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COMPLICATING GENDER: THE SIMULTANEITY OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS IN ORGANIZATION CHANGE(ING)

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This paper argues that in order to address the intersection of race, gender, and class we need to go beyond the liberal feminist and functionalist paradigms that dominate organizational change theory and practice. Race, gender, and class are shown to be simultaneous processes of identity, institutional, and social practice; and the impact that this re-conceptualization can have in supporting change efforts in organizations towards organizational health and justice is explored. Important differences between the experience of white women's mainstream feminist theory and practice, and women of color's theory and practice are identified. Four feminist frameworks (radical, socialist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial) are reviewed to identify what they can contribute to providing a set of "simple rules" to guide efforts at addressing the simultaneity of race, gender, and class in organizational change. These guidelines are, in turn, developed into concrete moves for crafting an organizational lens and standpoint that works the simultaneity of race, gender, and class. Three specific strategies are proposed to move forward in the research, theory, and practice of organizational change: 1) researching and publicizing the hidden stories at the intersection of race, gender, and class to help change dominant organizational narratives; 2) identifying, untangling, and changing the differential impact of everyday practices in organizations; and 3) identifying and linking internal organizational processes with external societal processes to understand organizational dynamics within a broader social context.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I have been interested in the intersection of race-ethnicity,¹ gender, and class for a long time and especially on its impact on organizational change efforts to achieve organizational health and justice² (Holvino, 1993, 1994). As Bannerji (1992: 67) asserts, “there is no better point of entry into a critique or reflection than one’s own experience.” My interest is personal. I am a Puerto Rican woman working in the United States, born of professional class parents, and heterosexual. I am always confronting how this complex positionality, which posits me as privileged in some dimensions and subordinate in others, influences my perspectives, choices, opportunities, and lived reality. My interest is also professional. I have seen how my positionality as a third-world woman residing in the United States, who works internationally in the field of organization development and change, provides me with particular perspectives, interests, and skills in how I do my work (Holvino, 2000b).

In the fields of women studies, feminist theory, and literary criticism, the recognition that it is important to work at the intersection of race, class, and gender is today an accepted reality (Bannerji, 1995; Belkhir, 2000; Bhavnani, 2001; DuCille, 1994). In fact, the intersection has become such a popular disciplinary topic that the same scholars who initially argued for attending to the intersection and contributed to making it a respected topic of academic scholarship are now concerned about the “commodification of Black womanhood”—Black women having become the preferred representative of the intersection in the United States (Christian, 1987, 1989a, 1989b; Collins, 1986, 1989, 2000a; DuCille, 1994; hooks, 1984, 1989, 1994).³ Still, many would argue that while progress has been made, work at the intersection of race, class, and gender is still underdeveloped (Belkhir, Butler and Jack, 2000; Kalantzis, 1990; Meisenhelder, 2000).

No such movement towards recognizing the importance of the intersection is evidenced in the organizational behavior and change literature, where few scholars are advocating for the inclusion of race in mainstream theory (Alderfer, 1990; Alderfer and Thomas, 1988; Cox, 1990; Nkomo, 1992), or the inclusion of more sophisticated perspectives on gender (Calás and Smircich, 1992a; Ely, 1999). Even fewer scholars seem to want to address the intersection of race and gender (Bell and Nkomo, 1992; Bell, Denton and Nkomo, 1993); race, ethnicity and gender (Ferdman, 1999); or race, class, and gender (Acker, 1999a, 1999b; Holvino, 1993, 1994; Marks, 2001). In the field of organization development and change, the silence on the intersection is outstanding, unless it is within the specific marketable context of the “managing diversity” discourse (Cox, 1993; Cross, Katz, Miller and Seashore, 1994; Thomas, 1991, 1992, 1999).

Why has it been so difficult to take up the intersection of class, gender, and race in organizational change? In this paper, I argue that in order to address the intersection we need to go beyond the liberal feminist and functionalist paradigms that dominate organizational change theory and practice. We need to complicate gender by drawing from other silenced streams of feminist theory to impact the practice of organization change(ing). And we need to bring to a

close the modern impulse to search for a metanarrative that integrates race, gender, and class in order to guide organizational change interventions on gender (Sacks, 1989).

My point of departure for this re-directing is the experience of women of color, working class women, and the women of color's critique of dominant white feminist theory. I incorporate, articulate, re-member, and re-deploy this critique in order to revisit organizational change efforts and draw new conclusions about its (in)ability to address *all* women. My purpose is to show race, gender, and class as simultaneous processes of identity, institutional, and social practice and to explore the impact that this re-conceptualization can have in supporting change efforts in organizations towards organizational health and justice. Instead of an overarching framework to address the intersection of race, gender, and class, I provide a set of guidelines for working the simultaneity of race, gender, and class in organizations that can be strategically deployed. While the application of these guidelines will require a lot of collaboration and confrontation among interveners across multiple axes of identity, positions, and disciplines, their use provides a lens, which allows addressing the intersection. In addition, three concrete strategies for moving forward to work the simultaneity of race, gender, and class in organizations are offered.

The paper is structured in four sections. In the first section I frame and provide the background for this work. My own history as a woman of color, told through the voice of others before me, is part of this background, because there is no place where women of color can enter that does not consider the intersection of race-ethnicity, gender, and class (Giddings, 1984). I review four themes in the experience of women of color, which provide a powerful basis for addressing the intersection of race, class, and gender. Important differences between the experience of white women's mainstream feminist theory and practice, and women of color's theory and practice, are explored as a way of contextualizing the need for addressing the intersection of class, race, and gender in organizational change.

In the second section I argue that despite the critique of mainstream feminism by women of color and the acknowledgment by many feminists (white and of color) of the importance of integrating race, class, and gender into gender analyses and interventions, translating this theoretical understanding into the practice of organizational change has not been easy. I present and analyze an example from the organizational change literature to demonstrate the consequences of not working with the intersection in the practice of changing organizations.

In the third section I draw from other feminist theories to gather insights and identify "clues" about how to approach the intersection of gender, class and race. In looking at other ways of doing feminist theory and practice, I glean different approaches of working with the intersection.

I conclude by offering six pointers or "simple rules"⁴ to guide efforts at addressing the intersection of race, class, and gender in organizations. These guidelines are, in turn, developed into five concrete moves. These moves are ways for crafting an organizational lens and standpoint that takes the intersection into account. Three specific strategies are proposed to move forward in the research, theory, and practice of organizational change that work with the intersection of race, class, and gender in a practical way. I propose these strategies as the work of the future.

II. WOMEN OF COLOR,⁵ FEMINISMS, AND WHITE WOMEN

As early as 1974, the Combahee River Collective, a collective of Black feminists, recognized that the struggle of Black women was a “unified” struggle against race, gender, and class inequality. In “A Black Feminist Statement,” they outlined their position:

We are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis [sic] and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives (Hull, Scott, and Smith, 1982: 13).

But, as Sandoval (2000: 42) documents, a hegemonic feminist theory based on the experience of white women developed, which actively suppressed the theorizing and practice of women of color and the recognition of “an original, eccentric, and coalitional cohort of U.S. feminists of color” and their contributions to feminism. The outcome of both “first wave” U.S. feminism in the mid-1800s and the “second wave” women’s movement during the nineteen-seventies and eighties was that women of color were made invisible and their concerns and experiences were disappeared. For example, in discussing “how did feminism get to be ‘all white’?”, Barbara Smith explains that “the fears about breaking ranks in the Black community, Black lesbian leadership not getting support, the larger conservative repression, and a lack of consciousness in white women’s organizations” all contributed to Black feminism not becoming as powerful as it could have (Smith and Mansbridge, 2000). In this context, Black women and Latinas developed their own separate frameworks and many today do not consider themselves feminists, meaning “white feminists” (Collins, 1989; Garcia, 1989; Walker, 1983).

Important differences between white women and women of color’s theories and practices have emerged that lead to different paths when theorizing and working gender at the intersection of race and class. The scholarship documenting these differences is extensive, particularly from Black and Chicana feminists (Collins, 1986, 2000a; King, 1988; Sandoval, 2000). While some feminists, in particular socialist feminists, have tried to respond to this powerful critique by women of color, the white feminist movement overall has been less than successful incorporating it. These differences, or better said, the inability to address these differences, have in turn over-determined the way in which the intersection of race, class, and gender has not been taken up in organizational change efforts for gender equity and social justice. I summarize in thematic form some of these major differences between white women and women of color, which Sandoval (2000: 46) aptly refers to as “the signs of a lived experience of difference.”

A. “WOMEN OF COLOR HAVE ALWAYS WORKED”⁶

African, African American, Latina, Asian, and other women of color have always worked and been seen as workers. “Domestic servants descended from African slaves, Chinese women sold into the U.S. prostitution market . . . and Puerto Rican feminist union organizers in the early–1900s” are just an example (Amott and Matthaeci, 1991: 3). Thus, for many women of color, white feminisms’ division between the public and the private spheres does not represent their reality. For example, the demands by white feminists to have the role of housewives in the

private sphere recognized and to gain access to work in the public (outside the home) sphere have not been a priority for women of color. On the contrary, being able to “stay at home” and be supported by “a husband’s paycheck” is considered a luxury that only white affluent women have (Glenn, 1988; Romero, 1992, 1997a; Williams, 2000). Instead, women of color’s demands have focused on improving their working conditions and opportunities, as they have generally been confined to positions at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy and in secondary labor markets. For example, after World War II, Black women experienced economic gains when employed in the worst paid jobs in the war industry and in the more dangerous and monotonous jobs in factories and offices that white women rejected. These new jobs allowed them to leave the world of domestic service and have more autonomy and a better wage (Amott and Matthaei, 1991).

There are many consequences to the different relationships that white women and women of color have to their material and economic realities. One is their relationship to the community and the complex interaction between paid and unpaid work in the lives of women of color. For example, because poor and working class women do not have the same political and economic means that middle-class women do, their reproductive labor frequently extends outside the boundaries of the nuclear family into the larger community—“the third shift” Romero (1997b) calls it. Community work becomes, for many women of color, a way of meeting a variety of needs for the welfare and safety of their families, which they feel they “have to do”; sharing resources, improving inadequate public services, accessing networks for paid work, for example. But because conceptualizations of “community work,” “volunteerism,” and “activism” have been shaped by the circumstances and experience of middle class women, women of color’s leadership roles, contributions, and rationale for engaging in community work are often relegated and remain unexplored (Pardo, 1997).

