are the province of the namer, not the definition of the group being named (Hudson-Weems, 1994). This explanation of namer/namee provides an understanding of the dynamics of a separate and unequal world established for women of Color. This world not only sets them apart from other feminists but also pits them against one another in a struggle for acceptance of their equality to all women and with men.

The struggle against racism and sexism experienced by women of Color could unite them. Yet, the women have different backgrounds and are grounded in different cultural traditions. Johnnetta Cole (1996) defines the things that bind women together as the assumptions, myths and stereotypes about what is common to all women. She says that what U.S. women have in common must always be viewed in relation to the particularities of a group, for even when we narrow our focus to one particular group of women, it is possible for differences within the group to challenge the primacy of what is shared in common. The fact is, women are not a homogeneous group but are divided women whose cry is "we are not the

same." In a society dominated by centralized sources of information and imagery in which economic imperatives and persuasive values promote the search for large, common denominator audiences, there are groups who find themselves outside the mainstream (Golden and Shreve, 1995).

The cultural theory of the Diva (sometimes called Prima Dona politics) also lends credence to an understanding of the reasons for conflict among women of Color. According to Lisa Jones (1997), a woman of multicultural ancestry, a Diva is a woman who blazes her own trail through the complex terrain of American culture. While initiated by African American women and most familiar to African and Hispanic American women, the Diva exists for all women of Color. The Diva represents the gap between lives, ambitions and desires of women of Color and the reductive, often negative, iconography of women of Color in mainstream culture who continue to deny the internalizing, repressive stereotypes offered as prefabricated forms of self knowledge for women of Color (Jones, 1997). Diva theory offers a perspective of contemporary cultural experience lived by women of Color. The Diva, who seeks celebration of her existence and her sense of dignity, cannot be denied.

Diva theory represents the "hold your head high no matter how they treat you" concept. Diva theory speaks to the many layers of signification women of Color are forced to read as social text about themselves. The signifiers are often the cause of the seemingly haughty behaviors sometimes displayed by women of Color especially to other women of Color. Conflict often abounds and causes strife among women of Color. This is a detractor from the solidarity and sisterhood suggested by women of Color theory.

Clearly, all Americans in the United States are taught to symbolically espouse not only that all humans beings are created equal, but also that these same Americans are endowed with certain unalienable rights. The national anthem sings of America as "the land of the free." The Pledge of Allegiance promises "liberty and justice for all." True freedom, however, appears to be

mandated by opportunity, power and privilege determined by policies, structures and functions of an "undemocratic United States that cause fissures among the US population. These fissures are the result of many years in the making. Inequality stems from economic stratification and access to power. Despite the ideology formally committed to human equality, racial and ethnic criteria frequently determine social status in society for women of Color. While it is important to note that each ethnic group had similar experiences -(1) each has been the object of negative stereotypes and discrimination, (2) each has resisted oppression and continued to strive for a better life for its members and their children, and (3) each has been the object of government policy that shaped its place (or lack thereof) in U.S. race and ethnic relations - the literature reminds us that each group still has its own unique identity and concerns (Kendall, 1998).

Social inequalities are viewed as a universal feature of societies (Williams, 1995). Class inequities are highlighted by the role of the capitalist class in racial exploitation; gender inequities are the result of the interaction of racism and sexism in exploiting women of Color, and racial inequities stem from government actions that have shaped the policies of racial inequality. As the literature demonstrates, these inequities can spur conflicts. Most all of the literature about inequality refers to some type of racial interaction conflict [cultural pluralism (Appleton, 1983; Washington, 1986); ethnicity (Aguirre, 1995; Grant, 1981; Hawkins, 1995); the melting pot (Moynihan and Glazer, 1970; Payton, 1986; Smith, 1971); multiculturalism (Kanpol and McLaren, 1995; Taylor, 1994); racial/ethnic difference (Lorde, 1984; Rothenberg, 1988, West, 1990, 1995); marginalization (Whitaker, 1984; Willie, 1975); racism (Feagin and Vera, 1995; Katz and Taylor, 1988; Winant, 1994); modern or enlightened racism (Entman, 1990, 1992; Jhally and Lewis, 1992); cultural criticism (Dyson, 1993, hooks, 1990, 1994); cultural race theory (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995); cultural identity (Collier and Thomas, 1988; Geertz, 1973); racial formation (Omi and Winant, 1986); genealogy (West, 1982); and cultural

politics (Angus and Jhally, 1989; Gilroy, 1987]. Van den Berghe (1967), Mason (1970), Lieberman (1961) and Banton (1967) tried to explain racial conflict as contradictory attitudes: the real or token acknowledgement of the norm of “equality” in a democratic society and (un)acknowledged reluctance in accepting the policy and personal consequences of the idea of racial equality (Essed, 1991). Racialism serves as an umbrella for a wide range of racial ideology, theory and practice that informs a study of women of Color.

Q: Would you tell me which way I ought to go from here?

A: That depends a good deal on where it is you want to get to.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Theories such as women of Color theory, multicultural feminism and race theory vie for position among theories of relationships both between women of Color and white women and among women of Color themselves. A multicultural perspective of social change must inform each of these theories. This suggests that solidarity and sisterhood may be relative. As the examples from literature herein have illustrated, researchers have identified a range of factors, including comparison, inequality and identity politics that complement conflict, and another set of factors such as conformity, a multicultural feminism and exchange that support solidarity.

The literature primarily reflects researchers' understandings of the factors present in conflict or solidarity. What is absent are studies that examine the understanding of women of Color about the causes of and case for a common sisterhood that might enhance their lives, and the complex interaction of factors that are important to unity.

It is critical, therefore, that those who are most central to this process be given the opportunity to explore and voice their opinion in a way that not only benefits their

own development, but also contributes to an improved understanding of the factors that influence alliances. The literature informs us that from a multicultural feminist perspective ~ *freedom is never completely free.*

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN

Research is the "production of a publicly scrutinizable analysis of a phenomenon with the intent of clarification."

-Reinharz (1992)

This research project is planned to study three questions:

1. Do women of Color believe that multicultural feminism is a way to improve their collective status?
2. Do women of Color attempt to unite in an effort to raise their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status?
3. If women of Color do not unite, are there either external societal factors or factors internal to women of Color as a group that keep them from uniting?

Sample Selection

To answer the three research questions I selected 32 women of Color from the two largest metropolitan areas in the United States – New York City and Los Angeles. These two cities have the largest populations of women of Color. Sixteen were chosen from each city – four of each of the following categories: women of African heritage (*African/Caribbean American*); women descended from countries that have a Spanish and Spanish-speaking origin (*Hispanic/Latina American*); women descended from the native peoples of the original

inhabitants of North and South America (American Indian/Alaskan Native Americans); and women who immigrated from or were descendents of people of Asia (Asian/Pacific Islander American).

A purposive sample was used in an attempt to select a variety of women of Color who were actively trying to improve the socioeconomic status of women of Color. I wanted to identify women across a variety of ages and socioeconomic classes who were active at the grassroots level and who were active in organizing community activities in support of greater equality for women of Color. Finally, I attempted to identify women from a variety of occupations to participate in the research, I used a repeat-name method of participant selection to locate respondents for the study. I collected names from area telephone books and contacted neighborhood, church, activist, education, and ethnic organizations. I also used the World Wide Web and acquaintances in Los Angeles and New York to obtain names of women who might be activists. I considered a prime candidate to be one whose name was mentioned at least twice by members of various organizations.

Immediately, difficulties arose in locating relevant people who would agree to participate in the study. I called 37 women who I felt fit the criteria of the study. Thirty-two of them initially agreed to participate in the study. Four of them later declined and three more were either not available or did not show up for the interview. Native American women were reluctant to participate. One woman became hospitalized. The final sample consisted of 24 women – 11 from New York City and 13 from Los Angeles. In New York I interviewed four African Americans, three Asian Americans, three Hispanic/Latina Americans, and one Native American. In Los Angeles I interviewed four African Americans, three Asian Americans, four Hispanic Americans and two Native Americans.

Although all 24 respondents were women of Color and thereby experienced similar forms of discrimination, they represented a very heterogeneous collection of women. Even

within the four minority groups, tremendous heterogeneity existed. To illustrate, among the eight African American, five were born in the United States, one in Africa, one in the Caribbean and one was of mixed ethnicity. Among the Asian Americans, two were Chinese, two Japanese, one Pacific Islander and one Korean. Of the seven Hispanic women, three were born in Mexico, two in South America and two in Latin America. Among Native Americans, one was a Ute, one Cree and one Iroquois. Their ages ranged from 22 to 58 years old. They all had attended college with the average length of formal schooling of 16 years. They were paraprofessionals (8), educators (6), students (4), legal professionals (2), medical professionals (2) and marketing/sales professionals (2). None of the respondents considered themselves feminists, but three defined themselves as activists. Twelve said they had a relationship at work with other women of Color, eight said they had a social relationship and four said they had both a relationship at work and a social relationship with other women of Color.

It became clear early in the study that the type of activist I was hoping for did not exist among the 24 women in the sample. In an attempt to enlist more activist women, I called an activist group in New York City to solicit more volunteers for the study. One woman, considered to be a true activist who worked for a grassroots organization, explained to that they are paid activists with time and therefore an ulterior motive to be active. She said they are vocal about those things they are paid to accomplish. That is their job. It was enlightening to develop a sense of what women who are considered "true activists" feel about what they do. None of the women in this study considered themselves radical. Several suggested that while they had some radical ideas, in practice, radicalism was "a waste of time in a dominant-class, laissez-faire atmosphere." As is discussed in the next chapter, most women of Color believed that knowing how to work within the system bought far better results.

The Research Instrument

A semi-structured ethnographic interview guide was used was used to collect data for this study. (Refer to Appendix A for the interview guide.) An unstructured interview format lacks a specific focus that may produce a great deal of information not related to the particular research questions under investigation. On the other hand, structured interviews (interview surveys) limit responses to precise, predefined categories with no option for the respondent to elaborate on her answers. The semi-structured interview is used here in an attempt to understand the complex behavior and beliefs of members of society by giving participants the freedom to construct their own responses. My goal was to guide interviewees, with a minimum of direction, to answer very general questions by telling their stories without restricting their specific responses.

The quasi-open interview has been used by feminists who have sought to involve the respondents in the construction of data about their own lives (Brunskell, 1998). According to Blumer (1969), "We can, and I think must, look upon human life as chiefly a vast interpretive process in which people, singly and collectively, guide themselves by defining the objects, events, and situations which they encounter.... Any scheme designed to analyze human group life in its general character has to fit this process of interpretation." The general questions were specified in advance. The pace of the interview was not predetermined, but rather was adapted to each respondent. I tried to let the interviewee take as much time as she wanted to answer each question.

Ethnography is important to understanding differences such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or other variables used by participants to describe their understanding of our stratified society. This method of inquiry is emancipatory in nature and will help in placing central importance on the lives of the women of Color; information that cannot be measured using standardized quantitative designs.

While the measurement of beliefs and attitudes may be somewhat imprecise and less reliable, ethnography uses alternative ways of producing and validating knowledge -- data provided through the women's own words. The telling of their concrete experiences is viewed as more accurate at assessing what it means to be a woman of Color. It provides a worldview through their eyes, through their own cultural lenses.

More specifically, the interview will be used to discern pervasive patterns such as cultural themes. Because racial and ethnic consciousness springs from a group's historical and current material circumstances and from their perceptions and cultural understandings of these circumstances, the semi-structured interview provides an indispensable methodological tool to ascertain how ethnic and racial consciousness is formed and changes over time and space. A portrait is drawn depicting the actual lives of women of Color.

Although the sample size in this type of design is much more limited than in a large closed-ended survey, the interview allows respondents maximum flexibility in describing and explaining their beliefs, actions and worldview as minority group members in the United States. A forced-choice questionnaire would be much more sterile in this regard.

The Procedure

When I called each woman to schedule an interview, I explained to each the nature of the inquiry and how I came to invite her to participate. I then asked about their willingness to participate. If the woman agreed to be a part of the study, the setting for each interview was the choice of the interviewee. This was done in an effort to make the interview as easy-going as possible. In order to keep the content of the interview in line with the cultural context, most interviews were held in the home of the interviewee or within an environment of the culture of the interviewee.

I asked each woman of Color if she felt she could address issues such as:

- racial and sexual identity and how this identity is described to and by others,
- the identity of a feminist and/or activist and how these identities are described to and by others,
- the definition of race and class difference and what the definitions mean to the same or different racial and ethnic groups,
- the elements of race and ethnicity that provoke feelings of pride as well as those elements that cause concern, pain or embarrassment that might hinder interaction with other women of Color groups, and
- the commonalities among and between women of Color groups that provide an impetus for joint feminist/activist action and mobilization.

I gave each woman interviewed the opportunity to provide her full name, geographic location and job title or, if she preferred, she could use only a part or a generic designation of the name, geographic location and job title identifying factors. Participants also had the option to deny the use of any identifying elements. In order to maintain an atmosphere of candor and to identify all the women of Color similarly, after the first few interviews, I explained to the women that no identifying information would be used to describe and define the responses of any woman. Establishing a rapport with the interviewee by reviewing such things as the purpose and timeframe of the interview and explaining the use of the data was also undertaken before beginning the interview.

I selected multiple data collection methods to protect the viability of the information by: (1) taking notes by hand concerning the context of the interview and the natural situations and social cues, and, (2) taping the interviews to provide a transcript of the conversation. I also

solicited verbal confirmation for continued exchange to allow me to probe for additional meanings and clarification if necessary. I contacted two of the women after I began analyzing the data to confirm the use of words specific a women of Color group.

