FROM DIFFERENCE TO INTERFERENCE: THE TRANSCULTURAL APPROACH AS AN
ALTERNATIVE TO FEMINIST MULTICULTURALISM

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ABSTRACT

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Questions about essentialism and "difference" are at the heart of many

debates within U.S. feminism in the past three decades. Worries about making

cross-cultural generalizations, or about establishing a universal concept of "woman,"

have led feminists into a variety of difficulties. Focusing in particular on identity

and cultural differences, I suggest that these problems are in part due to a

problematic understanding of multiculturalism. In my research, I conduct parallel

discussions of women's identity within difference and of cultural differences. I

critically assess two approaches to women's identity—the "particularity argument"

and gender skepticism—and propose a concept of women's identity that embraces

differences among women. I then evaluate two aspects of cultural differences—the

liberal feminist critique and the postcolonial feminist critique—and propose a

concept of culture that respects differences among cultures and the dynamics of

cultures as well as a compatible transcultural approach. The discussions of identity

and culture point to a practical issue: the necessity of discussing transcultural

feminist solidarity.

I propose a transcultural approach as an alternative to multiculturalism.

Unlike the multicultural approach, which asserts a completeness of each culture, the

transcultural approach suggests that if a specific group loosens the hold of the oppression of a specific cultural identity by virtue of transcultural experiences, then they will have a starting point to emancipate themselves from the subordination that is imposed by the culture of origin, which consists of social factors such as race and class. Transcultural themes have been explored in the feminist scholarship, such as work by María Lugones (2003), who demonstrates that transcultural themes, such as "world"-traveling, have been in the background of feminist scholarship and that they hold the promise for achieving women's solidarity if more fully exploited. I propose transculturalism as an alternative to feminist multiculturalism because it offers a promising way of mediating the assumed tension between differences among women and the common cause of feminist solidarity. Through bringing the discussions of women's identity and cultural differences into a normative discussion of feminist transcultural solidarity, I show that a category of women embraces the variability and the dynamics of women, that a concept of culture embraces the variability and the dynamics of cultures, and that a transcultural approach is promising for overcoming the flaws of multiculturalism. These three arguments point to the direction that we should learn to understand differences, confront conflicts, and intentionally build bridges, while we acknowledge differences among women and among cultures.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1. Motive

I attended a feminist gathering that was organized to provide junior feminists an opportunity to share their stories. Several of the fellow feminists at my table talked about their research projects in various parts of the world. It was fascinating to learn how they managed to study languages and do research on local women, for instance, women in a remote Asian village or in an African community. They did not pay much attention to me until I happened to mention that I am completing my second Ph.D. All of sudden I became the focus of attention, not so much because of my Chinese background, but because of my academic accomplishments. It seemed the Ph.D.(s) earned me a pass into this club of researchers: I was no longer a potential object of research, but rather semi-qualified as "one of them" (researchers).

However, I feel that I am someone in between object and subject because I am not "exotic" enough to be studied, but at the same time I am not "qualified" enough to do research on "other" women because I do not adopt the perspective of viewing "other" women as research objects. There are two issues involved in this dilemma. On the one hand, I view my uncertain status in feminism as a result of my limited understanding of relevant women's experiences in the U.S., since I do not come from one of the social contexts, where the various debates that characterize recent feminism arise. At the same time, there is a virtue in my standpoint as a Chinese woman studying in the U.S., since I do not fit the usual ways of speaking of "women of color" or "Third World women." For instance, I had never been

consciously aware of my skin color and its social implications before I arrived in the United States. I did not automatically identify myself with either "women of color" or "Third World women" in the sense that U.S. feminism utilizes these terms. On the other hand, I view my uncertain status in feminism as an issue of the method and role of philosophy. My philosophical methods and approaches do not seem to fit the feminist discourse in the U.S., even if my having a degree is regarded as something to admire. In this sense, just as I bring my specific experience, background, and standpoint to the feminist discourse, I have something distinctive to say by virtue of working as a philosopher. In so doing, I am making a case for the importance of a philosophical approach to feminist issues and the value of philosophical reflection in dealing with them. This experience from the feminist gathering and other interesting experiences that I have encountered in the United States make me wonder why there is such a divide between "us/women in the U.S. (women who are eager to learn about 'other women' to enrich their knowledge)" and "them/Other women (women who are 'out there' to be studied)," how we can understand women across cultural differences, and how best to address transcultural experiences.

My dissertation topic emerged from studying the feminist discourse in the United States. Questions about essentialism and "difference" have been at the heart of many debates within U.S. feminism in the past three decades. Worries about making cross-cultural generalization, or about establishing a universal concept of "woman," have led feminists into a variety of difficulties. These difficulties have directed attention to metaphysical issues rather than to a focus on collaborations among women within and across the U.S. borders. Feminist "difference critiques"

2

are inadequate because they have neither provided ways to make valid generalizations about differences among women nor offered opportunities for open discussions of divisions among feminists. My perspective on these feminist theories offers a different and perhaps broader viewpoint because I approach these theories as a scholar who is from another part of the world and who seeks to develop an argument that is global and cosmopolitan.

2. Themes, Thesis, and Trajectory

In this dissertation, I discuss a number of feminist theories that argue against the generalizations made by many (white middle-class) feminists, who are criticized for their essentialism. The accused essentialist feminists seem to suggest that we develop an idea of women that responds to the whole range of women's experiences. Accordingly, there are issues of appropriate generalization, of what factors need to be brought in the discussion, and of how they are to be included. At the same time, these antiessentialist feminist theories have not yet themselves provided a vista from which we can postulate a solution to these issues. When we think about women's oppression, it is important to draw important distinctions, but we do not have all the concepts required to differentiate among women and their experiences properly. We require concepts to talk about women's oppression, particularly those emerging directly within gender relations. Yet, women are oppressed in other ways as well, for instance through economic exploitation and racial discrimination. Thus a problem that these discussions raise is how determining we can take into account of differences among women's lived

conditions, including different ways women are oppressed *as women*, different ways they suffer other kinds of oppressions, and different ways in which these oppressions intermesh with gender oppression. My critical discussion begins with most general concepts of women and the distinctions among them, and with the problem of evaluating these theories and of locating their contributions and limitations.

One of my tasks is to look into what antiessentialist feminists mean when they use such term as "essentialism" and "ethnocentrism" and to evaluate the adequacy of these concepts, particularly if we are not going to think metaphysically. I approach the feminist philosophical literature partly with an eye on the problems that arise due to the language in which the debates are stated. I am developing my own perspective as a result of my discussion and evaluation of these theories and I write from the standpoint of someone who does not fit in any of the categories that these feminists have typically employed. My goal is to analyze the authors' theories that I discuss to determine their argumentative integrity as well as how their concepts fit into the perspective that I hope to develop. Women who are like me are not well represented in the feminist literature, but I am not concerned about representing a group because I think mutual understanding and communication matters more than representation. Writing from a standpoint of a cosmopolitan feminist, I seek theoretical understandings on which everyone should agree.

There are three themes in my dissertation: The theme of a general concept of women as such, the theme of culture and transcultural experiences, and the theme of feminist solidarity. The theme of a general concept of women as such matters

4

because I think that generalization about women is possible and that we should be concerned with what kinds of generalization are valid. A valid generalization implies that we can construct a category of women that captures (1) differences among women and (2) the possibility and the dynamics of what women can be in the future. A valid generalization needs not only to capture differences among women, but also to keep the category of women open for the possibility of emancipation, and this suggests a normative dimension to the category of women. Reference to the future justifies some hesitation since such concept or category of women cannot simply be based on generalizations, if that means generalizations based on descriptive claims about existing and past women. The theme of culture and transcultural experiences is important because it connects the discussion of U.S. women of color and that of international women ("international" from the standpoint of the U.S. feminism) with the intention to blur boundaries between "us" and "other women in other countries" and boundaries between the U.S. feminism with "other" feminisms. The theme of a category of women as such and the theme of cultural and transcultural experiences are in interplay with the theme of women's solidarity, which can be demonstrated that some aspect of the normative ideal of solidarity is incorporated into an adequate category of women and is realized in transcultural experiences.

Feminist discourse in the United States has focused on the "problem of difference," which has in fact led to limited discussions of women's collaboration across cultures and societies. While it is important to recognize that women are different and subject to different forms of oppression, it is also crucial to look for

effective methods for resisting these various forms of oppression. A discussion of a category of women as such can lead to feminist resistance because it provides an intellectual basis for claiming that women are oppressed *as women* and women should resist gender oppression *as women*. Transcultural experiences reveal that the resistance is not only White women's resistance, or U.S. women of color's resistance, but also a resistance in the transcultural sense. My research focuses on multiculturalism and transculturalism as contrasting approaches to fostering women's solidarity across cultural differences. Despite its merits, multiculturalism emphasizes the separation and non-intervention of cultures to the exclusion of investigating communicative needs of cultures, and this fails to offer an effective way for women from different backgrounds to recognize and interact with each other. I argue that a transcultural approach is a promising alternative to feminist multiculturalism for discussing the relationship between solidarity and differences among women. Transcultural experiences do not view cultural differences as a challenge to women's solidarity; rather, the transcultural approach offers an alternative social and practical framework to think about differences in a more constructive way and to construct women's solidarity without dismissing differences among them.

I examine the issue of diversity and the complexity within feminism and suggest a move toward transculturalism, which is a practical stand that is supported by intellectual arguments involved in the dissertation as I reject perspectives of affirmation or simple negation of the "essentialist" conceptualization. I have two commitments in this dissertation: (1) One is an intellectual commitment: it makes

sense to talk about women are oppressed *as women*, which means that even though there is an error associated with certain kinds of generalization, we can make some generalizations that are valid; and (2) the other is a political commitment: it makes sense to think about solidarity among women and to some extent a much broader form of solidarity is possible. Feminist solidarity does not mean that all women would act in solidarity, but that it is possible for women in very different circumstances to find balance among their differences and work with each other to eliminate gender oppression.

3. Background

The main issues about feminist "difference critique" arise with debates over essentialism and related discussions of ethnocentrism. Because I evaluate the different approaches of the "difference critique" and consider what is at issue in the debates over essentialism, it is necessary to look into how feminists use terms such as "essentialism" and "ethnocentrism." Here I explore where the theme of essentialism fits into the dissertation and what issues arise when I criticize particular positions. With regard to my distinctive experience and philosophical approaches, the themes of essentialism and ethnocentrism become good examples for illustrating what I take to be the key points when I say that I do not "fit." By developing the philosophical reflection on the possible meanings and implications of ideas such as essentialism and ethnocentrism, I show how philosophy plays a role, both regarding the analysis of women's oppression and approaching practical challenges to it, which are theoretical issues and practical issues.

Defining Essentialism

What exactly is essentialism and what is wrong with it? Oddly, the term

"essentialism" is rarely defined or explained explicitly in the debates over

essentialism. When it is defined, it is often done by its "antiessentialist" critics

rather than its alleged defenders. For instance, Toril Moi provides a typical anti-

essentialist claim when she says that "any attempt to formulate a general theory of

femininity will be metaphysical. ...as we have seen, to define 'woman' is necessarily

to essentialize her" (1985, 139).

One can easily have the impression that all forms of essentialism are

pernicious and politically regressive while anti-essentialism represents the new

promising direction with little political limitation. Any definition of woman and any

attempt to generalize about women from the particular historical, cultural, ethnic,

and class positions of particular women runs the risk of reducing the particularity of

social construction to essentialism. "Essentialism" is rashly condemned as a

theoretical pitfall in feminist theories and the "essentialist" accusation is posited

without careful reflection and assessment. As Cressida Heyes points out, the anti-

essentialists tend to use " 'essentialist' as a pejorative adjective rather than a

substantive term of critical assessment" (2000, 20). According to her, there are

several controversial themes in the debates over essentialism ranging from

problematic or illegitimate generalizations to ahistorical thinking, and from the

importance of identity politics to the problem of implicit metaphysics. The result is

that the term "essentialism" suffers from being overly comprehensive and vague at

the same time. Some feminists, such as Elizabeth Grosz, Natalie Stoljar, and Heyes, endeavor to find out what "essentialism" could mean. In what follows, I will briefly present their explanations of possible meanings of the term "essentialism."

Grosz offers a conception of essentialism and three forms that it can assume. She defines essentialism as the tendency to attribute a fixed essence to women and claims that "the existence of fixed characteristics, given attributes, and ahistorical functions….limit the possibilities of change and thus of social reorganization" (1994, 84). The three forms that essentialism takes are: (1) Biologism, in which women's essence is defined in terms of women's biological capacities, such as the functions of reproduction and nurturance; (2) naturalism, in which a fixed nature, such as being emotional or irrational, is claimed for women; and (3) universalism, in which invariant social categories and activities are assigned to all women in all cultures (See Grosz 1994, 83-86). Stoljar combines the biological and natural characteristics that Grosz addresses into the essential properties and maps out two forms of essentialism: (1) One is the position that attributes a fixed and unchanging nature to women, which is a claim about the essential properties of an individual woman; and (2) the other is the position that suggests an implicit universalism, which is a claim about a universal "womanness." Stoljar also maps out the anti-essentialist arguments that respond to these two forms of essentialism: (1) The social constructionism argument against the first form of essentialism proposes a socially constructed account of gender rather than a natural and fixed nature of women; and (2) the diversity argument against the second form of essentialism rejects the implicit universalism. (See Stoljar 1995, 261-67).

Heyes distinguishes three varieties of essentialism: (1) Biological essentialism, which is the tendency of feminists to distinguish the sexed body as a pre-social site upon which constructions of gender are imposed; (2) metaphysical essentialism, which consists in the claim that certain species or types of things have an essence, that is, a certain innate structure, for instance the Lockean nominal essence; and (3) linguistic essentialism, which consists in the claim that any definition of "women" must assume certain necessary and sufficient conditions— they can be biological attributes but do not need to be—of membership in that definition (See Heyes 2000, 20-22). Heyes points out that the debates over essentialism in recent feminist thought are rarely concerned with biological essentialism and metaphysical essentialism, so they are not the targets of feminist criticism of essentialism. Because concerns with bodies are located within social constructionist discourses and because essentialism of the metaphysical and biological varieties is prior to social constructionism, they are not what are at stake in contemporary feminist debates over essentialism. Rather, according to Heyes, linguistic essentialism, which concerns the assumption that the definition of "women" consists in a set of necessary and sufficient conditions, is the focus of feminist attention regarding antiessentialist efforts.

Issues Raised by the Idea of "Essentialism"

At least two issues are raised by the idea of "essentialism": One issue is about whether there is a reason to think that there is an essence; the other issue is about difficulties that follow from thinking that there is an essence. Certain ways of

thinking that are labeled "essentialist" are undeniable, e.g., certain kinds of metaphysical thinking or biological reductionism, but we need to focus on the question whether there is a point of speaking about women in general. I am not assuming that there are no biological generalizations that can be made, but rather I think that no biological generalization can adequately grasp women's oppression. It seems that the issue being raised by the critics of essentialism is in respect to generalization concerning women's oppression. When critics deny any generalizations about women, they may be missing something important, which could be about actual conditions of women or about normative, ethical, or political perspectives in conditions and possibilities of women.

Although a term with enormous complexity, essentialism in feminist discussions implies that (1) women share some properties, or (2) women are oppressed in the same way. The problem with essentialism is that it does not help us understand women's experiences across cultural differences. When antiessentialist feminists use "essentialism" as a criticism, they are not saying that there are no essences (at least most of them are vague about whether there are essences or not), but rather they are just saying that those "essentialists" are positing an essence when there is not one. So the issue about essentialism is not just about whether there is an essence of women, but rather it is about the way that feminists reason when they criticize that one asserts that there is an essence. My general view on essence is that whether there is an essence of women or not is not the key issue when we are discussing women's oppression, because essentializing oppression prejudges what is possible. Without adequate evidence, essentializing

cuts short the exploration of alternatives to what exists as well as the explanation of the social causes of oppression—causes that could be challenged politically. It *is* possible to generalize about women whether or not feminists talk about essences, but there are limitations of what kind of generalization one can make. When we say that women are oppressed *as women*, it means that all women are subject to oppression by virtue of their gender position in the society regardless of what forms of oppression they are subject to. So we can say that women are subject to gender oppression, which is different from saying that they are all oppressed in the same way. The way that some feminists think about essences and essentialism point to the fact that it is a confusing conceptual problem, but it is often joined with a historical problem. Maybe the generalization about women is a historical generalization instead of a metaphysical generalization, because we are making a historical generalization when we say that women happen to be oppressed *as women* in the society in which they live and the gender distinction corresponds to some kind of oppression. So one of the themes that I am concerned with, which may be get confused under the heading of essentialism, is what kinds of generalizations are valid and what kinds of generalizations are helpful.

If we focus on the issue of the generalization of women's oppression rather than essence, we can point to problems with biological and metaphysical thinking in that regard and we can defend using general conceptions (based on generalizations, not metaphysics) as useful for reflecting on oppression and as relevant to a nuanced approach to challenging gender oppression. For instance, when it comes to the historical generalization of women's experiences, neither White nor Black women

are able to generalize all women's experiences on the basis of their own experiences because they are not considering experiences of non-White and non-Black women and therefore they only tell part of the story. As a result, generalization seems to be a historical question, so we need to find out in what ways gender oppression is similar and in what ways it is different. Antiessentialists seem to suggest that this is a historical and empirical question, but if they are not going to argue about the generalization of women metaphysically, then how are they going to argue? Presumably, it can be argued anthropologically, historically, culturally, etc. In other words, if one cannot argue about generalization on *a priori* basis, then the role of theory is to organize the available information about the historical records. The question then becomes how adequate these conceptions for organizing the materials for our knowledge are, that is, how valid our generalization is.

Since the issue is one about generalization, I think both the accused "essentialists" and antiessentialists have their merits and limitations: On the one hand, antiessentialists are right in the sense that women in different situations suffer different forms of oppression; on the other hand, feminists who are accused of essentialism might be right at least in the sense that generalizing about conditions of women is appropriate because one could generalize about women by saying that they have all been subject to gender oppression—at least in historical societies. It is important to understand this generalization, even if forms of gender oppression have been (or are) different. In this sense, both antiessentialists and those accused "essentialists" have a point.

Defining ethnocentrism:

Criticism of ethnocentrism is an attempt to challenge the forces regarding the views that have been charged as essentialist, so it is necessary to talk about what ethnocentrism is. The use of the term "ethnocentrism" goes with the kind of criticism where one assumes one's standard as the point of reference or the paradigm case. Ethnocentrism does not necessarily mean that one is hostile to others, but it means that one is overgeneralizing on the basis of her own experiences. One way to think about ethnocentrism is to examine whether ethnocentrism is an intellectual error or a moral criticism. For instance, it could be that both White women and Black women make an intellectual error if they only generalize on the basis of their own experiences. In particular, it could be the case that in the United States, Black women and a subset of White women think on the basis of the historically poor treatment of Blacks, so it does not make sense to emphasize the issue of White women in this society, because by focusing on Black women's experiences, feminists can develop an intellectual insight about gender oppression in general. It seems that feminists view ethnocentrism as a moral failure rather than an intellectual failure; that is, ethnocentrism is not a false generalization, but rather a narrow-mindedness that is morally defective. So one of the problems with the concept of ethnocentrism is that it is a moral criticism. When feminists accuse someone as "ethnocentrist," they are criticizing her in the moral sense. This is where the value of the otherwise very abstract usage of ethnocentrism reveals itself because one could say that some women are ethnocentrists since they

14

generalize only from their own experiences but not from experiences of other women.