Another consequence of this different relationship to the material world is that the experience itself produces a different way of thinking, because there is a “connection between what one does and how one thinks” (Collins, 1989: 748). “If you eats these dinners and don’t cook’em, if you wears these clothes and don’t buy or iron them, then you might start thinking that the fairy or some spirit did all that. . . . Black folks don’t have no time to be thinking like that. . . . But when you don’t have anything else to do, you can think like that. It’s bad for your mind, though” (John Langston Gwaltney, in Collins, 1989: 748-749).

B. “MEN ARE NOT THE ENEMY AND FAMILY IS NOT NECESSARILY THE PROBLEM”⁷

The role of the family in sustaining women of color against racism has meant that women of color do not define men as the oppressor, nor do they experience family as the most oppressive institution. While many women of color critique the nuclear family, and especially its patriarchal and heterosexual structure and ideologies, for many Black women and Latinas the family is a place where the values of the community are transmitted, and strategies to survive the racist system are taught. Family, instead of being experienced as oppressive, is experienced as a haven from the hostile environment of work and society and even a resource for upward mobility (Higginbotham and Weber, 1992; Romero, 1997b).

In addition, the experience of racism leads many women of color to prioritize race as the starting point of their self-definition and social position, as white racism treats “all Blacks alike.” Thus, women and men of color join in one anti-racist struggle of survival and social change. Furthermore, because race and class are frequently conflated, as when the term “Black welfare mother” is used to signify all Black women, women of color may struggle against racism, even if it means relegating issues of gender (Reynolds, 1997). As Hurtado (1996b: 381) clarifies, the relationship between women and men of color is “the area in which feminists of color have made fewer inroads . . . because intergroup ethnic/racial conflict creates the need for little-questioned solidarity in order to survive.” Puerto Rican, Latin American, African, and other third world women share a similar experience when liberation movements and imperialistic struggles have been framed in national/ethnic terms and women have chosen to identify first with these community struggles, joining in solidarity with men against a common oppressor, rather than seeing essentialized men as their oppressor. “We are fighting for our people; they [white women] are fighting for their individual rights,” summarizes Mendez-Negrete (1999: 40). For Alarcon (1990: 359) this unique experience of women of color, in between “woman and of color,” creates a particular position where the subject is reconfigured in relation to a multiplicity of others and “not just white men.”

C. “WHITE WOMEN ARE PRIVILEGED TOO”

Many white women, especially those who are middle-class or affluent, have benefited from the freedom to pursue professional opportunities because women of color look after their homes and their children. In these situations, white women have openly exploited women of color in the roles of domestic workers. They have used their racial and class privilege to sustain their social power and status and diminish the identity, social position, and options of working class women and women of color (Glenn, 1986; Hochschild, 2000; Reynolds, 1997; Rollins, 1985).

White women have also benefited from their whiteness in a racist system. For example, by being the only desirable mothers of the white man’s progeny, a group dynamic is created where white women relate to white men through “seduction” and women of color, the undesirable ones, relate to white men through “rejection” (Hurtado, 1989, 1996a). While their femininity is exalted and their virginity protected, women of color’s sexuality is demonized and their femininity degraded or exoticized (Carby, 1985; Hurtado, 1999b; Lu, 1997; Smith, 1989, 1990). Christensen (1997) explores how this positioning of white women in relation to white men also hinders their ability to engage in anti-racist and class struggles, as many white heterosexual women’s middle and affluent class status is a product of the privileges derived from their relation to their fathers, husbands, lovers, and organizational male mentors. White women collude with white men in the private sphere (a dynamic of dependency) and fight the “male oppressor” in the public sphere (a dynamic of counter-dependence). White middle class and affluent women “feel so free to attack ‘their’ men” because of their relationship to white men in powerful social positions (Williams (2000: 170). Working class women’s demands for equality, on the other hand, are tempered by their greater fear of family instability and the potential poverty of divorce.

White women derive many benefits from this “special place for white women only” (Frost, 1980). In organizations, this dynamic translates into a tendency by white women to be complicit with white privilege and white men, while women of color confront it/them. Because of their

lack of alignment with heterosexist privilege, some white lesbians and lesbians of color do not participate in the dynamics of seduction and have been able to forge alliances with women of color out of this different relation to white men (Hurtado, 1999a). Contrary to white feminisms, adds Hurtado (2000: 141), “Chicana feminisms have addressed the inclusion of men in their efforts to mobilize politically . . . [and the] recognition of difference among men helped produce complex feminisms.”

D. “A DIFFERENT CONSCIOUSNESS AND A DIFFERENT WAY OF KNOWING”

Because of the distinctive set of experiences that arise from their political and economic status and their lives in the interstices of race, class, and gender, women of color have a different view of the material reality. This unique position creates the conditions for “a different standpoint” (Collins, 1989), not white and not male. I call it “in between.” Others have referred to this unique perspective of women of color as a third gender category (Sandoval, 1991); multiple consciousness (King, 1988); oppositional consciousness (Sandoval, 1991; 2000); *mestiza* and borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987); bridge (Rushin, 1981); crossroads (Rojas, 1989); and interstitial feminisms (Pérez, 1999).

Deborah King (1988) likens this position to “belonging and not belonging, a ‘both/or’” orientation that allows women of color to be at the same time members of a group (of color, women) and at the same time “stand apart from it” as the “outsider within” (Collins, 1986). Hurtado (1996b: 384) calls it “shifting consciousness . . . the ability of many women of color to shift from one group’s perception of social reality to another and at times, to be able simultaneously to perceive multiple social realities without losing their sense of self-coherence.”

This positionality, in turn, creates a specific relationship to knowledge and knowledge production. This positionality is informed by knowledge that expresses and validates oppression, while, at the same time, it also documents and encourages resistance to oppression (Collins, 2000b; Hurtado, 1996b). This places women of color in a unique position “to [document] the maneuvers necessary to obtain and generate knowledge . . . [a] unique knowledge that can be gleaned from the interstices of multiple and stigmatized social identities” (Hurtado, 1996b: 375). “Successful marginality” gets converted into knowledge, Hurtado further demonstrates, by the mechanisms of appropriately using anger; finding a voice in a balancing act between silence and outspokenness; withdrawing from men and gaining strength from it; tactically shifting ways of interpreting the world from multiple identities as appropriate (shifting consciousness); and expressing oneself in multiple tongues by developing the ability to talk to different audiences and in different genres (Hurtado, 1996b).

In third world criticism, theory itself comes to be questioned, partly to challenge how the apparatus and institutions of theory-making work to silence the perspective of third world women (DuCille, 1994; King, 1990) and partly to connect to their communities of origin which is most likely to be working class and non-academic (hooks, 2000). Feminist writing by women of color is different in style and content. For example, different genres are mixed to make feminist theory—poetry, critical essays, short stories, letters, memoirs—and the production of knowledge itself is less tied to the academy (Lorde, 1984; Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981; Morales, 1998). Anzaldúa (1990: xxv-xxvi) summarizes well women of color’s stance:

Necesitamos teorías that will rewrite history using race, class, gender and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries—new kinds of theories with new theorizing methods. We need theories that will point out ways to maneuver between our particular experiences and the necessity of forming our own categories and theoretical models for the patterns we uncover. . . . We need to de-academize theory and to connect the community to the academy. . . . We need to give up the notion that there is a “correct” way to write theory.

Though this is not an exhaustive analysis, I hope to have demonstrated that there are significant differences between how women of color and white women experience, understand, and live their personal, organizational, and community lives. Mohanty (1991a: 10) aptly summarizes the critique by women of color of mainstream feminism,

Third world women’s writings on feminism have consistently focused on 1) the idea of the simultaneity of oppressions . . . ; 2) the crucial role of the state in circumscribing women of color’s daily lives and survival struggles; 3) the significance of memory and writing in the creation of oppositional agency; and 4) the differences, conflicts, and contradictions [in] third world women’s organizations and communities . . . [and] have insisted on the complex interrelationships between feminist, antiracist, and nationalist struggles. . . . Thus, third world feminists have argued for the rewriting of history based on the specific locations and histories of struggle of people of color and postcolonial peoples, and on the day-to-day strategies of survival utilized by such peoples.

These differences generate important practical limitations for women working together and in working with men to change the situation of women in organizations. For example, they pose limitations to forming coalitions between working class and professional-managerial women, between white women and women of color, and between the different groups of women of color. Each group has different perceived and real needs, different agendas and priorities for change, different strategies and tactics, and different access and relation to power sources (Donleavy and Pugh, 1977; Marks, 2001; Proudford, 1998; Smith, 1995). The differences also underscore the importance of “complicating gender” by exploring its racialized and classed dimensions in order to get to a more complete understanding of women and their situation(s).

But, in spite of this forceful critique and the ample documentation of the different experience of women of color, the liberal feminist paradigm continues to dominate organizational research (Ely, 1999). This is a paradigm that privileges gender over race, class, and ethnicity, assumes a common oppression of all women, and seeks to provide “equal” rights and opportunities to women based on those of (white) men. And it is in the context of equal rights for individual women, usually meaning white women, that organizational issues have been framed in the United States. What it would take for the experience of women of color and their critique to enter the organizational discourse and for the dilemmas of working class women to impact how gender work is done in organizations is the concern of the rest of this paper.

III. RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS INTERSECTIONS: WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Despite the forceful critique by women of color and working class women of approaches to gender that do not take into account the intersection of class, race, and gender, and the more recent acknowledgement by mainstream (white) feminists of the importance of the intersection, it has been difficult to translate these developments into concrete interventions in organizations. While we are beginning to find more examples of scholarship in organizational research that addresses the intersection (Adams, 1998; Glenn, 1999; Niemann, 1999; Segura, 1992a, 1992b; Simmons and Smith-Wesleyan Editorial Group, 2000), the same cannot be said for scholarship in the area of organizational change. A colleague's statement on the intersection of race, gender, and class sums it up well: "It keeps cropping up in the gender and institutional change field but there seems little concrete to say about it beyond that it's important and one deals with it contextually."

It is as if feminist theory could not provide guidance toward addressing the intersection in the theory and practice of organizational change. This is the problem I seek to address. How can the understanding that race, gender, and class are connected be translated into concrete interventions that seriously take into account the intersection? And what happens when we continue to intervene in organizations as if race, gender, and class were not interacting dynamics? In other words, what happens to our ability to do organizational change geared to equality and justice in the workplace when we do not have a perspective that considers and works with the intersection of class, race, and gender? I analyze the example of the glass ceiling, a well-recognized feminist contribution to organizational change, to demonstrate that in spite of its accomplishments much of what has been done so far designing change interventions to address gender equality in organizations has been constructed out of the subjectivity of white women and the theorizing of liberal/mainstream feminism.