Interviews were planned for one (1) hour each. While the data collection method was planned as interviews, the data collection closely resembled narrative and storytelling as answers to open-ended questions.

Proposed Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the most appropriate when the data are gathered via semi-structured ethnographic interviews. Qualitative analysis is the use of native language to explore, describe, explain or understand human beliefs and behavior. It captures the respondents' points of view without predetermining the response categories.

I gathered information on the three major research questions. I attempted to find out how they felt about multicultural feminism as a useful perspective to help improve their socioeconomic status, to what extent they attempted to mobilize to improve their collective status, and, if they did not attempt to mobilize, why not. I asked interviewees to tell me their feelings, attitudes and opinions about a number of issues and concepts that might be related to their actions or inactions. I wanted to know what they thought about cultural hegemony, certain identity issues, activism, feminism and multicultural feminism. Finally, I was interested in the extent to which their previous life experiences (culture of origin) could help explain their view and behavior.

Cultural hegemony, as political ideology that is infused in the thoughts and actions of all Americans, was represented in questions relating to majority group ideas and attitudes such as media portrayals of people of color and feelings about class status. Identity issues were represented by questions about sisterhood and similarities and differences among women of Color groups as an indication of comparison and self-identity. Feelings about multicultural

feminism were ascertained by asking questions about unity, support of other ethnic groups, and the women's concepts about feminism. The status of their activism was gauged by questions about their contributions to causes, need for social change, and ideas about equal rights.

Data Analysis

My role was to understand a phenomenon - if women of Color do elect to work together to improve their socioeconomic and sociopolitical plight. My role involved scrutiny, persuasiveness and authenticity such that the narratives presented reflected fidelity (validity). The desired outcome is to provide a heightened sensitivity to the lives of those researched.

Through open-ended questioning, the method of inquiry is intended to create an atmosphere of trust that allows for interactional moments of insight to emerge from the interview. The method of interviewing followed the language and the logic of the women's thought while asking questions in order to clarify the meaning of particular responses.

Unfortunately, the distance between researcher and those researched and the nature of face-to-face contact does not allow interviewees to take control of their participation. Telephone interviews, for instance, allow the person being researched to remain at a distance from the researcher and to have total and complete control over what they choose to communicate. Women often feel "trapped" into responding in a face-to-face conversation. Many relationships between researcher and respondents have been sabotaged because of misunderstood social cues. In this study, these differences were explained to each woman of Color to ascertain if there was a more convenient way to get the information or for the woman to feel comfortable with the interview. As an alternate method, telephone and email interviews were offered with the understanding that some of the contextual qualities sought might be lost.

An analytic comparison was selected for analyzing the data. I used the women's responses in order to compare themes and ideas among women of Color groups. From the information I collected, I first used coding to help identify included terms. Included terms were determined

after reviewing the data to pinpoint similar and consecutive ideas. After coding, I developed an analysis whereby references to identity (color, group affiliation, status and class), feminism and activism (definition, description affiliation with), and majority tactics (media, policies, politics and resulting actions, type coding and dominant ideology) were used as the included terms for solidarity or conflict. I eliminated ideas as contributing factors if the idea or concept was not shared by many women of Color as related to conflict or solidarity. I focused on what was common across cases.

Categories were then developed into which included terms were fit (identity, solidarity, conflict). These categories also served as cover designations – broader inferred themes and concepts about included terms as they relate to the context of the research (e.g. affiliation and acceptance of women in the same of Color group and women in other of color groups, or as one interviewee dubbed it, “the mixing of skins”). Responses were seen to represent the women’s thoughts about conflict, solidarity and identity. While the excerpts about identity are few, many of the comments about conflict also relate to identity. Therefore, identity can be viewed as a theme that contributes to conflict.

I took precaution while analyzing to ensure that using a predetermined interview outline caused no loss of important and salient topics. I realize that one of the weaknesses of the interview guide approach is the possibility of inadvertently omitting important topics. The flexibility in sequencing and wording questions also could result in different responses and reduce the comparability of the responses (Wolcott, 1996). In the earliest rounds of coding I included any blatant or interpreted similarities among the women’s answers on any topic referred to during an interview. The topic, the respondent population and the information to be gleaned from each interview made the *semi-structured interview still the most useful of the interview styles available.*

If common struggle ("United we stand; Divided we fall") is a true concept, women of Color should work together actively to rid themselves from race, class and gender-based (re) actions. I collected data to develop an understanding about differences and similarities in cultures and the effects of these differences or similarities related to multicultural feminism. A brief overview of the data shows that women of Color do not specifically plan to work together and they are active only about matters that affect family members and in some cases, their community (neighborhood). One woman summed up the research issues by saying, "It sounds good, but time consuming to try to get everyone together. It's a different way of thinking and one most women don't have a model for. We may all want the same thing, but our experiences dictate different ways of getting what we want. Because the nation defines us as the same, it doesn't mean we are the same. Similar is not same."

During the three-month period between June 2000 and August 2000, I conducted 24 interviews on two coasts. While this timeframe is short, my understanding of how actions and events can change the scope of understanding of people(s), I sought to collect the information from the women in an expedient manner such that the frame of reference of all the women could be similar.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The study addressed three major research questions: (1) do women of Color believe that multicultural feminism is a useful way to improve their collective status? (2) Do women of Color attempt to unite in an effort to raise their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status? and (3) If women of Color do not unite, are there either external societal factors or factors internal to women of Color as a group that keep them from uniting?

In their own words, African American (AA), Asian American (AS), Hispanic/Latina American (HS) and Native American (NA) women talk about their views on multicultural feminism and how they cope with socioeconomic and sociopolitical issues. I have included typical representative responses to the various questions in the interview guide. For a more complete list of quotes, refer to Appendix B. It should be noted that women of Color do not see themselves fitting discreetly into one of these four categories. On the other hand, they do see themselves as minorities who are disadvantaged in one or more ways.

Belief in Multicultural Feminism

The concept of multicultural feminism is not well understood or accepted by women of Color. Many have very negative opinions or do not understand the meaning of feminism. Others have problems with the concept of multicultural. Some women of Color fight hard to maintain their own culture, to “stay who we are.” They cannot fathom the idea of “mixed

culture.” Even among those who do understand and support the concept of multicultural feminism, their efforts are thwarted by the inability to assemble a critical mass of women across cultures to grasp the need for or idea of connectedness. They are told that Americans in the United States espouse not only that all human beings are created equal, but also that all Americans are endowed with certain unalienable rights; that the national anthem designates America as “the land of the free” and the Pledge of Allegiance touts “liberty and justice for all.” Instead, they see that life conditions appear to be mandated by opportunity, power and privilege determined by policies, structures and functions of what may be an “undemocratic United States.”

For many of the women, there was either an unclear perception of feminism and activism or distaste for what they believed the words represented.

A few of the representative statements follow:

- I am not as outspoken as a feminist. That brings its own conflict. -HS
- I was never brought up to be an activist person because I am a woman, but we are taught silent thunder is mightier than the sword. -AA
- It's one thing to be a feminist, all women are feminists in their own way in that they all fight for women's rights whether just for women of Color, for women of their own color, or for the good of all women; but many of us are still not activists. I guess you could say we talk the talk but we do not walk the walk. -AA
- Feminists are confrontational. I have a can do attitude but it is not destructive to any one. -NA
- Americanization is different for different groups. Some lose their traditions. Those with traditions closer to American have an easier time. Feminism and activism do not change anything. They just add more conflict by adding more difference. -AA

Attempts to Unite to Raise Their Social Status

The women of Color in this study did not attempt to mobilize. Responses show that these women generally don't think of their plight as similar to others. Women of Color,

especially Asian American women, are mired in regional differences and bear strong nationalist tendencies to their homelands. This pattern is echoed among African and Hispanic/Latina Americans. Naturalized Africans in the United States, as opposed to African Americans born in the United States, feel very little allegiance to African Americans. They have a negative view of African American's need to lose self and assimilate white culture.

Women of Color do not attempt to unite to improve socioeconomic and sociopolitical status. While this might be surprising, women of Color in the trenches do not seem to know or understand the wisdom of solidarity. It appears not so much that they are in obvious conflict; they just don't connect to the idea of collective social change. Some don't actually realize that they are oppressed or think of themselves as a minority. They certainly don't see themselves as a unified collective.

They said:

- The church is responsible for bringing people together. There are so many religions and differences within religions that if churches and faiths cannot get together, how can people? Some religions even pit people against each other. -AA
- If we are not defined by geography, I still do not feel we are all alike. -AS
- Similarities boil down to common objective. With a different specific objective people have little in common. -AA

The women of Color seem to blame one another and group culture as a reason not to unite.

The women stated:

- We are inhibited around white people. Their culture is placid; ours has feeling and outward emotion. -HS
- We should not have to prove we are okay because we are different. We are just as good as they [whites] are. -HS
- We rarely socialize outside our group but that has to do with ideas, food, holidays and other cultural sameness. -HS

- We learned early that white is right and money is power. -AA

Hispanic/Latina women, as yet, have not defined themselves in a way in which all of the women feel comfortable. Many are not sure what the term Hispanic means. To many of them Latina signifies those women of Color from Latin American countries. Others consider themselves to be Chicanas (a term recognized but not used as a classification here). Other women of this minority say the term Chicana (which is more prevalent on the West Coast) is a political term, however, some say that the politics of Latinas and Chicanas are similar in terms of oppression. This group too appears to prefer designations that relate to their native homeland (e.g., Puerto Rican, Columbian, Mexican).

Only Native Americans seem to feel any real allegiance to other Native American women. We think of Indians as existing as tribes, and tribal designations still exist. One Native American woman told me that Indians couldn't afford to shun one another because there are too few Indians left. She said the planned genocide of Indians was meant to diminish their numbers so they would not be a threat to American Europeans. Asked about this tendency to bond, another Native American woman on a different coast said she thinks this is true when the Native American race [sic] is threatened, but she said she feels tribal designations are still important and provide an Indian class system.

Why Don't Women of Color Attempt to Unite

The feeling seems to be that mudding the waters, becoming a mixed group, may confuse the issues. The women of Color say within similarities they share there are a myriad of differences. What they seem to understand best is a comment made by Exxo (1987) that the "American Way" is the capitalist's way, "the good life" is their life and good words are

bound to the service of one idea, one class. They understand that they as individuals must pay homage to the “house of Have,” to have any chance of becoming a part of this group that represents the way life should be.

In several interviews, as the respondents discussed the ruling class, it became clear that they were not of one mind about it. Some don’t feel dominated, necessarily, by this class and don’t really see that the economic system under which they live, the political system that runs the economic system and a concept of reality are all handed to them and may not be “for the people, by the people and of the people.” Significant here is their lack of understanding that stratification is imbedded in common practice. Not all women of Color could acknowledge that inequality is a basis for conflict between the power elite, who also have policy-making authority and a desire to maintain the status quo, and them, ethnic minorities. Others blame most of the problems on the system.

Those responses suggest that the cause of their plight is outside of their control, external or caused by the system or society.

They understand:

- The system is set up for some to fail. Those with a different doctrine fail. -NA
- Class issues separate groups more than cultural differences and minority sameness. -AA
- America has always had an underdog that many felt was a burden and that they had to drag along and pull up by their bootstraps. But there would be no underdog if Americans had not displaced the so-called underdog. That is where the conflict comes in. There can be no solidarity or order with so many underdogs vying for a place. -NA
- We allow ourselves to be told by society who we are. We should not stand for the politics. -HS
- Too many people have to give up too many things for there to be equality. Many do not know the meaning of sacrifice and love thy brother. -NA

- There are so many angles here to consider. Too many issues, too many people, too many classes, too much and too many years of status quo. Too much competitiveness. Like the song says, "It's gonna take a revolution." -HS

On the other hand, women of Color themselves hold cultural beliefs and act in ways that make it difficult, if not impossible, to unite in a collective effort.

According to these women:

- We carry our culture with us. Because of different cultures, we have differences. But our differences should not make some better than others. -AS
- Those who do things differently may be hard to deal with. -HS
- The status quo is conflict because all people are unique with individual priorities. It is hard to leave behind individual priorities even if they are not for the good of all people. -HS
- We can only fight for one issue at a time. People have different issues. What is good for one group may not be good for everyone. It could be a difference in timing or in the way they fight. Social change cannot benefit us all. There is no way we all can win. Money is the power that drives one people against the other. -HS
- The different parts and pieces make us different. Physical differences in skin color, hair type, homeland and background all make us different. We divide among differences and those different people want their own different whatever it is. Identity politics is into difference. In my house, generalizations are not allowed. This does away with stereotypical beliefs that group people and ignore difference. -AA
- No one can see that for anyone to truly benefit we all must benefit. This takes action. -AA

While women of Color feel they don't consciously plan to discriminate against other women of Color in their efforts to improve their social status, they do behave in ways that do discriminate. They say, in most cases, there are just too many things such as jobs, family, children and living that get in the way of planning or not planning to discriminate. "It's just easier to stick to what you know best," one woman said. Skin color, however, seems to be a major issue among women of Color and among women of Color groups. Many women feel

that because of the “white is right” syndrome, groups of color members feel that the more you act and look like your Anglo counterparts the better you are. The women also feel that whites more readily accept those of a lighter complexion color.