However, often ethnocentrism is more complicated than a moral criticism because it could be that a White middle-class woman is not just being ethnocentric in the sense that she only generalizes from her situation, but also that she is complacent about the exploitation of women whose labor she is benefiting from. In principle, women can identify with all other women but at the same time it is a fact that there are profound differences among women in most circumstances. Some differences conceal actual conflicts, such as competing race and class issues, so the problem of the differentiation of women is not just the problem that the complexity of women face in terms of different forms of oppression they experience, but also that they are in different relations to other women because oppression can be in the form of being oppressed by other women. I am committed to the idea that women are oppressed *as women*, which means that all women are subject to gender oppression in some forms even though there might be differences at different times and places. Yet, the idea that all women are oppressed *as women* encounters problems when it comes to encouraging solidarity among women, in part because gender oppression that women experience are sometimes very different in their expressions in each individual woman's life. It could be the case that women are simply being different and it is difficult for them to compare experiences. For instance, White middle-class homemakers experience one kind of oppression and women as domestic workers experience another. However, it is another thing when differences become an issue of conflicts, for example, the issue of low-income

15

women of color has the moral primacy not just because they are oppressed worse, but also because Whites benefit from the system that is partly supported by racial discrimination. These women deserve the priority of our focus because White women are actually oppressing them. In this sense, ethnocentrism is also connected with racism although no feminist really uses the term "racism" in her criticism. So the charge of ethnocentrism is almost saying that an ethnocentrist is someone who is a racist, but this charge operates through the conceptual fallacy of ethnocentrism and essentialism. There is a virtue of worrying about ethnocentrism and essentialism, but if one wants to accuse another as a racist, one should just say it rather than using ethnocentrism or essentialism as the code language. However, it should be noted that antiessentialists are not accusing essentialists personally as racists, but that ethnocentrists and essentialists think in the way that enables the propagation of racism.

If there were solidarity of women, it would have to include women who are different from each other as well as those women who are oppressed by other women. Women who benefit from oppressing other women have to undergo some radical self-critique, which is dominant in the current U.S. feminist discourse, and then we should think about how to engage in correcting those forms of oppression together. This means that we should not only acknowledge differences but also recognize conflicts that are locked in the knowledge of the historical oppression. The idea that there are potential conflicts among women might be one of the ways to think about the ambiguity of the notion of ethnocentrism that some feminists are concerned with. The issue of differences and the reality and possibility that some

differences would lead to conflicts make it necessary to talk about women's category as such and feminist solidarity despite the difficulty inherent in the construction of a woman's category as such and feminist solidarity that embodies differences among women. If we recognize issues of conflict, we are appealing to a much broader conception of emancipation, which is an assertion that is consistent with my guiding belief that oppression is not inherent in women's identity. One of the problems with antiessentialist literature is that very little of it discusses human emancipation and social transformation in general terms. This is a vacuum conceptually as well as politically, which is a problem that I want to point out, though I cannot solve in this dissertation.

4. Mapping the Dissertation

The dissertation is composed of two parts and a concluding chapter. Part One (Chapter 1-2) critically assesses two approaches to women's identity—the "particularity argument" and gender skepticism—and proposes a women's identity that embodies differences among women and the dynamics of women. Part Two (Chapter 3-5) critically assesses two aspects of cultural differences—the liberal feminist critique and the postcolonial feminist critique—and proposes a concept of culture that embodies differences among culture and the dynamics of cultures and a transcultural framework that is compatible with this concept of culture. The discussion of identity in Part One and the discussion of culture in Part Two point to a practical issue: the necessity and importance of the discussion of solidarity, which will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Part One is divided into two chapters. In Chapter 1, I trace the rise of the "problem of difference," which is centered on differences among women; in particular, lower-class women, whose experiences are not represented in the feminist discourse, are different from White middle-class women. I begin this chapter by presenting the case of Betty Friedan, whose work became a target of the "difference critique." Friedan presents a White middle-class feminism and is accused of presenting essentialist argumentation. I explore the limitations of the "particularity argument," which is an approach of criticizing generalizations such as Friedan makes, by Elizabeth Spelman and Kimberlé Crenshaw. I label Spelman's and Crenshaw's arguments the "particularity argument" because both of them argue that the particulars of an individual woman should be considered to avoid the danger of glossing over differences among women. The "particularity argument" addresses the interlaced oppression of underprivileged women but fails to elaborate on how women can be connected among their particularities. Intellectually, it seems that feminism now is divided into separate feminisms, such as Black feminism, Latino feminism, Asian feminism. Politically, feminist struggles are dissolved into localized, regional, and specific struggles representing the interests of particular women or particular groups of women.

In Chapter 2, I explain what is built into the uses of the term "category" and consider how to construct a category in a way that is consistent with recognizing differences among women. The general metaphysical perspective of gender is under attack because it fails to take into account racial, cultural, and class differences among women and because gender is considered a detrimental concept.

Feminists who fall under the banner of postmodernism generally assert that categories are unreal. I focus on the shortcomings of Wendy Brown's version of postmodernist category skepticism. Brown suggests that the idea of a unified and coherent subject should be abandoned because by attaching an injured identity to women, feminist theory perpetuates a sense of victimhood as primary to women's identity, and by implication that victimhood is detrimental for achieving empowerment. To criticize Brown's argument, I present Marilyn Frye's approach of addressing the dynamic relationship between differences among women and the category of women. Frye points out that plural identity should be categorized as a practice of pluralism in a logically positive category construction, in which genuine subjectivities A: B displace the A/not-A pseudo-dualism. Frye's construction of a positive category demonstrates that experiences of women can be generalized and that the concept of women can be generalized in a way that grasps both the variability and the dynamics of women. This chapter is centered on the category and the necessity of the category of women. The link between Brown and Frye is that the former argues against identity and the latter argues for identity.

In Part Two, I conduct an argument about culture that is parallel to the argument of women's identity that I conduct in Part One. In Part Two, I address the divide of feminism along the line of cultural difference and critically examine multiculturalism. Part Two is divided into three chapters. In Chapter 3, I present a debate about multiculturalism between Will Kymlicka and Susan Okin and in particular Okin's liberal feminist critique of multiculturalism. Discussions of cultural diversity have largely taken place in a dominantly liberal context, so I

narrow my discussion to the liberal multiculturalism of Kymlicka and his liberal critic Okin. They both rely on a problematic understanding of cultures as self-contained entities. Okin argues that the protection of minority cultures—the main claim of Kymlicka's version of multiculturalism—is in fact harmful for women and girls in those minority cultures. Okin's critique of multiculturalism is based on a problematic account of culture, which regards cultures as static, self-contained, and well-integrated entities. Okin has a questionable assumption that the minority culture is often more patriarchal than the majority culture and she is insensitive to the political context in which the minority cultural claims are made. I propose that the concept of culture, as a self-contained entity, should be reconceptualized into a fluid concept of culture as internally contested and diversified, with the consideration of cultural interdependence and communication.

Chapter 4 assesses the postcolonial critique of multiculturalism by pointing out both its failure to break free from the multiculturalist framework and its fruitful proposal for fostering dialogue among women. Postcolonial feminists such as Uma Narayan and Chandra Mohanty argue that there is a major problem—the problematic understanding of "Other" culture—with multicultural studies. They criticize the problematic concept of culture used by multiculturalists within the framework of multiculturalism with the hope that people in multicultural studies become more sensitive to the context and the history of cultural differences. The postcolonial critiques of multiculturalism launched by Narayan and Mohanty are useful for challenging various multicultural assumptions and practices; however, they fail to provide an alternative framework to replace multiculturalism. That is,

with the acknowledgement that the postcolonial critique of the problematic concept of culture is fruitful, the critique is inadequate because although it suggests the necessity of finding an alternative to the multiculturalist framework, it fails to provide such an alternative. Narayan and Mohanty's critiques call attention to the fact that feminism needs a concept of culture that can capture the variability and the dynamics of cultures, but they unwittingly adopt aspects of the positions that they otherwise reject. Without a transition of the framework, their suggestions for the reconstruction of the concept of culture and for women's solidarity are impractical. I propose that feminism not only needs to have a reconstructed concept of culture, but also needs a new framework because the reconstruction of the concept of culture challenges the foundation of multiculturalism.

With their merits, both the liberal feminist critique and the postcolonial feminist critique are unfruitful strategies for addressing differences among women because they both fail to avoid thinking about cultural differences in a way that is multicultural. They (1) fail to grasp the complexity and variability of the culture, thus failing to grasp the potential interconnection between cultures; or (2) fail to explicitly suggest going beyond multiculturalism. I propose a shift from multiculturalism to a more favorable alternative because: (1) the alternative accommodates the reconstructed notion of culture; and (2) the alternative enhances women's cross-cultural solidarity.

In Chapter 5, I specify the transcultural approach as the alternative to the multicultural approach. The transcultural approach was developed by the Russian-American cultural theorist Mikhail Epstein, who offers a very useful metaphysical

framework for feminists to adopt for exploring the possibility of women's collective struggles. Unlike the multicultural approach, which asserts a completeness of each culture, the transcultural approach suggests that if a specific group loosens the hold of the oppression of a specific cultural identity by virtue of transcultural experiences, then they will have a starting point to emancipate themselves from the subordination that is imposed by the culture of origin, which consists of social factors such as race and class. I introduce the transcultural approach through a critical exposition of Epstein's conceptions such as "transculture" and "interference." In a word, transculture means the freedom of every person to live on the border of one's "inborn" culture or beyond it. Interference refers to a necessary, mutual, and multidirectional process that transposes the borders of interacting cultures, mentalities, and disciplines in multiple directions. Through interference, the differences complement each other and create a new interpersonal transcultural community to which we belong, not because we are similar but because we are different. In this sense, different cultures should not be satisfied with merely tolerating one another, but rather they should be creatively involved with one another. The transcultural themes have been present in the background of feminist scholarship, such as work by María Lugones. Lugones's work demonstrates that elements of transculturalism are present in feminist philosophy and transcultural themes, such as "world"-traveling, have been in the background of feminist scholarship and they hold the promise for achieving women's solidarity if more fully exploited.

If we think transculturally, then the possession of a vague cultural identity would not be anymore confusing than having a single cultural identity. The purpose that I propose transculturalism as the alternative to multiculturalism is that it is urgent for feminism to find the balance at the *intersection* between the debate about women's oppression in various cultures *and* the debate about the possibility for women to resist gender oppression. The notion of solidarity suggests that there should be strong connections among women, but this idea is not adequately illuminated in the multicultural approach. Transculturalism, however, is an approach that cultivates an idea that involves both the variability and the dynamics of women and those of cultures.

The concluding chapter focuses on the theme of solidarity. The theme of solidarity is important from at least two perspectives: (1) From the epistemological perspective, women have different experiences of gender oppression and women do not automatically form a group, so solidarity is a strategy for them to recognize gender oppression on a macroscopic scale; and (2) from the political perspective, solidarity is crucial for women to resist structural gender oppression collectively. I talk about women's solidarity from two aspects in this chapter: One aspect is from the theme of identity politics and the other aspect is from the theme of cultural differences. I focus on the aspect of identity politics by discussing Amy Allen's work, in which she employs a strategic usage of "a mediated concept of group identity" and proposes a concept of political coalition as feminist solidarity. I argue that a discussion of feminist solidarity needs to emphasize women's group identity because women are oppressed as a group. I focus on the aspect of cultural

differences by addressing the idea of global feminism by Charlotte Bunch, who is an advocate of the campaign that women's rights are human rights. However, Elora Chowdhury criticizes the problematic construction of global feminism in the U.S. academy, arguing that the politics of global feminism is based on a justification of Western liberal notion of democracy. Chowdhury proposes braiding U.S. anti-racist/women of color feminism and Third World/transnational feminism to resist both hegemonic White feminism and Western feminism, which is similar to Chandra Mohanty's proposal of transnational feminist solidarity. I argue that both Mohanty and Chowdhury seem to foreshow an alternative idea of feminist solidarity. The alternative perspective, which I name transcultural feminist solidarity, endorses women's group identity and addresses structural inequality, global injustice, and cultural differences. Practices or initiatives that draw from a transcultural approach (or at least act in a way that is consistent with such an approach) can foster solidarity. By showing challenges to transcultural feminist solidarity, I argue that the transcultural approach intends to promote the interaction of women, even of those women who are from different cultural backgrounds and class locations. These interactions, such as a genuine dialogue between Chinese and American women, would benefit from following the transcultural approach and as a result they would contribute to women's solidarity in general.

The concluding chapter manages to bring the discussions in the previous chapters into a normative discussion of feminist transcultural solidarity. I demonstrate that the conclusions from previous chapters, such as a category of women with the variability and the dynamics of women, a concept of culture with

the variability and the dynamics of cultures, and a transcultural approach that is promising to overcome the flaws of multiculturalism, contribute to the conclusion that I made in this chapter. That is, while we acknowledge differences among women and among cultures, we should learn to understand differences, confront conflicts, and intentionally build bridges.

PART ONE: WOMEN'S OPPRESSION IN DIFFERENT FORMS AND WOMEN'S IDENTITY WITHIN DIFFERENCE

Introduction to Part One

Critics of feminist literature of the sixties and seventies argued that some writers were overgeneralizing about the problems women suffer as a result of male domination and therefore also about the goals of feminist politics. For instance, White middle-class feminists' theories are criticized as overgeneralizing from the situation of specific women because underprivileged women are overlooked in their generalizations. This problem was identified as being one of essentialism. In feminist discussions, essentialism implies that women share some properties, or that women are oppressed in the same way. We can identify two kinds of argument that were developed to pursue this criticism. One argument examines the claims about the particularity of women's contexts, and the other focuses on issues about the nature of thought itself (category skepticism). Despite pointing to relevant considerations, neither is adequate because the focus on essentialism was in some ways misleading or inadequate to the problem. Neither of these approaches adequately balances the need to respect multiple forms of women's oppression or their diverse goals while retaining some understanding of the importance of the idea of feminist solidarity.

In what follows, I will analyze the claims made by each of these two lines of criticism, state fundamental analytical and normative issues about each position, and criticize the main claims they make about the analysis of women's oppression and about feminist politics. By critically examining these two approaches to

differences among women, I argue that difference as such is not a problem, but that it becomes a problem if we assume that difference is a barrier to women's theory and practice. They both seem to conflate the theme of generality of women's oppression with the theme of a women's essence, but the theme of difference and the theme of essentialism are two distinctive themes. That is to say, overlooking differences among women does not necessarily imply that a feminist theory employs essentialism. I also argue that the two "difference critiques" do not lead to women's solidarity.

Part One is divided into two chapters. In Chapter 1, I trace the rise of the "problem of difference" and explore the limitations of the "particularity argument" by Elizabeth Spelman and Kimberlé Crenshaw. In Chapter 2, I focus on the shortcomings of gender skepticism presented by Wendy Brown. I draw on Marilyn Frye's construction of a positive category to demonstrate that experiences of women can be generalized and that the concept of women can be generalized in a way that grasps both the variability and the dynamics of women. I argue that the debates over essentialism are not about feminists making essentialist claims but rather about them making problematic generalizations about women; thus valid generalizations are necessary for feminist projects. I argue that the type of generalization of women that Frye proposes contributes to women's solidarity.

There are two general themes in this part: One theme is women's oppression and the other is women's identity. Both themes are closely related and are feminist reflections of the "problem of difference," but the former is more from an empirical perspective and the latter is more from a metaphysical perspective, although one

cannot draw a distinct line between these two perspectives. With these two themes in mind, we see how the "problem of difference" arises for understanding and for practice (solidarity and politics). The two issues that are raised by the feminists that I will discuss in this part correspond to these two themes. The kind of issue raised by Spelman and Crenshaw is an issue of the difference among women's oppression, which can be shown from the conceptual solution that is offered. The kind of issue raised by Brown and Frye is less about women's oppression but more about women's identity although women's oppression is the backdrop of their discussions of women's identity. What needs to be noted is that without the consideration of women's oppression in different forms, women's identity within difference is not possible. This is the link that connects the theme of women's oppression and the theme of women's identity. We want to find out how differences in oppression take place and how to react to the differences that are considered obstacles to solidarity. There are intellectual and practical problems, for instance, does each woman suffer a different kind of sexism? Or is the way they experience gender so influenced by racial issues that the gender issue and the race issue cannot be separated? Can these issues be settled philosophically?

CHAPTER 1

WOMEN'S OPPRESSION IN DIFFERENT FORMS: CRITICIZING THE "PARTICULARITY ARGUMENT"

Feminists who launched the "difference critique" claim that it is wrong for White feminists to make general claims for all women because by doing so they ignore important differences among women. These critics argue that it is essentialist for feminists to make general claims about women without taking into account the important differences among women. For instance, Elizabeth Spelman (1988) emphasizes differences tied to race and class among women and emphasizes the importance of studying women within their specific social contexts. "Difference critiques" as such and the closely related issue of women's identity have occupied feminist theory since then. A category of women refers to something with which we can identify general patterns of gender oppression and therefore we can develop political responses to sexism. If a feminist claims that there is a category of women or makes general claims about women, she is highly suspicious of accounts that fail to address the "problem of difference." In other words, it is problematic that the important differences among women are ignored in some feminist works as if such differences did not exist.[1] Feminists who do not explicitly address the "problem of difference" are criticized for relying on an indefensible essentialism and of being ethnocentric.

I begin this chapter by presenting the case of Betty Friedan, whose work became a target of the "difference critique," as a way to explain why I initiate and approach my discussion from the perspective of culture. I then critically examine

the "difference critique," which can be developed in different ways, launched by

Spelman and Kimberlé Crenshaw.[2] They assert that feminist resistance should be

demonstrated in localized, regional, specific struggles, which represent interests of

particular women or groups of women. I've labeled their arguments the

"particularity argument" although they make other claims as well. First, I critically

examine Spelman's criticism of feminists such as Betty Friedan, who is criticized as

assuming an "essential 'womanness'." Spelman argues that claiming an "essential

'womanness'" treats women or their particular living situations as irrelevant. Then I

critically examine the theory of intersectionality developed by Crenshaw, who

argues that women should be theorized as existing at the intersection of gender and

race. I argue that the "particularity argument" addresses the interlaced oppression

of underprivileged women but fails to elaborate on how women can be connected

among their particularities. I conclude that the "particularity argument," despite its

virtues, dissolves feminist struggles into fragmented struggles.

1. The Rise of the "Difference Critique"

Some feminists' analysis of, and solution to, women's oppression, such as Friedan's,

are criticized by feminists who launched "difference critiques" as being exclusive to

White educated middle-class women because feminists like Friedan ignore

differences among women. Differences among women are overlooked by privileged

women, who are accused of taking their experiences as *the* experience of all women

and of implying that what they understand as women is the *essence* of women. In

this section, I present Friedan's critical analysis of women's problems and her

normative standing on this issue as well as Spelman's critique of Friedan's arguments.

1.1 Friedan's Critical Analysis

In her book *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan describes a "feminine mystique" that she argues is prevalent in the Post-World War II American culture. The feminine mystique applies to women who find true feminine fulfillment and satisfaction as a wife and mother. These women are materially well-off, educated, respected as equals to their husbands, and have the freedom to choose what is good for their home and children, for instance, which cars to purchase and which markets to shop at. Although they are educated, few of them have the intention to enter professional workplace. Even for women who go to college, the biggest desire in life is finding a husband and bearing children. As Friedan states, "In the fifteen years after World War II, this mystique of feminine fulfillment became the cherished and self-perpetuating core of contemporary American culture." (2001[1963], 61)

The feminine mystique is buttressed by a "problem that has no name." Friedan states that "the problem that has no name" is shared by "countless women in America" (63), who feel tired, empty, incomplete, dissatisfied, desperate, and hopeless. She asserts that "the problem that has no name" is a crisis in women's identity because the "feminine mystique" does not allow women to think about their identity as something other than being someone's mother or wife. American housewives who are entrapped in the "feminine mystique" cannot find their own worth. Yet, "the problem that has no name" has little to do with physical or material difficulties such as poverty, illness, or hunger. In fact, material responses to "the

problem that has no name," such as fancier cars and bigger houses, often make the

problem worse. It has little to do with the tedious housework routine either.

Rather, "the problem that has no name" is something about these women's mind and

an inner voice that screams, "I want something more than my husband, children,

and home." As Friedan states,

> It is easy to see the concrete details that trap the suburban housewife, the
> continual demands on her time. But the chains that bind her in her trap are
> chains in her own mind and spirit. They are chains made up of mistaken
> ideas and misinterpreted facts, of incomplete truths and unreal choices.
> They are not easily seen and not easily shaken off. (77)

That is, the "feminine mystique" keeps these housewives entrapped in "the problem

that has no name" as if being a good mother and wife was the best choice for their

lives. A culture that cherishes the "feminine mystique" does not encourage or allow

women to find their own identity and fulfill their potentials as human beings.

