

# HANDBOOK OF DIVERSITY IN FEMINIST PSYCHOLOGY



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## Multiple Lenses: Multicultural Feminist Theory

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Feminist theories in general and multicultural theory in particular have had an enormous effect on a variety of academic fields since the 1990s (Russo & Vaz, 2001). There is a popular, as well as a scholarly, demand to understand the power and impact of the dynamics of gender. Feminism has a direct bearing on people's lived experiences because it started from the radical notion that, given women's positionality, they had something worthwhile to say. Most important, the seminal pioneering feminist theorists assumed that women deserve to be heard and listened to (Littleton, 1989). Over the past several decades, feminist theorists have disputed the knowledge claims at the core of theory building, they have challenged in profound ways the construction of method, and ultimately they have questioned the "why and for what purpose" science is produced and who should benefit from this knowledge production.

By asserting that women's perspectives are valuable, feminist theorists defied the notion that knowledge production is independent of the knowledge producer and that it is objective or free from social influence. Instead, all knowledge is situated within a context and must take into account the positionality of the producer, as well as of the receiver, of knowledge. Within this

simple relationship, the complexity of objectivity is fully disclosed: impartiality is impossible to attain when it comes to producing knowledge by humans for humans.

Individuals, by definition, exist within social relations, embedded in a set of coordinates that are tentative, fluid, changing, subjective, and nondeterminative. It is within this web of social relations that feminist production takes place. Layered on these social coordinates is the practice of norms, values, expectations, motivations, histories, and languages, as filtered through culture, all of which gives multicultural feminisms its unique stake in knowledge production (Comas-Díaz, 2000; Vasquez, 2002). Put more simply, feminist multicultural theory is "theory in the flesh" (Moraga, 1981a) as humans live their existence on this planet. Multicultural feminism is not an ideation, abstraction, or philosophical artifice. The nexus for multicultural feminist theory is tucked within the everyday experiences of human beings who love, live, laugh, cry, and think.

### The Origins of Multicultural Feminist Theory

During the 1980s, a subgroup of feminist writers raised the critique that the diversity of women's experiences, both within the United States and internationally, was not being fully addressed within the boundaries of traditional feminism (Russo & Vaz, 2001). Their arguments centered around cultural variations in definitions of gender relations and differences within cultures as determined by class, ethnicities, power, and other socially relevant factors. If the ultimate goal of feminist theorizing and political mobilization was to deconstruct and abolish patriarchy, then the multiple manifestations of patriarchy as they vary across cultures should be addressed in all feminist production (Hurtado, 2003a). In other words, multiple masculinities (Coltrane, 1994; Connell 1987, 1995; Pyke, 1996) and femininities (Pyke & Johnson, 2003) are filtered through different cultural manifestations of patriarchies. Multicultural feminist theory was developed in response to this compelling critique and has become a vibrant and prolific field within the larger field of feminist theorizing.

### Core Concepts in Multicultural Feminist Theory

Across the diverse landscape of multicultural feminist production, there are some common concepts—such as intersectionality, self-reflexivity (including the questioning of privilege), and accountability—that multicultural feminist scholars propose as the basis for their insights and perspectives (Collins, 2000; Perez, 1999; Williams, 2004). While not exhaustive, this list of concepts is illustrative of what multicultural feminist theorists bring to the table in knowledge production. For instance, through the lens of intersectionality, multicultural feminists study the product of multiple identities; through self-reflexivity, the questions of privilege and methodology are addressed; and through accountability, the impetus for social and political change is inspired.

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## Intersectionality and Multiple Identities

The understanding that women all over the world are subjected to multiple sources of oppression was first documented by activists who were addressing the practical issues and needs of poor and racialized women as they coped with their disadvantages (Collins, 2006; A. Y. Davis, personal communication, February 3, 2007). Obviously the feminisms developed by such influential figures as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem could not be applied without modification to women in Africa, for example, who suffer from starvation as well as rape and other gender-specific oppressions based on cultural practices, political upheavals, and historical circumstances (White, 2007). The same is even true among African American women in the United States whose disadvantages have as much to do with their race as with their gender (Collins, 2000).

## Intersectionality and the Law

Nowhere is the inadequacy of examining gender oppression solely, without consideration of other sources of subordination, more apparent than in the law. Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1995) seminal pioneering work on intersectionality eloquently exposed the inadequacies of the legal system in handling multiple sources of discrimination experienced by African American women. Crenshaw systematically demonstrated that, for example, in the case of employment discrimination African American women were forced to bring suit either as women or as Blacks; the courts would not accept their claims as *Black women* because that would create yet another protected category, with the potential of cumulative oppressions being endless. As stated by the courts:

The legislative history surrounding Title VII does not indicate that the goal of the statute was to create a new classification of 'black women' who would have greater standing than, for example, a black male. The prospect of the creation of new classes of protected minorities, governed only by the mathematical principles of permutation and combination, clearly raises the prospect of opening the hacked Pandora's box (cited in Crenshaw, 1989, p. 142).

Crenshaw applied her incisive analysis of intersectionality to rape, where she found the law's archaic assumptions of (White) women's purity led to more punitive punishment toward Black men in the case of interracial rape and to less prosecution in the case of rape of Black women by all men. She also applied the intersectionality framework to domestic violence and found that the excessive punishment handed down by the criminal justice system to Black men led Black women to fear and refrain from reporting physical abuse by men in their communities. In addition to the legal realm, when Crenshaw explored the notion of political intersectionality, she found that Black women are forced to choose between joining political movements to end racism and joining feminist movements to end sexism. They find it difficult to be allied with both movements simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1995). Crenshaw's work did not explicitly examine other social categories also used to oppress women, such as class and sexuality, but her work in the areas of race and gender sets

up the conceptual framework for considering multiple sources of oppression within feminist analysis.

### Intersectionality and Social Structure

While Crenshaw's analysis focused on the hidden legal injuries of intersectional subordination, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) focused on the non-legal, societal structures that collude to create the same phenomenon. As originally defined by Collins (2000), intersectionality is "an analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women's experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women" (p. 299). Central to Collins' analysis is the premise that societal structures are formed and sustained to exert power over people of color in general and African Americans in particular. From Collins' perspective (2000):

The very notion of the intersections of race, class, and gender as an area worthy of study emerged from the recognition of practitioners of each distinctive theoretical tradition that inequality could not be explained, let alone challenged, via a race-only, or gender-only framework. No one had all of the answers and no one was going to get all of the answers without attention to two things. First, the notion of interlocking oppressions refers to the macro-level connections linking systems of oppression such as race, class, and gender. This is a model describing the structures that create social positions. Second, the notion of intersectionality describes micro-level processes—namely, how each individual and group occupies a social position within interlocking structures of oppression described by the metaphor of intersectionality. Together they shape oppression (p. 82).