A. MAINSTREAM FEMINISM AND THE GLASS CEILING

The "glass ceiling" is a concept popularized in the 1980s. It is used to describe a barrier so subtle that it is transparent; yet, it is so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up the management hierarchy (Morrison and VonGlinow, 1990). Glass ceiling studies identify organizational practices, which act as barriers to managerial advancement and therefore need changing. Glass ceiling research has revealed that typical barriers to women's advancement are lack of mentoring, sex stereotypes, pipeline issues, and outmoded concepts of what it takes to be a good leader that advantage male images and devalue women's caring and people skills (Catalyst, 1998; Fletcher, 1992; Morrison, 1987; Sharpe, 2000).

But, a comparative analysis of the situation of women of color shows that their experience in organizations "is quite different from the experience of white women . . . [t]he data . . . show that white women and women of color differ on more items than they agree on" in glass ceiling-type surveys and interviews (White and Potts, 1996: 13). In fact, women of color have not benefited from glass ceiling interventions and from efforts to promote them. Using statistical and interview data, Martinez (2000) contradicts Nathan Glazer's contentions that Latina/os, unlike

African Americans, have “made it” in the United States. For example, “[w]hile the median income for African American women who are full time workers is 86% that of white women’s income, Latinas earn only 74% as much as their white counterparts. . . . [T]he median income for African American women working full time is 63% that of white men, while the median income for Latinas working full time is 54% that of white men” (Martinez, 2000: 63).

There are also marked differences in how women experience their opportunities for advancement in organizations. White women (60%) are more likely than women of color (47%) to believe that their opportunities for advancement have improved in the last five years. Women of color are more than twice as likely as white women to believe that there has been no change in advancement opportunities (38% versus 15%). They also perceive that the primary barriers to advancement are not their performance, but their lack of access to influential mentors and networking (47% versus 29%) (Giscombe, 1999). From her interviews with Chicanas, Martinez (2000: 74) concludes that work relationships between Chicanas and both white women and men are “limited, abusive, sometimes oppressive, and definitely ambivalent.”

Research on the glass ceiling for Latino/as⁸ also leads to the conclusion that glass-ceiling conceptualizations and interventions that do not take into account the differential impact on men and women because of the intersection of race, class, and gender are inadequate to explain and guide interventions to advance the status of Latinos in organizations (Holvino, 1996; Melendez, Carre, Holvino and Gomez, 1994). One of the key findings of this research was that changes in the labor market and the erosion of traditional sources of organizational advancement like internal job ladders are limiting Latinas’ progress in organizations. While many of the well-known reasons for lack of advancement that apply to white women and which are internal to the organization also apply to Latinos—such as lack of mentoring, culturally-determined models of managerial success, and lack of access to informal networks—explain some, but not all of the reasons for Latinas’ absence and lack of advancement in organizations.

One conclusion derived from this study is that since the majority of Latino workers are concentrated in the disappearing industries of agriculture and manufacturing, in the lower paid professions or trades, and at entry level jobs, it is less useful to address “glass ceilings,” which imply a managerial or supervisory level in a hierarchical organization. Rather, it is more important to understand the impact of the changing economic and industrial climate on working-class Latinas. In other words, the glass ceiling is revealed as a problem of managerial and professional class members in organizations, while what most Latinos need in order to be able to improve their economic position is help in the “pre-organization,” for example, educational opportunities and on-the-job-training (Melendez, Carre, Holvino and Gomez, 1994). Their advancement is not so much dependent on the organization itself, but on its environment, which determines what kind of entry opportunities are available to them in the job market (Fernandez-Kelly, 1994; Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia, 1988; Morales and Bonilla, 1993).

B. LIMITATIONS OF MAINSTREAM FEMINISM IN ADDRESSING THE INTERSECTION OF RACE, GENDER AND CLASS

As the glass ceiling example suggests, the promise of and the interest in the integration of race, gender, and class talked about in mainstream feminism have not translated into concrete

organizational interventions that take into account the complexity of these relations. In the few studies available, the intersection of *race and gender* is addressed by trying to understand the differences between women of color and white women in terms of their status in organizations as revealed in statistical analysis of salaries, positions, and advancement (Catalyst, 1999). Very few studies consider their unique stories and work experience as revealed in interviews, or their relationships with other groups in organizations (Bell and Nkomo, 1992; Hossfeld, 1990; Segura, 1989; Zavella, 1987). The intersection of *class and gender*, on the other hand, is left largely unexplored, except for the focus on working class women's experience of work which in many cases are women of color (Cavendish, 1982; Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff, 2000; Lamphere, 1987; Lefkowitz and Withorn, 1986; Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997; Sacks and Remy, 1984; Zandy, 1990). I want to highlight four consequences of these limited perspectives and approaches to the intersection of race, class, and gender for understanding organizations and promoting organizational change. What they all share in common is that they "disappear"⁹ an organizational dynamic that is important to understand and address in the goal of promoting gender equity and institutional change.

C. THE WOMEN WHO DISAPPEAR

A difficulty with mainstream feminist approaches to gender equity in organizational change efforts is that race, gender, and class are treated as independent variables and separate categories of analysis. Because they are variables to be manipulated, they are seen as additive—gender + race + class. For example, data on race and gender in organizational audits to monitor representation are collected and analyzed separately following the principles of statistical analysis and disaggregating data. Women of color are consistently counted twice (as women and as people of color) and at the same time disappeared, because their experience is never fully acknowledged or understood in its complexity. The differential impact of discriminatory practices on women of color and the qualitative difference of their experience is seldom documented and addressed (White and Potts, 1999).

The additive approach also makes gender the privileged dimension of difference for white feminists, as gender is the only axis of social power that blocks their way (Williams, 2000). One result of this dynamic is that the complexity of their own experience at the intersection of race, gender, and class is made invisible (Bell and Nkomo, forthcoming; Ostrander, 1984). White women end up feeling and being seen as a group that does not carry race, and affluent white women are seen as a group that does not carry class; differences and diversity are "out there" in the "others" (Ely, 1995).

D. HOW CLASS DISAPPEARS

In mainstream feminist approaches to organizational change, class is eliminated from the change agenda. The intersection of gender *and* class is less figural in part because class is not seen as an unchangeable biological attribute like sex or race. For example, Loden and Rosener (1991) define race and gender as primary differences and class as a secondary difference. An essentialist¹⁰ conception of differences prevails, which occludes the social nature of the processes and structures that construct class as an important dimension of difference and social power.

In addition, class does not become part of the change agenda because, in the liberal discourse of mainstream feminism and management, the cultural assumptions of hierarchy, meritocracy, and individualism remain unchallenged. The logic of meritocracy and capitalism posits that if women (and men) work hard, they will improve their condition and move out of their poor or working class position. Merit is presumed to be tangible and measurable, occluding the impact of structural advantages on the privileged position of dominant group members (Haney and Hurtado, 1994). Consequently, the goal of change is to provide the societal and organizational conditions for upward mobility to *individuals*. But this goal basically ignores group identity, “structural processes and class and race disadvantages” (Ferree, 1987: 326).

Organizational class hierarchies are not questioned. Instead, the differences in hierarchical positions are investigated to see whether they are so steep and rigid as to prevent those in the lower ranks from contributing. For example, some diversity interventions in organizations try to address “levelism,” the impact of hierarchical levels on the performance and productivity of women and men of different races (Esty, Griffin, and Hirsch, 1995). Flatter organizations, self-managed teams, employee shares, and company sponsored day-care facilities are proposed solutions to the intersection of class and gender in organizational life (Holvino, 2000a). The underlying assumption of a mainstream feminist agenda is the “well-being” of the corporation—and particularly its survival and effectiveness—rather than the alteration of its current class relations.

E. THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE THAT DISAPPEAR

Marks (2001: 10) documents and analyzes how the dynamics of change in gender equity interventions in South Africa have been limited by a narrow focus on race which “ignores the way in which affirmative action policies deepen and entrench class and gender distinctions.” She describes two concrete examples of how failing to take into consideration the intersection of race, gender, and class has generated dynamics that hinder moving forward in the transformation efforts towards equality in the South African context. Her analysis is especially useful as an example of the limiting effects of mainstream feminist theory traveling (King, 1994) and being adopted in other countries without attention to their particular historical and social context.

Marks (2001: 10) documents the dynamics observed in South African organizations where “middle class white women and middle class Black women are able to form alliances across race and around class in order to preserve economic privilege, and white and Black middle class men are able to bond across race around their masculinity and around the (norm)alization of heterosexuality in the workplace.” Black working class women are further marginalized by this “fractioning between and amongst categories . . . their subordination is therefore reconstituted, but not substantially reformed.” The inability to understand how this dynamic across differences is playing out to hinder coordination and progress toward gender equity in the organization is based on an inability to understand how gender, class, and race divide at the same time that it connects women across dimensions of difference. Similar dynamics of fragmentation have been reported in change efforts in the United States (Proudford, 1998; Thomas and Proudford, 2000).

Another dynamic of fragmentation reported by Marks (2001:14) is how the creation of a gender unit, charged with the responsibility of promoting gender equality, kept competing with change interventions designed by the Affirmative Action unit, charged with the responsibility for ensuring that the organization adhered to the Employment Equity Act—the racial issue. The agenda of racial equality was perceived as more important than the agenda of gender equality, enhancing efforts toward the former and hindering efforts toward the latter. Even when the officers of both units were mandated to integrate their efforts “the difficulty was in understanding the interlocking of race, gender, and class within the context of a transformation strategy.” Both these examples highlight how ignoring the intersection hinders change efforts toward organizational gender equity.

F. MEN AND THEIR DIFFERENCES DISAPPEAR

Until recently, gender equity change efforts focused on changing women’s status and opportunities by focusing solely on women’s situations and experiences. The limitations of this strategy have been especially obvious in the efforts of women in development, such as reproductive rights, where the inclusion of men in efforts to secure women’s health and reproductive rights has been found crucial (Hartmann, 1987).