1.2 The Normative Implications of Friedan's Analysis

Friedan's solution to "the problem that has no name" is that women should manifest

their potential in employment that allows them to exercise their true abilities, and

establish their distinctive identities. She points out that the "feminine mystique" is

full of delusions, which try to persuade women that it is their husbands, children,

and homes that give meaning to their lives. But, as a matter of fact, housework is

not a career in which a wife can find meaning, and marriage does not contain

everything that a woman needs. No matter how perfect a woman can make her

house appear, and how perfect her marriage is, she does not live a life that can "give

her a self" (464). Instead, Friedan suggests that women should have "a new life

plan—in terms of one's whole life as a woman" (469). Both marriage and career are part of the "new life plan," and are not mutually exclusive choices.

According to Friedan, women should "get out of the house and into the workplace"(8). The job that Friedan has in mind is something that a woman can "take seriously as part of a life plan;" that a woman can "work in which she can grow as part of society" (472); the vocation she thinks of can "provide a basis for identity" (553, n2); "that is of real value to society—work for which, usually, our society pays" (474); that "permits an able woman to realize her abilities fully, to achieve identity in society in a life plan that can encompass marriage and motherhood" (476), and work through which women can "have a sense of achievement" (486). As Friedan states,

> The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own. There is no other way. But a job, any job, is not the answer—in fact, it can be part of the trap. Women who do not look for a job equal to their actual capacity, who do not let themselves develop the lifetime interests and goals which require serious education and training, who take a job at twenty or forty to "help out at home" or just to kill extra time, are almost as surely as the ones who stay inside the housewife trap, to a nonexistence future. (472)

That is, the job should not be simply a way to make a living, but also should be creative, fulfilling, and meaningful. To achieve this goal, women need to receive a serious education for serious purposes, which means education should cultivate a woman's capacities and prepare her for participating in the society as someone more than a mother or a wife.

1.3 Spelman's Critique of Friedan's Critical Analysis

"The problem that has no name" is criticized by some feminists as White, middle-class, and privileged because it ignores differences among women. For instance,

Spelman argues that it is problematic for some feminists such as Friedan to talk about women, the problems of women, and especially the problems of women as if there was a "womanness" that all women share. Spelman argues that claiming an "essential 'womanness'" ironically makes women "inessential," by which term she means to "point to an essential 'womanness' that all women have and share in common despite the racial, class, religious, ethnic, and cultural differences among us" (1988, ix). Spelman argues that until the particulars of an individual woman are considered, it is doubtful that we can talk about "women." As she states,

> Positing an essential "womanness" has the effect of making woman
> inessential in a variety of ways. First of all, if there is an essential
> womanness that all women have and have always had, then we needn't know
> anything about any woman in particular. For the details of her situation and
> her experience are irrelevant to her being a woman. Thus if we want to
> understand what "being a woman" means, we needn't investigate her
> individual life or any other woman's individual life. All those particulars
> become inessential to her being and our understanding of her being a
> woman. (158)

Spelman seems to suggest that this criticism can apply to Friedan, who dogmatically presupposes an ideal (that of fulfilling work) that she misleadingly attributes to all women by only discussing the particulars of White middle-class women. By doing so, Friedan seems to assume that the particulars of non-White non-middle-class women are irrelevant.

Spelman raises the issue of essentialism as she argues that that feminist theory must take differences among women more seriously. She characterizes essentialism as something that "invites me to take what I understand to be true of me 'as a woman' for some golden nugget of womanness all women have in common," which "makes the participation of other women [women other than

White middle-class women] inessential to the production of the story" (159).

Moreover, because women are not understood in their particular situations and experiences, positing an essential "womanness" makes certain women appear less like a "woman" (because these "other women" do not share the "womanness" derived from the experiences of White middle-class women) and thus removes the need for communication among women. It seems that there are two issues at stake here: One issue is ignoring women with different experiences by treating them as invisible, and the other issue is the resulting lack of need for communication with other women since their differences are not relevant.

Spelman has reservations about such phrases as "as a woman" or "oppressed as a woman." To her, these phrases in effect isolate gender from race and class and obscure the race and class identity of White middle-class women. They can function to imply that all other women have the same version of womanness as that of White middle-class women. As she states,

> … the solution has not been to talk about what women have in common as women; it has been to conflate the condition of one group of women with the condition of all and to treat the differences of white middle-class women from all other women as if they were not differences. (4)

On this view, the problem with feminist theories such as Friedan's is that they confuse the condition of one group of women with the condition of all women.

1.4 Spelman's Critique of the Normative Implications of Friedan's Analysis

Friedan's view about women's liberation is an example of the White middle-class perspective that Spelman argues fails to recognize race and class differences among women. It is a perspective that emerges in a White middle-class American culture, which differs significantly from the conditions and needs of women of color and of

different social classes. Friedan's solution to "the problem that has no name," that is, "getting out of the house and into the workplace," is widely criticized by feminists, who argue that women from less privileged backgrounds already worked outside the home to support their families and that Friedan's analysis assumes the experiences of White middle-class women as common to all women. Many feminists of color make the point that Black and Hispanic women in America experience oppression differently from that of White middle-class women. For instance, bell hooks argues that Friedan's presentation of "American women" in fact describes the oppression only of White middle-class women. Moreover, if Friedan's feminist prescriptions for these women to go into the workplace can be implemented under existing social structures, Black women are going to endure continuing subordination because more Black women will be forced into domestic housework to help White women (See hooks 2004 [1981]).

Similar to hooks, Spelman argues that Friedan's solution to "the problem that has no name" may have been relevant for White middle-class American women in the 1950s, but it has never been apt for poor women or women from ethnic minorities, who have always worked outside the home as well as in it (see Spelman 8). It is important to note that Spelman speaks of jobs in a different sense than Friedan: While Spelman thinks every job counts as work, Friedan thinks that work should give a woman's life meaning and identity. However, it does not seem that Spelman would disagree that all women need to have meaningful and rewarding work, so it is unlikely for Spelman to suggest that Friedan is wrong to think that way. It seems that Spelman is suggesting that Friedan is problematically

generalizing about women when she identifies the problem and when she identifies

the solution. White middle- and upper-class feminists such as Friedan have been

insensitive to the problems of women of other races, cultures, religions, and classes.

For example, it *seems* that Friedan is saying that *all* women have "the problem that

has no name." Spelman argues that thinking in terms of commonality among

women does not lead to a solution to gender oppression, because it is unhelpful to

speak of the condition of all women on the basis of an analysis of the condition of a

specific group of women. Assuming that there is a single problem of all women is to

ignore the differences between White middle-class women and other women.

Spelman urges feminist theorists to resist the impulse to make general claims on

behalf of all women, as if there exists an immutable core of "womanness" into which

all of women's differences dissolve. Instead, she claims that what it means to be a

woman is contingent on the social context.

However, Spelman acknowledges that generalization about women is

possible because she does not mean, "we ought never to think about or refer to

women 'as women' or to men 'as men'" (186). That is, she thinks that generalization

of women is possible, but undesirable. She emphasizes that it is impossible to think

of a woman's "womanness" in abstraction from the fact that she is a particular

woman. She suggests that feminists should stop presupposing an "essential

'womanness'" that all women share; instead, they should start to conceptualize

gender as always inflected by other differences among women. Spelman argues that

the phrase "as woman" is "the Trojan horse of ethnocentrism"(13, 167, 185) and it

carries a heavy political load. She claims that assuming an "essential 'womanness'"

is a disguised ethnocentrism. That is, thinking of women as a group characterized

by certain essential features—economic, sexual, reproductive, political—has

reflected the social positions of the theorizer, in this case White middle-class

women. The theorizer emphasizes what is in common among women at the

expense of ignoring differences and even conflicts among them. Spelman warns that

feminists need to be cautious about such commonalities.

> At issue is not so much whether there are or are not similarities or
> differences, but about how white middle-class feminists try to use claims
> about similarity and differences among women in different directions,
> depending on what they believe such similarity or dissimilarity implies.
> (139)

Spelman gives an example to illustrate that claims about commonality can be

arrogant depending on who is claiming it. For instance, if a Black women in the

United States claims that she shares some similarities with a White woman, she is

not making an arrogant claim about commonality. However, it is arrogant for a

White woman to make the claim that a Black woman is like her. According to

Spelman, what makes the difference is that the White woman presumes the power

and the authority to authorize her identity while the Black woman does not assert

such rights.

In addition, Spelman criticizes what she calls the "additive analysis of sexism

and racism" (125) as ethnocentrism. An "additive analysis of sexism and racism"

considers that "all women are oppressed by sexism; some women are further

oppressed by racism" (125). This "adding on" analysis focuses on the fact that the

racial and class identity of Black women or of working-class women is made salient,

but ironically, White women's racial and class identity are left unmentioned. This

irony reveals that White middle-class women take their experiences as what women have in common and to introduce "difference" simply means to bring in women who are not White and middle-class. In so doing, Spelman claims, White middle-class Western feminists regard their particular view of gender as "a metaphysical truth" (186), thereby unintentionally privileging some women while marginalizing others. What is implied in this claim is that (some) White women may not simply be the victims of class or racial oppression, but are also sometimes oppressors (of other women).

2. Women's Oppression versus Women's Identity

There are strengths in Spelman's arguments about the interlaced oppression of underprivileged women. She rightly emphasizes the importance of thinking of women in terms of differences rather than of an abstract commonality. She highlights the importance of recognizing the differential nature of women's gender oppression. She brings people's attention to women who are normally overlooked in the problematic conceptualization of women. She raises the question of the connection between gender categorization and power relations. She rightly argues that categorization itself is a political act because it reflects the interests and social positions of the categorizer, even in the situation that a powerless person uses the concept of the powerful.

However, I suspect that it is theoretically incorrect to label the neglect of differences among women as being the same as claiming an "essential 'womanness'." I wonder whether talking about women in their particular contexts

would by itself cure "essentialism" or "disguised ethnocentrism" (in Spelman's sense). I also suspect whether it is helpful for the feminist movement to emphasize the rivalry between White middle-class women and non-White non-middle-class women without exploring the possibility of them working together. In what follows, I will criticize Spelman's arguments from these three perspectives.

First of all, the theme of difference is different from the theme of essentialism and it seems that Spelman assumes these are the same argument. Although Spelman acknowledges that generalization is possible, she mainly emphasizes that generalization can be seriously misleading. As Spelman states, evidence of committing "essentialism" is to "take what I understand to be true of me 'as a woman' for some golden nugget of womanness all women have in common"(159). That is, a feminist becomes open to the charge of essentialism if she claims that gender oppression that she experiences is the same as the oppression of women in general. For instance, even if Friedan takes White middle-class women's experiences as if they were universal to all women, this issue may or may not be associated with the claim that women's oppression can only be grasped in its particularity. That is, claiming women are oppressed in different forms is not necessarily in conflict with making claims on behalf of women. In other words, the claim that women all endure gender oppression although women are oppressed in different forms is different from the claim that all women enduring gender oppression is the essence of women. It seems to me that there are two issues involved in Spelman's criticisms: One issue is whether all women are oppressed in the same way or whether all share certain kinds of oppression, and the other issue is

that whether there is an essence of women or whether to be oppressed is part of

that essence. A women's essence is a separate issue from the issue that whether

oppression is in relation with that essence, but Spelman seems to say that if one

generalizes oppression, one is claiming an essence. So she is mixing up these two

issues. The question of generality of (certain kinds of) women's oppression can be

posed as an empirical or historical question and is independent of positing a

women's essence. In other words, the issue of a women's essence may or may not

involve a claim about the relation of oppression to that essence or the relation of the

generality of oppression to that essence. It is important that we sort out this

conceptual distinction.

Secondly, focusing on the particulars might not be able to cure essentialism.

It is true that we should not reject the idea that particularity must be preserved in

the criticism of oppression; that is, we must be attentive to the different kinds of

oppression women suffer in different contexts. It is also true that we can imagine

strategies that unify different groups of women; that is, different kinds of

oppression may call for different practical responses. Yet, it is a different point to

argue that whoever overgeneralizes is not just making an intellectual or political

error, but is also engaging in essentialism. It seems that Spelman is saying that

essentialism is a way of thinking that allows for or even encourages empirical

overgeneralization. So focusing on essentialism as the problem leads Spelman to

avoid facing the empirical question of the extent to which generalization might be

justified as well as the extent to which it is not. The danger of ethnocentrism exists

regardless of whether we can generalize or not, though readiness to make

generalizations may reflect ethnocentric attitudes. Ethnocentrism reflects the narrowness of one's generalization. It can be interpreted as either a weaker accusation or a stronger accusation. The weaker accusation of ethnocentrism is that one is making intellectual errors by overlooking experiences and situations of people other than their own ethnicity. The stronger accusation of ethnocentrism is that one is imposing her group's outlook on others, therefore her analysis might be racist. The weaker accusation is an intellectual criticism while the stronger one is a political criticism. Although the intellectual cannot be separated from the political, it might be more constructive to focus on the intellectual criticism when there is no evidence of vicious political intentions. For instance, it is legitimate for Spelman to argue that the form of the relegation of housework to women might vary in different contexts and that "doing housework" is not the essence of women, but it is theoretically incorrect to charge those who generalize that women are oppressed by taking the role of house worker are claiming an essence of women (which Friedan obviously does not claim). Although Friedan does not explicitly claim that women who do not receive serious education cannot work equal to their top capacities and cannot obtain a meaningful job, she seems to imply that every woman has the opportunity to receive education and work creative jobs. As a matter of fact, many underprivileged women have to deal with poverty, hunger, and illness, do not have the opportunity to receive education, and therefore obtain employment that provides a living and is below their potential. The problem with Friedan is not that she thinks all women should receive a good education and be able to explore their full potentials, but rather that she ignores the obstacles to such a vision for most

women. Friedan's ideal is less relevant to poor women of color, but it cannot be denied that poor women of color want to do meaningful work as well.

Last, claiming social categories constructed solely in their particularity can lead to fragmentation and Spelman's emphasis of the rivalry of Black women and White women and distrust of White women's intention could make barriers to feminist solidarity appear to be greater than they actually are. Spelman's argument about "inessential woman" seems to recommend, unintentionally, a kind of cultural relativism or contextualism. She makes the statement that "generalizations about women are possible" (183), but they are culturally contingent and socially constructed. That is, cultural contexts and social conditions must make a difference to how gender is generalized. Moreover, Spelman does not specify how she would categorize gender culturally, so she leaves open the possibility that gender constructed as such can be fragmented. For instance, there can be African American women, Latino women, etc. In addition, it remains questionable that Black women are more justified to make claims about commonality among women than White women. I understand that Spelman is making a point that making claims about commonality is a political act, but it does not do White women justice by automatically suspecting that they abuse their social privilege. A more constructive approach is to diminish the opposition between Black women and White women instead of boosting the rivalry. After all, when women are on the same page that they endure gender oppression in different forms, they still need to work together to figure out ways to resist sexism.

Now it looks that there are two issues entangled in Spelman's argument: One is the definition of women and the other is the condition of women's oppression. It seems to me Spelman's critique of Friedan conflates these two issues: She rightly argues that Friedan makes the mistake of assuming the condition of White middle-class women as the condition of all women and that Friedan overlooks the fact that women are oppressed in different forms. However, it is questionable that Spelman is correct when she argues that feminists such as Friedan assume a womanness (derived from the condition of White middle-class women) as a universal concept. That is, the issue of women's identity and the issue of women's oppression are separate issues, although they are closely related. It remains a question whether Friedan *actually* claims that "the problem that has no name" is essential for *all* women. Spelman does not provide evidence that Friedan explicitly or implicitly makes claims about what is good for *all* women.

Friedan's finding is culturally bound: Her depiction of women's experiences results from her White, middle-class, and heterosexual location in the postwar American culture. However, criticizing Friedan's arguments as claiming an "essential 'womanness'" ignores the real problem that is attached to women's identity and does not give Friedan the credit she deserves. It seems that Spelman is imputing a philosophical or intellectual commitment to Friedan for which there is no evidence. It seems that overgeneralization is not even the problem, since it could be the case that Friedan is just focusing on one group of women without saying that her argument applies to all women. She could still be criticized for allowing for the impression that she is addressing the issue for all women and she could still in fact

44

be ethnocentric, but we have not seen evidence for that charge. It is undeniable that

Friedan does generalize from her own case and the similar cases of her Smith

College alumna, but it is also undeniable that Friedan's specific arguments have to

do with real gender oppression even if of only for a specific group, therefore

deserving a more radical understanding than she was given credit for. Friedan's

observations and arguments are confined by her social location, but it does not do

her arguments justice to call her arguments claiming an "essential 'womanness'."

That is, even if Friedan implicitly overgeneralizes, it is still overkill to say that she

employs essentialism.

In any case, Friedan raised a challenge to women's oppression that in turn

ran into criticism for inadequacy of its intellectual assumptions. She raised a

genuine if not a universal issue for women. Reading Friedan's specific arguments, it

is clear that she cares about women's oppression and strives to find a way to end the

oppression. She does not assume that simply having a job is sufficient; rather, her

solution is that women's identity should include a focus on reaching their vocational

potential. For instance, she suggests that one of the sources of women's oppression

is the relegation of housework to women. Although it is clear that the relegation of

housework to women is not the only source of women's oppression and for some

women it is not the source of oppression at all, it remains true that the relegation of

housework to women is a good example that women in general endure massive,

structural, systemic, and invisible subordination collectively and it is also an

example of a more general pattern of a sexual division of labor. In the rest of this

dissertation, I will utilize the example of the relegation of housework to women to demonstrate how different feminist philosophers discuss the same issue.

3. Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality

In the previous sections, I presented the origination of the "difference critique" by critically examining Spelman's critique of Friedan. I argued that Spelman is right to assert that women should be looked at in their particular situations, but her argument that feminist theories such as Friedan's argue for an "essential 'womanness'" is unfruitful because it confuses the overgeneralization of women's oppression with the assertion of an essence of women. Spelman is not the only feminist who seems to recommend that women should be looked at within particular environments. Crenshaw develops a theory of intersectionality that argues for the particularity of a certain group of women. Crenshaw challenges the conceptual limitations of the single-axis framework that treats race and gender as separable. She uses the concept of intersectionality to denote the various ways in which race and gender interact, for the purpose of highlighting the distinct social experience and existence of Black women.

3.1 Crenshaw's Critical Analysis

Crenshaw tries to find a way to best conceptualize the important differences among women's conditions and oppression. She argues that (White) feminism displays a tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories. An example of this tendency is the usage of the term "Blacks and women." Crenshaw argues that "although it may be true that some people mean to include Black women in either

'Blacks' or 'women,' the context in which the term is used actually suggests that often Black women are not considered" (1989, 139 n3). She argues that this tendency is perpetuated by a single-axis framework that is reflected in feminist theories and antiracist politics. By a "single-axis framework," Crenshaw means that race and gender are treated separately, on mutually exclusive axes. As a result, typical uses of both the category of women and the category of Blacks exclude Black women because these categories are developed on the basis of the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group, in this case White women in the gender category and Black men in the race category. So Black women are invisible in terms such as "Black and women" and are theoretically erased in feminist theory and antiracist politics. Black women are marginalized in feminist theory and antiracist politics because neither examines the experience of Black women, whose oppression is located at the intersection of race and gender. Crenshaw argues that the single categorical axis analysis distorts the multidimensionality of Black women's experiences.

> These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated. (1989, 140)

That is to say, Black women are subordinated and marginalized in a categorically different manner from other women. Crenshaw utilizes the analogy of traffic to describe Black women's experiences.

> Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an

intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination. (1989, 149)

According to her, the oppressions that Black women experience are not from just one aspect of their identity, but rather they are multiplicative and intersectional. In other words, Black women are not simply oppressed as women, nor are they oppressed simply as Blacks; rather, they are oppressed as Black women, who are at the intersection of the racial oppression and the gender oppression. Crenshaw argues that both feminist theory and antiracist politics require acknowledgement of the complexity of the oppression of Black women.