Also central to Collins' analysis is the notion that the media generate "controlling images" that lead to the objectification and commodification of black bodies, thereby justifying many kinds of oppressions, given that Blacks are not perceived as fully human. These controlling images, which Collins considered much more powerful and complex than simple stereotypes, have their origins in the institution of slavery. Historically, to justify the buying and selling of human beings in the slave trade, a set of images were developed to enforce institutional control and oppression. According to Collins, "the objectification of people of African descent as chattel, the commodification of objectified Black bodies as property, and the exploitation of Black people as property and as workers are all closely linked" (2004, p. 55). Controlling images are gender-specific and often complement each other. For example, the controlling image of the "bitch" is used to defeminize and demonize Black women whereas the controlling images of the Black male criminal and athlete help to substantiate the incarceration of Black men and the devaluation of their intellectual capacities (versus their athletic prowess). Collins also recognized that controlling images do not only apply to Blacks but to all people of color through a racialization process; the darker the individual (regardless of race), the more these controlling images are applied by various societal institutions. Controlling images are particularly relevant to the framework of intersectionality as they serve to disempower specific groups of women in different ways depending on the context.

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Another approach to intersectionality broadly defined includes significant social consequences (Hurtado & Gurin, 2007). In addition, the focus has shifted to such as race, class, and gender inherent in Borderlands. This does not result in individual group membership, but is realized as intersectionality (Hurtado & Gurin, 2007).

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## Intersectionality and Borderlands Theory

Since the late 1980s, Chicana feminist scholars have been working at the forefront of intersectionality in multicultural feminism, exploring the psychological consequences of belonging to multiple derogated social formations (Flores, 2000; Vasquez, 2003). Following W.E.B. DuBois' ideas on double consciousness, Chicana feminist theorists have posited several concepts theorizing on the experiences of Chicanas growing up "in the borderlands." Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) proposed the border between Mexico and the United States as a metaphor for all types of crossings between geopolitical boundaries—for sexual transgressions, for social dislocations, and for existing in multiple linguistic and cultural contexts. Living in many liminal spaces (Lugones, 2003) results in the development of a *mestiza* (hybrid) consciousness that simultaneously embraces and rejects contradictory realities so as not to exclude what is critically assessed (Hurtado, 2003a). Other Chicana feminist writers have called this *facultad* (ability or gift) a "differential consciousness" (Sandoval, 2000), "multiple realities" (Alarcón, 1990), "multiple subjectivities" (Hurtado, 2003a), and a state of "*conscientización*" (Castillo, 1994). The notion is that women who are exposed to multiple social worlds, as defined by cultures, languages, social classes, sexualities, nation states, and colonization, develop the agility to navigate and the ability to challenge linear conceptions of social reality. As such, oppressions are not ranked nor are they conceptualized as static; rather they are recognized as fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on the context. The intersectionality framework allows for the expression of multiple oppressions and forms of resistance that are not easily accessible through traditional methods of analysis and measurement. Borderlands Theory has been used in the social sciences (Hurtado, 2003a), literature (Saldívar-Hull, 2000), history (Pérez, 1999), education (Bernal, 1998) and political theory (Barvosa-Carter, 2007; Barvosa, 2008), producing rich and unique analyses.

Another application of Borderlands Theory is found in the analysis of intersectionality through the concept of social identities. Social identities are broadly defined in a variety of fields as an individual's sense of belonging to significant social groups that have emotional meaning and social and political consequences (Hurtado & Gurin, 2004). From a social psychological perspective, the focus has been on the social identities that compose master statuses such as race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and physical ability. Following the logic inherent in Borderlands Theory, these social identities are not additive; they do not result in increased oppression with an increased number of stigmatized group memberships. Instead, individuals' group memberships are conceptualized as intersecting in a variety of ways depending on the social context (Hurtado & Gurin, 2004).

Social identities, together with personal identity, constitute an individual's sense of self (Tajfel, 1981, 1982). Because personal identity is somewhat independent from social identities, individuals cannot entirely override the negative and oppressive effects of their stigmatized social identities. For example, a poor African American lesbian with a physical disability will be treated in many social contexts according to her visible social identities rather than based on her individual characteristics, which quite possibly may include being a kind, gentle, and intelligent human being. Intersectionality as embodied in



stigmatized social identities allows for an agile analysis of the different social contexts in which certain stigmatized social identities are more salient and likely to be used for oppression (Hurtado & Cervantez, 2009).

### Self-Reflexivity and the Questioning of Privilege

Self-reflexivity is considered an integral part of multicultural feminist theory because it acknowledges the researcher's own multiple social identities and potential concomitant multiple subjectivities. Inherent in this standpoint is the recognition that all knowledge is strategic and partial (Haraway, 1988; Pérez, 1999; Sandoval, 2000). Self-reflexivity recognizes the influence of the individual in the normal course of knowledge production and at the same time, the inherent tension in questioning without rejecting and in critiquing within the "context of hope" (Dillard, 2000). Self-reflexivity also acknowledges the involvement of political power and privilege, however circumscribed, and the influence these advantages may have in knowledge production. As Pérez elaborates:

"If I am the world, and I heal myself, then I heal the world." These are personal private revolutions, each member of the collective taking responsibility for her/his contradictions within the collective, willing to grapple with the question, "Who am I exploiting?" (1991, p. 173).

Self-reflexivity is abundant in multicultural feminist writings (Comas-Díaz, 2005; Hurtado, 2005; McIntyre & Lykes, 1998). There are several different levels of disclosure within the process of self-reflexivity. For some writers, self-reflexivity entails examining their significant social identities (such as race, class, and ethnicity) in the process of research and writing (Langhout, 2006). In particular, there is concern that the role of researcher, with its inherent higher social statuses, might lead to objectifying and distorting the individuals and communities under study (Comas-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcón, 1998). Great care has to be taken to prevent non-conscious ideologies (Bem & Bem, 1997) from fogging the perspective and realities of those under study. Among the solutions advocated for researchers to redress potential biases are to learn the communities' languages, to understand the context of the individuals and communities under study (e.g., their histories, socioeconomic statuses, power relations between different actors), and to engage in collaborations with those under study by making them co-participants in the research process (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998; Torre, Fine, Alexander, & Genao, 2007). All of these safeguards ensure that self-reflexivity is enacted in ways that avert essentializing and oppressing those under study.