They women’s feelings included:

- We [Africans] think African Americans have very little pride because they want to be like white people. -AA
- Complexion makes a difference in the marginalization of women. They [whites] marginalize us all but those who are the closest to them in color are less marginalized by whites and more marginalized by their own group. We let them stratify us. -HS
- Conflict and diversity are because of color, not what is the same or what is different. -AA
- The first thing you see is color. Color is not an advantage unless you are without color. Because leaders are white, there is conflict between [minority] groups as to who is the whitest and who should be the closest to white and the closest to the leader. -AA

Some of the women appear to discriminate against other women of Color based on personal characteristics. Some typical comments follow:

- If a woman were a homosexual, it would affect my relationship with her, probably negatively. -AA
- Sexual orientation makes no difference to me, but it might make it harder to get together if I know their preference first. But that has to do with difference rather than commonness. -AS
- You cannot talk color without talking class. Color does affect class, which affects relationships and movements. -AA

A minority of those interviewed thought solidarity might be possible and elaborated on multicultural issues.

They said:

- I am closer to my own type but closer to minorities than to white people. -AA
- Race matters but so do occupation, custom, class and other things people can share. Sharing is before caring. -AA

- Take away color designations and definition by color. Conflict will decrease. -AA
- We all bleed red; we are all sinners and we all need to be saved. These are the similarities. More familiarity with our similarities may decrease the differences. -AA
- I do not know how to end bigotry. The strategies are not known. Time may be a factor, or it may be when we all need each other instead of being competitive. -HS
- We must see another world outside our own to allow for cultural differences. -AS

Identity appeared to have a lot to do with the women's self image. Many also struggled to explain who their "sisters" were and who they considered to be a woman of Color. Others defended how they came to know and understand themselves and others.

Comments included:

- Women of Color are anyone who is not European. -AA
- Media does inform me, it expands my view but I do not agree with everything. Dominant ideas do not always sway my opinion. -NA
- A sister is a friend who you can talk about anything with. There is little conflict because you agree to disagree. -HS

Those interviewed also were asked how they might bring about changes in inequality and/or how they would mobilize an attempt at multicultural feminism. Most did not have any idea how to fix inequality either by changing the system or working relationships with others. Although many tried to formulate a solution, it is most obvious that many more people think they know what is wrong or that something is wrong than those who have a plan to fix any of the situations they deem in need. Some women bordered on hopelessness as they talked about social change to fix the system; others decided things would never change.

According to the women:

- We are in for a lot of struggle before we tackle the broader tyranny. I do not see the first struggle conducted peacefully before tyranny crushes us all. -AA
- We need a new revolution. People just need to get fed up enough that they just cannot take the inequality anymore. I will never see this change in my lifetime. -AA

- I think change will occur through religious revolution. A religious revolution is a revolution for equality. ~AA
- No one agrees on all points, not even all feminists or activists, so I might as well be an individual. ~AA

Definitions and ideas used to describe patterned relationships explained in preexisting feminist theory were used to note regularities and make contrasts. Of the many coding families, the consensus family category was used to code according to agreement, definition, uniformities, opinions, consensus, conflict, consensus, differential perception and mutual expectations. All consensus are the result of my interpretation of the data. Uniformity of answers was revealed in these data:

- Ideas about [one's own] identity change the ideology of "sisterhood."
- Independent thinking is responsible for a lack of a collective behavior.
- Women of Color are negative about the term "feminist" yet most claim to believe in the concept of feminism.

One woman echoed a common thought about feminism when she said, "Women of Color work for the good of people of Color and their animosity is not only directed toward men."

The women said other aspects of their life kept them from concentrating on activism and social change. Their statements revealed, "Women of Color are active in regard to micro causes [family, job situations] rather than macro causes [racial and ethnic oppression]. They also said, "Activism for women of Color describes acting according to the personal agendas of each woman of Color; there appear to be no common denominators for thinking about activism."

One of the most revealing answers about how women of Color feel about collective strategy discounted thinking that those most prepared to work for social change are activists or feminists. The woman said, "Women of Color do not see a cause and effect relationship

between activism/activist and feminism/feminist, but they see activists as women with free time." In regard to sisterhood, one woman said, "Women of Color bond with all women in whom they have something in common, rather than according to race or ethnicity, but they tend to stay within their minority group or with minorities."

Women of Color in this study were candid about their assessment of women of different Color groups as well as those within the same group. One woman said that without a doubt, "Women of Color discriminate within group." Others said:

- Skin color is a major factor in collectivity.
- Solidarity is a concept that is hard to realize. It may never be reached. For this reason, women of Color groups will continue to experience fissures among groups as well as between women of Color in their own minority groups.
- Peace cannot occur for any groups of [minority] people because society is a dictatorship run by elites; some group has to be lowest on the totem pole. Those who start first remain "first."
- There are different causes for which different groups protest even though oppression is a collective cause.

Also, the women are less than positive about the way they are categorized within the larger society. One woman of Color said, "Women of Color feel categorization of them is too limited with too few definitions." Another felt, "Definition of identities and differences gets in the way of solidarity. One woman summed up the feeling of being marginalized by saying, "Democracy is a hollow concept: capitalism divides people into classes of haves and have nots. The plight of those at the bottom of the class scale is worsened when race and ethnicity are added to the mix. Because of patriarchy, gender further compounds the worst conditions for the worst off."

When asked why they feel conflict, not solidarity, identifies best the relationship among women of Color, some women thought misunderstandings about similarities and differences

played a part in the problem. One woman said, "Similarities are not necessarily a cause for solidarity," and another said, "While similarities are common among women of Color, differences are as common and differences and similarities can simultaneously exist."

Other women of Color seemed to agree. They said:

- Divide-and-conquer and majority group tactics increase conflict among groups.
- Feminism is class-motivated and activism is cause-related. Activism is personal.
- Activism and feminism do not necessarily exist simultaneously and neither activism nor feminism leads to solidarity.

Multicultural feminism has not been adopted by the larger society as an important paradigm to deal with the inequities faced by women of Color. Many women of Color blame "the elite" and are resigned to the situation. One interviewee quipped, "We don't all know each other well enough yet. It will come, it just takes time." Another blamed the lack of a multicultural feminism on "trust issues" that crop up when women are not familiar with one another. Women of Color, however, feel that the established majority has circumvented their efforts to unite. Typical of the comments is, "We have to work so hard just to keep up, we don't have time to think about anything or anyone else."

Solidarity appears to be threatened by issues of identity the women have about who society says they are, what others' definitions of them mean and how they fair in comparison to the "ideal type." Within group, women of Color compare themselves to one another. The strategy for defining themselves becomes, "If I am then you are then I am." The act of identifying with women of Color in other minority groups, for most of the women, is not yet an issue. More than they just don't identify with women of Color in other minority groups, it appears to be an issue they don't dwell on unless it happens by chance. Problems such as who is the most important, most established and who has the most income appear to dominate any

semblance of recognition of common identity among like minorities and different minorities. The women say that given the classifications by which they are defined in the United States, no one group is free to express themselves or their culture as different because they are forced into unrealistic groups of people. As for a multicultural feminism, again, that concept is not generally understood, yet the concept of a collective in terms of numbers as strength is firmly rooted. As collective status, solidarity appears to make sense to all women of Color. But, as one woman expressed, "As long as we don't have to give up anything."

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

"Your blues ain't like mine..."

The responses from many women of Color in this study remind me of a story I once read about two groups, both lower class, who exist in competition with one another as they are forced to vie for the resources needed to sustain life. While they share a similar plight, the groups remain in conflict because they live in fear that the other group will gain more power, advance farther or have more than their group does. They each want the same thing ~ a fair chance at life ~ but they feel that if one group has it, the other cannot. It appears that the struggle to exist, although common between the two groups, becomes a winner-take-all battle. The country is plush with resources, however; and there is plenty for all if only the life chances available in their homeland were equally distributed. They fail to understand that both groups suffer the same constraints and they have the same woes. They are pitted against one another in a furious battle over which group deserves the most and they do terrible things to one another because of their professed hatred for the other. It is a battle of one-ups-manship between like enemies. My research was planned, in part, to discover the mechanics of sisterhood among groups of women of Color who must co-exist together and to find out what antagonisms might pull them apart and what congruities might draw them together.

The experiences described by the women in this study are both compelling and complex, and they often tell a story similar to the one I read. If I described a singular impression of the women, it would define their single mindedness about family ~ extended family in all its

varieties. This impression began to emerge early on as woman after woman defined herself, her activities and her thoughts through her relationship to family. This interpretation ultimately influenced the findings in an important way. I acknowledged that who women of Color are and who they intend to be revolves around family. If the family is okay, the women's need for social change didn't appear to be an issue. If the women felt change was needed, much of what they described related to the changing nature of their self-concepts and their identities based on the relationships they had with others. The women talked extensively about relationships with partners, parents, friends, co-workers, traditions and heroines that had an influence on their lives. While the topic of discussion was aimed to discover the relationships among women of Color, most often, it centered around discussion of relationships in general that influenced their thinking about their own and others' identity. These relationships were the cornerstone for their thinking about multicultural feminism in terms of solidarity or conflict.

Through the women's descriptions of the complex interaction of personal, social and institutional factors that influence their alliances with others, it also became apparent that cultural hegemony plays a large part in determining how women of Color in this study feel about themselves. Their relationships are based on their identity and their concept of their identity explains much of any variation among factors that enhance and/or impede solidarity. For these women, central to understanding multicultural feminism as a potentially critical influence on their lives, as the decision between solidarity as a joining of forces of all women of Color and conflict as a state of separation among women of Color groups, is how that decision may shape and reshape how they define themselves and their relationships with others. In this study, personal identity, more than social and political factors, emerged as an important influence in whether to attempt solidarity or to accept conflict.

Discussion

Researchers of race relations, in general, similarly voice many of the ideas supported by the women in this study. Many of the women share dismay about intergroup relations. Many have less tenacity than called for to meet the struggle head on. Many blame the other. Most agree, however, that if you see one woman of Color, you have not seen them all; that the heavy weight of patriarchy does not level all differences; and that "grandmother" may not convey the same meaning as "abuela," as "buba," as "gran'ma" (Cole, 1996). A discussion of the research questions follows.

Do women of Color believe that multicultural feminism is a useful way to improve their collective status?

While women of Color groups in this study realize how important it is to support multicultural feminism, many acknowledge the lack of an adequate time commitment. Many have attempted to instill multicultural ideas in their children, but others have given up on their own generation. These women of Color believe that multicultural feminism might be a useful paradigm to improve their collective status, but they appear not to have the initiative to do what it takes to unite with one another because of external constraints that cause internal disputes. The internal disputes are played out as the lack of ability to assemble a collectivity or solidarity among women of Color. There is conflict within women of Color groups and conflict among women of Color groups just as there is conflict between women of Color and Anglo women.

The women feel an affinity to other women of Color but seem to take care of me and mine such as extended family and community before turning their attention to women of Color outside the family or community. Extended family and community members are mainly people of the same ethnicity. Socioeconomic and sociopolitical changes for the better are seen as desirable but most attempts for change are generally by an individual. The women acknowledge

that within group change sometimes is the result of paternalism with changes made for them rather than changes discussed with or most important to them. These women feel that change often comes without the wisdom of knowing the importance of the "first walk a mile in my shoes" proverb.

It appears that a lack of time takes priority over desire to work collectively for change. Most women thought the idea was reasonable, but human nature and socially constructed attitudes, affected by many and various conditions, abated real attempts for a multicultural feminism. They say a narrower focus, such as working within similarly defined group such as their own minority, is necessary first. Most of the women of Color feel that because of the American political process, minority groups face different problems in relation to where they exist on an axis of, for instance, inequality to equality and parity with those who enjoy the benefits of equality. The major political issues that inhibit the acceptance of a multicultural perspective are cultural hegemony and racial formation.

Cultural Hegemony

Majority/minority relations in the United States cannot be understood fully without reference to cultural hegemony. Hegemony is defined in the *Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought* as "Political and economic control exercised by a dominant class, and its success in projecting its own way of seeing the world. Hegemony infers human and social relationships as 'common sense' and part of the natural order by those who are, in fact, subordinated by it." Instrumental here is the idea that no matter who is in power, all groups contribute to and legitimate an environment of hegemony.

Cultural hegemony, then, explains the domination of the ruling class over other groups, economically, politically and culturally. Thus, minorities often find themselves accepting the reality constructed by the dominant class. This was found to be true in this study. Exoo (1987) takes the stance that hegemony is a top-down process of political learning, the extent to which

elites can impose their ideology on masses by domination of various sources of political ideas. According to Antonio Gramsci, cultural hegemony is an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. Evidence of both Exoo and Gramsci's thought about hegemony were reinforced by many of the answers of the women in this study. Cultural hegemony, then, can be seen as a cause of both cross-racial hostility, prejudice among women of Color, and internalized racism, trying to assimilate whiteness.

Evidence of interpellation also provided knowledge about the extent of the pervasiveness of cultural hegemony. When audiences experience interpellation (Marx), a process by which the representations found in culture are said to coerce individuals into accepting the ideologies carried by these forms of representation, the collective representations acquire an ideological function (Exoo, 1987). Similar to ideology that dominates the political realm and gives rise to political culture, hegemony, was shown to involve the domination of the social and cultural realms or lived systems of meanings and values of the women (Williams, 1977).

Gramsci's example of hegemony also emphasizes struggle, which certainly is connected to the idea of conflict discussed in this study. Conflict over material and nonmaterial resources and definitions of the social world are at issue along with disparity in the way the dominant culture renews, amplifies and extends existing predispositions that substantiate inequality (Curran, 1982). Gramsci describes hegemony as the total domination of the middle class, not only in political and economic spheres, but also in the sphere of consciousness (Cashmore, 1996). One Native American interviewee described just how this applied to Native Americans.