In the West, recent scholarship on “men and masculinities” highlights a new recognition of the importance of understanding the role of men in producing, sustaining and changing patterns of gender inequality in organizations. As Robinson (2000: 1) concludes, “Much of the recent work . . . on masculinity and whiteness. . . takes as its starting point the notion that invisibility is a necessary condition for the perpetuation of white and male dominance, both in representation and in the realm of the social.” Contrary to the invisibility experienced by women and people of color, the invisibility Robinson is talking about is one that takes male dominance and privilege for granted and a particular form of hegemonic masculinity as normative and universal. Thus, “making masculinity visible is the first step toward eroding male privilege” (Robinson: 194).

The study of men, their experience, and their masculinities emerges as an important aspect of gender work in organizations when the notion of “men as managers and managers as men” is problematized and the interrelations of men, male dominance, masculinities and management practices are examined (Collinson and Hearn, 1996a). Some of the questions pursued are: How do institutions remain gendered in a masculine form? What are the mechanisms of power that inform both men’s relations with women and men’s relations with other men? What is the homosocial nature of organizations that reproduces male dominance? How are dominant forms of masculinity constructed in relation to femininities and other subordinated, marginalized, and colonized masculinities? What are the consequences of the dominance of men in management and what are the processes and conditions that sustain that dominance? How do women participate and resist hegemonic masculinities (Cheng, 1996; Collinson and Hearn, 1994, 1996b)? Disappearing men from the work on gender equity is similar to disappearing “whiteness” from the work on race relations (Delgado and Stefancic, 1997; Fine, Weis, Powell, and Wong, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993). The potential for change will be limited unless the dominant side of a power dynamic is understood and theorized as well as the subordinate dimension of the relationship.

In sum, the feminist framework that has dominated organizational change efforts on issues of gender equity, affirmative action and now, diversity, is based on a discourse of equal rights where the purpose of change is to offer “equal opportunity” to all. A central theme of liberal and mainstream feminists is “the pursuit of sexual equity (gender justice), rather than the elimination of sexual inequality” (Calás and Smircich, 1996). The emphasis is on gaining access to “the same opportunities,” resources, and power (of white men) within the assumed “level playing field” of organizations and society. The change strategies implemented align with the search for “equality within American mainstream” (Bunch, 1980). But as I hope to have demonstrated, the intersection of race, gender, and class cannot be fully taken up when mainstream feminism is applied to organizations. The consequence is that many organizational actors and dynamics become invisible and change options even more limited. The “field” cannot be seen in all its complexity and structured inequality. I suggest that the mainstream feminist framework that has dominated change efforts in organizations leaves us at best with the potential *integration* of race, gender and class under some illusive meta-narrative and at worst, with incomplete accounts of the *intersection* between these dimensions of difference and power.

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IV. ALTERNATIVES TO THE LIBERAL FRAMEWORK: THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHER FEMINIST THEORIES

Different frameworks influence the questions we ask, the questions that remain hidden, and the the outcomes and methods sought. Further, they pose unique advantages, limits, and contradictions. Consequently, I explore in this section what other feminist frameworks beyond mainstream feminism can tell us about the intersections of race, gender, and class in organizations.

I review four less used feminist frameworks in organizational change—radical, socialist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial—to identify what they can contribute to developing interventions that address the intersection of class, race, and gender in organizations. This summary does not do justice to the richness and complexity of the work behind each of the frameworks; others have done this work before me and I draw extensively from their work (Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Bulbeck, 1998; Calás and Smircich, 1996; Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Ferguson; Jaggard, 1983; Jaggard and Rothenberg, 1978; Sandoval, 2000; Tong, 1989). My purpose is not to provide a thorough explanation of these other feminist theories, but rather to look at these theories for what they help me see about the intersection, be it implicitly or overtly, in order to expand the boundaries of how we talk and do race, gender, and class in organizational theory and practice. In other words, I explore them to provide alternatives to the liberal-mainstream framework.

Throughout this section I cite the work of different authors as examples of one of the four frameworks. My intention is not to classify authors and assign them to particular frameworks, nor fix their scholarly work under a particular feminist theory with which they may not identify. My purpose is to use specific work, especially empirical research, that can be interpreted differently according to one's perspective, to illustrate the different frameworks and their potential contributions. My hope is that this will reveal possibilities that open up spaces for new ways of thinking about and doing organizational change at the intersection of gender, class, and race.

A. RADICAL FEMINISM

In radical feminism women are seen as subordinate because of their sex. Patriarchy, the domination of “the father,” is the system that oppresses women—a system in which men and the male are valued, and women and the female are diminished. At the core of male dominance are those institutions that organize sexuality, childrearing, and child raising including institutions like marriage and “compulsory heterosexuality” (Rich, 1980/1993). Radical feminists focus on women's biology and the ways in which masculinity, femininity and (hetero)sexuality are used to subordinate women to men (Tong, 1989). The goal of change is to eliminate all patriarchal structures and, thus, to end women's oppression, “the root and model of oppression in society” (Donovan, 1992: 142). Radical feminism is woman-centered and seeks a new social order where women are not subordinated to men (Calás and Smircich, 1996) and where their experience and “womanhood” are celebrated (Jaggard, 1983). It is often separatist, because “to prefer women is the ultimate rejection of patriarchy” (Hurtado, 2000: 136).

Women are thought to have different and sometimes “higher” attributes and values than men because of their subordination and their maternal role. Sometimes referred to as cultural feminism, this framework has been translated into organizational knowledge by exploring women’s “relational practice”; their preference to focus on relations rather than task, collaboration rather than competition, and to define their roles as leaders “at the center of things” rather than “on top” (Calvert and Ramsey, 1992; Fletcher, 1998; Helgesen, 1990). The enhancement of the women’s perspective and voice—“the valuing of women, their experience and female values”—is an important agenda and area of study (Marshall, 1989: 278).

Critiques of radical feminism abound, especially by women of color, that challenge the notion of a universal domination of men, the privileged status granted to “the woman’s voice,” images of the feminine and masculine based on whiteness. Further, they challenge the way in which the structural determinants of the “woman’s voice” in much of the representative work in radical feminism are downplayed, especially as this work has been taken up in organization and management research.¹¹ But, I want to highlight two major contributions of radical feminism to organizational theory and practice. The first is the challenge to mainstream organizations that situating research and theory development in the women’s experience has generated (Ferguson, 1984, Ianello, 1992). The second is the investigation of feminist and women-run organizations where insights can be gained about alternative organizations that challenge mainstream theorizing and research (Ferree and Martin, 1995; Riger, 1994; Springer, 2001).

1. Implications for addressing race, gender, and class

Radical feminism has been relatively silent about the intersection of race, gender, and class. This is probably because of its claims to a universal category of women and a common universal experience of women’s oppression. Nevertheless, taking as a basis its emphasis on a woman’s voice and women’s feminist organizations, the intersection of race, class, and gender using radical feminism could be explored by looking at what the common attributes are that different “women” bring to organizations. The focus would be on gender similarities across race and class difference, on what women contribute because of their differentiated experience across these dimensions, and on their oppressed position in different patriarchal systems. Studying the intersection could also be accomplished by focusing specifically on feminist organizations that are multicultural and on alliances between women among different racial-ethnic groups, class positions, sexual orientation, and backgrounds.

While studies on multicultural alliances seem to contradict the notion of “a woman’s experience” and instead point out the difficulties in forming alliances and coalitions between women across racial, ethnic, and class differences (Arnold, 1995; Donleavy and Pugh, 1977; Pheterson, 1986; Smith, 1995), the identification of these difficulties, by itself, provides important insights. For example, Ostrander (1999: 641) reports that in studying gender and race dynamics in a pro-feminist organization two tendencies are discerned. One tendency is that women, especially women of color, are subordinated. The other tendency is that this gender and racial subordination is actively challenged. Not surprisingly, these two competing tendencies make for a complex dynamic of cross-gender and cross-race solidarity. So, is it possible to create feminist organizing across the intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and class? Ostrander concludes

that “it is possible to create this kind of solidarity, but most probably in the form of continued struggles over established patterns of subordination and active ongoing efforts to repeatedly resist and challenge them.”

On the other hand, drawing on the lesbian cultural separatist tradition of radical feminism, one could envision exploring women’s institutions in more depth separately by class, race, and sexual orientation. For example, one could examine what studying Black feminist cooperatives, Latina community organizations, or lesbian collectives tells us about the similarities and differences between women and how they lead and organize (Hardy-Fanta, 1993, 1995; Springer, 2001).

While radical feminism may not offer an obvious way of working the intersection of race, gender, and class in organizations, it does suggest the need to ground any such work on the perceived experience of particular women looking for the strengths, learnings and contributions that can accrue from rich studies of their institutional experience. In addition, radical feminism clearly puts the lesbian and womanist perspective on the feminist agenda.

B. SOCIALIST FEMINISM

Socialist feminism considers gender to be a historically determined difference that can never be studied in isolation from other social processes such as race, ethnicity, and class. Influenced by Marxist feminists, this framework pays most attention to the material dimensions of women's oppression under capitalism within the structures and relations of power that sustain it and to the ideologies about gender that produce and reproduce women’s oppression. The sexual division of labor characteristic of capitalist society is seen as a fundamental pillar of women’s oppression. But, so is the gender structure of the labor market that positions men and women in different jobs, different industries, with different salaries and in unequal sex-based patterns of employment and sex-segregated workplaces (Barber, 1992; H. Hartmann, 1987; Reskin and Roos, 1987). Socialist feminism pays attention to both patriarchy and capitalism as related structures of domination and seeks to eliminate them both.

Socialist feminists developed two major theoretical approaches: dual systems theories and unified theories. In dual systems theories, patriarchy and capitalism are seen as distinct forms of social relations that intersect (Hartmann, 1981; Mitchell, 1971). In unified theories, the gender division of labor and men’s historical control over women’s labor power are seen as the root cause of women’s oppression (Young, 1980). Both of these versions of socialist feminism help attend to the sexual division of labor in two important forms. First, as a division between reproduction and production where women are assigned to the private sphere of the family and men to the public sphere of “work” and, secondly, as a division within procreation and within production. In the private sphere of procreation, men are assigned particular roles in the family that differentiate them from women. In the public sphere of production, men are assigned particular jobs in the labor market while women are relegated to the secondary labor market, where men and women of different races are positioned differently (Glenn, 2001; Jaggar, 1983).