Another level for implementing self-reflexivity is to include the researchers' life experiences, thoughts, and personal backgrounds as an integral part of the research process. Feminists of color, especially African American writers, have been at the vanguard of writing from this very personal space (Anzaldúa, 2003; hooks, 2003, 2004, 2007; Moraga, 1981b). These writers use their personal trajectories to illustrate the importance of culture, history, politics, oppression, and language in knowledge production (Hurtado, in press).

Self-reflexivity has also led to the study of whiteness (Fine, Weis, Powell Pruitt, & Burns, 2004). In multicultural feminist production, there is recognition

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that White women have race privilege that has consequences for the defini- tions of feminism (Hurtado, 1996) and for feminist research methods as well (Hurtado & Stewart, 2004). Furthermore, the personal disclosure necessary in self-reflexivity has potentially different political consequences for women of color writers than for White women writers. Whereas for White women the acknowledgement of race privilege can be perceived as a radical act of political commitment (McIntyre & Lykes, 1998), for women of color the disclo- sure can potentially lead to negative repercussions (Comas-Díaz & Jacobsen, 1995; Dillard, 2000; Hurtado, 2003b). The deconstruction of White privilege within feminist circles is still in progress; further study is needed to fully develop models of disclosure (McIntosh, 1992) and documentation (Vasquez, 2006), and ultimately dismantle the privileges accrued through whiteness (Morrison, 1992).

### Changes in Methodology as a Result of Self-Reflexivity

Multicultural feminist writers deploy a hybridity of methods and epistemologi- cal standpoints to circumvent their own subjectivities and biases in knowledge production (Dillard, 2000; Pérez, 1999; Sandoval, 2000). They also advocate the development of new methodologies, the affirmation of nontraditional meth- odologies, and the extension of the definition of method itself (Mahalingam & Reid, 2007). Methodologies should reflect the relational nature of knowledge that is subject to multiple perspectives to break down oppositional binaries in knowledge production. As such, multicultural feminist theorists have vali- dated the use of the self to explore issues of oppression, history, resistance, and excavation of subjugated knowledge (Cuádriz, 2006). Among the proposed methods still in the making are autobioethnography (Cantú, 1995), personal narrative as historical analysis (Fregoso, 2003; Hurtado & Gurin, 2004), and the use of case studies to situate and acknowledge the personal nature of con- ducting research in particular areas (Lott & Bullock, 2007).

Broadening the methodological options has led to an even greater number of interdisciplinary approaches that blur the theoretical boundaries between the social sciences, humanities, and, most recently, the natural sciences. The quest is to find innovative tools and discourses able to represent the diversity of human experience without relying on outmoded, linear, and colonizing rep- resentations (Morrison, 1992; Smith, 1999). Multicultural feminist theory has freed scholars to explore other writing genres and see how they help elucidate phenomena from different perspectives, further complicating and enrich- ing the analysis—for example, historians writing fiction and feminist theory (Pérez, 1996, 1999), lawyers writing personal essays (Williams, 2004), film crit- ics writing about international human rights (Fregoso, 2007), and psychologi- sts writing about art production (Roberts, 2005).

The very act of writing has also been expanded beyond its previous pre- cepts. Traditional academic writing, for the most part, has relied heavily on single authorship. When working in collaboration, the roles of the collabora- tors must be documented to ensure that the authorship reflects the "actual work" invested in the final product. Of course, these guidelines limit collabora- tions mostly to academic ones and restrict other creative modes of knowledge generation. Through innovation, new methods of devising authorship have



been broached. One approach is to establish groups of multidisciplinary scholars and practitioners who meet over long periods of time and produce written products that reflect the shared process of their collaboration (Cantú, 2006; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Other writers have used their family histories and expanded their individual stories by interviewing family members to verify and review their analyses of family dynamics (Méndez-Negrete, 2006). Still other researchers have used participant action research (PAR) techniques to enlist research participants as coauthors (Pastor et al., 2007). The result of all of this experimentation is a lively, rich, and highly productive area of study that is producing fresh material for reflection and investigation.

### Accountability and Social Change

While self-reflexivity, to a certain extent, is all about the self, accountability is about the social and political act embedded in the constituencies being served by knowledge production (Collins, 2000). Instead of knowledge production for "management and control," accountability is supposed to ensure that knowledge production is intended for transformation and achieving social equity (Hurtado, 1996).

Accountability assumes that the self is not constituted in the individual; rather it is encased in a body that is socially connected and therefore its subjectivity is constituted through communal relations (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998; Rowe, 2005). Because of the inherent individualist nature of U.S. society and of Western academic production, the communal self is seen as a threat to the laws and social norms in most Western countries (Moraga, 2007; Woo, 2004). Multicultural feminist theorists are at the forefront of theorizing the communal self as an integral part of individuals, not as a special partition of the self (Comas-Díaz, 2005). For example, if one feels whole and happy only through belonging to and identifying with specific communities, then the happiness and well-being of those communities are essential to one's well-being as well. As such, accountability is not an added burden or restriction, but a compelling reason for academic production and social existence (Hurtado, 2009).

Collins (2000) does not connect accountability necessarily to this view of self; she situates accountability primarily as a political act for knowledge production. That is, if knowledge production is to be useful in the everyday lives of the constituencies that the author writes about or hopes to inspire, those constituencies should be the ones determining whether the knowledge produced is worthwhile. The academy, as well as the academic bodies within the university, should not be the only arbiters determining the value and standards of knowledge production (Collins, 2000).

Accountability also opens the door to exploring various venues beyond academic outlets for disseminating knowledge production. Popular culture, magazines, trade books, public lectures, and art performance, for instance, are potential sites for publicizing the products of knowledge production (Roberts, 2005; Rose, 2001; Williams, 2004). In order to use these alternative venues, however, researchers also have to expand the research sites beyond what was previously viewed as within the privy of academic research. For example, Tricia Rose's (1994) landmark study of hip-hop introduced this dance form as a subject worthy of academic examination and as a potential site for

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targeted intervention to engage young people, and thereby expanded the research methods available to theorists. The knowledge gained in the study of hip-hop can be connected to the development of photo voice as a method to engage urban youth with their surroundings, helping them to think critically about their neighborhoods, families, and peer relationships (Youth Advisory Committee, 2008).

### Knowledge Production and the Inclusion of Sexuality

The examination of sexuality is central to all aspects of multicultural feminism, including knowledge production. The feminist critique of heteronormativity and the developments in queer theory have been fully embraced by multicultural feminist theorists and have been integrated into the recent developments in this area of study. Sexuality is not set apart from multicultural feminist production; it takes center stage in examining feminist issues, with a focus on cultural manifestations in gay and transgendered communities across the globe (Cantú, 2002; Ochoa, 2006; Schaeffer-Grabel, 2007).