3.2 Crenshaw's Normative Position

Crenshaw applies her concept of intersectionality within the broader scope of contemporary identity politics and claims that intersectionality "might be more broadly useful as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics" (1991, 1296). According to her, the theory of intersectionality encourages the recognition of multiple dimensions of identity in feminist theory and antiracist politics.[3] As she states,

> In mapping the intersections of race and gender, the concept [intersectionality] does engage dominant assumptions that race and gender are essentially separate categories. By tracing the categories to their intersections, I hope to suggest a methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable. While the primary intersections that I explore here are between race and gender, the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color. (1991, 1244-45 n9)

That is to say, the theory of intersectionality is one way to address differences, including gender, race, and class differences. It is developed as a method to

48

challenge the conceptual limitations of the tendency to regard race and gender as exclusive or separable, such as the "additive analysis," which results in the exclusion of Black women. Like Spelman, Crenshaw argues that women need to be understood within the complex social context they inhabit. In particular, Crenshaw emphasizes the importance to think with categories such as "Black women."

Crenshaw suggests that to be consistent with the idea of intersectionality, a "bottom-up approach" rather than a "top-down approach" should be adopted to alleviate discrimination (1989, 167). A bottom-up approach begins with addressing the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged, in this case Black women. In doing so, "others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit" (1989, 167). She suggests that in order to include Black women and embrace the complexities of the social marginalization of Black women, both feminist theory and Black liberationist politics should distance themselves from the single-axis approach, which views struggles as singular issues (either as a race issue or a gender issue).

> If their efforts instead began with addressing the needs and problems of those who are most disadvantaged and with restructuring and remaking the world where necessary, then others who are singularly disadvantaged would also benefit. In addition, it seems that placing those who currently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action. (1989, 167)

It seems that Crenshaw is comparing different ways of thinking about women's oppression: She prefers her "bottom-up" approach to the "top-down" approach, as well as different ways of thinking about "potential collective action" that would respond to oppression. She claims that identities constructed at the intersection of

multiple dimensions forge "organized identity groups in which we find ourselves in are in fact coalitions, or at least potential coalitions waiting to be formed" (1991, 1299). By coalition, she means attempts to organize as communities of color in the context of antiracism. According to her, race can be reconceptualized on the basis of intersectionality as "a coalition between men and women of color" and "a coalition of straight and gay people of color" (1991, 1299). In a sense, "potential collective action" and "coalitions" can be considered as forms of solidarity within the Black community.

3.3 Criticizing Crenshaw's Critical Analysis

Crenshaw is right that feminism needs a sharper statement of the inseparability of race and gender (and class) as they function in contemporary oppression. It is true that the gender experience is also a racial one and that race is always experienced within a gender setting (in particular, the power relations associated with it). The theory of intersectionality has many virtues: It reflects more accurately women's diverse social experiences; it theoretically situates individuals within networks of relations that complicate their social locations; it illustrates the virtues and necessity of approaching situations through an intersectional-axis rather than through a single-axis; and it reframes the ways feminists think about political issues. However, the theory of intersectionality has its weaknesses as well, two of which I will address now.

One weakness with the theory of intersectionality is that it regards race and gender as self-contained concepts. By adding race and gender together, the theory of intersectionality does not avoid an "additive analysis." Crenshaw works with the

image of two separate directions coming together in an intersection, but the metaphor of intersection posits disconnectedness as well as separateness and mutual exclusiveness. The complexity of the multidimensional oppression that Black women endure should be elaborated in a more sophisticated way than the additive picture of intersectionality. In a paper presented at the World Conference Against Racism in 2001, Crenshaw again depicted intersectionality with the imagery of a crossroads.[4] The crossroad image has an additive nature: It sounds as if we can account for complexity by simply running more roads through a designated intersection. Another troubling consequence of the additive nature is that it does not ensure that we avoid making the mistake of valuing one group's experiences more highly than other groups' experiences. For instance, the sexual violence against Black women is more visible than that of Native women or other women of color in the academic literature and media. The additive nature of the intersectionality image would re-inscribe the fragmented model of oppression and reify specific social identities. For example, the idea of intersectionality is supposed to capture the complexity of intracategorical differences, for instance, the difference among Black women, but in Crenshaw's application of this idea, she seems to drop the emphasis on the class difference among Black women. The alternative model to intersectionality should understand the different ways in which different social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they are related to political and subjective constructions of identities.

The other weakness with the theory of intersectionality is that it might lead to fragmented feminism because Crenshaw does not explain what intersectionality

means to the feminist movement as a whole. Most of the writings about intersectionality derive from the work of women of color in the United States and it is worth exploring whether gender, race, and class are similarly entwined in other national contexts. For instance, S. Laurel Weldon points out that capitalism sometimes reinforces and sometimes undermines gender or race hierarchies; race is a more salient division than class in the United States while the reverse is true in Europe; gender is more important than class in explaining some features of women's work (see Weldon 2006). It is true that ideas such as "global sisterhood" are built on an insensitive assumption that all women are similarly situated in patriarchy, but it is equally inaccurate to assume a fragmented feminism.

3.4 Criticizing Crenshaw's Normative Position

Crenshaw rightly points out the genesis of the single-axis framework, what sustains it and what its consequences are. The political implication of intersectionality is that women of color frequently pursue conflicting political agendas while White women normally do not have to. Crenshaw seems to suggest that if Black women's issues are solved (since they are the most disadvantaged and their situations are the most complicated), then the gender issue for non-Black women and the race issue for non-White men would be solved more easily. However, statements like this have unexpected social implications.

First, the fissure of women into at least two groups—Black women and non-Black women—is not only conceptual, but also social and political. The theory of intersectionality conceptually splits women into fragmented social categories, thus it risks the unexpected political consequence of undermining the common ground

for feminist practices. As a result of applying the theory of intersectionality, women as members of specific intersections of race and class might create their own feminism, and as an unintended result, exclude the solidarity of women. Intersectionality is believed to be democratic because it posits authority for women of color, which is sanctioned by White feminists, to create their own feminisms. While I agree with Crenshaw's critique of the separability of social factors, I worry that, at least as she has articulated it, the idea of intersectionality may contribute to a practical fragmentation of women. There is the danger of inhibiting women's collaboration across racial differences. Although it is not clear how Crenshaw would categorize White women and other non-Black and non-White women, she seems to set agendas only for Black women and does not address the problem of an agenda for all women with which to resist gender oppression together. She suggests that Black women should forge a coalition with Black men and homosexual Blacks, but she does not suggest a coalition of Black women with White women or with other women of color. Although it is understandable that the Blacks see racism as their primary oppression, recommending solidarity only in the Black community also unintentionally diminishes the feminist goal of eliminating gender injustice.

Second, it is understandable that Crenshaw aims to emphasize the marginalization specific to Black women, but her picture of crossroads corresponding to the theory of intersectionality results in the isolation of Black women from other women. At one point, she claims that "Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately

53

reflect the intersection of race and gender" (1989, 140), but her argument has the same flaw as the single-axis framework that she criticizes. That is, Black women are "predicated on a discrete set of experiences" in the intersection of race and gender, just as race or gender is "predicated on a discrete set of experiences" in a single-axis framework. Crenshaw argues that the single-axis framework takes gender and race as "essentially separate categories" (1991, 1244 n9), but expanding the concept of intersections by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color is not going to make these social factors less separate and exclusive. That is, because the notion of intersectionality does not provide a common ground on which the privileged and the underprivileged can communicate and work together, it therefore is not inclusive enough. Maybe the image of the intersection is too limited: On the one hand, with the equation of sexism with a road, it does not really differentiate among kinds of gender oppression; on the other hand, with the image of the intersection, it only includes what overlaps with another road, e.g., race. In this sense, it is too narrow regarding the gender dimension.

Last, it is not clear what Crenshaw refers to when she talks about "culture." Since she thinks that cultures define identities, it is strange that she only expounds upon the intersectionality of gender and race without mentioning culture. Crenshaw acknowledges that she capitalizes "Black" as a proper noun because "Blacks, like Asians, Latinos, and other 'minorities,' constitutes a specific cultural group" (1991, 1244 n7) but Whites or "women of color" do not constitute a specific cultural group. She emphasizes the role that cultural images play in the social devaluation of women of color. As she says, "The stories our culture tells about the

54

experience of women of color present another challenge—and a further

opportunity—to apply and evaluate the usefulness of the intersectional

critique"(1991, 1282). The fact that it is unclear what culture she refers to explains

why Crenshaw suggests the necessity of the coalition of the Black communities

without talking about Black women's coalition with other women.

It seems that Crenshaw risks presupposing too great a difference among

women, at least if she implies that Black women exist in an entirely different culture.

Related to this point, Crenshaw's argument about the "bottom-up" approach is more

doubtful than it appears to be. Her argument about the "bottom-up" approach

resonates with the feminist standpoint theory. With all its merits, for instance

centering experiences of the most disadvantaged, the "bottom-up" approach does

not provide us enough evidence how the resolution to the problems of Black women

applies to other women. Supposedly, women are oppressed in different forms, so it

is difficult to make the judgment that some women are more disadvantaged than

others. Furthermore, the solution to some women might not be suitable for other

women. For instance, the solution to Black women's problems might not work for

Chinese women in the United States since they might face different sets of

challenges. Crenshaw seems to argue for two contradictory points at the same time.

On the one hand, it seems that Crenshaw is saying that putting Black women in the

center would actually also illuminate the condition of White women and other

women in certain respects. On the other hand, it seems that Crenshaw is arguing

that the theme of solidarity to be conceived more in race than in gender terms; that

is, it seems that Crenshaw is saying Black women should unite with Black men

instead of White women. Given the fact that Black women are also possibly victims

of Black men, it is not clear how Crenshaw's argument of solidarity in the Black

community contributes to the feminist collaboration.

4. The Differences and Similarities between Spelman and Crenshaw

Spelman and Crenshaw have their distinctive positions, but their views are similar

in certain respects as well. Both argue that we need to pay attention to women's

particularity, that is, talking about women cannot be separated from the particular

social locations they occupy. In particular, their race and class background should

also be considered. Both of them argue against the "additive analysis," which

assumes that the race or class issue is simply something in addition to the gender

issue though my criticism of Crenshaw suggests that she is not consistent in this

regard.

Although both argue that feminists should talk about women with the

particularity of their experience in mind, Spelman and Crenshaw seem to adopt

different views. While Spelman emphasizes the differences among women as well

as the ethnocentric attitudes and mistakes that go into ignoring these differences,

Crenshaw adds the argument that ignoring differences between the oppression of

White women and Black women is a matter of ignoring racism as well as ignoring

the fact that the combination of sexism and racism produces a distinctive

oppression for Black women. Spelman discusses the more general danger of

ignoring any number of possible distinctive oppressions, while Crenshaw focuses

more on the specific issue of the mixture of sexism and racism. Spelman talks about

the particularity of women in general. In particular, she criticizes the idea that women are defined by the particularity of White middle class women, which is assumed to be condition of all women. So the particularity of White middle-class women becomes sort of an essence of women, which implies that White middle-class women are "essential" women. In so doing, the particularities of non-White non middle-class women are ignored; therefore, these women become "inessential." The point that Spelman makes in her critique of the "additive analysis" is that one's gender identity cannot be separable from her racial and class identity. However, the claim that Whites in the United States are not oppressed on account of their racial identity hardly leads to the conclusion that the sexist oppression of White women cannot be understood without reference to their racial identity.

Crenshaw deepens Spelman's argument about talking about women with their particulars in mind by discussing the oppressions of Black women in particular. Crenshaw launches her critique of a single-axis framework from her particular social location as a Black woman. When Crenshaw uses the term "women of color," she seems in practice actually to mean "Black women." This is exactly the way that Friedan uses "women" to refer to "women like me." It seems that Crenshaw uses the term "Black women" and "women of color" interchangeably. As she states, "The value of feminist theory to Black women is diminished because it evolves from a White racial context that is seldom acknowledged. Not only are women of color in fact overlooked, but their exclusion is reinforced when White women speak for and as women"(1989, 154). Note that in this quote Crenshaw's argument moves from "Black women" to "women of color" as if they are the same

category. It seems that Crenshaw identifies the category of "Black women" with the category of "women of color." This reasoning is similar to Friedan's identification of "White middle-class women" with "women."

Crenshaw's argument *appears* to suggest that Black women are women of color or at least representative of women of color: She makes the same mistake of exclusion that she criticizes feminist theory and antiracist politics of—her category of women of color is not inclusive enough to include women of other colors that are non-White and non-Black. If we follow her reasoning, we could come up with categories such as Latino women, Native women, Asian women, etc. and we could assume that each of these categories could exclusively represent "women of color." We know right away that this reasoning does not follow. What makes Crenshaw's argument a fallacy is exactly what she criticizes: She assumes that Black women are the sole representative of women of color, just as White feminists assume their experiences represent the experiences of "all women." It is unfair to say that they (or Crenshaw) *actually* think in this way, but it seems this assumption is hiding beneath their arguments. Perhaps they do not intend to assert themselves as the paradigm case, but the paradigm is inherent in their generalizations. So, there must be something wrong with their generalizations or the context in which they make their assumptions. Crenshaw argues from her experience as a Black woman in the United States, where the term "women of color" is *assumed* to refer to Black or Latino women. Her failure to differentiate among women of color may reflect a problem with the idea of intersectionality. It is fair to say that Crenshaw overgeneralizes her own argument. If that is the case, then it may be fair to say that

58

Crenshaw resembles Friedan in a kind of overgeneralization that does not, however, prevent them from capturing a part of the truth. Both Friedan and Crenshaw make claims from the particular social location that they occupy, White middle-class women and Black women respectively. Whether the suggestive idea of intersectionality can function as a universally applicable theoretical idea is doubtful. Perhaps Crenshaw would not claim it could be universally applied, just as whether Friedan claims that "the problem that has no name" is universally applicable is open to debate.

One can argue that the idea of intersectionality offers a useful characterization of the interrelatedness of oppressions arising in a complex society. One can also argue that it does not hold true in all cultures. For instance, the race issue is in particular salient in the United States while it is almost invisible in China. Although there are 56 ethnicities in China, a particular Chinese woman does not normally think she is at the intersection of gender and a particular race. What makes the intersection of race and gender salient is a particular social structure, for instance, the American society. The point I try to make here is that we all make claims from our social locations and are limited by our social experiences and visions. Even when well-intentioned, well-educated, and privileged feminist scholars make numerous efforts trying to think from the perspective of underprivileged women, it is undeniable that we are all confined by our visions no matter how open-minded we are.

However, this frustration reveals a fact that women are oppressed in different forms. Since women are oppressed differently, how can they find a

common ground on which to work together to resist gender oppression?

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality reveals the potentially antagonist rivalry

between White women and Black women, women who practice (intentionally or

unintentionally) racism and women who suffer racism, but she does not provide a

conception of how women at various intersections can collaborate. For instance, it

is more likely that housework is delegated to women who are at the intersection of

race and gender due to their underprivileged social locations. It is not uncommon to

see women of color or female immigrants work as domestic workers so that their

employers can work and live more freely. Crenshaw does not explain how the

"bottom up" approach solves this kind of social tensions or conflicts. In this sense,

the theory of intersectionality does not shed much light on the collaboration of

women at different "intersections."

Conclusion

In this chapter, I criticized adherents of the "particularity argument" for conceiving

particularity as the solution to the differences among women. I've labeled

Spelman's and Crenshaw's arguments the "particularity argument" because both of

them argue that the particulars of an individual woman should be considered to

avoid the danger of glossing over differences among women. The "difference" refers

to the fact that the race, class, sexual orientation, age, etc., have an impact on how

women experience gender oppression. Spelman argues that feminists such as

Friedan posits an "essential 'womanness'" by making claims on the basis of the

experiences of middle-class women and that Friedan's solution to "the problem that

has no name" is not suitable for all women because women endure gender oppression differently. I argued that Spelman fails to distinguish the theme of difference (whether all women are oppressed in the same way or whether all share certain kinds of oppression) from the theme of essentialism (whether there is an essence of women or whether to be oppressed is part of that essence). The intellectual result of this lack of distinction is that focusing on essentialism as the problem leads Spelman to avoid facing the empirical question of the extent to which generalization might be justified as well as the extent to which it is not. The unintentional political result of this lack of distinction is that it contributes to the rivalry of women in terms of race. Along the line of differences between Black women and White women, Crenshaw argues that we need to adopt the theory of intersectionality as the alternative to the "additive analysis of sexism and racism." While the theory of intersectionality greatly advances feminist discussions about differences among women by paying attention to socially disadvantaged women, it has unintentional intellectual and political results. Intellectually, it seems that feminism now is divided into separate feminisms, such as Black feminism, Latino feminism, Asian feminism. Politically, feminist struggles are dissolved into localized, regional, and specific struggles representing the interests of particular women or particular groups of women.

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest that feminists should focus their attention on their intellectual and normative assumptions for the purpose of facilitating women's collaborative work. Feminists like Friedan do not claim an "essential 'womanness'"; rather, she fails to consider the situation of most women

when she frames her problem in terms of White middle-class circumstances. Or at the most she overgeneralizes, although we have not established this criticism on the basis of textual quotations. In other words, the target of the "difference critique" should not be an "essence" of women but rather problematic generalizations of women's oppression in different forms. Differences in the form women's oppression takes *per se* are not problems; rather, the problem is how to perceive and generalize these differences properly. For example, we would have to ask why or how the intermeshedness of racism with sexism might make an alliance among women to transform that status quo. In other words, we need to explore whether it is possible for groups of women, for instance, Black women and White women, to address their respective racial make-up and cultures sufficiently for them to cooperate against sexism.

This chapter has a historical and a conceptual point: By presenting the conception and criticism of the alleged claiming an "essential 'womanness'," I depicted a revival of feminism in which the challenge to women's oppression in the United States, such as Friedan's arguments, came to be challenged as being too narrow. We can see how one might think that a specific approach is good for women, such as Friedan's, but that in practice it is too limited. We can also see that some of the errors associated with an "essential 'womanness'" impede mutual understanding and cooperative action in cultural and political contexts.

I have argued that women are oppressed in different forms, but in the arguments that I utilized in the chapter, there is one related issue lingering: the issue of women's identity. Both Spelman and Crenshaw talk about the differences in

62

the gender oppression that women endure as well as how to understand women's identity given differences in their oppression. However, the emphasis on particularity grasps differences among women but fails to construct a useful category of women for helping with women's collective resistance to structural oppression. The claim that women endure gender oppression does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that they endure gender oppression in the same way. It seems to me that the "difference critique" shifts between the discussion of "differences of women's gender oppression" (an empirical question) and the discussion of "whether a social category of women is necessary and possible given differences among their oppression" (a metaphysical question). For instance, Spelman's critique of an "essential 'womanness'" is a metaphysical argument while what she criticizes is an empirical observation. Although "women" and "women's oppression" are closely related, it is helpful for us to make a distinction between the two concepts so that we can see what is at stake in the "difference critique." It seems that we cannot avoid using the term "woman" and when we use it we offer it certain connotations. For instance, what exactly do I mean when I say "women are oppressed in different forms"? What "women" am I talking about? Is it a universal "womanness" that is subject to overgeneralization? Or is it just a term used for convenience because we otherwise cannot even talk about "women's" oppression? So the question is: Is it possible to define women with all differences among them? In addition, is the attempt to define women necessary at all? I argue that we need to construct the category of women in such a way that we can address differences

63

among women as well as achieving our collective, structural, and political goals,

which I will address in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S IDENTITY WITHIN DIFFERENCE: CRITICIZING CATEGORY SKEPTICISM

Feminists have scrutinized the issue of categorization, that is, whether the category of women is a legitimate, necessary, or possible social category, for several decades. According to some feminists, using the category of women or the concept of women can be problematic in certain contexts for certain purposes. The general metaphysical perspective of gender is under attack because it fails to take into account racial, cultural, and class differences among women and because gender is considered a detrimental concept. Feminists who fall under the banner of postmodernism generally make this claim on the latter ground, asserting that gender is unreal. In this chapter, I will focus on gender skepticism in this regard.