Because it is historical and specific, socialist feminism has contributed to understanding the different experiences of women of various races, ethnicities, and classes by examining how the

structure of work impacts women differently (Amott and Matthaei, 1991). For example, data gathered on the different jobs, industries, and organizational levels that men and women occupy show that when women have entered particular occupations their wages and authority are diminished. Reskin and Phipps (1988), Savage (1992), and Witz and Savage (1992) document this de-skilling of jobs for teachers and bank-tellers, a process where “positions are redefined and restricted” as women come into the profession (Savage, 1992: 148). Also, studies on the different jobs, industries, and organizational levels that women of different groups occupy reveal patterns of discrimination that confine women of color to the lower level positions and white women to the managerial positions (Browne, 2000).

Particular attention has been given to documenting and analyzing the experience of white working women such as waitresses and cleaning women (Ehrenreich, 1999, Paules, 1991) and of women of color’s extensive work as “domestics.” The study of women of color in domestic service reveals, once again, important differences between white and working women of color. While domestic service provided opportunities for mobility into other occupations for white working women, domestic service for women of color “has been an occupational ghetto” (Glenn, 1988). Asian, Latina, and Black women have struggled to redefine an occupation characterized by its preindustrial character, hard physical labor, and degraded status in order to find some semblance of autonomy, control and dignity (Glenn, 1985, 1986, 1988, 2001; Rollins, 1985; Romero, 1992, 1997a).

1. *Implications for addressing race, gender, and class*

Socialist feminists understand class, race, gender, and sexuality as *interlocking* roots of inequality (Jaggar, 1983; Wong, 1991) and interrelated forms of women’s oppression (Acker, 1999a; Tong, 1989). Thus, the processes of race, gender, and class must be studied in their complexity and in the variety of their manifestations. “Multi-issue feminism is necessary to fight back and win against all forms of oppression” (Wong, 1991:293). When studying the intersection of race, gender, and class in organizations, we would ask questions such as: “Who cleans for the cleaning lady that is cleaning for the managerial woman and how did it come to be that way?”¹² For example, Hochschild (2000: 33) draws on the work of Parrenas (forthcoming) on Filipina domestic workers in the United States and Italy to explicate the “global care chain: a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring.” This chain is a complex result of global capitalism and the unequal relations between rich and poor countries, the first with market demands for “care needs” and the latter with a surplus of migrant women to meet the needs of career women’s caring needs. Hochschild concludes that the ultimate beneficiaries of this chain may be the multinational companies, as both working mothers and their families in the North and domestic workers and their families of the South loose in this global arrangement. The goal within the socialist framework, then, is to restructure organizations for all, not just for women. This, in turn, requires a different social order altogether.

But, while socialist feminists have been strong advocates for addressing the intersection of race, class, and gender, problems with working at the intersection continue. This is partly because class has been taken for granted as unproblematic and partly because research has focused on adding women of color and working class women’s accounts, without accomplishing a

conceptual integration of gender, class, and race (Acker, 1999a; 1999b). Acker (1999: 14) suggests a potential strategy to address these limitations—to study “regimes of inequality” in organizations, “the particular, historically specific configurations of class, race, and gender patterns within specific organizations.” I will return to explore this strategy in more detail in the last part of the paper.

I highlight two major contributions of socialist feminism to the study of the intersection of race, class, and gender. First, they incorporate concrete accounts of working class women of different races in the study of work and work organizations; and secondly, they focus on class as a dimension of difference and of structural power. Both of these themes allow class to be part of the study of women’s situation across race and gender analyses.

C. POSTSTRUCTURALIST FEMINISM

Poststructuralist feminism looks at differences as socially and historically constructed, with particular emphasis on how differences like gender are constructed in language, discourse, and social practices. Gender is defined as the meaning attributed to the differences between men and women where one sex is privileged. “Woman” is socially constructed, inscribed in the heterosexual binary framework of male and female, which is always an unstable and problematic category (Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Phoca and Wright, 1999). These social “constructions” become dominant forms of knowledge that are always implicated in power. For example, organizational practices result in leadership styles that are gendered in particular ways and academic practices develop theories of leadership that equate leadership with dominant forms of masculinities (Calas and Smircich, 1992; Cheng, 1996; Fletcher, 1992, 1999; Martin, 1990).

The poststructuralist framework has contributed the following key insights to organizational studies: 1) organizations are inherently gendered; 2) organizations are symbolically and discursively described and conceived on hegemonic masculinities; and 3) the processes by which organizations become gendered can be investigated. Acker (1990; 1992) suggests that organizations are gendered in the ways they produce and reproduce gender divisions, gender symbols and identities, gender interactions, and gendered sub-structures that reflect male dominated societal arrangements. Holvino (2000a) and Acker (1999b) have extended this analysis to the study of the intersection of gender, race, and class.

While poststructuralists emphasize language, theory-making, and the discourses that constitute men and women as important sites in the construction of “gender,” many poststructuralist feminists maintain that gender analyses must take into account the psychic and symbolic dimension of gender as well as the material and structural conditions which shape gender relations. Gender is understood *both* as a category of analysis *and* a social relation of domination that is historically produced, thus, always specific (Flax, 1987). Gender cannot be studied in isolation from the broader material and social relations, all of which require transformation (Holvino, 1993; Scott, 1988). The goal, then, is to unpack, to deconstruct, the assumptions, images, and practices,—“that which is taken for granted”—especially those ways of thinking and doing organization based on fixed dichotomies like male-female, Black-white, top-bottom, which privilege one side of a discursive pair. Both the symbolic and the material

implications of such taken for granted arrangements and the structural processes that sustain them must be identified and transformed.

Examples of theoretical and practical applications of the poststructuralist framework to feminist organizational studies abound (Britton, 2000; Calás and Smircich, 1992b, 1993; Collinson and Hearn, 1996; J. Martin, 1990, 1994; P.Y. Martin, 1996). The Center for Gender in Organizations has developed an approach to gender equity in organizations that follows from this perspective (Ely and Meyerson, 2000; Kolb, Fletcher, Meyerson, Merrill-Sands, and Ely, 1998; Merrill-Sands, Fletcher and Acosta, 1999; Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000; Meyerson and Kolb, 2000). The common question these researchers and practitioners pursue is: “What rules, practices, and structures cause women’s inequality in organizations and how does this come to be seen as legitimate” (J. Martin, 1994)?

1. *Implications for addressing race, gender, and class*

A poststructuralist perspective suggests a variety of ways for studying the intersection of class, race, and gender with the goal of questioning current assumptions, images, and organizational practices in order to envision other ways of organizing and working across a diverse network of power relations that involve men and women of different races, ethnicities, and classes. An individual’s location or position in this network of social relations, be it the researcher, practitioner, and/or organizational member, is of utmost importance. This suggests that a poststructuralist approach to race, gender, and class is more interested in understanding the *intersectionality*, rather than the intersection of these dimensions of difference, emphasizing that the way in which the intersection is experienced and lived is dependent on particular circumstances and is always contextual and shifting. “Rather than examining gender, race, class and nation as distinctive social hierarchies, intersectionality examines how they mutually construct one another” (Collins, 2000b: 156).

Given this general framing, four approaches to studying the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in organizations are suggested:

- *Reflecting on and examining how gender constructions may be different for affluent and working class white women or poor and affluent Latinas, and so on.* The question that follows is: “What purposes do different representations of identities serve in sustaining current relations of power between men and women, women and women, and men and men across different axes of race, class, and sexuality?” For example, images of Latinas and Asian women as docile and manually agile are common in the management literature, justifying the belief that they make good factory workers and “poor” managers (Calás, 1992). These images contrast sharply with images of white women managers perceived as tough, feminine, bright and driven (Morrison, 1987) and Black women managers perceived as strong, self-sufficient, and care-taking (Dumas, 1985).
- *Compiling the narratives and looking into organizations from the perspective of different women, especially those who tend to be silenced by dominant organizational discourses such as Chicana cannery workers.* By listening to and exploring these less-well known stories, alternative “spaces” are created that allow for different “constructions” to emerge

(Chio, 1993; Hardy-Fanta, 1993, 1995; Holvino, 1993; Ong, 1987; Ruiz, 1987, 1999; Tiano, 1990a, 1990b; Zavella, 1987, 1989, 1991).

- *Bringing into focus the study of men and masculinities as part of understanding gendered processes in organizations* (Cheng, 1996; Collinson and Hearn, 1994; Gonzalez, 1996; Messerschmidt, 1996; Stecopoulos and Uebel, 1997). Because gender is a social relation, it is not just about women; men are also part of gender (Calás and Smircich, 1999).
- *Identifying and questioning the organizational practices and disciplinary discourses that create and sustain inequalities for different groups of people—for example, white women, women of color, men of color, working class women—at the same time that these categories of inquiry are questioned and destabilized* (Holvino, 1996b; J. Martin, 1994).

Critiques about the usefulness of poststructuralism to feminist practice are numerous (Alvesson and Billing, 1997; Bordo, 1990). Some argue that deconstruction alone is not sufficient to analyze “the intersections of gender and class with race and ethnicity” (Martin, 1990: 354). Because there is no final “truth” and because issues of representation and the researcher’s own implication in the networks of knowledge and power she herself is trying to investigate are always deconstructing the discoveries and the stories we construct about organizations, one may feel that studying the intersectionality of race, class and gender only leads to a series of endless deconstructions which are apolitical or irrelevant. Others argue that the constant challenge to universal categories hinders the ability to sustain analytical focus and argument (Bordo, 1990).

But, in spite of these concerns, a poststructuralist framework makes three powerful contributions that must be incorporated to address race, gender, and class analyses of organizations. The first contribution is the critique of dominant organizational practices that poststructuralist feminism performs. The second contribution is the possibilities for creating alternative spaces for other ways of thinking and doing equality in organizations that flow from poststructuralist deconstructive moves. The third contribution is the reflexive stance that the framework provides, which demands that those involved in studying the intersectionality of class, race, and gender challenge their own assumptions and positionality as they themselves seek to understand it.