One central metaphor examined in multicultural feminism has been the consequences of "border crossings" be they physical, as in between countries; social, as in between groups; economic, as in changes in class status; psychological, as in the effect on subjectivities as a result of social and economic dislocations; and sexual, as when women immigrate because of the unwelcoming climate toward homosexuality in their native countries. Because multicultural feminists question existing paradigms, methods, and areas of study, multicultural feminism is a fertile area for cultivating new studies on sexuality. For example, Oliva Espín (1996a) writes about lesbians who immigrated to the United States from Cuba to avoid the stigmatization and political repression directed at them in their native country. In her work she analyzes two life stories, comparing the process of coming out to the process of emigrating from one country to another. From her perspective, "the process of coming out also demands a rewriting of the life story and, almost always, a migration to another cultural context even though the person may not actually move" (Espín, 1996a, p. 101). Both immigration and the coming-out process can result to stressful outcomes:

These feelings include: loneliness due to the absence of people with shared experiences; strain and fatigue from the effort to adapt and cope with cognitive overload; feelings of rejection from the new society which affect self-esteem and may lead to alienation; confusion in terms of role expectations, values, and identity; "shock" resulting from the differences between the two cultures; and a sense of uprootedness and impotence resulting from an inability to function competently in a new culture (Espín, 1996a, p. 101).

Espín (1996a) also sees these feelings of dislocation as the beginning of growth toward a deeper sense of self and freedom. She concludes that all border crossings; be they between countries or sexualities, can lead to a mosaic of conflicting and contradictory identities from which individuals choose, depending on the social, political, economic, and ideological contexts.

The examination of queer sexualities (Cantú, 2002; Greene, 2004; Pérez, 1999; Roque Ramirez, 2003, 2007; Trujillo, 1991) from a multicultural feminist

perspective also opened up the study of heterosexual sexualities (Flores-Ortiz, 2000; Zavella & Castañeda, 2007; Tolman, 2002; Hurtado, 2003a). As illustrated by the work of Zavella and Castañeda (2007) and González-Lopez (2005), the migration process from Mexico and the rest of Latin America also results in heterosexual women and men undergoing transitions in their sexualities. Both studies explore how coming to the United States results in, in some instances, restrictions in enacting sexuality because of the lack of available partners, and in other instances, increases in sexual exploration as local and familial ties are loosened by coming to a new country.

In summary, a critical aspect of knowledge production in multicultural feminist theory is to embrace the uncertainty and instability of "knowing" at the same time that something must be done *now* about social inequality (Moya, 2002). The fluidity of this position can lend itself to waste, detours, chaos, and unsettled feelings, knowing that nothing can be known for certain. In other words, multicultural feminist knowledge production embraces all of the stereotypes often attributed to "feminine nature"; it claims that knowledge production has always been unpredictable but that masculinist narratives stressing order and linearity obscure its true nature (Morawski & Bayer, 1995). Most important, multicultural feminist theory assumes that knowledge produced from this standpoint is not only valid but is likely to come closer to the true nature of all knowledge, especially if we mean to apply our discoveries to making the world a better place (Moya, 2002). It is a tremendously hopeful posture.

### Emerging Strands in Multicultural Feminist Theory

A continued trend in a particular brand of White feminist scholarly production that has received acceptance and reward within the academy is the endorsement of abstract theory, with very little reference to lived experience. Nussbaum (1999) summarizes this trend as "the virtually complete turning from the material side of life, toward a type of verbal and symbolic politics that makes only the flimsiest of connections with the real situation of real women" (p. 38). In this context, activism and applied work are devalued as naive, provincial, and atheoretical (Moya, 2002). A corollary to this standpoint is a growing disdain among this brand of theorists toward analyzing the local in favor of the transnational (Soto, 2005). Ironically, feminisms in general and feminisms produced by writers of color have always been in solidarity with international progressive political movements (Sandoval, 1991). Whatever limitations the early attempts at internationalization led to (for example, the analysis in Robin Morgan's anthology *Sisterhood is powerful* [1970]), the commitment to address women's position all over the world has always been present and paramount. This is not to say that the ideological commitment has not always succeeded or that the commitment has always been followed by concrete, proactive action (Russo & Vaz, 2001).

For many feminists of color, the international commitments are an extension of their ethnic and racial connections and historical rootedness in their ancestors' origins—for example, the African American feminists' link to the political struggles in Africa (White, 2007) and the Chicana feminists' relationship to political struggles in Latin America (Arredondo, Hurtado, Klahn,

Nájera-Ramirez, 2000). Multicultural feminism is not just a theoretical application (Nájera-Ramirez, 2000); it is a political commitment that feminists of color must continue to address (Nájera-Ramirez, 2000; Hurtado,

### Empirical Work

The privileging of empirical work in feminist theory (Brown, 1997) and the privileging of feminism (that is, the experiences) have led to a reliance on the expert theoretical production (Brown, 1993, 1997a, 1997b). The national constituency of feminist theory has been limited to the existence. As a result, the theory has not adequately addressed the fact that women are often sheltered by it, and they have not achieved legal protection.

The move toward a "possibility" (White, 2005) without control (White, 2005) in White feminist studies, the analysis of the African American (Soto, 2005). The theory has not contributed much to the conditions of self-being (Soto, 1995; Rowe, 2005). The theory has not included analysis of Africa, Asia, and the use of method (Soto, 2005). Feminist Group (Soto, 2005) had a theory that is immediate and hybrid forms combined collective social responsibility and knowledge (Soto, 2005).

Feminists (Soto, 2005) in bringing issues to the front (Collins, 2005), such as their work, the broadest range of prejudice, discrimination, and more sophisticated,

ities (Flores-Ortiz, 2003a). As illustrated by Lopez (2005), the idea also results in different sexualities. Both in some instances, stable partners, and and familial ties are

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Nájera-Ramirez, & Zavella, 2003; Sandoval, 1991). There is no need to bifurcate multicultural feminist production into U.S.-based versus transnational since there is much fluidity in all feminist writings (Collins, 2006; Soto, 2005). This hierarchical division has regrettably displaced White feminism grounded in application (Nussbaum, 1999) and has significantly silenced the work of many feminists of color who have refused to abandon their activist roots and continue to address the local within their feminist theorizing (Collins, 2006; hooks, 2000; Hurtado, 2003a).