Marx described how capitalism undermined the best interests of the working class. The same could be said of the best interests of ethnic minority women. Members of the working

class do not oppose the order because they believe in its legitimacy, thus, they accept their own subordination. The situation of Asian American women demonstrates the importance of hegemony. Or, as Althusser explains, mainstream ideology is seen as a way of viewing reality; ideologies distort or mask true reality and serve ruling class interests enabling the class to keep control. Many of the women have determined that capitalism is at the root of their problems but they do not see that their acceptance of the dominant ideology allows it to persist.

According to Gramscian interpretation, the continued subordination of ethnicities is as much the result of ideology as it is to do with more easily identifiable forms of inequalities (Cashmore, 1996). If one thinks about the ideology concerning race, ethnicity and female gender, it is clear why some of the women in this study appear to have low self-esteem. They may, to some extent, believe in their inequality.

Hegemony as social conflict is played out in structure, function, interaction, power and control. Inequality can be caused, maintained and sustained by social conflict such as the conflict spurred by the idea of a "superior minority group." A society can best be thought of as consisting of categories and groups of people whose interests differ sharply from one another. The human components of society attempt to pursue their own interests in competition with others or to preserve their interests by resisting the competitive efforts of others as appears to be true of women of Color. A society so organized constantly experiences conflict as its components try to attain new gains or to preserve their interests. It isn't clear to the women of Color in this study that out of the process of competing and conflicting interests comes an ongoing process of change that is geared to maintaining the ideological status quo of those in and with power (Ball-Rokeach, 1985). A unified group, perhaps sharing a multicultural feminist manifesto, could serve to undermine this status quo.

An enduring example of hegemony is symbolic annihilation. For example, representation in the mediated reality of mass culture is in itself power; certainly, it is the case

that non-representation (annihilation) maintains the powerless status of groups who do not possess significant material or political power bases (Gross, 1988). The women denied that they form ideas about others by representation or non-representations of other groups. They say they do not believe everything media tell them. This may mean they are impervious to the density of media effects. According to Gerbner (1976), it is these groups at the bottom of various power hierarchies who are kept in their places by a relative invisibility termed symbolic annihilation.

Symbolic annihilation includes the following elements:

- Economic, political and social integration of modern industrial society allows few communities or individuals to maintain an independent integrity. The chief common ground among the different groups that make up heterogeneous communities is constructed;
- Not all interests or points of view are equal. Judgments are made constantly about exclusions and inclusions and these judgments mostly narrow the spectrum of views presented;
- When groups or perspectives do attain visibility, the manner of that representation reflects the biases and interests of those elites who define the public agenda. These elites are (mostly) white, middle-aged, male, and middle and upper-middle class;
- Decisions about which events are newsworthy and how to present them between the various categories of messages are heavily influenced by considerations of dramatic form and content (conflict and resolution). Messages share underlying similarities of theme, emphasis and value;
- The fictional worlds and persuasive realism of messages provide the broadest common background of assumptions about what things are, how they work or should work, and why; and

- The messages are likely to be especially powerful in cultivating ideas about groups and phenomena about which there is little firsthand knowledge of learning. Portrayals of minority groups will be relatively distant from the real lives of a large majority of media consumers (Gross, 1995).

The production of society for the women of Color is an ongoing process of negotiation among social actors. Negotiation, or exchange, whose job it may be to establish subordination or domination can facilitate conflict. The realm of power in social order and the management of social reality suggest an existence of recurrent patterns of interaction between subordinate and dominant individuals. The idea in this research that the effect of dominant, Anglo group hegemony causes strife among less dominant groups is validated. Women of Color, are constantly indoctrinated by the rhetoric of the dominant group and are in opposition not only to the reality of the dominant group, but also to one another as they wrestle for status at least somewhat equal to that of the Anglo groups.

It is vividly clear from the study that a connection exists between hegemony and self-concept. Self-concept suffers when reality is measured by the ideal. Hegemony clouds ideas of self and identity by reality not measuring up to the hegemonic ideal. Conflict is akin to hegemony. Hegemony is intrinsically involved in the idea of equality and causes conflict. Competing interests are an effect of a cultural hegemony that causes group conflict. Takaki (1990) identifies hegemony as a foundation of modern day racism.

While many of the women in this study were not aware of the term - "cultural hegemony" - most understood the importance of knowing one's own identity. This was especially strong among the Native American Indian women who were interviewed. Other women of Color who were newer to this country did not seem to be aware of any deliberate attempt to undermine their race or ethnicity; they simply felt that "it" (U.S. citizenship, which was the ultimate goal of many) was not as they had expected it. Most were unsure why, but felt that

citizenship did not lead to any improvement in their lives. This was especially true of Asian Americans. This group appeared to be more clannish, especially among same type groups within the Asian American women of Color group (e.g., Chinese, Korean, and Philippines etc.). This group also tended to focus more inward than to care what was or was not being done to them. Many felt they existed just fine in the United States.

Racial Formation

Various forms of racial strife that exist between the dominant group and minorities also can exist among minority groups themselves. Omi and Winant (1986) explain that racial formation is the most useful framework with which to analyze contemporary racial phenomena from the standpoint of hegemony. This approach views race as pervasive throughout social life.

Racial formation means that race has become a fundamental organizing principle of contemporary social life. As this study indicated, the women were more comfortable with like types. At its most basic level, Winant (1994) defines race as a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests. Race is a phenomenon whose meaning pervades social life. If race is a part of social life, racial formation may help explain why women of Color see a multicultural feminism as a futile attempt at unity. Race also pervades identity.

Race operates both micro- and macrosocially, not only on the individual psyche and relationships among individuals, but also collective identities and social structures are racially constructed. Because race is not a natural attribute but a socially and historically constructed one, the racial dimensions of social structures, identities and signification systems must be understood as flexible and contested and are often explicitly, but always at least implicitly, political terrain. The women in this study believe in this concept theoretically, but most react to this validation of self as true. Once again, politically, they are kept in their place while kept

apart from one another. This idea is compatible with the decentered conception of hegemony that resists the temptation to dismiss race as an illusion, mere ideology, while at the same time rejecting objectivist or essentialist interpretation of the concept (Winant, 1994).

Patterns of racism among minorities were clearly defined in the study that relate to minority-to-minority relationships. Many studies have focused on a prejudice-discrimination model to explain race and racism in the United States and the model helps explain a type of racism, or categorization, among minorities, evidence of internalized racism and cross-race hostility. The prejudice perspective focuses on the unfavorable attitudes directed at another group because of real or alleged physical or cultural characteristics. Discrimination discusses the overt, unequal and unfair treatment of minority groups because of alleged physical and cultural characteristics (Adorno et. al., 1950; Allport, 1954; Merton, 1970; Myrdal, 1944). Those groups of women of Color who have difficulty with the English language say they often feel used as well as abused.

Racism has been described as more individualistic, episodic, random, subjective and personal, and its effects are intended to harm (Feagin and Feagin, 1986). Racism is said to be the institutional or structural component of prejudice and discrimination. Racism is the natural order after exemplifying difference and favor based on difference. Carmichael and Hamilton (1967) view racism as institutional in nature and shift the focus from the individual to the system. Others such as DuBois (1961), Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1967) have stressed the subjective and philosophical aspect of racism and racism's structural component (e.g., which minority will get the job). Surely, it confuses the issue of solidarity when minorities are pitted against one another for resources and, as the women's answers demonstrate, the need to be the minority closest to the "right type." This avoids conflict both with other minorities and with whites.

Collins (1991) suggests that external definitions of minority life provided by dominant groups should be replaced by the self-defined standpoint of minorities. Collins says that oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if they frame their ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. This misinterpretation also occurs among minority groups. Several of the women alluded to the fact that they feel they often are saying the same thing as other women of Color, but their way of stating it is different and, therefore, misunderstood. As one woman explained, "Our conflict is about similarities as much as differences."

Benjamin (1991) says that to be a minority in North American society is to be conflictual. She says a dual value orientation exists in American society. While there is an adherence to democracy, freedom, equality, individualism, progress, achievement and success, there is also acceptance of racism and group discrimination that is the norm and is an integral feature of the American system. This dual orientation of American society generates a source of conflict that also affects minority-to-minority relationships such as among women of Color. According to Marable (1983), minorities have been exploited by the dual structures of racism and capitalism. He says that capitalism has underdeveloped an ethnic America. Capitalism generally supports a "rich get richer and stay dominant" philosophy. Of course, this is especially true if minorities accept their "place" and/or dismiss the concept of collective voice.

While sisterhood within the ranks of women of Color may try to ignore class and race differences among women, there still exists a metaphor and a vision that assumes collective experience and creation of new knowledge about previously invisible aspects of the lives of women of Color (Mauthner, 1998). Power and negotiation [cultural hegemony] gendered and ethnic talk [sisterhood and race formation] and subjectivity and emotions [identification issues] are incorporated in the relationships and affect any move toward solidarity among women of Color.

Do women of Color attempt to unite in an effort
to raise their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status?

Women of Color do not attempt to unite in an effort to raise their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status. In trying to discern one overriding characteristic of the reasons why women of Color do not attempt to unite, the problem appears to be the manner in which American politics affect those who live in the nation. The women interviewed for this study point to capitalism, competition, racial strife, all a part of American politics and central themes in cultural hegemony and racial formation, as the reasons for disunity among minority groups. Thus, their idea of feminism does not extend to a multicultural variety where all women of Color work together.

The women indicate that there are an array of factors that contribute to conflict among women of Color. These women want social change but seem unsure of how to accomplish positive overall quality of life changes for themselves or others, basically because of external pressures, demands and tactics. They have mixed feelings about the reason for their inequality, how to make changes and what changes should be made. They feel that attempts to unite are circumvented by both the power of politics and the daily grind to keep their heads above water.

The women say they are unsure what others, both within group and among minority groups, desire specifically, and they do not feel all women of Color want the same changes. They emphatically point to class differences as a major dividing line, one that is more significant than color. They acknowledge, however, that a lower class status combined with being of color, for both men and women, is the worst possible status. Skin color for most women of Color is synonymous with the ability to amass material wealth. The importance of skin color is a result of external policies.

Women of Color do not attempt to unite and do not specifically plan to practice multicultural feminism. It appears the forces of the established majority are detrimental to

multicultural feminism and methods toward multicultural feminism remain theory rather than practice. Women of Color are unable to assemble a critical mass of women from across the women of Color groups to establish a multicultural feminism. This is due, in part, to the inability of women of Color within a women of Color group to identify with other women in the group or for women of Color groups to identify with other, different, women of Color groups. Identity problems, caused by external societal factors, serve to cause friction among groups and manifests itself in no obvious attempt at a multicultural feminism.

If women of Color do not unite, are there either external societal factors or factors internal to women of Color as a group that keep them from uniting?

There appear to be both external and internal factors that keep women of Color from attempting to unite. More factors appear to be internal rather than external and most are related to differences among the women, a dimension of identity, and resulting comparisons with others. Looking at the problem from a cause and effect standpoint, the reason for the lack of an explicit move toward multicultural feminism appears to be external cause that causes an internal effect that causes an external effect. For instance, the fact that the status quo (external) causes dismay among some women of Color about the prospect for change (internal effect), the external effect is a non-changing status quo.

Major themes include comparison (as a form of competition and identity), differences in patterns of entry into the United States that result in different treatment, and intergroup relations. Each of these conditions, while contributing to conflict, also confounds identity and mitigates solidarity and multicultural feminism.

Comparison and Identity Issues

In a relationship, it may be impossible not to compare oneself to the other. Comparison can be conflictual and may cause, jealousy, competitiveness and poor self-esteem. Comparison, as an internal effect could be devastating to multicultural feminism. Social comparison

(Festinger, 1954) proposes that humans have a drive to evaluate themselves and that they even evaluate themselves by comparison when nonsocial means are available. Wood (1989) showed that comparison occurs in the evaluation of personal traits and circumstances. Merton (1970) and Richins (1991) recognized that people compare themselves with members of groups they do not belong to or with social categories ~ individuals with whom they share a social status but with whom they have no social interaction. Each of these descriptions of comparison as conflict and identity validation was discussed by the women in this study as problematic to solidarity and the success of a multicultural feminism.

Unconscious comparisons may also occur and the comparison can have a positive or negative impact on self-feelings (Allen and Wilder, 1997; Richins, 1991; Wood, 1989). Goethals (1986) suggests that comparison with others, especially "better off" others, either conscious or unconscious, may be facilitated by the abundance of portrayals of substantiality. Researchers have established that social comparison can affect self-concept, self-perception and other feelings of self, and comparison is important in determining subjective well being. Not only do women of Color compare and are compared to white women, but also women of Color compare and are compared to other women of Color. The research shows that women of Color compare and are compared to all women. Conflict is apparent when the results of the comparisons show some type of inequality among women of Color as well as between women of Color and Anglo women. The result, once again, is internalized racism and cross-racial hostility.

In this study, hegemony, masked as politics, and identity problems exacerbate differences that are played out in internal conflict within each of the minority groups that has as a further effect a negative contribution to minority group alliance. Internal factors include a sort of hopelessness about the ability of a minority group to change inequality to equality for all, an outcome of American politics; thus, the women show some disinterest in multicultural feminism and solidarity.

This study shows that internally, the effects of external pressures (politics) lead to identity crises among women of Color – who they are as well as who they want to be. Women of Color do not define themselves as unified or of grouped categories. The definitions of who they are and about their culture are described and categorized by others and are confusing and misleading to them. For instance, inclusive terms such as Asian American are terms the women feel do not describe them and, for some, even disparage them. They generally do not categorize themselves as the same as other members of their group (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean = Asian American). This hurdle may mean that an association with other women of Color is remote.