This chapter explores how the category of women raises questions for feminist criticism and politics. Feminist criticism and politics are interested in understanding and resisting gender oppression, yet speaking of the oppression of all women may be misleading. Speaking of women in general is problematic because doing so may miss or even obscure the ways in which other social conditions (other forms of social oppression) overlap with or even modify gender oppression to a certain extent. Indeed, it may even be that, even if all women suffer from some aspects of gender oppression, these oppressions along with other differences in historical circumstances, may result in their oppressions being quite different from those of other women. In this chapter, I explain what is built into the uses of the term "category," which seems loaded from both the critics and advocates. I consider

how to construct a category in a way that is consistent with recognizing differences among women. I argue that the category of women should be constructed in a way that reflects women's differences, accommodates the relationship between power and categorization, and contributes to women's collaboration.

I begin by critically examining Wendy Brown's version of postmodernist category skepticism. Brown suggests that the idea of a unified and coherent subject should be abandoned. She sees the implicit use of this philosophical idea as contributing to a normative criticism; that is, by attaching an injured identity to women, feminist theory perpetuates a sense of victimhood as primary to women's identity. Therefore, feminists need an alternative that is political (rather than moral). I argue that a past of injury is not inherent in women's identity and a feminist politics is not at odds with identity politics. Without ontological or epistemological support, feminist politics cannot go as far as Brown hopes. I then summarize Marilyn Frye's position on category construction. Frye points out that plural identity should be categorized as a practice of pluralism in a logically positive category construction, in which genuine subjectivities A:B displace the A/not-A pseudo-dualism. She argues that plural identities are loci of political solidarity and coalition and that the category of women does not have to be defined by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Frye's solution that the category of women should be constructed through multilayered correlations sets an example of how the concept of women can be generalized within women's differences. I argue that a category of women is necessary for feminist projects and that it is not essentialist to make use of one through a discussion of the relationship between essentialism and

ethnocentrism. The debates over essentialism often conflate essentialism with ethnocentrism because of the misunderstanding of these two terms. Then I elaborate on the connection between the construction of the category of women and the advancement of women's solidarity. I conclude that women's identity constructed in the way that Frye proposes would be helpful for diverting feminism from the debates over essentialism and would refocus it on feminist gender justice.

1. Brown's Postmodernist Category Skepticism

In this section, I focus on the limitations of Brown's critical analysis about women's identity and of her normative standing on the issue of identity.

1.1 Brown's Critical Analysis

Brown is one of the feminists that claim postmodern theories[5] are effective in illustrating how feminist scholars have supplanted the notion of universal "woman" with the incorporation of "difference" into feminism. The postmodern feminist anti-essentialist critique is occasionally carried to the extreme of asserting that no generalizations at all can or should be made about women. Going along with Judith Butler's argument of "gender trouble"(1990), Brown suggests that the idea of a unified and coherent subject, i.e., women as subject, be abandoned because it contributes to equating gender oppression with an injured identity for women. In so doing, feminist theory perpetuates a sense of victimhood as having to do with an injury to women's identity. She argues that by claiming a women's identity, feminists are making at least two mistakes: One is that feminists defend an unjustified "epistemological foundation" (1995, 45) and the other is that they attach

"a past of injury" to women (74). She states that a feminist politics should not rely on epistemology and ontology, nor should it rely on unjustified moral claims.

Brown argues that clinging to a women's identity means that you do not let go of the past because producing identity is "both bound to the history that produced it and as a reproach to the present which embodies that history" (73).

> This past cannot be redeemed *unless* the identity ceases to be invested in it, and it cannot cease to be invested in it without giving up its identity as such, thus giving up its economy of avenging and at the same time perpetuating its hurt—"When he then stills the pain of the wound *he at the same time infects the wound.*" (73, emphasis in original)

That is, by investing in the unredeemable injury, feminist identity politics perpetuates the hurt of the injury, so we need to avoid the notion of identity in order to cure the injury on identity and we should not linger upon the identity that has a wounded past. Brown seems to suggest that the suffering associated with women's oppression cannot be relieved by a politics that focuses on identity. According to her, the premise of identity is exclusion (those who do not share the identity are excluded) and the formation of identity is a site of exclusion. Moreover, claiming an identity implies an unjustified moral claim.

> In locating a site of blame for its powerlessness over its past—a past of injury, a past as a hurt will—and locating a "reason" for the "unendurable pain" of social powerlessness in the present, it [identity] converts this reasoning into an ethicizing politics, a politics of recrimination that seeks to avenge the hurt even while affirms it, discursively codifies it. (74)

In other words, by reminding women of the injured past and the powerlessness, identity does not devoid of the injury but rather reinforces it. Moreover, a moral approach of power replaces a more promising way of constructing a political culture.

Brown argues that feminist movements such as "consciousness-raising" tend to regard women's experiences as "Truth" and thus claims an "epistemological foundation." She criticizes that women's experiences are "anointed as Truth, and constitute the foundations of feminist knowledge" (42). In this way, women's experiences "acquire a status that is politically if not ontologically essentialist—beyond hermeneutics" (42). According to Brown, the "epistemological foundation" and "Truth" are the ground of moral claims: Anointed as Truth, women's experiences are always related to powerlessness while the power always distorts because people who hold it are in the position of dominating others. That is, Truth is always on the side of the disadvantaged, who are always without power and in the position of reproaching power because power is possessed and abused by who hold it. In doing so, feminists claim their truth is less partial and more moral than the truth of those who misuse power. According to Brown, in this way, by claiming an "epistemological foundation," feminists hold the ground of moral critique on power, which Brown depicts as "*ressentiment*" (46, emphasis in original) and "a political practice of revenge" (73). She argues that feminists cannot move forward in feminist politics if we cannot get out of the mode of moral reproach.

Brown thus denies the moral basis for the feminist standpoint theory. She challenges the logic of standpoint theory—the subject harbors a truth and that truth opposes power—and points out that this logic is problematic because standpoint theory has a false belief that a situated knowledge is capable of achieving universal norms. She argues that feminist standpoint theory is politically essentialist because it does not offer an explanation of the legitimacy of how women's experiences are to

69

be granted as epistemologically grounded. Without this explanation, "This strand of feminist foundationalism transports the domain of Truth from reason to subjectivity" (42). Granting the subjectivity of the subject as the source of truth is problematic because the subject adheres to its own truth-value, which is questionable in itself. In fact, according to Brown, this is a manifestation of partiality and self-interest for standpoint of women's experiences "cannot admit to partiality or contestability, and above all cannot be subjected to hermeneutics without giving up its truth value" (42-3). Therefore, Brown argues that standpoint theory's need for grounded knowledge of its own is equally unjustified as the knowledge derived from male supremacy. This groundless justification reveals the tension and inconsistency in standpoint theory: On the one hand, it claims that it is a theory of social construction; on the other hand, it claims that women's experiences and situations are epistemologically more privileged. Standpoint theory thus creates a dilemma: women's experiences, as well as other social experiences, are all socially constructed and culturally varied, but women's experiences count more as an epistemological ground. Thus, she suggests giving up epistemological foundations; that is, we should surrender the moral claim that people of certain groups are more epistemologically privileged than other groups.

Brown argues that identity politics and postmodernity are rivalries in the sense that postmodernity dismantles the collective identity that is characteristic of modern communities while identity politics is a reaction to the dismantlement of identity. According to her, the subject, which is "rational, willing, autonomous, and self-determining," is a production of modernity (40). The affirmation of the subject

makes it possible to reify women's experiences as sources of an unquestionable Truth, which is characteristic of modernity and liberalism. One of the tasks of postmodernity is to deconstruct the subject by "postmodern decentering, disunifying and denaturalizing of the subject" (40).

> When the notion of a unified and coherent subject is abandoned, we not only cease to be able to speak of woman or of women in an unproblematic way, we forsake the willing, deliberate, and consenting "I" that liberalism's rational-actor model of the human being proffers, and we surrender the autonomous, rights-bearing fictional unity that liberalism promises to secure. (40)

While Brown admits that gender is "a marker of subjects" and "an axis of subordination," she questions the tactic advanced by feminist theories to convert gender to a center of foundational self. According to her, it is problematic to fix or circumscribe what "woman" is because if feminist theory does so, then it cannot distinguish its notion of women from "autonomous, rights-bearing fictional unity that liberalism promises to secure." In other words, if the subject is a creation of modernity and liberalism, then feminist theory in fact falls into the same camp with liberalism when it fails to challenge the historical constitution of the subject. It seems that Brown connects modernity and liberalism with "the unified subject," which is in contrast to the fact that pluralities are "unwieldy and shifting" (37) to such an extent that they cannot be pinned down. A derivation from these "unwieldy and shifting" pluralities is also illegitimate for individuals who are already justifiably settled in "their own habits and arguments" (37); thus any generalization that goes beyond those habits and arguments transgresses the boundary of "their own habits and arguments." Brown seems to use the term "plurality" in the same sense of "difference." For instance, she states that "politics refers always to a condition of

71

plurality and difference" (38), but sometimes she uses the term "plurality" as a

feature of postmodernity to contrast the "individuality" of modernity, which insists

on a coherent subject.

> Dispensing with the unified subject does not mean ceasing to be able to
> speak about our experiences as women, only that our words cannot be
> legitimately deployed or constructed as larger or longer than the moments of
> the lives they speak from; they cannot be anointed as "authentic" or "true"
> since the experience they announce is linguistically contained, socially
> constructed, discursively mediated, and never just individually "had." (40)

It is clear that Brown insists that only specific experiences count and therefore

generalizations from the particulars are illegitimate and impossible. Generalization

from specific experiences run the risk of reifying the diversified and lived

experiences.

1.2 Brown's Normative Position

The common political vision that Brown wants to popularize is the desire to struggle

for "what we want" or what "I want for us," hence this not an identity politics (49,

75). She asserts that the moral ground for identity, truth, and norms is more

problematic than useful because the identity and experiences of women are a

thoroughly contingent construction. She suggests detaching the political from the

moral goal and contesting for a "sheerly political" struggle (45).

> Surrendering epistemological foundations mean giving up the ground of
> specifically *moral* claims against domination—especially the avenging of
> strength through moral critique of it—and moving instead into the domain of
> the sheerly political: "wars of position" and amoral contests about the just
> and the good in which truth is always grasped as coterminous with power, as
> always already power, as the voice of power. (45, emphasis in original)

That is, observations such as women's experiences or confessions do not have

higher moral values than others and women's experiences are not devoid of power.

So Brown seems to reject both a women's identity and the idea of an ethical

standard that might be associated with it.

Then what should women do with their "past of injury"? Brown suggests

women learn "the virtues of 'forgetting'" because "identity structured in part by

ressentiment resubjugates itself through its investment in its own pain" (74). That

is, if feminists continue to construct identity politics, they are going to continue

investing in the pain that is associated with women's identity.

> What would be required for us to live and work politically without such myths [that women's experiences are more moral and less partial], without claiming that our knowledge is uncorrupted by a will of power, without insisting that our truths are less partial and more moral than "theirs"? Could we learn to contest domination with the strength of an alternative vision of collective life, rather than through moral reproach? In a word, could we develop a feminist politics without *ressentiment*? (46)

We can see that the alternative that Brown presents is a plan that is purely

political rather than being based on ontology, epistemology, or moral claims: We

should cultivate "feminist postmodern political spaces" and practice "postmodern

judgment" (50). According to Brown, these political spaces are not sharply bounded

or fixed but rather open to contestation and public arguments. Different from

judgments that rely on ontology or epistemology, postmodern judgments are

constructed in the public realm:

> Such judgments require learning how to have public conversations with each other, arguing from a vision about the common ("what I want for us") rather than from identity ("who I am"), and from explicitly postulated norms and potential common values rather than from false essentialism or unreconstructed private interests. (51)

That is, a political struggle in these postmodern spaces is the best approach for

eliminating oppression because of its detachment from subjectivity, identity,

73

morality, and normativity. In a sense, such a politics is a matter of power against power. Brown focuses on the shift from ontological claims ("am" or "being") to political ones ("wanting"). She believes that this is a "slight shift" from ontological claims to a political one, from fixed interests or experiences to desires in motion, and from "who I am" to "what I want for us." By requiring "what I want for us," we go beyond private interests of certain people, which are associated with self-interests in the liberal sense, to the potential common values of the public, because "what I want for us" is a desire for "a political or collective good" (75), which is different from the liberal expression of self-interest.

1.3 Critique of Brown's Critical Analysis

Brown seems to associate reliance on the metaphysical idea of the subject with an essentialist idea of women and of an identity specific to women. Her criticism of identity politics is questionable from three perspectives: (1) identity politics relies on truth claims; (2) the subject is individual in the liberal sense; and (3) constructing identity reinforces the injury of women. I will launch my critique from these perspectives.

First of all, Brown's criticism is groundless when she posits that feminist standpoint theory makes truth claims. It might be useful to look into specific feminist standpoint theorists who suggest we start our epistemological process from women's experiences. For instance, Sandra Harding argues that some social situations, namely the situations of the oppressed, are scientifically superior to others with respect to epistemic privilege. Harding asserts that the discursive accounts of women's lives "provide richer resources than others for understanding

natural and social worlds—that they are epistemically privileged in this sense"

(2004b, 260). Harding states that the goal of her project is to "study-up"; that is, to

"understand the conceptual practices of dominant institutions through which their

exploitation was designed, maintained, and made to seem natural and desirable to

everyone" (2004a, 29). That is, she means not only to start with but also go beyond

specific experiences of the marginalized to disclose structures of marginalization.

She proposes that new subjects of knowledge should be valued over subjects of

conventional knowledge. A characteristic of new subjects is the idea of "strong

reflexivity" (1993, 69). That is, the subject of knowledge is considered as part of the

object of knowledge. This leads to her discussion about objectivity, because strong

reflexivity is a resource for objectivity. However, Harding is not referring to truth

when she talks about maximizing objectivity; rather, she suggests the use of "less

false beliefs" instead of "truth" (2004b, 256). According to her, the benefits of using

"less false beliefs" is that it does not invoke the notions of Truth in the conventional

sense of the term, and it avoids the unassailable exclusiveness of being "the Truth",

or "the one true story." In fact, what strong objectivity addresses is not an

epistemological issue; rather, as Harding argues, it is a moral and political issue.

When we start off our thinking from the lives and experiences of the oppressed, we

implicitly acknowledge that we are beginning with an unrecognized and

unacknowledged reality. I do not think such moral claims should be interpreted as

truth claims as Brown argues.

  Second, Brown fails to distinguish the subject of feminist theory from the

unified subject of liberalism. The subject in feminist theory is not "a fictional unity,"

but rather a subject located and situated in the social context of power relations. There is a fallacy in Brown's refusal of "the subject": If a theory advocates "the subject," then it is no different from liberalism. Apparently, advocating the idea of the subject is not necessarily a manifestation of liberalism for the point is about whether the notion of the subject is reformulated to include experiences of underrepresented subjects to such an extent that the subject is more inclusive and representative, and not about whether we should not have a notion of the subject. Liberalism advocates an individualistic subject while feminist theorists such as Spelman and Crenshaw suggest that the notion of the subject be generalized from the concrete context where individuals are situated. As Lisa Schwartzman argues, liberalism focuses "primarily on each and every individual as an individual, rather than also calling attention to the social context and to the relations of power in which individuals live" (2006, 7). In other words, by focusing on individuals' self-interests and by ignoring the social context of power relations, the subject in liberalism is an individual as individual rather than an individual of a social group. On the contrary, the subject in feminism is a member of a social group, in this case, the social group of "women," which helps to reveal the fact that women are oppressed not as individual but as members of the social group "women."

Last, Brown mistakes the "injured" identity for women's nature. The identity is a site of inclusion rather than exclusion as Brown criticizes. She seems to say that speaking in terms of women only risks lapsing into a fixation on identity. However, women's identity is a much more diverse and dynamic concept than Brown speculates and constructing women's identity does not reinforce women's wounded

76

past. The question is determining what the best language for characterizing

women's oppression is and the demands that challenge it. According to Brown, in

order to cure the injury on identity, we need to avoid the notion of identity, but her

argument is not convincing: It is not because identity perpetuates the injury but

because concrete content—for instance, the past of injury— *is not* brought into the

discussion of identity. Brown makes use of Freud's theory to explain how the past

of injury is reinforced: A compulsion to repeat traumatic events from the past is

motivated by our desire to gain control over the event, but this compulsive

repetition maintains the power of the event over us by making it the organizing

focus of our actions and choices. Brown also makes use of Nietzsche's nihilism:

"Man" would rather will nothingness than will nothing at all, therefore those who

embrace their identity categories in fact prefer oppression to an annihilation. She

accepts Nietzsche and is questioning speaking "in the name of women," but neither

Freud's theory nor Nietzsche's is useful to capture the nature of feminist theories

and practices: Feminists theorize and act in the name of women in order to break

through the repetitive patriarchal power and to eliminate the oppression of women.

1.4 Critique of Brown's Normative Position

Brown is correct when she points out that *ressentiment* should not be the drive for

feminist practices and movements. It is true that there is rivalry even within the

feminist practices, for instance, the separation of Black feminism and White

feminism. Although this sort of rivalry is not really the same as the *ressentiment*

that Brown talks about, she nevertheless gives us a warning that *ressentiment* is not

a constructive force of feminist movements. However, Brown's normative

arguments are not without flaws. I will address three of them here.

First of all, Brown's proposal is that by detaching from an "injured" identity

and creating "feminist postmodern political spaces," a feminist politics that does not

rely on ontology, epistemology, and moral claims is the most promising approach

for feminism. It seems that Brown assumes that oppression is linked with women's

identity and if women throw off such an identity ("sites of injury") and cultivate

"postmodern political judgments," then they would gain emancipation. Or at least

she is saying that emphasizing identity is not the most effective way of challenging

oppression. Yet, her normative standing on the issue of oppression is built on a

misunderstanding of identity. For instance, she argues that we should not and

cannot go beyond specific experiences because "our words cannot be legitimately

deployed or constructed as larger or longer than the moments of the lives they

speak from" (40). This argument is rather unfruitful because by rejecting such an

approach of generalization as metaphysical, it is hard to find out what and how I

want such and such for us. In other words, if one wants to find out "what I want for

us," then one needs to figure out "who are us" and "why I want this for us." In

addition, it is not clear why Brown says "what *I* want for us" rather than "what *we*

want for us," which seems inconsistent with her statement of "developing political

conversation among a complex and diverse 'we'" (51). A "sheerly political" goal

needs to be backed up by purposes for certain groups of people, whose experiences

cannot just stay at the level of empirical experiences. Without the ontological and

epistemological support, too empirical an approach leads to illusions or mistakes.

78

By only focusing on the "not larger or longer than the moments" present, it is difficult to reveal that gender oppression still persists. For instance, individual women's emancipation does not reflect that women as a social group are emancipated.

Secondly, forgetting the past does not really contribute to the emancipation in the present and future. Brown misunderstands emancipation as the ability to be free from social identities and argues that we can never get away from our own victimization if we attach ourselves to social identities. But problems do not get solved by avoiding acknowledgement, examination, and analysis. The construction of women's identity does not have to be caught in a cycle of power that is maintained by a repetitive compulsion, which focuses on oppression rather than empowerment. It is politically wrong for Brown to assume that if women are oppressed, then their identities cannot even be imagined to be useful for progressive feminist politics. As a matter of fact, rather than sources of oppression, social identities are sources of empowerment. That is, having a coherent concept of woman in order to advance feminist demands is not a dangerous error. Women might be able to be more aware that some obstacles that they encounter have something to do with the fact that they are women. The feminist movement in 1950s and 1960s is a good example that a reflection on the wounded past can generate enormous drives and power toward women's emancipation. If feminists only focus on the "now" and the "present," as Brown suggests, then they might miss the connection between similar oppressive phenomena in which women are victims. That is, they might not be able to look at gender oppression in a macroscopic way.