D. POSTCOLONIAL, THIRD WORLD, TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

Postcolonial, Third World, and/or transnational feminism¹³ are born out of disruptions in complex opposition to other social change movements: national liberation movements dominated by men, feminist movements dominated by white Western women, Eurocentric academic discourses that privilege theory over activism, movements that privilege heterosexuality, and movements that privilege Marxist analysis of class, without taking into account the lived experience of women of color (Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Hurtado, 2000; Mohanty, 1991b; Narayan and Harding, 2000). Since the 1800s, this experience of women of color has been described by women like Amy Jacques Garvey as “the evils of imperialism, racism, capitalism, and the interlocking race, class, and gender oppression that Black and other women experienced globally, particularly in colonial contexts” (Guy-Sheftall, 1995: 11). This experience is both subjective, producing a different consciousness that arises from the struggles of women of color,

and material, felt in the bodies of women of color in the form of slavery, indenture, forced sterilization, domestic, agricultural, factory and low paying work, rape, violence and lynching, lack of property and other human rights, mutilation, infanticide, etc., (Collins, 2000a; DuBois and Ruiz, 1990; Glenn, 1985).

In postcolonial feminism gender, class, race, sexuality, and nation are seen as complex social processes *and* discursive constructions, which need to be challenged at the same time that they are strategically deployed to question dominant Western paradigms (Spivak, 1988, 1990). Gender (or race), for example, is not seen as a universal category or experience, “but it present[s] specific and different characters in different social and historical contexts. . . . There is not a unitary system of signification that can be labeled racist [or sexist] nor is there a unitary perpetrator or victim” (Anthias and Yuval Davis, 1992). Thus, third world analyses are grounded in the material, political, historical, and socio-economic realities, which are always context specific. Nation, ethnicity and culture emerge as important axes of study that illuminate these particular manifestations. For example, the role of the state in circumscribing the daily lives and survival struggles of women of color reveals its co-implication in these social processes and must be studied as an important institution in this complex nexus of power and domination. It is only from these specific analyses that understanding and coalitions for change can be forged.

1. Implications for addressing race, gender, and class

Transnational feminism offers the possibility of theorizing different processes, such as family, prostitution, sterilization, and management, within the matrix of gendered, racialized, sexualized, and international relations of power, as well as from the experiences and perspectives of women of color (Briggs, 1998; Kempadoo, 2001; Mir, Calas and Smircich, 1999). I explore three potential contributions from postcolonial feminism to the study of race, gender, and class in organizations.

First, race, gender, and class are embedded in other social and complex relations that include the state, nation, and sexuality. More than ever, today these relations are global, making a specific goal of postcolonial feminism to study the processes of colonization and globalization and their differential impact on women and men in developed and developing countries. For example, what do sweatshops in California have to do with the leadership dilemmas of corporate managers in Hong Kong have to do with displaced workers in North Carolina? And what does it all have to do with the gender relations in a specific USA organization? In this sense there is no separation between domestic and global struggles and processes and how they manifest themselves in different aspects of organizational life (Fernandez-Kelly, 1994).

Second, race, gender, class, nation, and sexuality become sites of heterogeneous subject positions and complex and shifting dimensions of individual and collective identity. Additive models captured in arithmetic metaphors like “double oppression” and “multiple jeopardy” (King, 1988) give way to more nuanced images like “matrix of domination” (Martinez, 2000), “border crossing” (Anzaldúa, 1987, 1990), and “cross-border” existence (Hurtado, 1999a). In these metaphors, hierarchies of oppression are dismantled and complex positionalities and contradictory subjectivities are articulated and explored (Bhavnani, 2001). For example, how are Latina professionals seen by their Black, Asian, and Latina sisters on the production floor and

what are the explored and unexplored possibilities and hindrances to supportive relations and joint action between them?

The need to work within and across these heterogeneous subjectivities gives rise to the need for confrontations and coalitions that reveal the interplay of shifting identities and positions (Berger, Brown and Hewitt, 1992; Bhavnani, 2001; Henry and Pringle, 1996). The constructions about “the other” that represent them as victims without agency are especially important to confront (Calás and Smircich, 1999; Mohanty, 1991b). Those who claim to represent and speak for others must re-examine their own constructions of “the other” to reveal what they say about the constructions of the dominant, because race, class and gender are also present in the dominant (Briggs, 1998; Chaudhuri and Strobel, 1990; Henry and Pringle, 1996).

Since the intersection of race, gender, and class is embodied in the postcolonial subjects, those who have been traditionally silenced and relegated “speak back” to resist, affirm their own agency, and represent themselves beyond the traditional disempowering images of the so-called “oppressed” (Chio, 1993; Kempadoo, 2001; Mohanty, 1991b; Ong, 1987; Rao, Stuart, and Kelleher, 1999; Zavella, 1987). One could envision gathering testimonials and stories from women's (or men's) collectives in so-called “third-world” countries in order for Westerners to learn about other ways of organizing gender relations or structuring work in less oppressive ways. But, how to gather these stories without romanticizing “the other” or turning “them” into versions of “us,” or packaging “us” into forms of “them,” are the problems of representation that postcolonial feminists share with poststructuralists (Behar, 1996; Mir, Calas and Smircich, 1999; Trinh, 1988, 1989).

Third, the study of resistance, survival and agency, not just victimization and oppression, become important. This is accompanied by a strategic deployment of different modes of resistance and theory-making (Hurtado, 1996b). The methods used are questioned and other forms of making knowledge are upheld. One could envision stories, dramas, collages, and songs written, collected and performed by the women workers themselves to illuminate the dilemmas of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation in their organizations and lives. Through this process, more voices would be heard and more possibilities for the postcolonial feminist focus on empowerment and social justice “for all” would be created at the same time that the instability of such categories and goals is recognized and engaged (Ferguson, 1994).

These are only four examples of what other feminist theories beyond mainstream feminism can contribute to addressing the intersection of gender, class, and race in organizational change.¹⁴ Given this review, what can the practitioner do? Drawing from the postcolonial tradition of strategic deployments, (Hurtado, 2000; Narayan & Harding, 2000), I am more interested in practical applications for institutional change than developing elegant theories, even if complications and compromises are required. I propose that we do not choose among these different ways of doing feminist organizational practice, but rather that we develop concrete strategies on how to enter organizations with a lens that acknowledges race, gender, and class as *simultaneous processes of identity, institutional, and social practice*.

By processes of identity practice, I refer to the myriad ways in which race, gender, and class produce and reproduce particular identities that define how individuals come to see themselves

and how others see them. These practices cover the gamut from well-studied early socialization practices to more pervasive societal discourses like the cult of domesticity of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This cult defined a particular hegemonic identity for white middle-class women around wifehood and motherhood and consequently constructed working class women of color as lacking and “less than,” as exemplified in the domestic servant (Glenn, 2001).

By processes of institutional practice I mean the myriad of ways in which race, gender, and class relations and stratification are built into organizational structures, processes and ways of working, which seem “normal” at the same time that they produce and reproduce particular relations of inequality and privilege. For example, we can analyze domestic service as a particular type of institution with a particular set of interactions between the domestic and her employer, a clear division of labor, and poor wages, with a particular set of characteristics, sustained by a set of societal norms which “regulate” the institution.

By processes of social practice I refer to the myriad of ways in which societal structures, beliefs and ways of engaging at the societal level produce and reproduce inequalities along the axes of race, class, and gender. Glenn’s (2001) analysis of reproductive labor illuminates the complex interrelation between domestic and global market forces that result in a transnational division of labor along race, gender, and class lines.

But, what does attending to race, gender, and class as simultaneous processes of identity, institutional, and social practice mean concretely for organizational change theorists interested in practice and to practitioners reflective of their theories?

V. MOVING FORWARD TO ADDRESS THE SIMULTANEITY OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Drawing from the different feminist theories reviewed in what A. Hurtado calls “relational dovetailing,” where instead of “taking-apart in an adversarial mode we make knowledge by bringing-together in a politically conscious way” (personal communication February 22, 2001), I advocate a strategic deployment of multiple frameworks to work with the simultaneity of race, gender, and class in organizations. Sandoval (2000: 62), refers to a similar approach as “tactical subjectivity” and Holland (in DuCille, 1994: 624) calls it “complementary theorizing.” The point is to be able to utilize the different feminist frameworks as “tactics for intervening in and transforming social relations” in organizations (Sandoval, 2000: 62).

This does not mean that anything goes. Thus, the important question is how do we determine what is a strategic deployment of various feminist frameworks when applied in organizations? For Chicana feminists like Hurtado (1996b) and Sandoval (2000) the answer is to have a political stance that guides choices. I want to be more specific, especially in the context of mainstream organizations, by providing “a short list of simple rules.” While the “rules” serve as the general framing, I propose five specific guidelines or moves that help translate them into a lens that works at the intersection of gender, class, and race. This lens, in turn, helps to analyze and intervene strategically in organizations, serving as a complex feminist standpoint for addressing the simultaneity. I conclude by identifying three specific activities to implement organization research and change interventions that derive from this standpoint.

In other words, my approach has been to mine feminist frameworks for new ways of thinking about and doing organizational change that allow us to pay attention to the simultaneity of race, gender, and class. Rather than trying to develop an integrated theory, my stance in reviewing the literature has been to remain at the boundary of theory and practice and to produce a list of “simple rules” that could be applied to organizations. These “rules” can be seen as a minimum set of guidelines to help address the complexity of three sets of interacting oppressions: race-ethnicity, gender, and class. Out of this set of guidelines comes a lens for looking at the process of organizational change, as well as a set of strategies.

A. “SIMPLE RULES” AND A STANDPOINT TO WORK THE SIMULTANEITY OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER IN ORGANIZATIONS

Charlotte Bunch (1980: 194), a radical feminist, identified five criteria to evaluate specific feminist reforms, where “reform is not a solution but . . . a strategy toward [the] larger goal [of radical change to end the oppression of all].” Incorporating the insights from the four frameworks explored before, I have modified Bunch’s criteria into six guidelines that can function as a set of simple rules for developing concrete change interventions or research agendas that address the simultaneity of race, gender, and class in organizations. Like Bunch (1980: 199), I suggest that while “every reform will not necessarily advance all five criteria,” no intervention should be undertaken that is in opposition to any one of these guidelines.

- The intervention materially improves the condition of [all] women—the socialist framework.
- The intervention builds self-respect, strength and confidence in the organizational actors—the radical framework.
- The intervention gives those involved a sense of collective power and helps them build structures for further change—the socialist framework.
- The intervention educates and enhances the ability of organizational actors to be critical and challenging of the system—the poststructuralist framework.
- The intervention weakens, or at least helps question, patriarchal, capitalist, ethnocentric, racist, neo-colonial, and heterosexist control of institutions and helps shift structures of power over these—all frameworks.
- The intervention challenges current modes of representation and dominant ideologies at the same time that it acknowledges contradiction and reflects on its own deployment of power—the poststructuralist and postcolonial frameworks.