Disunity caused by forms of classification may have nothing to do with feelings about or knowledge of other groups, but appears to be more a result classifications and categories used in the United States. Alliances are made with those who are “around,” those with whom the women come in contact daily as a way to facilitate individual and routine life “chores” rather than as a conscious effort to form alliances for mass social change. Ignoring within group differences can contribute to tension among groups.

Relative to identity is an ensuing social anxiety associated with notions of self among women of Color called *image distortion disorder* (LeNoir, 1997). Similar to symbolic annihilation, according to LeNoir (1997), distorted images of race and ethnicity have created a national crisis based on race. Because in America there is little mixing of ethnic populations, most of the images that one ethnic group has of another group are socially constructed (a result of hegemony). Similar to image distortion disorder by a connection to the effects of hegemony on solidarity, cultural alterity, the state or quality of being different; oppositeness, also exploits differences.

Race, gender and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as vestiges of bias or domination or as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different. According to this

understanding, the women of Color in this study would agree the liberatory objective should be to empty such categories of any social significance. The women feel their identity is defined as (1) a woman, or (2) a person of color. It is an either/or proposition. This relegates the identity of women of Color to a location that resists telling (Crenshaw, 1993). The women say there is no either or, they are African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latina American or Native American. Their identity always is based on that which marginalizes them most. They say color and culture are their identifying traits. Identity of self also is central to understanding the other. Women of Color must know who they are to understand who they are not. If they know who they are, they can see and understand (as comparison) that their relationship to the other is unequal.

Dissimilar Origin

How a minority group enters the United States and is accepted by the dominant group affects how that group interacts with other minority groups. The women in this study seem to feel a distinct difference in the way different minorities are treated now that may be based on how they were treated in the past. Here again, the feeling is to aspire to be the "superior minority" closest to the other.

Information about entry into and living within the United States for of color groups provides an indication about how divisions and classifications become problematic and aid in an understanding of the current situation for many women of Color. Brief historical contexts are presented for each woman of Color group to help explain the effects of current political domination and the reason for hesitation to associate with either contemporary (Anglo) feminism or a woman of Color multicultural feminism in a collective stance for social change.

African Americans

On a day in 1619, a ship docked in Jamestown, Va., and unloaded a cargo that included 20 African servants. Although the concept of slavery did not yet exist, the status of the

indentured servant was a familiar one and seemed to fit the new arrivals. They were not white; their culture was far more different from the dominant English culture; they were not Christian.

In 1661, Virginia became the first colony to legalize permanent slavery and by the time of the Civil War, there were four and one half million people of African descent, 90 percent of whom were slaves, who had the task of suddenly creating a new position for itself in American society.

The results of the Americanization of Africans are unique in American history. Beyond legal restrictions, they could not own property, could not enter into a contract of any kind and could not gain legal resources; they were pieces of property. The slave owner's purpose was to break down native cultures and to replace them with tailor-made slave culture suitable for the work and lifestyle demanded by the system.

As African Americans, they were limited socially. It was against the law to teach a slave to read or write and upon emancipation, they had few skills. With options severely limited, the only viable alternative was sharecropping. Sharecroppers were almost as effectively tied to the land as slaves.

Jim Crow laws forced racial separation in practically all aspects of life as an alternative means of domination. The end of World War I was the beginning of large-scale anti-Black racism in the North, much of this racism coming from relatively recent European immigrants who competed with African Americans for jobs. World War II produced massive African American unemployment as white soldiers returned in a slowing peacetime economy. African American/white relationships were heavily affected by the distribution of power and valued goods and services in the larger society. Based upon age-old conceptions, prejudice and

segregation still exist in a society shaped to maximize the benefits and power of whites. Skin color defines this group although, today, not all black people are descendants of Africans (Luhman and Gilman, 1980).

Asian Americans

As voluntary immigrants, Asians came to America intending to accumulate wealth and return to their native land. As unskilled laborers, many were employed by railroad companies to build the transcontinental railroad.

The Chinese were the largest group of Asian immigrants. They soon became the object of racist attacks from non-Asian Westerners who, among other things, did not appreciate the competition for jobs. In an 1871 Los Angeles riot 22 Chinese were hanged and the 1885 Rock Springs, Wyo., massacre claimed 29 Chinese. Attempts also were made to end Chinese immigration, which became a reality in 1882. Chinese immigrants banded together for mutual support, protection and pleasure in enclaves such as "Chinatown."

The second largest Asian immigrant group was the Japanese who began to arrive after Chinese immigration ended. They found anti-Asian sentiment already established. Industrious Japanese experienced racist attacks from the non-Asian population that feared competition. Such fears led to the California Alien Land Law of 1913 that prohibited "aliens" such as Japanese from owning land.

Perhaps the worst racism inflicted upon Asian Americans was during World War II. The Japanese were "relocated" through the auspices of the US Army to concentration-like camps for the duration of the war, all except Japanese men in the camps who volunteered for military service. After the war, Japanese soldiers and relocation camp inmates returned to communities where they faced the same racism. The Chinese were seen as a threat to the working class, to American democracy and to other American institutions. Many of these stereotypes and fears

transferred to the Japanese and then to other Asian American groups as they arrived in the US.

It is noteworthy to mention that Asian Americans come from a variety of cultures as distinct from one another as they are from whites (Luhman and Gilman, 1980).

Hispanic/Latina Americans

This cultural designation comprises many different Spanish-origin groups. The ancestors of some of these groups were already North Americans. Although many Hispanic Americans are of European ancestry, they often are the victims of racial discrimination. The term Hispanic often symbolizes Spanish heritage and the term Latino stresses the common origins of these groups in Latin America. The name Chicanos originally referred to Mexican Americans who lived in a territory taken over by the United States. They became Americans of Mexican decent. The term, Hispanic American, is used to define each of these groups.

Mexican Americans entered the US under the terms of the peace treaty that followed the US/Mexican war in the 1840s. The area that is now the entire southwestern US was originally controlled by Mexico before this war, and before that, by Spain. At the end of the war, there were about 60,000 Mexicans in New Mexico, 5,000 in Texas, 7,500 in California, 1,000 in Arizona, and a few settlements in what is now Colorado. The Mexicans were no match for the power of the US government. Largely, the Mexicans were unskilled but the group found work on railroads and in agriculture when it was available. The Mexican-American minority status was well established.

When work was less available, the familiar pattern of ethnic group competition over employment repeated itself and Mexicans joined the ranks of so many other ethnic groups deemed racially different from Europeans. During times of strife, more Mexicans were deported under the charge of being illegal aliens than actually were, but during times of prosperity, they were more than welcome as industrial and agricultural workers such that some probably entered the US illegally because no one cared.

Mexicans fell into the category of involuntary immigrants because their low status had already been established in the course of conquest and their lives were very much at the mercy of the dominant Europeans who alternately used them and discarded them as the situation required. Many prejudices were incorporated into the dominant culture and were transferred to Puerto Ricans as well as other Hispanic American groups e.g. Cubans, as they entered the US. For those more affluent and prosperous Hispanic American groups, the success was thought to be undeserved or gained by unfair tactics. There is no single Hispanic American experience, but cheap labor and industrialization underscore the trend of dominant/minority relationships (Moore and Pachon, 1985).

Native Americans

The social scientific history of social groups in the US includes the first group to occupy territory. History encounters Native Americans first, but a focus on power and domination over them has been studied last. Rather than recognizing the uniqueness of each tribe, the manner in which Europeans exercised their domination was highly standard for all tribes. In spite of their uniqueness, however, they have seldom been in a position to express it in the face of the overwhelming power of the Europeans. That power was used to place almost all American Indians in a common situation.

Native American Indians could never be successfully exploited as a labor force. Tribal cultures proved to be too strong an obstacle. Indians also constantly, physically, posed a problem for Europeans as settlement expanded westward. Because of these two factors, Europeans had the choice of either killing Indians or moving them to undesirable land. Both solutions proved adequate for the Europeans. As Californians found it easier to move Mexicans than to feed them, the earlier Europeans often found it easier to kill Indians than to move them.

Moved to reservations, a no-man's land between two cultures, the tribe had no real national political influence. The government took the position of legal guardian, supposedly

acting in the interests of the tribe. Since 1924, Native American Indians have been legal citizens of the US. Nevertheless, their lack of political control gives the contemporary Indian on or off the reservation no way to compete economically. Native Americans have been among the most impoverished groups in society. The reservation land they retained was generally of poor quality. Traditional food sources were destroyed and hunting and gathering lands were lost to white farmers and ranchers. They were limited by racial prejudice and policies designed to either maintain their powerlessness and poverty or to force them to become Americanized.

Native Americans became a minority group through military conquest. Poverty, powerlessness, prejudice and discrimination continue. Opportunities to develop human capital are scarce. Stereotypical, demeaning and negative portrayals are common and lifestyles of Indians are more partial and tenuous than of comparable segments of the dominant group (Wax, 1971).

All groups entered the United States as subservient to Anglos. Hegemony and identity, the cause of cross-racial hostility and internalized racism, central to the findings of this study, contributed largely to the maintenance of this status quo. Hegemony became the weapon of the ruling class to remain dominant. Related to hegemony and identity issues are intergroup relations, racial formation, annihilation and comparison. In studying the relationships among women of Color, while all women of Color exist as minorities, it is necessary to understand mainstream racial theories as they relate to conflict among minority groups and because of sought after, progressively better, dominant/minority relationships. Contributing issues to minority/minority relationships are discussed.

Intergroup Relations

As we have seen already in this study, in contemporary American society, race remains a primary component of ideological consciousness and affects not only dominant/minority relationships, but also minority/minority relationships. Probably better viewed as intragroup

relations (minorities relating to other minorities), according to Gordon (1978), six patterns of intergroup relations can exist between the dominant group and minorities and parallels the group relationships that sometimes exist among minority groups. Racism, discrimination and prejudice are very much intertwined for the women in this study and, as a result, limit minority group solidarity. The amount of prejudice and discrimination, however, varies and, therefore, racial and ethnic relations may appear in different forms ranging from violent conflict to peaceful coexistence depending on how much the dominant group is seen to reject or accept its minorities.

Intergroup relations among minorities are often contingent upon the degree of acceptance of any one minority by the dominant group at any one time (the "superior minority"). Intergroup patterns include: assimilation, legal protectionism, population transfer, subjugation, extermination of the group and cultural pluralism. Consider that all minority groups have been subjected to all forms of intergroup relations from their emergence in the nation to the present. As familiar situations, these patterns are available to shape the formation of minority/minority relationships. All of the women of Color groups seem to relate to assimilation for their group (especially Asian Americans), but all of the groups do not feel that all of the other groups have assimilated (e.g., most other groups don't feel that Asian Americans have assimilated and Native Americans point to Hispanic/Latina Americans as having not been assimilated).

Assimilation is characterized by minority acceptance of dominant culture. The culture of the minority group is lost as it is blended with the dominant culture. Legal protectionism is a paternal type of arrangement where the dominant group protects a non-dominant group, usually through policies and laws. The dominant group mimics support for minority groups in the ways that the dominant group sees fit.

The Cherokee "Trail of Tears" saga provides an example of population transfer. Here, the dominant group employs its power to remove a minority group from one place to another, to expel a minority from certain areas or to push the minority group out of the area entirely. Subjugation also provides for dominant group control over the minority group. Facilities belonging to the dominant group are usually separate and superior to those of minorities in this scenario. Extermination attempts to wipe out a large group of people and amounts to wholesale killing of racial and ethnic groups.

Cultural pluralism, assumed the fairest method of "handling" the minority issue in the United States, is the condition where racial and ethnic groups are allowed to maintain or retain cultural/ethnic identities and group/cultural loyalties within the broader culture. This is the opposite of assimilation and requires mutual respect for other groups' traditions and customs. While cultural pluralism encourages each group to take pride in its distinctiveness, to be conscious of its heritage and to retain its identity, it can encourage patterns of identity problems and politics and usually results in a "which minority group is the most important or unique" scenario that conflicts intergroup relations between minority groups. The significance of "equal" ethnic holidays representing all races and ethnicities is a result of cultural pluralism. The women in this study say this type of accommodation often causes more confusion, comparison and anxiety than clarity about other groups and contributes to conflict.

The Voices of Women of Color

The women in this study had much to say. They sought to enlighten me about themselves, their ideas and their lives. Some of the information they provided did not fit directly as answers to the research questions. Nonetheless, while some of their thoughts defied categorization and research classifications, the information important to understanding women of Color represented by the 24 women in this study. The information they shared with me gives voice to their opinions.

Women of Color

The most striking differences in answers were the ideas about who belongs in the different women of Color group, who is a minority and who is oppressed. Other differences in answers included the definitions of feminism. Although all the women of Color thought the word feminism, when related to Anglo women had a negative connotation, some believed it was the relationship between the words feminism and activism that caused anxiety. Other women of Color felt that the two "isms" in feminism and activism made them the same in terms of aggressiveness, and still others felt that feminism was a "woman" thing and activism had to do with militancy. Additionally, answers covered a wide range when the women of Color were asked what should be done about oppression and the reason for the lack of women of Color alliances. Answers varied from "it will take time" to "first there will have to be a revolution."

Answers that were most similar across women of Color groups also related to feminism and activism. Most women were opposed to widely accepted views and definitions of feminism and activism. All suggested that while the term feminism might have a negative connotation, they were feminists if the word defined women who were involved in their environments by taking care of things they saw as wrong. They were professed activists in their own way about things close to home. All said time and family matters kept them from the "flag-waving" type of activism. Some said it was not their nature to display openly their ideas. Although some were activists in college and some even said they were thought of as feminists, all said the time commitments were a problem.