79

Lastly, the postmodernist denial of the ontological possibility or its political justification on *a priori* grounds is unfruitful to feminist projects. Thinkers who characterize themselves as postmodernists often argue that social categories are fictional and it is impossible to construct a category of women because a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the category of women cannot be provided. The academic feminists' "postmodern turn," by engaging in rhetoric of anti-essentialism, is in part a flight from direct, interactive, and responsible engagement with ethical politics. Postmodern feminists' distance from the meaningful work of gender construction misleads feminist practices. As I read Brown, her attempt to detach "a wounded identity" from women's theories and practices might provide her a more comfortable intellectual terrain politically because she dissolves issues such as racial identity in the "sheerly political" struggle. Yet, postmodern feminists like Brown fail to turn feminist theories into sites for engaging interactions between women of dominating groups and women of subaltern groups. Indeed, the "sheerly political" struggle that Brown proposes seems to suggest avoiding active engagement with sound reality by avoiding identity politics, which are crucial for feminist projects. A postmodernist approach, say the focus on demands rather than identity as Brown argues, is unable to address the problems that came up in Chapter 1; that is, the gap between different groups of women, for instance, middle-class and poor, elite and subaltern. Some kind of binding identification is needed to link women from different social positions together. In this case, identity draws from shared, though not the same, experiences of oppression. Brown seems to claim that her view is based on experience rather than ontological and moral claims that can

become ideological.   However, experiences are not necessarily at odds with

ontological and moral norms in the way Brown suggests. For instance, a women's

identity does not solidify women's experiences or imply that women's experiences

have more moral values than those of others, but rather utilize women's

experiences to reveal gender oppression as a general social phenomenon.

Moreover, Brown's argument is not as postmetaphysical as she claims. It

seems that the "difference" or "plurality" that Brown talks about is more abstract

than the "difference" that Spelman and Crenshaw talk about in the previous chapter.

While Spelman and Crenshaw talk about differences among women's oppression,

which is an empirical observation, Brown seems to talk about a general and abstract

"difference," which is a metaphysical generalization of differences among women's

oppression. For instance, Brown states, "postidentity political positions and

conversations potentially replace a politics of difference with a politics of

diversity—difference grasped from a perspective larger than simply one point in an

ensemble"(51). Brown does not explicitly connect the term of "injury" to the theme

of women's oppression. Yet, it is clear that if women are "victims" of "injuries,"

these "injuries" must have something to do with gender oppression. In this sense,

Brown is concerned with the same issue as Spelman and Crenshaw are, but

obviously from a more metaphysical perspective though she is claiming to be

resolutely anti-metaphysical or postmetaphysical. However, by arguing that

diversity is larger than difference, Brown shows that she is in fact covertly

metaphysical by virtue of her mode of argumentation. It is not clear whether this

sort of aversion of identity has something to do with the assumed connection

between identity and overgeneralization. As I argued in Chapter 1, it seems that Spelman conflates the issue of women's identity with the issue of overgeneralization/essentialism. The relation between the issue of identity and the issue of overgeneralization is that it is the metaphysical and the empirical expressions of the same effort, that is, the effort to have a sweeping grasp of women as a whole. The idea of category and its relation to identity can be demonstrated as claiming a social category of women is equal to confirming that women have a collective identity.

So far, we have touched on various but connected themes, for instance, the issue of conceptualization, the problem of overgeneralization, the reliance on metaphysical assumptions, the need to test concepts by experience but not descend into empiricism. These themes are both intellectual points of reference and connect up with practical or political issues. In this regards, we are implicitly touching on how the project of solidarity both requires conceptual resources and needs some sense of interests, needs, values or identities that allow for a sense of the emergence of solidarity in the midst of its absence, and the relation between this emergence and our conceptualization of the oppressions linked to gender and other social relations. The idea of women as a group needs to be considered in a more flexible and non-metaphysical way. That is, if we think of women as a group, it does not necessarily mean the category of "women" is an abstract concept that ignores experiential differences among women. Marilyn Frye offers a fruitful way to construct a social category of women within differences among women, which I will explore in the next section.

2. Frye's Positive Category of Women

In the previous section, I presented Brown's denial of the necessity of the notion of "women," and I argued that Brown's alternative to women's identity is unfruitful because a sheerly political "us" is too indefinite to capture the collective gender oppression that women endure. In this section, I present Frye's critical analysis and normative views on the issue of gender categorization and I draw on her proposal of constructing a useful category of women by working differences into a structure.

2.1 Frye's Critical Analysis

It is proper to start the exposition of Frye's critical analysis with what Frye is trying to accomplish with the idea of a category of women.

> [I am] working to re-conceptualize social categories (or at least some kinds of social categories, identity categories) in such a way as to make some kind of "identity politics" both cognitively and politically intelligible. I have thought of the task as "re-metaphoring" or "re-imaging" what social categories are, in order to dissolve the category skepticism that has been expressed in feminist, queer and race theory, and to promote a pluralist ontological imaginations that can accommodate the multiplicity of identity. (2005b, 1)

As we can see, Frye's project directly addresses the skepticism of identity politics that I talked about in the previous section.

Frye argues that thinking of "women" as an Aristotelian species or defining "woman" as members of a set are unacceptable ways of conceptualizing women. According to her, Aristotle's idea of species has long been a paradigm case of category: Species are defined in an Aristotelian fashion "as a natural category delimited by a distinctive combination of innate traits that constitute the essence of each individual in the category" (1996, 997 n9). That is, if we follow the distinction

83

of species, all individuals will be sorted into discrete kinds. For instance, men and

women would be two species each with a distinctive combination of natural

features that are biologically determined. To define women as members in a set, on

the other hand, means that individual women share a set of properties or attributes,

which are the necessary and sufficient conditions of being members of the set. Frye

argues that the twin approaches of species and sets are two different examples—the

material and the abstract mode—of the same container image, in which social

categories are imagined as in a space with boundaries fixed by necessary and

sufficient conditions and as containing homogenous content within these

boundaries. Frye argues that the container logic encourages one to sort individuals

as members and nonmembers by going through the list of necessary and sufficient

conditions for membership.

> A metaphor that embodies the worst of both images, sets and species (even
> on a nonessentialist construal of species). Like the image of a species, it
> blocks thinking of one individual as a member of more than one category;
> like the image of a set, it locks in the picture of a fixed and fixing boundary.
> (2005a, 49-50)

Frye advocates a practice of pluralism in a logically positive category

construction, in which genuine pluralist subjectivities A:B displace the A/not-A

pseudo-dualism. In the dichotomy of categorization A/not-A, "what A is" is defined

by its negation "what A is not." This kind of duality is inappropriate because it

presumes that individuals who have a set of "A" properties are members of the

category A and casts the remainder into the not-A category. The A/not-A is pseudo-

dualism because they do not divide the world into two equal parts.

> When woman is defined as not-man, she is cast into the infinite
> undifferentiated plenum. The man/not-man dichotomy makes no

distinctions on the not-man side. This helps make it so "natural" to lump women indiscriminately with children in "women and children" and to cast "nature" (which is another name of not-man) as a woman and woman as nature. (1996, 1000)

Frye argues the A/not-A dualism is objectionable because it distorts the condition or make-up of women and it prevents women from being a category by lumping them with other not-man. She claims that plurality identity can be and should be conceptualized, but it should be categorized neither as species nor as set membership. Rather, it is a genuine pluralist categorization, in which the category is constructed positively in a logical sense because each subjectivity "A" or "B" is self-supporting and self-defining rather than being constructed by contrast with its negation as what happens in A/not-A. Because a category is constructed not against its negation but rather in a self-supporting way, Frye labels it "a positive category," in which "positive" is defined in a logical sense instead of an ethical sense. In the positive categorization, what makes a category discrete in the otherwise undifferentiated space and what makes A as A is not essential sameness or attributes, but rather a principle of coherence or a structure. According to Frye, structure is a set of relations that stand between individuals, who are different from each other in a substantial way.

> It is the presence of internal structure that establishes the setting off of a thing or a sort of thing (a category) from its environment. *Structure* is a set of relations, and *relations* stand between differentiated individuals. Structure requires that the things structured are not all alike; it also gives salience to some features and aspects of the things it structures. It gives differential significance to different properties and relations of the things it structures. (1996, 1001 emphasis in original)

That is to say, a category is constructed by working differences into structure, rather than sorting things according to a list of properties and attributes. The structure

requires that the elements that it arranges be in a significant variety of relations with each other and that they have internal complexity, thus difference of any specific kind is preserved and organized.

Frye argues that her idea of structure offers a way of conceptualizing women that neither relies on the idea of an essence nor ignores significant differences among women. She argues that having an internal structure as necessary for a category does not imply that the category is an essence. According to her, both essentialism and anti-essentialism work within the same logic—the logic of the container. The reasoning of anti-essentialism runs like this: A category is equal to a set of attributes; therefore it is equal to an essence. If a category of women is constructed by a set of attributes shared by all and only the members of the category, that is, an essence, then it makes sense to take the stance of anti-essentialism. Frye also claims that a category of women does not ignore differences among women. In other words, commonalities, likeness, and sameness among women are not what construct women's identity. According to her, the logic of difference works like this: If there were no difference, then there would be no structure for differences; if there were no structure, then there would be no category. That is, differences and structures are central to category construction. In Frye's words, the construction of a positive category of women is one of the varieties of "the practice of differences" (1996, 1007). The A/not-A pseudo-dichotomy makes it difficult to understand how an individual can be a member of more than one category simultaneously. For instance, category construction involving both gender and race turns out to be difficult, but Frye's solution is that

86

the category of women should be demonstrated by images such as individual women located in "a correlational density in a multidimensional quality space" (2005a, 46). That is, the category of women is constructed through multilayered correlations. In a sense, this is a matter of overlapping clusters of similarities and differences among women. The positive category of women does not have built-in exclusivity or closure against other identity categories, so it does not preclude self-constructive involvement in others. For instance, gender can be conceived around social dimensions such as race, class, and culture.

2.2 Frye's Normative Position

Frye argues that feminist responses to the "problem of difference," such as postmodernist gender skepticism, produces numerous theoretical constructs based on a misleading set-rhetoric, which assumes that individuals who have a set of properties are members of a category, thus distracting feminists from generating and operating women-focused practices and projects. She argues that the immediate attention and research energy of feminism should be spent on liberating our conceptions of categories from the confines of the container metaphor rather than on anti-essentialism.

Frye argues that gender itself is an extremely important category of analysis and that plural and curdled identities are effective locations for formulating feminist political solidarity and coalitions. According to her, defining "woman" does not necessarily commit one to essentialism. Frye defines essences as such:

> The world is ultimately constituted of entities each of which exists independently of all others: for instance, Plato's Forms, Aristotle's individual substances. ...Each such entity has a distinctive identity:....it is what it is in

virtue of one of more intrinsic, innate, structured-in or inborn properties (like rationality and animality), which are its Essence. (2005a, 48)

According to this definition, essences are what make things what they are. But Frye states that there are no essences and essentialism is false rather than problematic. She argues that feminist theoretical and political efforts, such as constructing falsely unitary pictures of identities, creating social categories that operate as the normative construct, or constructing categories to give some politically dominant group paradigmatic status, produce problematic generalization rather than make a commitment to an essence.

> A good deal of discussion about sexist, racist, or ethnocentric constructions of human and of woman uses the vocabulary of "center" and "margin." I am suggesting here that it is useful at least for some purposes to think of this "centering" and "marginalizing" as someone constructing the category of humans or persons as a paradigm-case category, with him- or herself and a small number of folk s/he identifies with located as the paradigm case governing the category. (2005a, 58 n10)

Frye argues that critics of essentialism often conflate essentialism with ethnocentrism. What she means is that feminists who argue in ways that others criticize as essentialist, such as Spelman criticizing Friedan as essentialist, are really criticizing them for being ethnocentric; that is, Friedan is ethnocentric rather than essentialist. Frye defines "ethnocentrism":

> [W]hat is wrong in some of the cases of problematic generalization to be found in some feminist theorizing is that the theorist has situated herself, or her family, or her culture as a paradigm case that structures a paradigm-case type of category. I am inclined to think that this kind of construction is central to much of the thought and perception that we call "ethnocentric."...But it is *not* essentialism. (2005a, 51 emphasis in original)

According to Frye, "essentialism" (whose meaning varies depending on who is using it) is not the problem, but ethnocentrism is. For instance, when Friedan argues that

the solution to women's oppression is to seek an identity through professional

work, she is actually making an ethnocentric argument, taking the situation of

women like hers as the paradigm case of all women. In other words, Friedan is not

claiming that staying at home or working outside the house is the essence of

women, but rather she is taking her experiences as the paradigm case of all women.

However, it is legitimate for disadvantaged women, African American women for

instance, to claim the center stage. Yet, Frye does not specify whether African

American women make their experiences the paradigm case in this case.

2.3 Assessing Frye's Critical Analysis

I argue that Frye's proposal addresses concerns of feminists who engage in the

"difference critique," and in particular, their concerns about essentialism. Brown

worries that feminist identity politics is derived from a politically, if not

ontologically, essentialist foundation, but I argue that the charge of essentialism is

misleading and thus unfruitful for feminist projects. A feminist category of women

can be free from the essentialist charge and capture both the variability and the

dynamics of women.

Frye is right to argue for a positive category construction. Her proposal of

constructing pluralist subjectivities in "the practice of differences" addresses

concerns with which feminists are engaged when they launch the "difference

critique." The feminist philosophers that I have discussed to this point in Part One

are all concerned with how feminists should find a way to talk about differences

among women. Frye's proposal emphasizes the particularity of different contexts

that women inhabit, which is a point that Spelman and Crenshaw bring to our

attention. We can generalize about women without claiming an essence for them. It is theoretically misleading and unnecessary to dismiss all generalization and categorization as essentializing. Frye's construction of a positive category of women offers an example of how the concept of women depicts the variability of women's oppressions and allows for the fluidity of women's identity and therefore helps to make change in the conditions of women imaginable. That is, it is possible to generate a notion of gender that would be a general concept, yet not susceptible to what people find problematic when they label positions as "essentialist." Rather than thinking about essences of women, we might think of gender as a structure of oppression that has general features that take very different forms in different cultures and societies. Some may wonder what is built into the "structure" of gender relations and argue that there is a latent essentialism there. However, according to Frye, what is built into structure are differences and essence simply does not exist. That is, essentialism is a false accusation.

Frye argues that plurality identity should not be categorized as set membership. Some may ask whether there are no respects on which we can speak of all women sharing certain distinctive characteristics. For instance, women who endure specific kinds of patriarchal oppression, such as relegation of women to housework, economic dependency, exclusion from politics, etc., seem to share some characteristics. Frye might argue that women do not endure these kinds of oppression in substantially different ways, so these kinds of oppression do not count as distinctive characteristics of women; that is, they are not a set of characteristics that women are required to have in order to be identified as women.

Frye's proposal also shows that it is intellectually misleading to insist that feminists

should give up the category of gender, the intellectual grounding for feminist

theories and practices (as Brown argues). That is, it is theoretically unhelpful to

automatically dismiss any generalization and categorization as essentializing. Frye's

construction of a positive category of women is an example of how the fallacy

associated with essentialism is corrected and offers a way to generalize women.

That is, a concept of women should not be based on the traditional concept of

essence because the oppression of women manifests itself in such varied forms that

no single concept grasps the various oppressions that all women experience. So this

indicates what is problematic about generalization is that it is difficult to consider

all possible situations in the generalization.

While Frye states, "women are oppressed, *as women*"(1983, 16, emphasis in

original), Spelman thinks phrases such as "as women" ignore or obscure differences

among women. However, it is theoretically incorrect to suspect any systematic

marking of difference or any generalization being "exclusive" and "essentialist." It is

incorrect to assume that categorizing, *per se*, is essentializing. The "problem of

difference," which is depicted as a battle against essentialism, seems to have a two-

sided aspect: On the one hand, oppression cannot be discussed without the

normative discussion of its background; on the other hand, thinking of category as

an Aristotelian essence or a set membership constrains some feminists from

category construction. Yet, one can be against category in general or against the

specific claim that there is some categorization improper to women. In the debates

over essentialism, these two distinctive views are criticized without a clear

distinction, thus some useful feminist theories are criticized rashly. It is unhelpful

that some claims confine feminist discussions to issues that are perceived as

common to all women independent of culture and class. Essentialism seeks a

universalism, where standards of justification, moral principles or truth are said to

be universal regardless of culture and class, without awareness of its limitations.

However, it is also unhelpful that feminists relinquish the category of gender, which

is the intellectual grounding for feminist theories and practices, or simply use it

strategically. The claim that "women are oppressed in different forms" is not in

conflict with the claim that "there is a category of women." In other words, a

category of women is necessary for feminist projects and it is not essentialist to use

such a category.

The oppressions suffered by different women should be described as

intermeshed or enmeshed to capture the inseparability of one oppressive factor

from another. This inseparable structure of oppression makes it necessary for

feminists to build a structural resistance to oppression. A structural resistance to

gender oppression requires theoretical tools and practical goals. On the one hand,

the category of women is crucial for creating such a structural resistance because

(1) women are oppressed *as women* and it is important to be able to theorize what

"as women" means even when they are oppressed in different ways; (2) women's

oppression is endured collectively rather than individually even if it takes

distinctive forms. On the other hand, the category of women is crucial for creating

such a structural resistance because women need to be aware that only when they

unify *as women* can they resist women's oppression *as women* despite their race,

class, and cultural differences. Here, the "structure" in terms of oppression and resistance refers to the gender relation. In this sense, the feminist movement needs solidarity, which points out how change in women's situations is possible with the consideration of the social structures of power relations.

2.4 Assessing Frye's Normative Positions

According to Frye, problematic generalization is due to ethnocentrism instead of essentialism. However, the issue here is not the motivating force of the error— ethnocentrism— but rather it is an issue either why it is inaccurate to characterize all generalizations as essentialism or why it is problematic to reject generalizations about women. One might wonder why the real problem in the instances that are the focus of the "difference critique" is ethnocentrism (as Frye argues) rather than essentialism or some other strictly intellectual error. I will examine the relationship between essentialism and ethnocentrism by further exploring why the issue of essentialism is so pervasive in the feminist "difference critique." In addition, I will argue that Frye's proposal for constructing a positive category of women within differences among women would provide theoretical support to prove why the collaboration of women from different backgrounds is both necessary and possible.

      There are two problems with ethnocentric perspectives: (1) One is that it is narrow-minded in regards to the concept of women and it displays an inability or lack of incentive to relate beyond one's ethnicity; and (2) the other assumes the generalization of situations of a similar ethnicity would apply to all women. Why do critics of essentialism conflate essentialism with ethnocentrism? Namely, why does the antiessentialist critique take the form of accusing some feminists of believing in

essence while what these feminists actually do privileges the experience of some women over that of other women? Why is it damaging for feminists to focus on essentialism rather than ethnocentrism? Here we may face more of a practical issue rather than one of metaphysics, though, at the same time, there seems to be the claim that the mistaken views condemned as essentialist still need not only to be dropped but to be replaced by different theoretical approaches at a comparable level of generality. Maybe the anti-essentialist argument does not "conflate" essentialism and ethnocentrism, but instead it is affected by ethnocentric assumptions; that is, the anti-essentialist argument is in fact anti-ethnocentric. In other words, charging an argument as essentialist does not make it less ethnocentric. So "essentialism" and "ethnocentrism" are not two different positions that are being confused in the mind of those who challenge them, but it is the source of political validity to make an ethnocentric statement posing as essentialist that is being conflated. That is to say, ethnocentrism may be expressed in a view that is (mistakenly) criticized as essentialist and the recourse to the position that is labeled "essentialist" is adopted (or motivated) by an ethnocentric bias, which the person may not be aware of, or would even deny having. It is true that imputing an essence of women may serve a view whose most significant flaw is ethnocentrism, but saying one's view is ethnocentric does not necessarily imply that essence is or is not acceptable.

Antiessentialist feminist critics do not specify what they mean by "essence," so I take them to mean that they *assume* having cultural biases has something to do with feminist "essentialism." For instance, Friedan can be accused of looking at

women through the lens of a White middle-class suburban culture in the U.S. in the 1950s. Namely, along the line of the "essentialist" accusation, ethnocentrism can be suspected as the essence of the Western culture. There are two possible interpretations for this assumption: (1) What anti-essentialism argues against is ethnocentrism or essentialism, which implies that essentialism and ethnocentrism is the same thing; or (2) they simply mistake cultural bias for essence. When Frye argues that a person who thinks in terms of Aristotelian category or sets is making an intellectual error and that there is a better way of generalizing about women, she is not arguing that one is ethnocentric *because* one is applying the notion of essence; rather, she is arguing that those who are accused of being essentialists are actually committing ethnocentrism. So the debates over essentialism are centered upon a misunderstanding, which mistakes "what essence is" for the real problem with the charged "essentialist" position. As a result, the cultural bias of a subset of feminists, i.e., White middle-class feminists, is mistaken as claiming an essence for women. The point of claiming that essentialist thinking is really the expression of ethnocentric bias, such as Frye argues, is to say that those who speak of "essentialism" are not really putting their finger on the key problem. It might be true that the feminist philosophers who are accused of essentialism use some implicit idea of an essence of women when stating their narrow views, but the real problem is not intellectual so much as motivational/ideological—the real problem is that they are not opening up to the complexity, diversity, and dynamics of women. Doing so requires that a different kind of conceptualization take place, but the

precondition for that is not so much strictly intellectual as it is a matter of critical self-awareness and openness.