I propose that to translate these guidelines into more practical ways to work the simultaneity of race, gender, and class in organizations requires the following five moves. These moves constitute the multiple lenses that make for a standpoint at the intersection and which in turn, provide guidelines for action.

- Pay attention to different axes of power and domination – class, race, gender, sexuality and nation – without prioritizing one or the other. This means paying attention to the many ways in which difference and the social processes of race, gender, and class intertwine and “move around,” as opposed to being localized in “the oppressed” or “the oppressor.” Whiteness, affluence, masculinities, and the myriad of ways in which women are positioned differently along dimensions of difference and power become targets of study and change.

For example, how does my own positionality as a heterosexual, professional, Western, woman of color in my organization silence non-Western, lesbian, working class women at the same time that my own woman of color voice is silenced by the dominant white feminist academic discourse of a research center in a management school, which like most institutions in the Eastern region of the U.S. “elevates” Black women as the representatives of all women of color?¹⁵

- Pay attention to the material and the symbolic and discursive practices; one without the other will not do. As Russo (1991: 306) reminds us, “It is not simply a matter of ideology, ideas, stereotypes, images, and/or misguided perceptions. It is about power and control, be it in terms of money, construction of ideology, or control over organizational agenda.”

For example, how is the silencing accomplished in everyday organizational practices, such as: Who gets invited to a major program event? Who gets remunerated for

participating in it and how much? Who determines the theme and title of the event? How is the event structured so that some participants will be able to speak and others will remain silent?

- Attend to the socially constructed nature of identity, power relations, and difference, at the same time that these constructions are always seen in relation to and linked to the material social processes and institutional practices that create advantages and disadvantages for different groups (West and Fenstermaker, 1995).

For example, how is my “Latinaness” constructed in the organization and how does my behavior, style and contributions fit or not fit the dominant behaviors, styles, and accepted institutional practices? How is my identity and status, constructed at the intersection of race, class, gender, and nation different and similar to the identity of the Latina school’s cleaning woman? And what does that have to do with the situation of Latinas in society and the labor market, where by far the majority are service workers and less than one percent have a doctorate degree?

- Encourage and sustain critical dialogues that acknowledge complexity and contradiction—the contradiction of multiple identities and the complexity of the overlay of class, gender, and ethnicity as they occur in social reality (Kalantzis, 1990).

For example, my academic white Western training demands that I write in the third person, use lots of citations, and construct a rational argument in written form in a language that is not my own while the Latina longs for stories and metaphors, the magical, and the Spanish language. How do I negotiate with myself my own ambitions for success within the white feminist academy and with my colleagues who want me to be a successful Latina academic writer, an oxymoron of sorts? And are these contradictions and complexities silenced, talked about, or regulated through organizational norms about appropriate ways of writing without a dialogue that problematizes writing and knowledge-making?

- Attend to the social and historical context and the ways in which context and history show in everyday practices (Britton, 2000: 423; Chesler and Moldenhauer-Salazar, 1998; Marks, 1999; Meisenhelder, 2000).

For example, in the context of a research center in a prestigious private college, how is the intersection of race, gender, and class already over-determined by class? In the context of the profession of organization development, with its top-driven commitment to organizational change, what can be said about organizational justice or health? In the aftermath of the recent elections and current conservative political climate, what support is there for changing the social relations of race, class, and gender?

While these lenses may provide some guidance, they are still too general and complex. Today, what can be done differently to work the simultaneity of gender, class and race in an organization?

B. METHODS AND WAYS OF WORKING WITH THE SIMULTANEITY

Three concrete activities or interventions for how to enter organizations with a lens that acknowledges the *simultaneity* of race, gender, and class as processes of identity, institutional, and social practice are proposed: 1) researching and publicizing the hidden stories at the intersection of race, gender, and class to help change dominant organizational narratives; 2) identifying, untangling, and changing the differential impact of everyday practices in organizations, and 3) identifying and linking internal organizational processes with external societal processes to understand organizational dynamics within a broader social context. In other words, working at the boundary of organization and society. I will expand on each of these and offer an organizational inquiry and/or consulting example.

1. *Researching and publicizing the hidden stories at the intersection of race, gender, and class*

“Legitimate knowledge can only be written in small stories or modest narratives, mindful of their locality in space and time and capable of disappearing as needed” (Calas and Smircich, 1999: 664). Telling the stories and articulating the narratives of organizational actors across different axes of power and identity is an important contribution to changing the dominant organizational discourse because it brings to light alternative narratives that seldom find their way into mainstream accounts and organizational mythologies (Ely and Meyerson, 2000).

One purpose of this type of intervention is to help change dominant organizational narratives that privilege the experience of white men and white women and that construct organizations within the liberal paradigm of maleness, heterosexism, whiteness, and Westernness. These are narratives that construct and reproduce particular kinds of identities with particular relations and access to power. For example, Bell and Nkomo’s (forthcoming) in-depth stories of white and Black women’s narratives in corporations reveal important differences in how the two groups learn and experience race. The researchers found that while white women learn to keep their distance from Blacks, to be “color blind,” and to exhibit the appropriate etiquette when in the presence of Blacks, Black women learn to “armor” themselves psychologically in order to be respectable, to buffer themselves from racism, and to develop courage. These different attitudes are brought to the organization as these women advance into management positions impacting every aspect of their work, from who they confide in and talk to, to the judgments they make about others’ competence, and to how they negotiate their own careers and leadership roles.

Reynolds (1997), on the other hand, calls for Black women researchers to stop inquiring about the differences between white and Black women and to start addressing the differences and diversity among Black women. Proudford’s (1998) research suggests that this may be indeed a very good move. Until intra-group dynamics are understood and have a legitimate place to be explored, relations between groups of women may very well continue to be superficial and/or contentious. Hurtado (2001) engages in exactly this type of differentiated life-story-telling by exploring the lives of young Latinas in higher education. Managers and organizational change consultants seeking new ideas to reduce the dropout rates of Latinas in higher education would benefit from reading these narratives through a lens that attends to the intersection.

Considering another axis of power, Ostrander (1984) provides us with rich narratives of upper class women. These narratives have much to contribute to understanding race, class and gender relations in the experience of dominance as white and affluent (Ely, 1995). They remind us that the intersection of class, race, and gender lives also in white women (DuCille, 1994). But this requires that accounts of women managers make visible their class position and background, instead of just presenting them as “women managers” (Marshall, 1989, 1993, 1994b; Morrison, 1987).

A second purpose of telling the stories at the intersection of race, class, and gender is to change the experience that organizational members have of each other across dimensions of difference from that of a “generalized other” to the “concrete other” (Benhabib, 1992; Cobb, 2000; Hurtado, 1999a). “Women’s first place of identity and political awareness is the body,” says Harcourt (2001: 204). But, as long as women are experienced and presented in organizations and organizational literature as if they did not have race, ethnicity, class, sexuality—in other words, as disembodied human beings—women will only be seen and interacted with in terms of abstract and stereotypical images that “the dominant” (men, white, heterosexual, Anglo) have of “the other.” Seeing and working at the intersection of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and nation, for example, allows for the specificity of concrete bodies and histories to enter and begin to shape organizational dynamics. It is only in the context of concrete actors that real interactions that produce change can take place. As Benhabib (1992: 159) proposes, moving from the generalized other to the concrete other shifts the dynamics from “formal equality and reciprocity [where] each is entitled to expect and to assume from us what we can expect and assume from him or her . . . to norms of equity and complementary reciprocity [where] each is entitled to expect and to assume from the other behaviors through which the other feels recognized and confirmed as an individual with specific needs, talents and capacities.”

Hegemonic identities produced and reproduced through organizational and social practices can be disrupted by the collection and dissemination of these differentiated stories and narratives that work at the level of identity practices.

2. *Identifying, untangling, and changing the differential and material impact of everyday practices in organizations*

If we understand that “women” is not a universal experience or category, then it is imperative that we identify, untangle and change the differential impact that everyday practices have for different women in different types of organizations. An “even more focused and differentiated analysis” is needed, argues Smith (1995), so that the specificity of the experience of the simultaneity of race, ethnicity, and class can be understood and taken up. This type of analysis focuses on institutional practices.

Catalyst’s (1999) study shows that white women are likely to be promoted more rapidly than women of color. Women of color report the lack of access to mentors and sponsors and the lack of networking with influential colleagues as the primary barriers to their advancement. White women, on the other hand, are more likely to attribute their advancement to exceeding performance expectations. Studying these different situations and perceptions reveals a different organizational picture and suggests different change interventions for different groups of women.

For example, given what we know of the challenges involved in cross-racial mentoring (Thomas, 1990, 1993) and given that we also know that white women relate to white men through seduction and women of color relate to white men through rejection, are we to continue to design mentoring programs that are the same for white women and for women of color? Are we to continue to provide the same advice for white women as for women of color about how to advance their careers?

Barber (1992) provides another example of studying the differential impact on different women at the intersection of gender and class. She explored how class impacted gender consciousness in a group of working class women on the production floor by causing them to deal with “sexual harassment” through joking and not reporting their harassment to their supervisors. This is a very different approach than the one recommended by human resource staff and the dominant literature on sexual harassment. Were these women less interested and committed to ending their oppression? No, but the way they managed their harassment was shaped by their different experience of the simultaneity of gender and race as working class women. Should we continue to do sexual harassment training by asking all women to report incidents of sexual harassment to their supervisor and the human resource manager? Should human resource managers begin to collect and report statistics about sexual harassment that differentiate among the responses of white and women of color across different levels in the organizational hierarchy? Coalitions and alliances between women are highly unlikely until the specificity of the experience of different women is articulated and reflected upon by each other and by the organization.

Acker suggests that we study regimes of inequality, that is, “the precise patterns of inequality” and their “historical and present manifestations in the organization” through case studies that shed light on the differential impact that class and race have on men and women (personal communication, June 30, 1999). She enumerates various forms in which these patterns could be made visible through detailed descriptions of the characteristics of the inequality regimes in a specific organization, for example: 1) What constitutes the dimension(s) of inequality that form the basis of the regime; 2) How are the patterns of inequality visible or not and to whom; 3) What is the legitimacy of these forms of inequality and how is this legitimacy accomplished; and 4) What are the practices and the organizational structures by which inequality is sustained, including methods of control and compliance (Acker, 1999a)?. It is my experience that organizational members can engage in this kind of analysis across race, gender, and class differences if the appropriate conditions for safety and inquiry are created.