## Empirical Work

The privileging of theory has also sidetracked the importance (or necessity) of empirical work (Moya, 2002). Empiricism has been equated with "methodism" (Brown, 1997) and, as a result, the initial impetus and approach in the field of feminism (that is, to simply ask women what they think about their lived experiences) have been placed in question. Instead, the intellectual is positioned as the expert to theorize women's existence (Wiegman, 2005). While feminist theoretical production has gained legitimacy in the academy (e.g., Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997a, 1997b), it has not gained much in terms of its relevance to its original constituency and objective—making women's lives better in their everyday existence. As stated by Nussbaum (1999), abstract theory alone will not remedy the fact that "hungry women are not fed by this, battered women are not sheltered by it, raped women do not find justice in it, gays and lesbians do not achieve legal protection through it" (p. 45).

The move toward theory, and away from empiricism, has not happened without controversy. The debate about the "impossibility" (Brown, 1997) and the "possibility" (Wiegman, 2005) of women's studies has largely been held among White feminist writers (Nussbaum, 1999). In determining the future of women's studies, the analysis and input of feminists of color have been mostly ignored (Soto, 2005). This is unfortunate because multicultural feminists could contribute much by broadening the terms of the debate and extending the definitions of self beyond the liberal Western concepts of individual rights (Landrine, 1995; Rowe, 2005; Lugones, 2003; Moya, 2002); widening the Western cannon to include analytic work in ethnic studies and writings from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and other areas of the world (Alvarez, 2000); and expanding the use of method and writing processes (Anzaldúa, 2003; Torre et al., 2007; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Unlike White "academic feminism" that by "the new century ... had gone apocalyptic" (Wiegman, 2005, p. 40), multicultural feminist theory is immensely hopeful, believing that academic production in its various hybrid forms can indeed transform the world—to what exactly is to be determined collectively (Moya, 2002). As Vasquez (2002) states: "Psychologists bear a social responsibility to promote the public interest by sharing relevant research and knowledge to influence court decisions, legislation, and policy" (p. 880).

Feminists of color, especially those focusing on U.S. issues, have persisted in bringing issues of poverty, racism, homophobia, and classism to the forefront (Collins, 2000; Comas-Díaz, 2000; Moya, 2002; Saldivar-Hull, 2000). As such, their writings continue to emphasize the concreteness of feminism in the broadest meaning of the term—that is, women's liberation from poverty, prejudice, discrimination, and the continued persistence of sexism in its subtler, more sophisticated manifestations.

## Feminism and Practitioners

While these debates rage in the academy, multicultural feminist theory is being embraced by practitioners in various areas as a useful tool in framing their practice (Comas-Díaz, 2005). Surprisingly, clinical and counseling psychologists have implemented many of the proposals made by multicultural feminist theorists (see Enns in this volume for a comprehensive review; Barrett, Chin, Comas-Díaz, Espín, Greene, & McGoldrick, 2005; Comas-Díaz & Jacobsen, 1995; Espín, 1996b; Russo & Tartaro, 2008). The increasing ethnic and racial diversity in the United States, the enormous volume of immigration from all over the world, and the increasing globalization of the U.S. economy have provided the impetus for infusing multiculturalism into psychological therapies to help individuals, especially women, outside the White mainstream practices on which most therapies in the United States are based (Comas-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcón, 1998). Organizational psychology is another area that has taken multicultural feminist theory seriously. In particular, organizational psychology has been in charge of developing mechanisms for adapting to the increased participation of women in leadership positions (Bell, Meyerson, Nkomo, & Scully, 2003) and for companies' transition into a multicultural workforce worldwide (Holvino, 2008).

The academy and education in general have not been as quick to take up a multicultural feminist agenda in reworking curricula, pedagogies, or even hiring practices (Hurtado, Cervantez & Eccleston, 2009). The challenge that remains ahead is to increase the visibility of multicultural feminist theory in other areas, including popular media such as television, films, and print. For example, intersectionality can be applied to children's multicultural television so that derogated social identities, including gender and sexuality, are addressed and made apparent to a large audience. Children are targeted to initiate their socialization into a consciousness about inequalities in the world early in life (Hurtado & Silva, 2008).

## Bringing Other Constituencies Into the Fold: Toward a Developmental Multicultural Feminist Theory

In 1995, Hope Landrine issued an urgent call to the field of psychology to include the analytic work on the dominant and privileged in framing the feminist agenda:

[To] bring cultural diversity to feminist psychology requires not only a focus on the cultures of others but a focus on European American cultures. As long as 'cultural diversity' means 'how those minorities are yet different' (from whom?), diversity discourse eloquently eludes addressing, yet quietly maintains, existing social arrangements.... Culture will be regarded with dignity and the sociology of knowledge altered only when European American cultures are treated like all others. (p. 16)

Landrine called for a multicultural feminist analysis that is multipositioned to maximize the number of lenses through which various cultural contexts are examined. A group of Chicana feminists proposed the metaphor of a

*glorieta* (a roundabout from which dialogues depend on which direction you are coming from) (Klahn, Nájera-Ramírez, & ...)

The *avenidas* (avenues) of power and dialogue is fast and dexterous. It intervenes in the process of decolonization and ...

This intellectual spotlight of analytical and dialogical influence on human ...

In addition, Alarcón (2008) addresses the development of older women in the field of feminism. She has also advocated for this constituency: by high drop-out rates in the criminal justice system, develop some of the most radical feminist theory as one ...

## Enlisting Girls Multicultural Feminist Theory

A major concern for a younger generation of high school students and racial/ethnic and ethnic "integrated" students and is not yet ...

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*glorieta* (a roundabout) to describe the analytic process: a central standpoint from which dialogue with multiple constituencies and audiences is engaged, depending on which *avenida* (avenue) is being addressed (Arredondo, Hurtado, Klahn, Nájera-Ramírez & Zavella, 2003). In the words of the authors:

The *avenidas* that we face in the *glorieta* allow Chicana feminists to make assessments of power in relation to our varied locations. Like a Mexico City *glorieta*, the dialogue is fast-paced, fluid, and flexible, at times unnerving, it forces intellectual dexterity. Such agility is foundational to the Chicana feminist project, which intervenes in important ways to raise consciousness and further the struggle for decolonization against multiple oppressions. (pp. 2-3)

This intellectual position echoed Landrine's (1995) concern to shine the spotlight of analysis not only from the top down; the analysis must be multivalent and gyrational to fully capture the significance of cultural context in influencing all human experience.

In addition, Arredondo et al. (2003) proposed that multicultural feminisms address the developmental life cycle of women by including girls and young and older women in its analysis, thereby rectifying an earlier omission in the field of feminism that emphasized the adult years. Many feminists of color have also advocated the inclusion of young *men* of color in feminist analyses as this constituency increasingly comes under attack by the state as demonstrated by high drop-out rates from educational institutions and increased numbers in the criminal justice system (Collins, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2006). Below I develop some of these ideas as I propose a developmental multicultural feminist theory as one of the important areas for future development.