However, we should not overlook the role that essence plays in ethnocentrism, which remains unaddressed in most anti-essentialist critiques. That is, they do not explain why it is a fallacy to think that women have an essence. It is intellectually inadequate for these critics to use concepts without properly explaining them due to the confusion that these concepts cause. As a matter of fact, the reason that the traditional concept of essence commits a fallacy when it is applied to the concept of women is that an essence cannot grasp the fact that (1) women have variability (they have different experiences and problems) and their oppressions take different forms; and (2) that women are dynamic (their situations are fluid and changing) and have the potential to change. Arguments such as Frye's attempt to agree that the anti-essentialists have a point, but also insist that some generalizing concepts about women are feasible and desirable.

Frye's proposal for constructing a positive category of women reveals the connection between category and power in a way of exercising of power-with, rather than a way of exercising of power-over in the universal dichotomous category construction. It is important to recognize that it is the exclusive dichotomy rather than differences that splits the category of women into fragments. Brown suggests a shift from ontological arguments to political claims as if once claimed as political, a project automatically accommodates differences and is thus collective. As a matter of fact, ontological arguments and political claims can coexist: Making ontological arguments does not mean these arguments are anti-political. Similarly,

claiming something to be political does not guarantee that it is collective. Yet, when feminists theorize, they should keep political goals in mind. The construction of a logically positive category of women as a way to think outside of the container logic has a politically constructive impact on feminist practices because if differences and differentiation are logically necessary for the category construction, then they must be necessary for women's collective activities. In other words, women are in collaboration with each other not because they are the same, but rather because they are different with respect to their experiences of gender oppression.

Antiessentialist arguments such as gender skepticism that Brown makes do not help us understand how such solidarity is possible. That is, these arguments do not grasp the sense of a common locus of oppression when it takes different forms. It is frustrating that feminism focuses on the discourse of difference but lacks a substantial discussion of women's solidarity. The fact that the idea of "global sisterhood" does not actually contribute to women's solidarity does not mean that women's solidarity is not needed or politically vacuous. A more fruitful idea of women's solidarity should be developed using proper ways of gender identity construction although one needs to acknowledge practical as well as theoretical obstacles. That is, the normative discussion of women should utilize generalization to address and challenge the structural power relations of women's oppression rather than denying the category of women. In other words, criticism of sexism requires generalization that is otherwise blocked by the "anti-essentialist" thought. The "difference critique" distracts feminists from collective consideration of women's solidarity; in particular, anti-essentialism contributes to political

fragmentation. Both women's oppression and resistance are structural and collective, so it is important to recognize the collective political goals among specific political aspirations.

Having a properly constructed category of women would greatly help the definition of women's collective political goals. Yet, such a category is not possible without including women's oppression as part of it. This connection is the link of the two themes—the theme of women's identity, which I address in this chapter and the theme of women's oppression in different forms, which I addressed in the previous chapter. When the category of women is explicitly constructed in feminist theory and consciously used in feminist movements, the race issue is raised because the category of women threatens White women's racial bond with White men. The tension between White feminists and feminists of color would be eased when they have collective political goals. White feminists should stop unhealthy self-criticism, which repeats familiar faultfinding arguments without creating space for the recognition of common interests and the development of respectful alliances. A practical question that needs to be noted is that certain kinds of privilege do not rule out oppression, though they may inhibit solidarity. When White feminists persistently point out that they have placed themselves at the center of feminist theories, they paradoxically reinforce that position. When Black feminists claim that Black women should take the center stage, they replicate the same phenomenon they want to decry. Instead, both groups should focus on collective theorization and political projects, rather than criticizing essentialism.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have critically examined a style of feminist anti-essentialist responses to the "problem of difference"—postmodernist gender skepticism— and I have argued against it because it denies the possibility of gender categorization. Gender skepticism arose as a response to the "problem of difference" among the debates over essentialism. It questioned the normative standpoint that early second wave feminists developed for criticizing and challenging the existing oppression of women. As a "difference critique," gender skepticism has a theoretical and a political legacy for feminism, but it also has its flaws. By presenting Frye's approach to address the dynamic relationship between differences among women and the category of women, I argued that Frye offers a fruitful approach to demonstrate that the dichotomy between generality and particularity is false. In other words, through criticizing Brown's version of gender skepticism, this chapter aims to accomplish the following three tasks: (1) Gender skepticism is groundless because its skepticism of the "essentialist foundation" of feminist identity politics does not threaten the possibility of the category of women; (2) whether there is an essence or not is irrelevant to the fact that we can and should construct the category of women, which embodies differences within women and the possibility and the dynamics of what women can be in the future; and (3) the category of women is helpful for feminists to think about all forms of women's collaboration.

I concluded that non-ethnocentric category construction is crucial for women's solidarity across cultural differences because the category of women discloses the power structure of both gender oppression and resistance that is

prevalent in various cultures. One may ask what is universal about gender across cultures. Though specific oppressions differ in different societies, we can nonetheless speak of a universal structure of oppression, for instance, the general tendency towards male dominance, unequal distribution of resources and capacities, divisions of labor, etc. It is not that women or men have an essence that determines this universal structure of oppression, but that there is a persisting structure of relations between the genders. That is, societies are always structured in part through gender divisions that involve disparities and conflicts of these kinds.

Part One Conclusion

In this part, I presented the rise of the "problem of difference" and critically examined two approaches addressing differences among women and the category of women: The "particularity argument" and gender skepticism. These two approaches are among the feminist efforts to cure the "essentialism" in feminism. I argued that essentialism is the wrong target for feminist critiques; rather, false generalizations (and the ethnocentric attitudes involved in false generalizations) are what make some feminists assume that constructing the category of women is an essentialist act. I concluded that if the problem of essentialism is the danger of working with fixed ideas of what women are or can be, and then we can avoid this without surrendering general ideas about the oppression of women. To speak of a general structure of relations inherent in the gender division of societies is not to say that all societies embody these relations in the same way. In this sense, Frye's approach to constructing a category of women without surrendering differences among women is a good example of how gender can be categorized.

The antiessentialist arguments bring into play a number of ways of thinking about differences. With its inherent complexity, it is important to recognize that gender categorization could be culturally bounded. That is, when the category of women is constructed, differences among women could be considered as a product of a specific culture. For instance, Friedan's categorization is closely related to the American culture in the 1950s, even though gender oppression is not specific to that culture and takes different forms in various cultures. Thinking of differences in terms of culture would better capture the intermeshedness of categories because

culture itself is an intermeshed reality. However, by saying that categorization is culturally bounded, I do not mean that categorization is culturally relative because gender is not a culturally contingent conception. Neither does gender run independently of cultural practices because the gender dimension is complicated by culture. The concept of gender is not stable or fixed, but neither is it fluid in a postmodernist way. In this dissertation, I deal with cultural difference while realizing there is complicated ambiguity of the interplay of gender, class, race, and culture. One of the key things to acknowledge is that although I am aware of all the issues, culture defined as socially shared values and historically formed identities include racial, national, ethnical differences. Racial differences, which are pronounced in the United States, are theoretically included in the definition of cultural differences.

After battling with the misunderstandings and confusions about essentialism and anti-essentialism and gaining a clear idea that a category of women is necessary and possible, we need to know how to contribute to the collaboration of women in a non-oppressive pursuit among cultural differences. Multiculturalism offers a conceptual framework in an effort to make cultural differences salient, protect the right of minority cultural groups, and preserve cultural diversity or culturally embedded differences, however, I will criticize multiculturalism and provide an alternative to the multicultural approach in Part Two.

PART TWO: FROM MULTICULTURALISM TO TRANSCULTURALISM

Introduction to Part Two

In Part One, I argued that the concept of women can be generalized and that it should grasp both the variability inherent to women's varied life and the dynamics and theoretical possibilities for women. That is, a concept of gender as a structure of analyzing oppression is consistent with the cultural and class variability. In this part, I will conduct a parallel argument about culture. I will address the divide of feminism along the line of cultural differences and critically examine multiculturalism. There are two aspects from which I critique multiculturalism in this part: One aspect criticizes the misunderstanding of culture as a self-contained entity, such as the view held by the liberal defenders and the critics of multiculturalism; the other aspect criticizes the misunderstanding of culture through the utilization of an ethnocentric lens, which was initiated by postcolonial feminist adherents. Both critiques point to the fact that multiculturalism fails to provide an effective way to contribute to a constructionist concept of culture and genuine cultural communication. I argue that multiculturalism is an unsuccessful "difference critique" because: (1) It relies on a problematic account of culture; and (2) it fails to assist the communication among cultures and therefore it does not contribute to solidarity. I argue that something beyond the multiculturalist notion is needed and that transculturalism is a promising alternative to multiculturalism. I propose that feminism needs a framework transition from multiculturalism to transculturalism for two reasons: (1) Feminism needs the transition of framework to accommodate a reconstructed concept of culture because multiculturalism as a

framework would fall apart if the problematic concept of culture, which is the key concept of multiculturalism, is reconstructed; and (2) feminism needs a new framework to foster women's cross-cultural solidarity.

Part Two is divided into three chapters. Chapter 3 starts with a strategy for avoiding an ethnocentric narrowness, namely the idea of multiculturalism developed by important liberal thinkers. I then present and challenge a liberal feminist criticism of such multiculturalism by pointing out the problematic treatment of culture as a self-contained entity, a view held by both the liberal defenders and the critics of multiculturalism. Chapter 4 assesses the postcolonial critique of multiculturalism by pointing out both its failure to break free from the multiculturalism framework and its fruitful proposal for fostering dialogue among women. I argue that although they have merits, both the liberal feminist critique and the postcolonial feminist critique are unfruitful strategies for addressing differences among women because they both fail to avoid thinking about cultural differences in a way that is multicultural. They (1) fail to grasp the complexity and variability of cultures, thus failing to grasp the potential interconnection between cultures; or (2) fail to explicitly suggest going beyond multiculturalism. I conclude this chapter by proposing a shift from multiculturalism to an alternative. In Chapter 5, I specify that the alternative to multiculturalism is transculturalism. After presenting what transculturalism is, I argue that transculturalism is more favorable than multiculturalism. I then explain to what extent feminists have adopted the transcultural perspective, by which I demonstrate that the transcultural theme is visible in feminist theories. I argue that the concept of transculturalism needs to be

104

transformed to adopt a category of women to suit a feminist agenda. Finally, I

specify the advantages and limitations of feminist transcultural perspective and

conclude that despite its limitations, a feminist transcultural perspective is

beneficial for forging women's solidarity in overcoming gender oppression among

other forms of oppression.

CHAPTER 3

**RECONCEPTUALIZING "CULTURE": ASSESSING THE DEBATE ABOUT
MULTICULTURALISM AND FEMINISM**

Multiculturalism is a vague term, which can refer to various approaches discussing

cultural diversity, or very literally, multiple numbers of cultures. While

multiculturalism has been used as an umbrella term to characterize the moral and

political claims of a wide range of disadvantaged groups in political theory, some

liberal theorists focus their arguments on "group differential rights" (for instance,

see Kymlicka 1995,1989 and Okin 2005, 1999, 1998). That is, multiculturalism

often refers to minority groups who demand recognition of their identity and

accommodation of their cultural differences. Discussions of cultural diversity have

largely taken place in a dominantly liberal context, so I narrow my discussion to the

liberal multiculturalism of Will Kymlicka and his liberal critic Susan Okin. In this

chapter, I will present a debate about multiculturalism between Kymlicka and Okin.

I argue that they both rely on a problematic understanding of cultures as self-

contained entities. As an alternative, I propose reconceptualizing "culture" using a

fluid concept of culture as internally contested and diversified to point out that

feminists should avoid the multicultural approach. I also argue that this

constructionist concept of culture is consistent with the conceptualization of women

that I attribute to Marilyn Frye in Part One.

    I start the discussion by first presenting what I mean by "culture." I then lay

out Kymlicka's definitions of culture and multiculturalism before I state Kymlicka's

account of liberal multiculturalism, and lastly I turn to Okin's definitions of culture

and multiculturalism and her account of tensions between feminism and multiculturalism. I criticize the problematic account of culture in Okin, who regards cultures as static, self-contained, and well-integrated entities. I propose that the concept of culture, as a self-contained entity, should be reconceptualized with cultural interdependence and communication in mind. The transformed concept of culture leads to an examination of the limitations of the multicultural approach. I conclude that multiculturalism should be discarded because: (1) It relies on a problematic account of culture; and (2) it can lead to separateness and divisiveness among feminists—the opposite of feminist solidarity.

1. The Notion of Culture

The term "culture" is an extremely complex notion partly because it went through complicated historical development and is used differently in various disciplines and thought systems. We often talk about cultures such as the American culture, the Chinese culture, or multiculturalism without scrutinizing what we mean by "culture" partly because "culture" seems a self-evident notion. Since culture is a key term in this chapter, in this section, I present briefly what "culture' means to me and what I take to be at issue when scholars are talking about cultures. By setting up my explanation of culture early on in this chapter, I intend to compare my understanding of culture with scholars who address cultures in Part Two.

There are at least three interrelated senses of the notion "culture": Culture as background, as resources, and as shaping capacities. I will specify the three functions of culture respectively: (1) Culture as a general background to social

experiences and as embodied in the practices of specific institutions: Culture

articulates and sustains the values, identities, sensibilities, motivations, practices of

child rearing and education, etc. that are distinctive of a given society or

subsocieties; (2) Culture as a process by which people emerge within specific

societies as agents oriented to values, meaning, possessing identities, internalizing

rules and capacities. That is, culture provides resources for corporate development

of people as an agent; and (3) Culture as shaping capacities that provide resources

for individual development, i.e. for the individual, culture as resource that is

internalized through personality formation and ongoing social life. Sociological

ideas of social integration into lifeworlds (all the immediate experiences, activities,

and contacts that make up the world of an individual or corporate life) are

contrasted with system integration and participation in formal institutional

structures.

Culture, politics, and economics are interdependent. When we compare

different types of societies, issues of institutional differentiation are important

because cultures are in relation to meaning, value structure, etc. as well as in

relation to the corresponding articulation of women's accepted social roles, etc. For

instance, in various types of societies, women's social roles might be different.

Culture consists of social factors such as gender, race, and class: These social factors

are mediated through culture, so it is more effective to talk about differences among

women in terms of cultural differences than addressing various social differences

separately or intersectionally.[6] What is at issue here is that culture can be defined

as a comprehensive concept, in which gender differences, racial differences, and class differences are all addressed.

According to William Sewell (1999), the term "culture" has two meanings: one is culture as an abstract category of social life and the other is culture as a concrete and bounded body of beliefs and practices. Culture in the first sense is singular, which is normally contrasted to other abstract categories of social life, such as economy and politics. Culture in the second sense is pluralizable, which represents distinctive worlds of meaning and is normally in contrast with another culture, for instance, "American culture" and "Chinese culture." The distinction between an abstract and singular sense of culture and a concrete and pluralizable sense of culture is meaningful because when we say that cultures are connected with politics and economies, we use the term "culture" in the first sense (although we tend to use "culture" in this sense in a pluralizable form), while when we say that American culture is a melting pot culture, we use the term "culture" in the second sense.

There are two models of culture: the classic model and the transformed model.[7] The classic model sees the concept of cultures as coherent and distinct entities while the transformed model sees the concept of cultures as fluid. The classic model is based on the assumption that cultures are logically consistent, highly integrated, consensual, resistant to change, and clearly bounded. On the contrary, the transformed model is based on the assumption that cultures are contradictory, loosely integrated, contested, subject to constant change, and weakly

bounded. Tony Bennett (2005) explains the shift from the classic model to the

transformed one:

> [A] move away from the view that cultures can be described as fixed and separate entities. The terms cultural hybridity, cultural flows, transculturation, cross-cultural dialogue, and cultural in-betweenness thus all draw attention to the fluidity and impermanence of cultural distinctions and relationships. The change of emphasis that is involved here is best captured by the shift from speaking of different cultures to a stress on cultures in difference, with the implication that cultural activities are caught up in processes of differing rather than being simply different from the outset. The emphasis on processes of racializing or ethnicizing culture points in the same direction. (2005, 68)

That is, the transformed concept of culture is in close relation with the term

"difference" and the dynamic and fluidity of the concept of culture is crucial to grasp

ideas such as "transculturation" and "cross-cultural dialogue."

2. Kymlicka's Definitions of Culture and Multiculturalism

In this section, I will present the analytical claims offered by Kymlicka regarding

culture and multicultural conditions. Kymlicka uses "a culture" in a sense that is

neither overly restrictive nor too broad. To him, culture does not refer to the

narrow sense of culture—the distinct customs, perspectives, or ethos of a group or

association—for instance, a "gay culture." Neither does "culture" refer to the broad

sense of culture—the "customs" or "civilization" of a group or people—for instance,

the "Western modern culture." Kymlicka's definition of "culture" is as follows:

> I am using culture (and "multicultural") in a different sense. My focus will be on the sort of "multiculturalism" which arises from national and ethnic differences. As I said earlier, I am using "a culture" as synonymous with "a nation" or "a people"—that is, as an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history. And a state is multicultural if its members either belong to different nations (a multination state), or have

emigrated from different nations (a polyethnic state), and if this fact is an important aspect of personal identity and political life. (1995, 18)

The kind of culture that Kymlicka focuses on is "a societal culture," which involves not just shared memories or values, but also common institutions and practices. Kymlicka states that the world contains various societal cultures. A societal culture is "a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres. These cultures tend to be territorially concentrated, and based on a shared language" (1995, 76). That is, societal cultures refer to all practices and institutions that exist in public and private human activities. In particular, a shared language and history is crucial to a societal culture. Societal culture is centered on a shared language, but a shared language is necessary rather than a sufficient condition for a societal culture. That is to say, members of a societal culture shared the same language, but it does not lead to the conclusion that people who share the same language belong to the same societal culture.[8] A societal culture typically aligns with a national territory. For instance, there is not a single culture in the United States, but there is a dominant common societal culture based on the English language that incorporates the majority of Americans, with the rest belonging to a small number of minority cultures of immigrants and national minorities.

Going along with his definition of culture, Kymlicka distinguishes two main forms of cultural pluralism: "multinational" and "polyethnic" (1995). He uses the terms "national" and "ethnic" to refer to a group's mode of incorporation into a

larger society, not its level of political mobilization. In "national minorities," the first

form of cultural diversity, previously self-governing, territorially concentrated

cultures are incorporated into a larger state. For instance, the Canadian

government's "multiculturalism" policy is to support polyethnicity within the

national institutions of the English and French culture. In "ethnic groups," the

second form of cultural diversity, individual and familial immigrants wish to

integrate into the larger society and to be accepted as full members of it. Here,

"ethnic group" does not refer to national minorities who do not have political

privileges but rather refers to immigrant groups. According to Kymlicka, a state that

is multicultural depends on two conditions: The first condition is that its members

either belong to different nations (a multinational state) or have immigrated from

different nations (a polyethnic state); the second condition is that such belonging

and immigration is an important aspect of personal identity and political life.

Kymlicka points out that "multiculturalism" refers to different things in

different countries. Whereas in the United States, the term "multiculturalism" is

often used to include the demands of marginalized social groups who are excluded

or marginalized from the mainstream of society, in Canada it normally refers to the

right of immigrants. Although he acknowledges the importance of social

movements such as feminism, Kymlicka excludes these social movements from his

discussion of multiculturalism. He explains that the disadvantaged such as women,

gays and lesbians, and the disabled do not form distinct "cultures" or "subcultures,"

so their demands against their marginalization are not struggles for

multiculturalism. Instead, the oppression of these social groups is pervasive despite

of ethnic and national differences. He argues that the claims of the disadvantaged

are compatible with the claims of cultural minorities. That is to say, two distinctions

need to be made in the understanding of the term "multiculturalism": One is the

distinction between national minorities, which have distinct and potentially self-

governing societies that are incorporated into a larger state, and ethnic groups,

which constitute immigrants who have left their national community to enter

another society; the other distinction is between these cultural differences and

social movements initiated by the marginalized such as gays, women, the poor, and

the disabled.