Most of the women also did not harbor animosity toward men in general. Most felt that all men are not alike either. When asked about the men they were the most skeptical about, they ranked white men with men of other cultures closely. The women identified a hidden agenda, "not sex necessarily, but something that could be of benefit to the man," as the main reason for their distrust of groups of men. Men who belonged to a different of color group than

the women of Color were identified as a cause for worry. When questioned about the cause of this worry, the women said they did not know "other" men as well and did not know what to expect. The women denied the fact that their uneasiness about other men might be because of stereotypes about the group. Most said they knew stereotypes were mostly "white peoples' definitions," but they are aware of the stereotypes about their own and other of color groups anyway. One woman said, "We have our stereotypes and names for them too."

Progress in Life Chances

Women of Color in this study who felt progress in their status had been achieved also felt that the real progress was for individual minority groups with few substantial changes overall for minorities as a collective group. Some said life really was not better for those of color compared to, for instance, European immigrants. Many felt the way the "so-called" advances in their life conditions, as they called them, were couched to appear as positive changes over time. Many felt that whatever was done to improve the condition of ethnic minorities also was done to placate them. Other women said the changes were to make the "white people feel as if they were doing something." Several women of Color felt that stratification is not the fault of all white people, merely those who have money and want to keep it that way. In addition, most of the respondents feel white women, as women but also white, are a part of the dominant class. Overall, it appears that women of Color feel as if political machinations work against them.

Most of the women felt that they were doing their part in their own way to make the world a better place and to make life as comfortable as possible for themselves and their families, but most also said they felt ill-equipped to tackle the country's political "scheming" by themselves. When asked if they felt more able to tackle the problems of ethnic minorities in this country any better than previously, they still said "No."

Sisterhood

Those women of Color whose families came to the United States with money felt less kinship with women of Color within their groups. One Hispanic woman told me that she was not Hispanic but Argentinean, and while she had some affinity with her Hispanic sisters, her life was not like that of many other Hispanics. She felt she was in America to get her education ("use the US system") to take her knowledge home and better her country. She said she had no tolerance for the politics of the United States that classified people, but she did not have to worry about our system. Her biggest complaint about living in America was the "old boys clubs" that exist. In her country, for her class (high) specifically, women are considered equal, especially those with an education. She said America imposes unnecessary tension between people of color groups because of its class categories. "People are not so much the same that you can lump them into four categories," she said. Hispanic women were not at all satisfied with one label, Hispanic, for all people from countries of Spanish origin.

The societal categorizations of people of color were problematic for other women of Color as well. Many women expressed concern about the categories used to describe them as women of Color and about the definitions of who women of Color are. They said the most common descriptions did not fit their definitions of themselves or of various other women of Color. Many women did not mention Native American Indian women when asked about who they thought were women of Color. Some women explained that women of Color included any women who were not "all white." Categorically, the pure white designation was reserved for women who did not have worries about being different. In terms of a plausible explanation for what genetics constitute the category of all white, however, there was none. An understanding of Anglo women by most women of Color was those women who belong to the "have" as opposed to the "have not" category; those women who can afford the time to be feminists. It is

apparent that many women of Color, even those who have benefited from the American system of politics and those who teach children and uphold the laws of the nation, feel a divide between themselves and women "born with a silver spoon." The issue was social class.

Many of the women feel an "all women" category is not enough to bring the common struggles of all the women to the forefront. One woman said, "We're all fighting for something, but it's not always the same thing at the same time. Our concerns change, and that has more to do with our personal life more than what's going on in the world (nation)." Another woman said that white women feminists did not have a lock on the personal versus the political problem. As explanation, she offered, "My kids are on my mind more than El Nino and Clinton's affairs." She said she might pair up with another mother whose kids had the same problems before she would pair up with another women of her race or ethnicity just because they were both the same color and sex. It also appeared that women did not draw the line at working with women only; if men had the same concerns as they did, they would work with men. The women of Color, however, agreed that it was easier to work with women because women felt concern in the same way as other women, especially about family matters.

I noticed a similarity among the groups to the question about who would or could be called a "sister." All spoke of needing to have ideas, values, needs, concerns and interests in common. Similar values seemed to be the strongest need. In addition, not one of the women of Color considered herself to be prejudiced or to discriminate against other minority groups. Almost all said they were aware of racist attitudes and unequal policies, but almost all also said it would be hard to stick their necks out for another minority person who was discriminated against because of what might happen to them such as losing their job. All said, however, that they would participate in a movement to end inequality or unfair practices that involved work or family. It sounded as if the women of Color believed in the idea of "safety in numbers," but this only extended to the personal ~ work, family.

In discussing sisterhood, all of the women listed their sisters who were kin first and someone with whom they had something substantial in common as second. They said the race of the person did not matter. In answer to my question, "As a person in a room of strangers, to whom would you gravitate or sit next to?" all of the women of Color in this study said they would probably sit next to another woman, but the type of woman differed among their answers. Some referred to a woman of like type as a comfort factor even though they might not end up as good friends, and some said a woman of a different race (meaning a white woman) so that it wasn't obvious they "had" to sit next to another minority woman. Others said it really did not matter; they did not make a conscious decision.

Sex appears to be more important than race in forming associations. Many women of Color said they did not pick friends based on race, although some said they really only socialized with like types outside of work. Many also said if they were friends with a woman of Color who was not of their woman of Color group or with a white woman, if they had to make a choice, they would have to stick with "their own kind" (women they assumed were of the same ethnicity). Most were not sure why they would pick the most similar group to them to socialize with, but some said it was because of their family relationships (it seemed they deferred to husbands more often than not). Others alluded to the "blood is thicker than water" analogy.

Equality Issues

Color was explained as a variable in equality. One woman told me that even within her own family, the complexion of her siblings varied. She said that those who were the fairest were the ones who profited in life. Those who were of a darker complexion felt the stigma of inequality far more than those who were of a lighter complexion no matter income, education or marital status. One woman said that she felt Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition would not be possible until color variations no longer defined good and bad. According to some women,

degrees of color are a major problem that affects women of Color groups. This effect of skin color seems most apparent for African and Hispanic women. Hair and hairstyle also seem to make a difference in acceptance.

Other women of Color saw African American women who wear braids as more militant and, therefore, more subject to scrutiny. Women in the African and Hispanic American groups who had or either knew someone who had a finer, thinner, more Anglo grade of hair were viewed as "whiter" and often truly thought to be not of the women of Color group. One woman explained the situation as she thought many women of Color might feel: "White is still right. Everyone feels that the closer you are to the perfect woman, who is white, the better you are, even within families. The model is still white and because of the power white people have, that model will always dictate who is okay and who is not okay." When asked about similarities and differences, she said, "We're all different, but those of us, even with our differences, who are the most similar to the white model, who can hide their differences more, profit most." Another woman said, "We (women of Color) don't get along because things like skin color are used against us to cause animosity between us. If we could just be happy with ourselves, we'd probably prosper more, but no matter what we do, we can't get that white stereotype out of our heads."

Misnomers

During our discussions about judging people without factual knowledge, I shared with some of the women an account of a situation I witnessed. In this situation, a well-educated white woman from an aristocratic family, one who previously enjoyed all the benefits afforded an Anglo-Saxon woman of her class, had a very pronounced southern accent. Other Anglo women outside of the southeast ostracized her because of her southern drawl. They assumed she was a spoiled, rich southern debutante or an uneducated buffoon. Because she did not, in their eyes, convey the necessary attributes of those bestowed with power and righteous in their haughtiness, she did not, for her northeast Anglo sisters, represent the epitome of the perfect white woman.

She was treated as an outsider, one to avoid association with, in spite of her skin color. She was not accepted as a member of the elite until the other white women validated her membership in the aristocracy and learned the facts about her lineage. The women of Color in this study related to the situation I described, and some said they had experienced similar treatment. They said that color is generally associated with lower class and less education. Many had experienced the stigma associated with color and compounded by false judgment. One woman said that because false judgments are so often the cause for discrimination, her rule of thumb was, "Don't judge someone until you've really experienced their story."

Several of the women expressed helplessness about identity qualifiers that wrongly categorize them. They said that while they themselves did not feel inferior, in trying to pull women together in a common cause, education, finances and life outlook played a major role in continuing the separations among ethnic women. One woman asked, "How do you speak to someone who is like you but who has entirely different things on her mind? I am worried about stocks and she is worried about bread. We have absolutely nothing in common other than the fact that we are both considered to be of the same race." The respondents felt many non-ethnic people do not understand that Women of Color are not a homogeneous group and not all are equally concerned with the same issues.

What They Told Me

Overall, the women in this study feel that white women tend to ostracize women of Color because of racism or because of divergent interests. They say women of Color raise issues relative to race and ethnicity that many white women do not feel comfortable addressing or are of no concern to white women. A sense of having to carry the entire burden to fix most of society's problems complicates women of Color alliances. It appears the women feel the problem with an alliance is who should do what or who is responsible for handling which piece of the inequality pie. This, they say, detracts from the ability and desire to take part in any action on a

national or women of Color group scale. A sense of the knowledge that the work to be done will be only on the shoulders of women of Color, also detracts from the ability and desire to form alliances with white women. While there are some acknowledged commonalities between women of Color groups, the study indicates that there is some mistrust among the groups and a definite mistrust of white women.

The issues of race/ethnicity bias also often interfere with alliances that might be built among women of different cultures. Some women of Color noted the need to solve issues within their own groups before relationships with other multicultural women become a priority: "Sisters have clicks within the broader sisterhood. We have to be less clannish within our own groups before we can stop being clannish around other groups." They say differentiations and/or descriptions need to be clearer or pushed from the forefront. "My family is Japanese. How does that make me the same as a classification of Chinese?," one woman asked. For instance, in the same vein as anthropologists, some Hispanic/Latina women feel that African Americans think Hispanics are white. Both Hispanic/Latina and African American women do not think Asian American women of Color belong to the of color group, and while Hispanic/Latina women as well as African American women know that Native American Indian women are oppressed and the victims of genocide, many do not know about their ongoing oppressions and are, therefore, apt to forget about Native American Indian women when discussing oppression alliances: "I'm not sure who the women of Color are," one woman answered.

Economic competition also can play a role in solidarity. Many women of Color feel that Asian Americans are advancing more rapidly than they are, causing friction and jealousy. "People naturally think Asians are smarter and work harder than we do. We get a bad rep(utation). While different people are good at different things, people still judge all of us by their idea of one of us." The conflicts between African Americans and Asian Americans in the

Los Angeles area are well documented. One woman of Color explained, "Many Blacks feel that Asians are our worst competition within non-whites populations." Job opportunity and education also are problems of competition and are an indication of class problems. These differences, clearly noted by the women, seem to point to the fact that many women of Color do not feel a commonality with other women of Color.

Recommendations

In discussing the problems of race and reconciliation that confront women of Color, the issues were often laden with the emotion and conflict of trying to describe feelings about other women of Color and women of Color group. The discussion of similarities and differences among the women of Color groups and women in general seemed burdensome. The discussion, however, was pushed beyond the polarizing impact of a debate to the unifying impact of a reasoned dialog as Cole (1996) suggests. It is reasoned dialog, and not divisive debate, that ultimately will ease the tensions caused by race and strengthen a collective resolve to work together to build a community worthy of the principles and values espoused by all ethnicities.

Can women of Color get beyond American politics? While similarities of domination and oppression abound among women of Color, so too do the tenets of politics that can be the catalyst for strife among minorities or different ethnicities. Most of the women of Color explain a desire to make a collectivity among them work if in so doing they can battle the ideological collectivity of the dominant group. If it is in the best interest of women of Color to seek a path that leads to a truce that is workable for all, then it is of value to continue to try to understand the ties that bind and/or divide within and among groups. Women of Color will need to find a way to work collectively for all women of Color.

How can women of Color define themselves through a matrix that encompasses gendered particularities while not losing sight of unity? Can there be a collective when the information provided for and about some women is dismissive, when all women are called upon

to judge themselves by a single standard? If there is to be solidarity among women of Color, there must be a recognized "common" cause. In the midst of finding voice, women of Color still are finding self and the self must be defined before it can be voiced. Ideas about self-definition do not suggest a concrete method for women of Color to define themselves. Self-definition for women of Color can be a double-edged sword. The process of self-definition could lead to a greater solidarity among women of Color, while at the same time divorcing them from the dominant culture stereotype. These antagonisms cause conflict. Conflict is the fuel that divides and conquers. What is a woman to do to get it right and make it work?

A summation is presented here of some of the ideas shared by women of Color about how to increase the momentum that will make them one. These ideas also serve as recommendations from the women of Color for beginning the process to achieve multicultural feminism. Women of Color say that for multicultural feminism to succeed (and provide collective support for improvement in socioeconomic and sociopolitical status), women of Color need commitment. They call for:

- a commitment to become informed about people from other minority races and cultures, and
- a commitment to think about how issues of racial prejudice and privilege affect each person with whom daily contact is made.

They feel action is needed such as:

- conscious effort to get to know people of other races personally,
- active concern to see that comments or actions that appear prejudicial, even if someone else is a target of these actions, are discouraged,
- collective support of all women of Color for institutions that promote racial inclusion,

- active participation in projects to reduce racial disparity in economic and political opportunity and well-being, a drive to become influential in politics that do not serve all groups, especially those that have become marginalized, and
- plans to visit areas of the country that allow experiences with other cultures.

They request institutional support that includes:

- assurance of an accurate reflection of and teaching about national diversity
- examination of methods for how groups can increase commitment in reducing racial disparity, lessening discrimination and improving racial relationships, and
- constructive dialog about race in the workplace, school, neighborhood or religious community with representatives from these areas.