Enlisting Girls and Young Women in Multicultural Feminist Theory Creation

A major concern for the future of feminist theory in general is the integration of a younger generation of writers, practitioners, and innovators. Given the current high school dropout rates, the poor college graduation rates, and the ethnic and racial composition of doctoral programs and academic faculty, the racial and ethnic "integration" of young feminist writings is apparently limited to outliers and is not yet reflective of the populations of color in the United States.

The existing writings by young feminists are predominately by White middle-class writers, who cast a nod in the direction of multicultural positions but are limited in integrating such positions into the actual production. Furthermore, recent multicultural feminist production has taken place mostly among academics; even the writings outside the university are produced mostly by writers with university degrees (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Hernández & Rehman, 2002).

The continued exclusion of women of color from academic production is the result of the failures of the education pipeline, where statistically women of color in higher education are still a rarity. For example, in 2002, 51.7% of young women (under the age of 21) graduated from high school, the majority of them were White (66.7%), followed by Latinas (13.7%), with most women of color having much lower graduation rates (Black women 12.6%, Asian women 4.7%,



biracial women 1.7%, and 0.4% unknown). Of the women graduating with bachelor degrees, the majority again were White (73.3%), followed by Black women (10.4%), with most women of color having much lower graduation rates (Latinas 6.7%, Asian women 6.1%, non-resident aliens 2.7%, and American Indian/Alaska natives 0.7%). Similarly, of the total master degrees granted, the majority were earned by White (64.7%) women, followed by non-resident aliens (foreign students, 18.8%), with most women of color having much lower rates of advanced degree attainment (Black women 5.9%, Asian women 5.9%, Latinas 4.9%, and American Indian/Alaska natives 0.5%). The trend continues at the doctoral level where the majority of doctorate degrees were earned by White women (66.4%), followed by non-resident aliens (16.8%), with most women of color having much lower rates of degree attainment (Black women 7.2%, Asian women 5.3%, Latinas 3.8%, and American Indian/Alaska natives 0.6%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In 2003, of the 39.3% of woman professors in 4-year universities in the United States, the majority were White (31.56%), followed by Black (2.7%), with most women of color having much lower rates (Asian women 2.1%, Latinas 1.4%, multiracial 0.4%, American Indian/Alaska natives 0.2%, and non-resident aliens 0.1%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

Given these dire statistics in higher education, new creative modes of multicultural feminist production need to be developed and employed to increase the participation of young women in creating the feminisms of the future. Fortunately, there have been some exciting breakthroughs in this area of study in recent years.

### Recent Innovations in Multicultural Feminist Theory Production

One new approach that increases age diversity in feminist theory is the collaborative research models developed within the academy. Armed with the tools of Participant Action Research (PAR), Michelle Fine and her colleagues have produced collaborative pieces exploring feminist issues that are written for academic outlets, perhaps for the first time, across differences in "generations, colors, classes, and ideologies" (Pastor et al., 2007, p. 75). These innovative projects encourage young participants (middle and high school students) to learn research methods, produce art pieces (like spoken word), perform their work, and collaborate in the writing of the final product for academic publishing. As part of their strategy of inclusion, the researchers use different modes of knowledge production than those usually accepted in formal research projects. For example, Pastor and colleagues (2007) have integrated their young collaborators' poems that document the structural and personal disadvantages experienced in their homes, schools, and society at large. As poignantly illustrated below, in a poem by the high school student Tanzania Roach, a complicated set of social and economic relationships is revealed. Many young women would have trouble articulating these complicated ideas without the freedom of expression encouraged by the poetry genre.

Don't thrust anymore of your sick ideas into my head<sup>d</sup>  
like a rapist thrusts his body into his screaming victim

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don't force me to say what you want  
 like a rapist forces his victim  
 to perform debasing sexual acts  
 Don't leave me crying without a shred of confidence to go on  
 without a shred of dignity to continue living  
 Don't make me second guess myself  
 when I know I have the right to speak  
 You've left me with the hate I never asked for  
 Rapist. Racist. They look almost the same.  
 Rapist. Racist. They are the same.

In her poem Roach, listed as a coauthor of the chapter (Pastor et al., 2007) in which the poem appears, astutely deconstructs the intersection of the systems of subordination imposed on her because of gender, race, sexuality, and class (Collins, 2000). She concludes that although the sources of oppression may be different (rapist versus racist), the negative outcome to her well-being is the same: she cannot develop a confident personhood that allows her to function and control her life. Through collaboration with the academic researchers, this young woman's voice enters the feminist dialogue and thereby inserts a new perspective rarely seen in academic production. Most important, her voice is not filtered through the researchers' intellectual lens and research method; Roach is witness to her own experiences and theorizes her position in life.

Similarly, Torre, Fine, Alexander, and Genoa (2007), two psychologists and two youth performers, wrote the PAR study documenting the construction and performance of the theater piece *Echoes of Brown: Youth Documenting and Performing the Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education*. The authors' goal was to write about the "patterns of naturalized cumulative educational injustice and disrupt taken-for-granted patterns of inequity" (Torre et al., 2007, p. 223). Written collaboratively, the chapter is based on interviews and written data from the young women who participated in the theater production of *Echoes*, as well as the authors' experiences in producing and performing the work. In the final written product, the first-person pronoun shifts between "we" and "I" to signal the collective experience and permit each author to distinguish her individual thoughts. Both of these research projects illustrate the guiding assumption of the PAR researchers—that young women are "the best narrators of [their] lives" (Pastor et al., 2007, p. 75).

Notwithstanding these innovative approaches that interject young women's voices in multicultural feminist studies, feminist researchers of middle and upper class origins reporting on White adult women continue to dominate academic production, which is still the primary source for disseminating feminist ideas.

### Including Older Women and Nontraditional Families in Multicultural Feminist Analysis

The high divorce rates found in all ethnic and racial groups, the increasing participation of women working outside the home, and the higher life expectancy for women compared to men, all pose pressing feminist questions. These demographic trends point to an increased need for diverse living

arrangements, especially for older women. Some women on reaching retirement age are pooling their resources and creating collective living arrangements. In other instances, they are simply living near one another and sharing semi-communal eating and cleaning agreements. In still other instances, they have actually combined their assets to buy large houses to accommodate their different lifestyles and needs under one roof. Some have sold their previous homes and started from scratch, designing innovative housing that has both private and communal areas, moving beyond the conventional houses designed for nuclear families. Of note, men have not followed suit in creating such innovative living arrangements as they grow older (Gross, 2004).