3. *Identifying and connecting internal organizational processes with external and seemingly unrelated societal processes to understand organizational dynamics within a broader social context and social change agenda*

The third suggested intervention is based on paying more than lip service to the boundary of organization and its environment (Miller, 1995; Miller and Rice, 1967; Trist, 1977), taking the environment to mean the societal context, in order to identify and connect internal organizational processes with external societal processes. This in turn will help locate organizational dynamics within a broader social context and develop change interventions within a larger social justice agenda. This focuses the analyses at the level of social practices.

For example, to understand the changing roles of Latinos and Latinas, who make up the majority of the workforce in the *maquiladora* industry along the U.S.-Mexican border, it is important that a larger analysis of globalization, gender, and the distribution of power and resources in the global economy be incorporated. Fernandez-Kelly (1994) notes that as the workforce reconfigures because of globalization few men make gains as technicians and professionals, while many more jobs previously associated with female employment at lower levels in the hierarchy go to both men and women. These changing roles between men and women create dilemmas that show up both within the workplace and in the communities to which these workers belong (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992; Williams, 1988). Attempting an organizational change intervention without an analysis of this social context—the relationship between the “outside and the inside”—and how those interactions support and hinder organizational change produces very limited change strategies.

Another outcome of this type of intervention is to specifically locate organizations and their actors in their particular social context. Much can be learned from the experience in other countries, and especially the experience in so-called “third world” countries, where more comprehensive analyses of the interaction between the social/societal context and the internal organizational dynamics of change are demanded by the societal context itself (Cock and Bernstein, 1988; Marks, 1999, 2001; Seidman, 1999).

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VI. FINAL COMMENTS

There is so much more I wish to say, include, and expand on in this monograph. At the same time, I must not pretend to have the final say—that would go against my own call for moving forward in a strategic multi-framework, multi-pronged approach to working with the simultaneity of race, class, and gender in organizations. My hope is that, together with others, I can continue to explore what I have not been able to delve into in this paper; for example, What does it do to the study of the simultaneity of these processes to consider their intersection with sexual orientation and sexuality, both theoretically and practically in more depth? How can the arguments made here gain from including more of the rich scholarship by Asians in the United States and Asian American feminism (Cheng and Thatchenkery, 1997; Lim and Tsutakawa, 1989; Shah, 1997)? How does incorporating the work of indigenous women in the areas of land rights, sovereignty, and anti-violence help bridge the sometimes-competing agendas between social change agents, professionals, and scholars working toward equity and change (Smith, 2001; Color Lines, 2000/01)? And these are only three examples of what needs attention. Other standpoints will bring new questions, perspectives, analyses, and inquiry and intervention strategies. Hopefully, we can continue to create knowledge by dovetailing instead of taking apart.

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¹ Race and ethnicity are not the same but are usually conflated (Acker, 1999a). Traditionally, race refers to categories socially constructed on the basis of skin color and phenotype, and ethnicity refers to categories based on cultural and historical group identities (Ferdman, 1991). In the case of Latinos in the United States this differentiation is particularly problematic since the case could be made for Latinos being either a race, an ethnic group, or both. Cox (1990) has argued for using the term racio-ethnicity to address this problem, but this usage is still not widely accepted. Throughout this paper I will use all three terms.

² I introduce here the term “organizational health and justice” because I believe it responds to my call to address the intersection of race, class, and gender I propose to study. While I could use organizational effectiveness and equity, those phrases indicate to me a bias towards managerial purposes (a class bias) and an individual rights framework (a liberal feminist bias) that I intend to critique.

³ In her well-developed and complex argument, DuCille (1994) suggests that the current explosion of scholarship about Black women relies on, at the same time that it replicates, the image of Black women as the “quintessential site of difference” and otherness. This current academic profusion may have little to do with understanding and wrestling with the difference of the Black woman’s experience and more to do with the current marketability of the subject.

⁴ In their application of complexity science to organizational change, Olson and Eoyang (2001) provide the useful concept of “short list of simple rules”—the minimum set of guidelines or norms that circumscribe behavior in a system. If all of the agents follow the same “simple rules,” then each one adapts to his or her immediate and local circumstances effectively, while remaining a part of the larger system. Each makes independent and adaptive responses, yet the system as a whole generates complicated patterns of coherent action. Change agents can intervene by observing current rules and reflecting them back to the organization, or helping the organization establish a new set of rules. An example of a few simple rules that support self-organizing structures of learning and action are the ones used in Owen’s (1999: 237) open space technology: 1) “Whoever comes is the right people; 2) Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened; 3) When it starts is the right time; 4) When it’s over, it’s over; and 5) The Law of Two Feet (sometimes called the Law of Personal Initiative).”

⁵ While I admit to the uneasiness of using the term “women of color” because it obscures the diversity of racial-ethnic groups contained within this category, I want to focus on the commonalities among these different groups of women—Native American, Latina, Asian, and Black/African American—who share a status and an experience as racio-ethnic minorities in the United States. In this paper I have also drawn mostly from the scholarship and experience of Black women and Latinas, especially the extensive work of Chicanas. An unfortunate consequence of my choice is that the specific contributions of white and poor working class women and their differentiation from the experience and status of affluent and middle-class white women has been harder to keep in focus. This is a topic which remains to be explored

further. The same limitation applies to the experience of Native American and to a lesser extent, Asian women.

⁶ All throughout the paper, the story of race and ethnic women is closely related to the history of class and sometimes they will appear as if they were the same. Because of the prevalence of people of color in lower-echelon jobs, which restricts their economic opportunities and status, it is almost impossible to clearly separate the racial story from the class story in the lives of women of color. This is a dilemma that grows out of the nature of this study, because that is what working at the intersection means—class is not a separate variable, but a component of race, and gender, and vice versa. As Dubois and Ruiz (1990: xiii) remind us, “[t]he history of women cannot be studied without considering both race and class . . . [and] working-class culture cannot really be understood without reference to gender and race.” One limitation of this approach is that the specific differences between white working class women and working class women of color have become difficult to explicate and explore and must remain a theme for future exploration.

⁷ I recognize that this argument rests on an assumption of heterosexuality and on the experience of heterosexual women, both white and of color. It is a good example of how specific attention to the intersection of sexual orientation has much to contribute to expanding our understanding of the dynamics of privilege and power among women at the intersection of race and class. This is a limitation throughout the rest of the paper, but to integrate and do justice to the complex and extensive work on gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation (Creed and Scully, 2000; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Lorber, 1999; Wishik and Pierce, 1991) is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁸ Like others (Quiñones-Rosado, 1998), I prefer the term “Latino” to “Hispanic,” but use both to acknowledge the contested nature of the terms and to recognize the preference for the term “Hispanic” in some geographical areas of the United States. I prefer “Latino” because it represents more accurately the U.S. social, political, and cultural phenomena of racialization of a diverse group of people during the last century, and it highlights a mixed-racial composition that recognizes the indigenous and Black people of America in our ancestry—not just the white Spanish ancestry. I also alternate between using “Latino,” which indicates male, and “Latina,” which indicates female, in order to address the gendered nature of the Spanish language.

⁹ I am indebted to Aida Hurtado (1999b) for her work on the “disappearing dynamics of women of color” based on the cultural analysis of Latina and white women’s representations in the media. In my use of this metaphor I also want to honor the powerful Latin American women’s movement born out of South American mothers and grandmothers activism in claiming their disappeared sons and daughters victims of police and state brutality and violence.

¹⁰ Essentialism refers to the traditional notion that the identities of men and women, for example, are biologically, psychically and socially fixed or determined (Phoca and Wright 1999: 12). Loden and Rosener’s categorization reflects, in addition, the conflation of sex and gender, where both terms seem to have the same meaning, which is based on biology and therefore

essentialized. But, in feminist theory sex is seen as biologically based and gender refers to the social construction of the relation between the sexes. While the use of “gender” is not without its problems, I believe the differentiation between sex and gender is helpful.

¹¹ Bridgette Sheridan drew my attention to the difference between radical feminism, at least how it came about in its beginnings, and its more current versions, especially as represented in “the women’s voice” scholarship (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982). One of the contributions of the former, she asserts, was the connections and bonding it generated between white lesbians and lesbians of color, and white radical feminists and radical women of color (personal communication, May 26, 2001).

¹² I thank Maureen Scully for introducing me to this type of questioning in our joint seminar, *Class and Gender Intersections in Organizations: How Do We Begin?*, Center for Gender in Organizations, SIMMONS Graduate School of Management, Boston, MA, February, 1999.

¹³ While I recognize that it is problematic to try to bring together what can be seen as distinct trajectories in feminisms – postcolonial, U.S. third world, and transnational—I want to emphasize the common ground among them so I can use it strategically to voice an alternative to the frameworks presented so far. Collins (2000a: 22), a pioneer Black feminist scholar, recognizes that “Black feminist thought’s distinguishing features need not be unique and may share much with other bodies of knowledge. Rather, it is the *convergence* of these distinguishing features that gives U.S. Black feminist thought its distinctive contours” (italics in the original). Sandoval (2000), a Chicana feminist, also talks of these commonalities. Drawing on recognized and as yet to be explored similarities, I will use the terms interchangeably. Again, my point is not so much to provide an exhaustive academic and historical analysis of these different streams of feminisms, but to contrast this particular feminist form with those previously sketched. I draw from Mohanty’s (1991a) work to define third world feminism as a political and socio-historical label which brings together women of the colonized, neocolonized and decolonized countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and Black Asian, Latina and indigenous people of the U.S.

¹⁴ Black feminist thought, queer theory, critical legal studies, and other critical frameworks can also provide important insights and suggest implications that are worth exploring but which are beyond the limitations of this paper.

¹⁵ Aida Hurtado drew my attention to this dynamic. Whereas in the Northeast region of the United States, the race discourse revolves strongly around Black-white dynamics based on the history of slavery, the Civil War, reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation laws and the Civil Rights movement, in the West and Southwest regions the discourse of race is complicated beyond Black-white by the presence of other racial-ethnic groups—Native America, Mexican, Asian, Black, and Anglo—and strong voices that recognize complex power relations among the different subsets of these groups, not just white and “others.” (Personal communication, June 29, 1999.) DuBois and Ruiz (1990) make a similar point contrasting the biracial model of historical analysis

derived from the North and Southeast regional experience with the multiracial and multicultural models of historical analysis that draw from the West of the United States, which they favor.

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