And, they ask for:

- a way to develop and/or recognize a common good, and
- a prayer for peace and guidance for, as well as guilt of, those who satisfy only their self interests.

Women of Color must overcome barriers if they are to mobilize in sisterhood to build a new political strategy to improve their life chances. Women of Color must work collectively in their support of a multicultural feminism. As is evident from this study, this may be unachievable as long as the bonds of solidarity are continuously strained by practices that pit racial/ethnic groups against one another in a no-win game (hooks, 1995).

The nation exists as a white, patriarchal society that has engaged in complicity that facilitates internalized oppression and internalized domination within oppressed groups. Cross-racial hostility, born of divide-and-conquer political tactics, can be a catalyst for women of Color to harm and exploit one another while white power and privilege remain intact. Women of Color will need to conquer internalized racism (the combination of internalized oppression and

internalized domination) and cross-racial hostility that may cause dissonance among them (Harris and Ordonez, 1990). It appears from this study that oppositeness is a quality of difference and living within a system that causes socioeconomic strife contributes to disunity and dissonance among women of Color. According to Harris and Ordonez (1990), it is a desire to prove stereotypes wrong and mirror the behavior of the dominant culture that feeds internalized racism and cross-racial hostility and prevents multicultural feminism.

What are the social conflicts that may prevent multicultural feminism? What is the cohesion in this atmosphere of social conflict that can cement and provide solidarity? What conditions change the shape of a multicultural alliance or serve as the linchpin that facilitates or hinders understanding, conflict and interaction among women of Color? Women of Color are destined to compete with one another for scarce resources as they vie for racial, sexual and class equality given their white counterparts if the answers to these questions remain unknown.

Our nation, from the founding fathers on, has verbally supported cultural diversity. Political rhetoric acknowledges that the success of the country is built upon the unique contributions of every racial and ethnic group. The President's Initiative on Race (1998) calls for strengthening foundations as Americans while celebrating differences in order to live in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. On the surface, this sounds like support for multiculturalism. The women of Color interviewed spoke in favor of intergroup alliances before intragroup alliances and, indeed, a national alliance. If the cultural hegemony and identity problems that created a schism within sisterhood keep women of Color from forming a solidarity, the political rhetoric about all Americans having a reason to invest in creating One America to move forward together to fulfill the promise of the American dream, then that rhetoric is "bull," as one interviewee noted.

One of the most striking findings from this study is that there are many women of Color who are willing to accept that racial prejudice, privilege and disparities are major problems

confronting them. They acknowledge most Americans of Color are not, and do not, consider themselves racist but people of Color have rehearsed responses to people who are racially different than they. The responses suggest that according to these women of Color, people of Color have internalized the racist concepts and stereotypes that are "the fault line of race." They say the groups must find a way of engaging people, helping people to become engaged in conversations that are not confrontational but that are constructive.

Women of Color alliances, which conceivably will bring about people of color alliances to achieve equality such that America is One America, cannot be the only way to achieve equality. One group or one person cannot determine what is best or what will work for everyone. That tactic may be a cause of why problems of inequality exist today. Because women now have more voice than they have had in the cultural heritage of many of the women of Color, alliances need to be formed. Following the trends and research related to critical race theory may provide additional knowledge about minority alliance. Critical race theorists embrace subjectivity of perspective and are avowedly political (Matsuda et al, 1993). According to Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado and Crenshaw (1993), the work of critical race theorists should be both pragmatic and utopian as they seek to respond to the immediate needs of the subordinated and oppressed, even as they imagine a different world and offer different values. The work should involve both action and reflection.

A critical race theory, according to critical race theorists, cannot be understood as an abstract set of ideas or principles. Among the basic theoretical themes should be that of privileging contextual and historical descriptions over transhistorical or purely abstract ones. The theory should be based on the idea that the dominant conceptions of race, racism and equality are increasingly incapable of providing meaning. They say a critical race theory should be an effort to confront and oppose dominant societal and institutional forces that maintain the

structures of racism. Because no matter how we look at the framework of a non-collective union between and among women of color groups, the relationships are, indeed, racial or driven by racism (Matsuda et al., 1993).

A critical race theory borrows from and analyzes other intellectual traditions including liberalism, Marxism, social change, feminism, postculturalism/postmodernism and neopragmatism to explain the relationships between naming and reality, knowledge and power (Matsuda et al., 1993). It should explain the role of liberal-capitalist ideology in maintaining an unjust racial status quo and majoritarian self-interest as a critical factor in maintaining oppression. Any theory should view racism not as isolated instances of conscious bigotry or prejudice, but as larger, systemic, structural and cultural ~ as deeply psychologically and socially ingrained.

As expressed by writers of color such as hooks, Collins, Crenshaw and Davis to name a few, a critical perspective would use personal histories and parables and chronicles dreams, stories, poetry, fiction and revisionist histories as methodology.

A critical race theory would include such defining elements as:

1. recognizing that racism is endemic to American life. Theorists should ask how traditional interests and values serve as vessels of racial subordination.
2. expressing skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness and meritocracy. These claims are central to an ideology of equal opportunity.
3. challenging ahistoricism and insisting in a contextual/historical analysis. Current inequalities and social/institutional practices are linked to earlier periods. Racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage along racial lines.

4. insisting on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and their communities of origin in analyzing society. This knowledge is gained from critical reflection about the lived experiences of racism.
5. understanding that race is interdisciplinary and eclectic. It borrows from several traditions. This eclecticism allows critical race theory to examine and incorporate those aspects of a methodology or theory that effectively enable the voice of color.
6. working toward the elimination of racial oppression as part of the broader goal of eliminating all oppression.

The recognition of intersecting forms of subordination requires multiple consciousness and political practices that address the varied ways in which people experience subordination (Masuda et al., 1993). The desired outcome for women of Color is social change in the status of inequality. What, however, presents evidence of social change; what should women of Color deem as successful change in the existence of inequality when and if they are able to amass a critical, collective mass of women of Color who wish to affect socioeconomic and sociopolitical change? Multicultural feminism as social change must be proactive, focusing on the outcome of struggle for advantage between classes, races or other groups (Darendorf, 1959). This outcome provides a general explanation of how and why societies change. Of the many ideas encompassed within multicultural feminism, critical race theory offers ideas for solutions to some of the problems inherent in studies about racial and ethnic structures and parallels what the women of Color suggest is necessary to form alliances through a multicultural feminism.

Women of Color must understand the parameters of social change, perhaps multicultural social change. The quality of desired change must be identified and difference among people understood and minimized before solidarity can be achieved. If these

accommodations are not made, women of Color groups, and by extension people of Color, may be destined to exist in conflict with one another as they try to gain favor with Anglos as they strive for the racial, sexual and class equality given their white counterparts.

Change relates to change in attitudes, change over time, change of definition, changing epistemologies and changes in differences and commonalities. Change occurs with the idea that people can rely on a certain stasis and stability in the order of things from one day to the next. Laws, rules, means of communication and forms of understanding change while there is a certain dependency on continuity. Change and continuity may be seen as a paired function of the state of affairs where all parts of a system are somewhat balanced ensuring the continued functioning of that system. Any one-sided development or malfunction within a system is reflected as distortion (Tonkiss, 1998). The notion of standpoint is of paramount importance today. Social change can mean different things to different people. Any definition of social change, therefore, should have relevance to social experience across different social locations. Social change must be defined with an attention to history and time.

Limitations of this Research

Additional research needs to be done to discover what the social conflicts are that prevent multicultural feminism and what is the cohesion in this atmosphere of social conflict that cements and provides order among women of Color. This research began with an interest in the feminism of women of Color, *nee*, multicultural feminism. Multicultural feminism suggests alliances and bridge building to accomplish change collectively through strength in numbers. What seemed an obviously good idea to me, solidarity did not seem to be a common practice. When I could not find a wide application of this perspective in the literature, I attempted to ascertain how familiar women of Color were with it. I talked to 24 women, a very small sample, and I had difficulty finding the 32 women of Color I originally sought. The

concepts and ideas embodied in multicultural feminism were foreign to those women of Color I contacted. I found that what is theorized is not practiced in any comprehensive way and is not widespread.

I also selected women from two large cities. Women in other large cities in different parts of the country and especially women of Color in smaller cities may actually have closer contact with one another and/or the number of variations within of color groups may be smaller and provide a clearer example of what is theorized. Additionally, the result of collectivity was social change, yet change is widely defined. Some women felt change had occurred in the living conditions of Color groups, but it was not always clear what was the nature of the change.

In order to determine what conditions or variables change the shape of a multicultural alliance or serve as the linchpin that facilitates or hinders misunderstanding, conflict and interaction among women of Color, extensive research must be done, with a larger sample, in many and different environments. A better understanding, perhaps through the passage of time and with a broader scope, must be secured and the alternatives of solidarity better understood before a true assessment of how well the theory works can be made.

Care also must be taken to include more class differences within the variety of women of Color interviewed. I believe it may also be a disadvantage to define these women as activists. For many women, activist is a vague or negative word. Many women who are active in many different ways do not define themselves as activists. Much more needs to be done to understand the way in which lesbianism affects alliances. While women of Color in this study denied the presence of homophobia on their part, body language sometimes suggested otherwise. Broadly, grouped definitions of women of Color groups also cause conflict for several women of Color groups. Perhaps it is necessary to identify women of Color without reference to their association with a specific women of Color group.

It was difficult for me to be completely objective about this research on women of Color. I have very strong emotional feelings regarding the oppression many experience. Although being a woman of Color helped me immensely in doing the research, my interpretations may have been biased. The dilemma is how to interest others in studying solidarity and conflict with the knowledge that of Color groups are a segment of the population under study. More standpoint work must occur. I do not believe that the thoughts and feelings of women of Color can be clearly studied only using numbers. The "powers that be" are, most often, white, middle-class men. This fact may add to the difficulty of studying women of Color. Can the dominant group ever have an interest in solidarity among minorities? One advantage is the fact that of color groups do not inflate the significance of gender difference and gender roles as much as their Anglo counterparts. The struggle for parity with Anglos is conceived as a struggle for people, men, women and children, who are of Color. For women of Color, the effects of inequality affect the minority rather than just the women of the minority group.

Conclusions

...Until justice rolls down like waters

And righteousness like a mighty stream....

-Martin Luther King Jr.

Racial and ethnic identifications, as well as cultural hegemony, cause inter and intragroup conflicts among women of Color. There can be no solidarity as long as major cleavages exist among women of Color groups. Cultural hegemony, media politics, policies and laws are political maneuvers that pit groups against one another. Additionally, racial and ethnic identifications are problematic and cause tensions among minority groups. Members of minority groups experience different types and intensities of discrimination. For example, skin color is

related to the degree of prejudice and discrimination to which one is exposed. Those who are of the darkest skin tone are discriminated against the most. This condition is heightened because of cultural hegemony that supports identity politics.

Collective behavior, a sense of community and solidarity with others, rests with those who share activities and thoughts and other commonalities such as family affairs and workplace tensions. A new sense of community not based solely on race and ethnicity may be the bridge to solidarity and may close the gap among all groups. This bridge can be seen as a sort of networking whereby when one person shares values, beliefs, interests etc. in common with another, overlapping commonalities will give rise to a collective of people with some similarities. This process is a more natural way to bring about understanding between and among "the other" than groups based on race and ethnicity.

Commonalities, sharing likeness, can better bridge class descriptions and can engage both sexes so that gender is not a problem of division. Women of Color are aware of the ploys indicative of cultural hegemony and self identification as well as policies and laws that are stacked against them. As likenesses grow among members of all races and classes, it is up to all groups to share their culture and way of life so that all are comfortable and knowledgeable about those viewed as "the other." Self-identity and self-awareness as they relate to culture are important, but not at the expense of a multicultural identity. The idea of a kaleidoscope is one in which women of Color seem to find is the best way to incorporate everyone, a tapestry of sorts. There are multiple colors, some overlapping colors, but each color will maintain an identity of its own. Politics, on the other hand, can force a quasi bond among those who really do not have as much in common. Government is the cause of the poor shape the nation is in and it is government that provides the "all-for-one" attitude prevalent in the nation. The idea of me and mine, rules this country and the motto is all-for-one with first, most, best as guideposts.

It is rather a consensus among of color groups that those who have will never, willingly, share with those who do not and will not forge any kind of bond across classes. Material equality is the equality that matters most. Any radical change that might occur would probably lead to the rule of another group and would just leave someone else in charge to look out for their own group. Religious bickering does not help to close the divide. "One nation under God" adds to religious competitiveness for religious power. "With liberty and justice for all" may not be within human grasp. Have any different groups in the same country ever commingled with success? Worse yet, is the public apathy that seems to surround groups who are seen as different. The attitude is "it will never make a difference." This prevents a truly democratic nation but supports the worst of capitalism.

Peace, unequivocal acceptance of similarities and differences and a kinship between of color groups are obscure ideas. With a model of how not to form bonds displayed from those people who supposedly should have the politics to make those bonds a reality, is it unthinkable to expect those with fewer resources and obviously less political savvy to lead the way? Can the nation broaden government documents such as census forms to list all categories of people so that no one group is left out and made to feel inferior?

Although some degree of inter and intra group conflict is inevitable too much of it may make equality impossible. Collective behavior among women of Color to find a way to overcome life's inequities may be a dream. Information about how to begin with grassroots activism and collectivity is available, but communicating the plan of action may be a problem. Besides the norm of conflict, exchange will never be even and differences will continue to cause misunderstanding. Comparison is inevitable as is the need to dominate. Mighty in numbers is a fallacy; mighty in resources rules. In addition, while the events in history that should not be repeated are recognized by some, everyone probably will never recognize those events. One can recognize but never totally change the effects of history.