These changes to the family structure made by older women are one part of a much larger trend toward what can be considered the "post-nuclear family" (Hurtado, 2009). Another example of alternative families is seen among gays and lesbians who adopt children in the United States as well as from other countries. Lesbian couples are using donors from sperm banks or male friends and relatives to have biological children. Some lesbian couples are alternating having biological children from the same donor, creating a sibling bond among their offspring, an unprecedented phenomenon. Heterosexual single women are also having biological children through sperm banks and, in some cases, are locating other single mothers with children from the same donor. These women are creating semi-structured families in which the biologically related children have the opportunity to develop familial bonds. Of course, at every step of the decision making, these individuals are making choices about the race and ethnicity of not only their partners but of the donors as well. As such, multicultural families, especially among gay and lesbian couples, are at the forefront of changing the family unit as we know it.

Similarly, families of color have never fit the normative composition advocated by White hegemony. The histories of slavery, colonization, and forced and semi-forced migration have affected the composition and functioning (as well as meaning) of these families (Baca Zinn, 2000). However, White feminist theory takes as its central point of departure a heterosexual nuclear family. The families that do not fit the mold, whether they be White or of color, remain undertheorized (Fine & Weis, 1998).

The increasing diversification and recognition of these changes in family units poses new and profound questions for multicultural feminist theory. If the impetus for the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s was largely based on scrutiny of the nuclear family, the decentering of the nuclear family in favor of more varied family structures, especially as women get older, prompts important questions about conventional patriarchal arrangements. For instance, how do nontraditional families subvert the power of patriarchy and what are the long-term consequences of the erosion of the nuclear family structure? Are the innovative living arrangements made by older women a feminist move? If so, in what ways, and how can this new-found freedom to determine living arrangements independent of heterosexual proscriptions contribute to subverting patriarchy? Furthermore, do these living arrangements among older women, following the theorem of "theory in the flesh," influence young people, especially young women, who may wish to consider an existence beyond heterosexual arrangements? Do the new families built by gay, lesbian, and single women also subvert patriarchy, which is largely based on a nuclear family system?

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Further still, as economic globalization continues to expand, women all over the world are influencing the economic and, consequently, social fabric of families and communities. The World Bank, as well as other foundations interested in funding economic opportunities, has found women workers to be the most reliable investment for economic development. Small cash infusions in the form of loans for cottage industries in such economies as India and Africa have resulted in exceptional returns, primarily benefiting children in these families. These organizations have found that women pay off loans more reliably than men, invest more productively than men, and are more likely to use the benefits of their economic stability to give their families secure and healthy lives. Will economic independence, however limited, result in changing patriarchal arrangements in these societies? All of these questions are relevant to the future of multicultural feminist theory.

### Relating to Oppression: Including Young Men of Color in Multicultural Feminist Analysis

In *Relating to Privilege: Three Blasphemies on Race and Feminism* (Hurtado, 1996), I proposed that White women derive a degree of structural and emotional privileges from their familial relationships to U.S. White patriarchy. As daughters, mothers, sisters, spouses, cousins, and aunts to White men, White women inherit a relational power dynamic that informs their perspective and thus their feminisms.

Conversely, women of color cannot biologically provide the pure White offspring necessary for White patriarchy to reproduce itself. This distance from and barred biological access to White patriarchy results in the aperture for a different kind of feminist platform that is at times at odds with White feminisms. For example, the increased incarceration of men of color, especially of boys and young men, has created a new concern among feminists of color. For many, it is not an uncommon experience to have a brother, father, uncle, cousin, or other male relative in the criminal justice system. As such, many feminists of color find themselves *relating to the oppression* of incarcerated men from their communities. Differences in incarceration rates for men of color, as well as their underachievement in the academy, has made these men's inclusion into a feminist movement a central issue—one that has not been embraced by White feminists of any age. However, feminists of color do not adhere to the notion of the "plight of the Black [of color] male" (White, 2008); they have instead opened the analysis to focus on patriarchy as the central problematic in the current incarceration trends. The study of masculinities of color is to add "complexity to more traditional approaches to social phenomena that focus only on race, class, or gender, by broadening our understanding of how mechanisms of institutional power mesh with personal expressions of power" (White, 2008, p. 19).

Another contribution made in the area of multicultural feminist masculinities is the examination of men of color who are thriving and who call themselves feminists (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; White, 2008). This positive analysis counteracts the deficit thinking inherent in the social problem approach currently in vogue in the study of men of color. Central in the analysis of the feminisms of men of color is the outlining of "new masculinities" that do not depend

on the domination of women as central to men's definition of self (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; White, 2007). Expansion of the definition of manhood may also contribute to a multicultural developmental feminist theory in which the relationships between young people can achieve and benefit from more equitable arrangements.

## Future Directions in Multicultural Feminist Theory Production

There is no doubt that multicultural feminist theory has made tremendous inroads in the field of psychology largely due to the efforts of committed psychologists of color (Russo & Vaz, 2001) working in collaboration with their White allies. As Russo and Vaz indicate:

Since its emergence as a field in the 1970s, women psychologists of color, albeit few in number, have been active participants in feminist psychology. They have been leaders in advocating more complex perspectives on gender and have shaped an inclusive vision for the field. (p. 280)

One of the biggest challenges remaining is to turn the theoretical insights multicultural feminists have so courageously developed into empirical projects (Shields, 2008). There is, for instance, a pressing need to design studies that do justice to the complexity of intersectionality. Far from conclusive, some promising starts merit our attention.

## Contributions to the Empirical Study of Intersectionality

Intersectionality is commonly thought of as embodied in individuals' social identities (Hurtado, 2003a; Shields, 2008). Which particular intersecting categories gain significance at a given time is dependent on social context (Hurtado & Gurin, 2004). Deaux and Perkins (2001) refer to intersectionality as the "kaleidoscopic self"; Arredondo et al. (2003) as a *glorieta* (a roundabout); and Hurtado and Gurin (2004) as a "multivalent amoeba"—all of these terms are used as metaphors to describe the fact that intersectional identities are best highlighted through the *specification of the context* and/or through the specification of the *identificational intersection* under study. In other words, an intersection of social identities can be examined from the perspective of the context (or background) in which it occurs or the intersection can be examined from the perspective of the exact nexus (or foreground) of the particular intersection under study.

To illustrate these two ways of examining intersectionality, I refer to two studies. In my study of educationally successful Chicanas (Hurtado, 2003a), I asked the respondents about each of their significant (and potentially stigmatizing) social identities separately—first race, followed by ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and social class. When I inquired about their class background, I asked the open-ended question, "When you were growing up, how would you describe your class background?" In this instance, intersectionality is examined by focusing on the context in which that social identity manifests itself.

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The question specifies the context, the time period "when you were growing up," which by definition takes into account the ethnic and racial composition of the respondent's neighborhood, the social class based on the family's economic resources (however family was defined by the respondent), and a specific developmental stage (prior to leaving home for college). The answers provided by the respondents were complex and richly textured with the social realities many of them negotiated growing up poor or working class. For example, they mentioned growing up in neighborhoods where almost everyone was Mexican and poor; therefore they did not perceive themselves as economically deprived. Furthermore, it allowed the respondents to acknowledge their change in class status (the changing "multivalent amoeba") as many of them moved from predominantly working class, ethnically and racially segregated neighborhoods to the more middle class institutions of higher education. Many of the respondents who experienced these social disjunctures spoke eloquently about how their perceptions of their class status changed as their basis for social comparison changed (Tajfel, 1981) from the residents in their neighborhoods to their fellow students who came from much more privileged backgrounds. Many of the respondents in this study were the first in their families to attend college (Hurtado, 2003a).

The Hurtado and Sinha (2008) study illustrates the second approach to analyzing intersectionality, focusing on a particular *identificational intersection* rather than the background or context in which the intersection occurs. In this study, we examined the views of working class, young, educated Latino men on manhood by asking the open-ended question, "What does manhood mean to you?" We did not specify a particular context (e.g., in your family, in your culture, in your peer group) or a particular developmental stage in their life (as we did in the sample of Chicanas discussed above). The question asked the Latino men was about their perception of a particular facet of their identity. The question required the respondents to take into account how their gender, race, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and social class intersected with their concept of manhood. The respondents spoke eloquently and freely on how their definitions of manhood were influenced by all their social identities: of the 36 respondents, 36 mentioned their race, 32 mentioned their ethnicity, 22 mentioned their social class, and 8 mentioned their sexuality (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008). Furthermore, rather than mentioning each social identity separately, the respondents' comments on their social identities and definitions of manhood were relational and imbedded in rich, textured narratives (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008).

Because of the multiple facets and layers created by intersectionality, researchers of empirical studies often choose qualitative over quantitative methods when applying the framework of intersectionality. McCall (2005), however, proposes that quantitative methods can also be used (albeit not at the expense of qualitative methods) to examine the complexities of intersectionality. McCall asserts that qualitative methods have been "privileged" when examining intersectionality because it is assumed that quantitative methods would simplify the effects of intersecting social categories. Indeed, she agrees that qualitative methods may be necessary to fully disclose the layered and nuanced meanings generated by intersectionality. McCall, however, proposes that quantitative methods can be applied by specifying which categories



are under study (class, gender, for example) and the conditions under which the specified categories are being examined. Furthermore, a researcher can acknowledge that the social categories specified through quantitative methods are tentative, contingent, and artificially bound for the purpose of study, and that the content of the categories may change with time, method of measurement, and context.

In summary, multicultural feminism forces us to think in complex, relational, and contextual ways whenever examining human relations—a very tall order indeed. The push within multicultural feminist theory has been to follow the assessment of these conceptual complexities with concrete empirical studies and without abandoning the centrality of lived experience that has been the bedrock of feminism.

## Conclusion

In 2000 bell hooks wrote that “feminism is for everybody.” hooks’ assumption was that feminism was a “living theory” (Hurtado, 2003a) that can be useful and applied to everyone’s life. The challenge, however, has been how feminism translates from the academy to everyday life. I would argue that its usefulness is dependent on infusing feminism with a developmental perspective such that core principles discussed in this chapter—intersectionality, self-reflexivity, and accountability—are explicitly taught not only in schools but are made accessible to various constituencies in a variety of venues. The exploration of methods, different venues for publication, inclusion of new voices, and expansion of dissemination of feminist knowledge production can all be used to further explore what feminism means and to enhance, modify, challenge, fight, and survive one’s everyday existence.

Consciousness about gender disparities as well as other injustices does not happen through “spontaneous combustion” (Hurtado & Silva, 2008). This is especially the case when many institutions in society are structured to keep individuals from questioning the existing power arrangements. Gender, especially, has become so naturalized that all gender disparities have an easily available biological explanation that is extremely difficult to dispute, even among highly educated people. As such, it takes counter-hegemonic education to gain a feminist consciousness. An integral part of the feminist project, then, requires that consciousness about social injustice be taught as early as possible for feminism to be viable throughout the life cycle (Cole & Stewart, 1996). For example, the children’s TV cartoon “Little Bill” takes on multiple social issues in age-appropriate episodes, teaching children about the disadvantages created by the intersecting, derogated social categories of race, class, gender, physical ability, and ethnicity. Hurtado and Silva (2008) have examined the animated series using an intersectional lens. Unfortunately, sexuality is not addressed in the series.

Feminism, then, needs a living curriculum that facilitates a counter-hegemonic narrative about injustices and that provides avenues for social change throughout the life cycle. Multicultural feminist writers have set the stage for the next phase of feminism and its usefulness for deconstructing, and ultimately, obliterating existing power arrangements. If we accept the premise

that multiculturalism is influencing social justice, multicultural feminist proposals have been made, women’s reproductive education, normalizing conceiving and raising parenthood, among others.

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## Endnotes

1. The poem “Don Tanzania Roach” contact Tanzania.

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that multicultural feminisms are central to social action through research and influencing social policy, then what have we accomplished so far? Although multicultural feminism is still a counter-hegemonic movement, many of its proposals have been adopted by the mainstream—laws against sexual harassment, women’s reproductive rights, women’s entry into every sector of higher education, normalizing cohabitation before marriage, same-sex marriage, conceiving and raising children in gay and lesbian families, single-chosen parenthood, among many other revolutionary social rearrangements.

Many of these accomplishments are the result of multicultural feminist theorists embracing science as an endeavor, not rejecting it because of its inherent subjectivity; instead they conceive of knowledge production for what it is—a strategic, purposeful, and relational endeavor. As such, multicultural feminist writers are true believers in knowledge production precisely because they acknowledge both its limitations *and* its immense potential. Knowledge production sensitive to the historical conditions that produced it, as well as the human relations involved, can indeed lead to more comprehensible, consumable, and useful knowledge. The questioning of boundaries and methods has not led to an intellectual cul-de-sac where nothing can be known or altered but to a multiplicity of perspectives where patterns, concerns, goals, applications, and solutions (however partial) can be negotiated in collaboration with a diverse group of others. Multicultural feminist theory has much to offer toward the rearrangement of existing social relations. We have just begun.

## Endnotes

1. The poem “Don’t Hurt Me Anymore” (1995) is used with permission from Tanzania Roach, copyright by Ms. Roach. For more information please contact Tanzania\_roach@antiochsea.edu.

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