Although feminism helps to identify the issues and problems many women face, one way of "doing feminism" cannot satisfy all. Activism calls for spending time and probably resources. Unequal resources, unequal time and many other inequalities of change activism negate the spirit of sisterhood among women of Color, as it also strains the spirit of sisterhood among those who maintain the name. One of the strains of traditional white feminism is a call for a broader, more inclusive, range of women within the feminist ranks. Why should women of Color be expected to form kinship bonds when other women cannot? For women of Color, there is additional baggage such as groups that are more varied with more varied problems to overcome before alliances can be made. Feminism is not synonymous with activism and activism is different from being a feminist for these women. Clearly, the ethic of "different stakes for different folks" is at work here. The categories of activism and feminism are as stratified as race, gender and class themselves. While there are specific interactions of race, gender and class that cannot operate as three different, affective effects; they are too closely tied to each other. So too, are the results of inequality felt in different ways by different groups.

Women of Color are more likely to work with men of color to fulfill their needs rather than different groups of women of Color. Affinity is likely here too. Race and ethnicity are subjective but the plight of those who are affected by their race or ethnicity know that if they are to be heard, make their standpoint clear, some form of fight is inevitable.

Perhaps a more critical perspective is needed to understand the dynamics of the relationships of women of Color and women of Color groups. According to West (1994), race matters. In studying race, which has an effect on solidarity, alliances and/or collective behavior, one should (a) acknowledge that structures and behavior are inseparable, that institutions and values go hand and hand, (b) reject the idea that structures are primarily economic and political creatures - an idea that views culture as an ephemeral set of behavioral attitudes and values; culture is as much a structure as the economy or politics, it is rooted in institutions, (c) take an

historical perspective that looks at the effects of the past, and (d) assume that the effects of race and racism cause a detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition toward the world. A critical perspective is radical (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado and Crenshaw, 1993). It articulates the values and modes of analysis that informs a life of struggle. It is grounded in the particulars of a social reality that is defined by experiences and the collective historical experience of the communities of origin.

According to Lieberman (1997), the fact that we are essentially dealing with a probabilistic world and the deterministic perspective in which most sociological theories are couched is unrealistic and inappropriate. Sociology needs an appropriate epistemology, not one that blindly mimics a model of scientific practice that is not fully appropriate for the situation. Lieberman says that how results are obtained also overshadows the correctness of the product. He calls this a "formalistic fallacy" in which form becomes the basis for evaluating validity and utility of the content. He says we need to think very differently about what is theory, what it should do and what is appropriate.

A critical race theory includes a humanistic orientation and an opposition to conventional methodological approaches. A critical theory is informed by the critiques of the critical theorists. A critical race theory, therefore, confronts and comprises a dynamic among the researcher and the researched, struggle, and a science of action, experience, method and theory.

A critical view may be able to bring the voices of the least to be heard. It is imperative to continue to explore theories and methods that inform. Theory and intellectual creativity are not the province of a select few, but instead emanate from a range of people. Theory should challenge both the ideas of educated elites and the role of theory in sustaining hierarchies born of hegemony, identity and privilege (Collins, 1991). Surely, any theory that precludes a full

understanding of why some Americans must define their citizenship as partial and qualified falls short of the task of understanding society. It is an optical illusion when we sometimes fail to see the creative controversies and intellectual possibilities that define racial and ethnic tensions.

Because so many issues of race, oppression, meaning and stance hover over almost any idea of women of Color coming together in common cause, perhaps the idea is too new, too hurtful or too competitive as cultural hegemony and the politics of identity stress difference or difference without commonality. Perhaps these women are still new to giving voice to their ideas and opinions. Whatever the cause, this research showed very little commitment to women within women of Color groups or among different women of Color groups becoming one women of Color group with ties of equality to whites. While the intent of this research was to find out why solidarity is not the case, in being asked to consider the intricacies of the topic while confronting buried emotions and feelings, more of the research focused on those emotions and the effects of the emotions as a driving force in everyday life.

It should be remembered that any understanding of racism as a system of advantage presents a serious challenge to the notion of the United States as a just society where rewards are based solely on one's merit. Such a challenge often creates discomfort. If outright denial by a secure majority of a biased system is not possible, their withdrawal from such a system may be. It is assumed that in a society where racial-group membership is emphasized, the development of a racial identity will occur in some form. It would be a surprise if developmental processes unfolded in identical ways. Yet, heightening awareness of racism without also developing an awareness of the possibility of change is a prescription for despair.

More research needs to be conducted in this area and with a different approach to the women. I think the classification of ethnic women into four categories was confusing to many of the women. Perhaps selecting respondents of color as one mass group might provide better insight about the phenomenon, although there is still the risk of classification, the biggest

"hindrance" to a dialog about the causes of the breakdown in all-group formations such as alliances, coalitions and feminism ~ those things that preclude solidarity. Most of those interviewed wanted to concentrate on the classifications and the reasons for and problems with those classifications. While this provides some answers, there assuredly are more. Research about women of Color is not widespread. With researchers determining new and better ways to hear these women speak, perhaps a better dialog will be discovered, particularly a dialog across race and ethnicity. We know that the definition of "all are women" is not sufficient, what we do not know is if the differences among women can serve as enhancement to finding commonalities among differences. Perhaps more attention should be given to the issues of process. It is very difficult to talk about the concepts identified in this study without talking about the concepts of racism, classism and sexism. Race as a taboo topic, or as a topic that is easier to try to ignore, is an essential obstacle to overcome if dialog is to begin at all. Is there a rainbow out there?

As more is known about the interplay among women of Color, if collective social change in the form of equality is desired, other questions need to be addressed. What insights do the women bring to the traditional perspectives on social change, are they seeking social change at the local, state, national or international levels, are they seeking personal or institutional change or both, are they working to create social policies that effect social change? (Albrecht and Brewer, 1990) Given the knowledge of difference, for now, it seems enough to understand better what women of Color have in common.

I think human rights are inscribed in the hearts of people: they were there long before lawmakers drafted their first proclamation. That said, racial reconciliation means that even when there is evidence of female oppression among women of diverse backgrounds, it is important to listen to the individual assessment each woman makes of her own condition.

When one has identified a commonality between or among women, the particular ways that commonality is acted out and its consequences in the larger society may be quite diverse (Cole, 1996).

Because change carries within it the change that will answer it, women of Color must remember: change is often only conceivable seen as a one at a time effect ~ it starts when you care to act, it starts when you do it again after they say no, it starts when you say WE and know who you mean, and each day you mean one more (Piercy, 1990). Let women of Color not forget, an old African proverb that says: If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito.

*Friendship is not a fruit for enjoyment only,
but also an opportunity for service.*

-Greek Proverb

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Catalysts or Impediments to Multicultural Feminism

I am personally concerned with women of Color (African, Asian, Hispanic and Native American women) in the United States and the rich diversity of their life experiences as a basis for collective action for progressive change in the areas of women's and equal rights.

My research assumes that there may not be a sisterhood across lines of race, class, age or sexual orientation. As suggested by women of Color such as Gloria Anzuldúa, Audre Lorde, Sonia Shah and others, it seems likely that alliances built on the recognition and understanding of differences/similarities could make collective action for social change not only possible but also probable. If partnerships such as coalitions, alliances and solidarity between and among women of Color are not currently being formed, do the effects of US ideology, policy and/or political rhetoric affect the coalition-building for social change that would seem to draw oppressed and "minority" women of Color into a "majority" group.

Description:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself and your background as a woman of Color.
2. Who do you consider to be [other] women of Color in the United States?
3. What constitutes for you a non-biological sister, a sisterhood alliance or group kinship?
Does sexual orientation sway your choice of who you select as a sister?
4. Who are your sisters; how would you describe them; what is common about them?
5. What is [a] similar and [b] different about the groups of women you consider to be women of Color?
6. What is your concept of the word "feminist"? Are you a feminist or activist? In what way?

Analysis:

1. Do dominant group (majority) ideas and attitudes (e.g., media portrayals) affect your thinking about oppressed groups? For instance?
2. Do these ideas and attitudes affect your thinking about your own racial and ethnic group?
3. Who are your allies; whom do you work with and look to for support in your struggle for social change, especially social change to end oppression and inequality?
4. With whom do you socialize?
5. What affects the relationship you have with other women of Color groups? And your relationship with women of Color within your own racial and ethnic group?

Vision:

1. Is the rainbow concept of alliance something with which you are familiar? Is the rainbow concept in any way similar to how you view or work toward progressive social change, especially for women's and equal rights?
2. Are you active or involved politically in your racial and ethnic community? Please explain why/how.
3. Do you actively support any other racial and ethnic communities? How?
4. How do [a] similarities and [b] differences, [a] within group and [b] among all women of Color, contribute to the formation of coalitions and alliances [a] within and [b] between racial and ethnic groups?
5. In your opinion, can a cohesive or unified strategy work for the good of all women of Color? How/Why/In what ways?

Strategy:

1. Can different women of Color groups conduct multi-issue, multi-racial and ethnic partnerships to forge an inclusive social change politic?
2. What can be done to end the marginalization of women that also includes women of Color?
3. What are the [a] benefits and [b] consequences of positive social change for oppressed and "minority" groups?
4. What strategies will be most effective?
5. How will you/can you contribute?

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Question 1:

Do women of Color believe that multicultural feminism is a useful way to improve their collective status?

I think those things that promote females should have should have advantages for males and females. -AA

I am not a feminist or an activist. I will wait for Americans to change. -NA

I do try to bring about change in the ills of society but I am no activist. I do not march or anything. -AS

I am not an activist but I believe in women doing what they want to do. -HS

I fight for my family and if someone wrongs them or me. That makes me an activist but not for the outside [of my family] things. -AS

I am feminist in theory but I am not an active fighter. I work for my family. -AA

Women and all people need to be active in seeking more familiarity, melding more, before minorities can blend. -HS

We must start with small groups to build to larger groups, with working out differences locally before working nationally to form collective groups from collective individuals. -AA

It is networking that brings power for people. -HS

Common background is important to connectedness and alliance. -NA

To get people together they must share their different ways. Culture includes language, socializing and barriers. Our way of doing things is tied to culture. -AS

I am active about those things that I need to do to go against the grain. This has nothing to do with color. -AA

Question 2:

Do women of Color attempt to unite in an effort to raise their socioeconomic and sociopolitical status?

To work together we must prioritize and agree on issues without each group wanting to take care of its own. -HS

We marginalize ourselves more by our perceptions of same and different. -AA

The situation is one of push-pull. -AS

Difference is natural but difference should run through similarity with knowledge of diversity at the end. -AA

Women do not have to be of the same color to be my sisters. -AA

Color does not matter, there are good and bad folks everywhere. There should be a rainbow but there also should be equality for everyone. -HS

My sisters are those who I share a caring and warmth toward. This comes from being able to talk to them and each of us having concern for the other. -HS

Everything should be based on educating people, but not about color. The educated fare better than the non-educated. -AA

Positive change means interconnected change with others. -AA

What we want to do is make change rather than socialize. -NA

We must leave our sensitivities behind; differences are not important. -HS

Collectivity means judgment must stop every which way. -NA

I see that my children have more varied experiences than I did and I fight for my kids' rights to learn difference and sameness, but I do not really worry about me. I am going to like who I like. -AA

Solidarity comes from relationships not color. -NA

My sisters are believers no matter what color. -AA

Differences are not by choice. Similarities we can find. -AS

My children are my life. I form bonds through my children's activities. -AS

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Question 3:

If women of Color do not try to unite, are there either external societal factors or factors internal to women of Color as a group that keep them from uniting?

External: Social, economic, and political issues connected with the dominant group; divide-and-conquer tactics external to the attempts of women of Color to unite.

America cannot accept that the country is a garden variety. -AA

If cultural hegemony means media, the media belongs to whites. They separate us by playing up differences. They make a conscious effort to separate us. -AS

We all cannot win together, it will never happen because of the dominant [white] status quo. -HS

There is a pendulum that swings such that some group is not getting something. -AS

Separations between folks are caused by different social barriers. - HS

I am not sure about cultural hegemony and identity politics; it all has to do with money. -AS

Conflict in all its forms is because of a larger competitive society. -AS

Media play a part in degradation. They provide visual separation, token portrayals and no normal mix of folks. -HS

Politics and power rule. The group in power has everything. -NA

Americans own the world so they feel they can do anything to anyone. -HS

We all need to consider the source of our information about one another. Who is the informer? -AS

First, those in power must realize that we all have a need for the basics. -NA

As for identity politics, those who make the most noise are boasting. Their boast means "I've made it in America." -HS

Internal: Color, identity, similarity and difference issues internal to the women
of Color groups among themselves.

We need education to give us knowledge of other people. -AA

There is no unified strategy because each group feels a different sense of not being considered a part of society. There is different thinking, different problems. -AA

Too many class issues fight solidarity, as does feminism. -AA

Different people means different ways of doing things. You cannot keep all the people together on anything. -HS

People are tribalistic and the tribes have differences. -NA

People have a responsibility within society for family, community and government.
People act on that responsibility in different ways. -HS

I will fight and join others' fights if I can see what is in it for me. I am still looking. -AA

Language and communication barriers divide. You stay with what you are comfortable with. This does not make for sharing. -HS

We should try not to compare with other folks or definitions. Major commonalities count. -HS

It is important to understand the issues not because of color, this is not important. All differences have similarities. -AA

It is ignorant to think we have to agree. We just need to be tolerant. -AS

Conflict has nothing to do with like or unlike types. Similarity has to do with what you're fighting for. -HS