3. Kymlicka's Defense of Liberal Multiculturalism

In the previous section, I presented definitions offered by Kymlicka regarding

culture and multicultural conditions. In this section, I will turn to the normative

side of his discussion of multiculturalism.

Kymlicka develops a theory of multiculturalism that emphasizes the liberal

values of autonomy and equality (2007, 1995, 1989). He makes the egalitarian

claim that members of minority groups are entitled to special protections because

they are disadvantaged in terms of access to their own cultures compared to

members of the majority culture. According to him, in a liberal multicultural society,

there are certain non-subsistence resources that should be available to everyone

and cultural membership is one such resource that everyone is entitled to;

therefore, there is a need to defend minority cultures. Kymlicka makes four points

in his defense of liberal multiculturalism: (1) Cultural membership is a primary

good that everyone is entitled to for the purpose of promoting self-esteem and self-respect; (2) autonomy and freedom are the basic principles of liberalism; (3) individual freedom is tied up with cultural membership; and (4) group-differentiated rights are consistent with the liberal principles of freedom. I will examine these four points respectively below.

First, Kymlicka regards cultural membership as a primary good. According to him, access to culture or cultural membership is one of the primary goods to which all are entitled. Individuals should be viewed as "members of a particular cultural community, for whom cultural membership is an important good" (1989,162). "Cultural membership is (still) a primary good" (1989, 166) so that cultural membership is part of the consideration that individuals are being equally treated. In Kymlicka's words, "we should treat access to one's culture as something that people can be expected to want, whatever their more particular conception of the good" (1995, 86). Cultural membership is a primary good for two reasons: First, it provides individuals with dignity and self-respect; second, it not only provides various meaningful options for one's life choice but also assists individuals in making life plans.

Second, Kymlicka argues that the principles of freedom are the basic principles of liberalism. He recognizes that there are many visions of liberalism, so he states that the vision of liberalism he defends is grounded in a commitment to freedom of choice. In his words, "the basic principles of liberalism, of course, are principles of individual freedom" (1995, 75, also see 34, 80,186). He argues that liberalism attributes fundamental freedoms to individuals by providing them two

freedoms of choice: One is a freedom of choice regarding how they choose to live their lives and the other is a freedom of choice regarding the direction in life they choose. That is, in the liberal tradition, not only individuals should have resources and freedom to lead lives according to their inner values and beliefs, but also they have the liberty to question their beliefs and alter their life plans accordingly.

Third, Kymlicka argues that individual freedom is tied up with cultural membership. To him, there is a close connection between freedom and culture. He argues that culture plays an important role in the liberal-democratic theory due to the fact that cultural membership provides individuals with cultural preconditions for living a good life—freedom of choice and freedom of changing.

> Respecting minority rights can enlarge the freedom of individuals, because freedom is intimately linked with and dependent on culture. ...I will argue that individual choice is dependent on the presence of a societal culture, defined by language and history, and that most people have a very strong bond to their own culture. (1995, 75)

That is to say, cultures are important to individuals' freedom, so cultural membership should be taken into account within the liberal principles.

Last, Kymlicka argues that group-differentiated rights are consistent with the liberal principles of freedom. Group-differentiated rights are consistent with individual freedom because liberals only endorse minority rights that respect individual freedom.[9] Kymlicka recognizes that his defense of group-differentiated rights might raise issues in contexts that the minority has illiberal restrictions on its members, so he distinguishes his liberal account of multiculturalism from the "conservative" or "traditionalist" approach to multiculturalism. According to him, the "conservative" approach mistakenly assumes multiculturalism as a right to

115

preserve "authentic" cultural traditions while the liberal multiculturalism is a matter of intentional transformation of people's cultural traditions. The liberal multiculturalism demands "both dominant and historically subordinated groups to engage in new practices, to enter new relationships, and to embrace new concepts and discourses, all of which profoundly transform people's identities and practices" (2007,99). In other words, it is the liberal account of multiculturalism, which concerns both the dominant and the subordinated, that provides the framework for contemporary multiculturalist policies.

4. Okin's Definitions of Culture and Multiculturalism (Okin's Analytical Claims)

In the previous sections, I presented Kymlicka's definitions of culture and of multiculturalism and his defense of multiculturalism. In this section, I will present Okin's definitions of culture and of multiculturalism. In the next section, I will present Okin's normative claims about multiculturalism.

Although Okin never explicitly says she means the same thing using the two terms, in her critique of multiculturalism, Okin seems to hold a similar definition of culture and multiculturalism to Kymlicka's since she does not criticize Kymlicka's definitions and implications of these two terms. She seems to suggest an account of cultures as monolithically patriarchal with minority cultures being generally more patriarchal than the surrounding Western culture. As she says, "sex discrimination—whether severe or more mild—often has very powerful *cultural* roots" (1998, 679 emphasis in original). Sometimes, it seems that she identifies

"culture" with "tradition" in terms of patriarchy. For instance, she says, "Sometimes, moreover, 'culture' or 'traditions' are so closely linked with the control of women that they are virtually equated" (1999, 16). Other times, it seems that she identifies "culture" with "ethnicity." For instance, she says,

> In the context of (this) multiculturalism language, history, or religion—any combination of which are sometimes referred to as "ethnicity"—are frequent markers of distinct cultures. (1998, 662)

Okin argues that there is a difference between "some poor women in poor countries" (1994, 15) and women in Western industrialized countries. That is, the former live in a generally more patriarchal culture than the latter. She argues that the justification of group rights from a liberal standpoint fail to have two things in mind: One is an accounting of the degree that a culture is patriarchal and the other is the measure of its willingness to change. She brings the attention to the institutional structure of a culture, that is, one's social location in a particular culture is equally as important as the development of self-respect and self-esteem in that culture. Given that minority cultures are more patriarchal than the majority culture, minority rights may worsen women's oppression. In her words, "the situation of some poor women in poor countries is different from—as well as distinctively worse than— that of most Western women today" (1994, 15). She argues that the focus on differences among women and the respect for cultural diversity does great disservice to many women around the world. Okin acknowledges that gender inequality has similarities in their causes and effects, but not in their extent or severity. She points out that gender inequality exists in all cultures, but it exists to a greater extent in cultures that are strictly religious or traditional. For instance, the

Western women do not face the cruel branding of women in other cultures, such as

foot binding, clitoridectomy, and purdah. These are demonstration of "the case of a

more patriarchal minority culture in the context of a less patriarchal majority

culture" (1998, 680).

Okin argues that group rights should not be granted to cultural groups living

within liberal societies if the minority culture is more patriarchal than the majority

culture. In her own words,

> While a number of factors would have to be taken into account in assessing
> the situation, they [women in minority cultures] *may* be much better off,
> from a liberal point of view, if the culture into which they were born were
> either gradually to become extinct (as its members became integrated into
> the surrounding culture), or, preferably, to be encouraged and supported to
> substantially alter itself so as to reinforce the equality, rather than the
> inequality, of women—at least to the degree to which this is upheld in the
> majority culture. (1998, 680, emphasis in original)

That is to say, in a liberal society, minority cultures are normally more patriarchal

than the majority culture, so the elimination of gender inequality in minority

cultures would imply those cultures assimilation into the majority culture or their

extinction, preferably the former. A particular culture does not generate self-

respect and self-esteem in its members if (1) it fails to provide individuals,

especially women, their places within the culture; and (2) it forces certain (normally

subordinate) social roles upon its members. Since most cultures, especially

minority cultures, are patriarchal, granting rights to the minority is not the solution

to protect women and girls. Worse, "they [minority rights] may exacerbate the

problem"(1998, 680). Therefore, for the sake of the healthy development of women,

those patriarchal cultures are better off being incorporated into and accommodated

to the majority (liberal) culture or they should cease existence all at once.

Okin states that there are two concepts of multiculturalism: One is the politics of recognition or identity politics in the narrow context of education, which demands the recognition of marginalized groups such as women, people of races, the poor, the homosexuals, and indigenous people; the other is the protection of cultural group rights in the wider social, economic, and political nation-state context, which demands the protection of the distinctive cultures of minority groups within the nation state. Okin clarifies that she focuses on the second concept of multiculturalism, that is, arguments for group rights are built upon liberal premises. That is, she holds the same definition of multiculturalism as Kymlicka does.[10]

5. Okin's Challenge to Liberal Multiculturalism (Okin's Normative Claims)

Having presented Okin's definitions of culture and of multiculturalism in the previous section, I will present her normative claims about multiculturalism in this section.

Okin points out that there are tensions between feminism and multiculturalism because asking for special protections for and accommodations to patriarchal communities may reinforce gender inequality within these communities. She argues that tensions between feminism and multiculturalism might be best addressed by focusing on how to alleviate the multiculturalism/feminist dilemma. Okin challenges Kymlicka's liberal multiculturalism by arguing that there are some conflicts between feminism and the liberal claims for group rights.[11] She argues that Kymlicka has not adequately or directly addressed the relationship between gender and culture.[12] She states,

119

I shall argue that there are tensions between feminism and multiculturalism which have, so far, been insufficiently attended to by either feminists or defenders of group rights. ...I want to argue that there is considerable likelihood of conflict between feminism and group rights for minority cultures, and that this conflict persists even when the latter are claimed on liberal grounds, and are limited to some extent by being so grounded. (1998, 664)

In what follows, I will explain this criticism.

Okin argues that those who defend the liberal claims for group rights for minority cultures, Kymlicka for instance, overlook two factors: One is that he fails to recognize that minority cultural groups, as well as the majority society, are gendered; the other is that he pays insufficient attention to the private sphere. For the first factor, Okin explains that although all cultures practice sex discrimination and patriarchy, women in Western liberal cultures have more freedom and opportunities than women in many of the world's other cultures. In other words, granting minority group rights to patriarchal groups may worsen the situation of women in those cultures. For the second factor, Okin explains that patriarchy is subtler and less formal than public injustice, so it remains a question whether Kymlicka's test of a liberal culture is justified. That is, because Kymlicka overlooks the private sphere, fewer cultures than he assumes are actually liberal therefore there is less protection of women's rights than he assumes. Establishing group rights to enable some minority cultures to preserve themselves may not necessarily be in the best interest of girls and women of these cultures since these cultures might be illiberal.

Okin argues that conflicts between feminism and multiculturalism persist even when multiculturalism is grounded in liberalism. According to her, Kymlicka's

arguments for group rights are based on the rights of individuals and confine such privileges and protection to cultural groups that are internally liberal. Okin shows that the defense of group rights on liberal grounds would encounter problems when women and gender are taken into account. She suggests that the liberal model of multiculturalism should ensure the participation and adequate representation of the less powerful members, in particular women, of more patriarchal groups.

Okin's normative position lies in her endorsement of liberalism. She suggests that "some poor women in poor countries" should accommodate the Western liberal culture. According to her, evidence that Western women are less oppressed is that they are allowed to engage in paid labor while "some poor women in poor countries" are prohibited by their regions or cultures to work for pay. Poverty, a lack of paid employment opportunities for women, and highly patriarchal cultural norms are likely to enhance women's oppression in those cultures. Furthermore, Okin points out that "oppressed people have often internalized their oppression so well that they have no sense of what they are justly entitled to as human beings" (1994, 19). That is, the oppressed might accept their oppression and even be cheerful about it for the sake of survival. In this case, Okin argues, outsiders can often be better analysts and constructive critics of social injustice than those who live within the relevant culture because outsiders have a critical distance from the culture in question.

Okin argues that the majority culture has a special responsibility to members of minority groups whose oppression it may exacerbate by granting them group rights without careful consideration of intragroup inequalities. That is, granting

group rights to a nondemocratic community amounts to taking the same side with those in power in the more patriarchal culture. Okin argues that tensions between feminism and multiculturalism might be best addressed by focusing on how to resolve the multiculturalism/feminism dilemma. For women who are members of relatively more patriarchal minority groups (than the liberal Western groups), it is not a simple choice between the culture and rights. Okin proposes that "discussion about group rights should be premised on a good-faith effort to ensure that liberal-multicultural aims do not contribute to unequal intra-group social power that is perpetuated by undemocratic means" (2005, 73). That is, she believes that liberalism is the best social theory to promote gender equality and that liberalism usually respects women's equality more than most minority cultures that currently seek group rights within liberal societies do.

6. The Problematic Account of Culture (Assessing Okin's Analytical Claims)

In the previous sections, I identified what Kymlicka and Okin mean by culture and multiculturalism. I showed that Kymlicka and Okin seem to share similar definitions of culture and of multiculturalism since there was no dispute about the definition and implication of these two terms in the debate over multiculturalism. That is, to them culture is the sum total of all human practices and institutions in both the private and the public spheres, i.e., "a culture" is similar to "a nation" or "a people." By multiculturalism, they mean that minority cultures need to be granted group-differentiated rights on liberal principles. In this section, I will argue that the tensions presumed by Okin between feminism and multiculturalism stem partly

from a problematic account of culture that Okin adopts, which regards cultures as static, self-contained, and well-integrated entities to such an extent that cultures are sharply distinct.

Okin's critical analysis of culture has its strength. She does not refrain from the critique of cultural practices that oppress women in cultures other than her own. She rightly acknowledges potential tensions between respecting cultural identities and protecting women's rights. Okin's concerns that granting group-differentiated rights might exacerbate gender inequality are legitimate, but I will argue that Okin's concerns should be posed differently and that to pose Okin's legitimate concerns in a different way has some relevance in a different conceptualization of culture. Before I propose a different way of conceptualizing "culture," I will assess the weakness of Okin critical analysis of culture from two perspectives.

With regard t the first perspective, Okin holds an over-simplified concept of culture, which overlooks internal contestations of cultures. We can infer that her view of culture is monolithic from her statements that minority cultures are more patriarchal than the majority culture. As a matter of fact, the majority culture is not always less patriarchal than minority cultures, but rather, the patriarchy of the majority culture and minority cultures are manifested differently. Okin fails to note the internal diversity of cultures and turns a blind eye to the deep sexism of Western cultures, which is a demonstration of her ethnocentrism. Okin allows herself to be distracted from the oppression that Western women endure as if they had already achieved gender equality. In a positive sense, the diversion of attention from the

oppression of Western women to the oppression of women in other cultures draws our attention to the oppression of women in other cultures, but in a negative sense it makes feminists blind to the oppression of Western women. Although Okin insists that her arguments are more nuanced than they are often understood to be, in general she has a binary view of culture. For instance, in her statement that Western liberal cultures are less patriarchal than other cultures, she unconsciously dichotomizes the world into "our culture" versus "their cultures," "our liberal state" versus "their non-liberal traditions," and "our less patriarchal society" versus "their more patriarchal norms."

The second perspective is related to the first. Okin focuses exclusively on sexual violence in other cultures, thus she does not do justice to the historical progress of those cultures and she pays inadequate attention to the possible changes and trends in those cultures. Okin is insensitive to the political context in which minority cultural claims are made and mistakes religions or traditions of a particular culture as *the* culture. She views these religions and traditions as internally static or irredeemably patriarchal. Without a thorough study of the full dynamics of the power relations within a particular culture, it is doubtful that the judgment about that culture would be faithful and accurate. For instance, Okin rightly criticizes that the Chinese culture cruelly brands women through foot binding (see 1999), but she fails to acknowledge that the resistance to foot binding was initiated by women and she also fails to mention that foot binding is no longer practiced. She presents foot binding as a static, persistent, and isolated phenomenon that has survived historical changes and developments. Simplistic

124

definitions of culture, which assume that minority cultures are unified, traditional, uncontested, and unaffected by their social contexts, are definitely problematic.

7. Reconceptualizing "Culture"

In the previous section, I argued that Okin's concept of culture is problematic because it does not take into consideration internal contestations, historical processes, and social contexts of a particular culture to demonstrate the variability of a culture and it depicts culture as static because it overlooks the degree to which the development of a culture can occur. In this section, I will propose that feminists need to reconceptualize "culture" to better serve feminist projects and that the liberal concept of culture should be reconceptualized with cultural interdependence and communication in mind. An alternative concept of culture is one that is internally contested, interactive, and fluidly defined. This new conceptualization of culture is consistent with the views attributed to Frye about the concept of women that I discussed in Part One.

The alternative concept of culture is a more adequate notion of culture than the one used by multiculturalists because it grasps that (1) cultures overlap with each other so they are without sharp boundaries from which they could be isolated from each other; (2) cultures are internally diversified and contested; (3) cultures are sensitive to contexts, attentive to the politics of cultural construction, and are the product of specific and complex historical processes; and (4) cultures are interactive and interdependent among each other. The alternative concept of culture helps us to understand cultural conflicts from a perspective of cultural

interconnections rather than from a dichotomized liberal majority culture versus illiberal minority cultures perspective. It is clear that not only the majority culture has influence on gender norms of minority cultures, minority cultures also have influence on gender norms of the majority culture.

According to the alternative concept of culture, culture can be metaphorically viewed as a sphere or space that an individual is located in, but this space does not have a clear-cut boundary. Cultural features are seen within any given economic or political activity, so culture is also a sphere of social reality. Culture seems to be something that we can acquire, so culture can be viewed as something that shapes the way we experience a world. For example, an immigrant living in the United States can manage to learn English or acquire practices and habits associated with the American culture. Literally, some people might say that White women and women of color do not share the same culture because they belong to different races, but we can also say they share the same culture if they live in the same country. The key issue here is whether we regard culture as an issue that is separated from race and class. When we speak of cultural differences, we do not speak of a set of variables that operate separately from class or race; instead, they are intertwined. However, speaking of cultural differences does not necessarily justify speaking of different cultures because different groups do not really have entirely different values or interpret the universe in completely different ways. In other words, cultures are not self-enclosed entities, which are neatly bounded and precisely delineated. We could say that the structure of cultures organizes differences with a certain degree of coherence so that cultures are not too fluidity to

126

grasp and define. Structure helps to understand an otherwise undifferentiated idea

of culture. It is "reification" to speak of cultures as though they were entirely

different from one another.

The alternative concept of culture is consistent with the concept of women I

attributed to Frye in Part One. That is, the alternative concept of culture is

consistent with the theory of women's oppression as a general structure. As I

argued in Part One, the concept of women should (1) involve the variability of

women's experience; and (2) can grasp the dynamics of possible changes for

women. The alternative concept of culture and Frye's concept of women address

both the variability and the dynamics of women and cultures. The alternative

concept of culture would help feminists understand different women in different

cultures in a more fruitful way than a multicultural concept of culture does.

8. Criticizing Okin's Normative Position

In the previous sections, I first criticized Okin's problematic notion of culture, then I

proposed an alternative concept of culture. In this section, I will focus on Okin's

normative position about how to deal with gender inequality within the context of

cultural conflicts. I tend to equate multiculturalism with a concept of culture that is

flawed, so I argue that Okin's critique of multiculturalism is inadequate in terms of

her adoption of a problematic account of culture from multiculturalism and her

endorsement of liberalism. That is, Okin's criticism of multiculturalism is misplaced

because she is not using an adequate notion of culture. Yet, I still agree with her that

the multicultural view is inadequate.

I sympathize with Okin's concerns that granting the minority group-differentiated rights might worsen gender inequality within a particular group. Indeed, as Okin argues, gender inequality is worse in some places of the world than others, although I would not necessarily agree with her overgeneralizing statement that women in Western liberal societies are much better off than "some poor women in poor countries" in term of gender equality. Okin rightly points out that any legitimate liberal model of multiculturalism must take into account voices of the disadvantaged such as women. She also rightly points out that "some poor women in poor countries" are in the best position to explore what the best options for themselves.

However, Okin's suggestion that the reformed (with gender equality in mind) Western liberalism is the best approach for feminism is problematic for the following three reasons. First of all, Okin needs to specify which groups of women, in which countries, and in what circumstances internalize their oppressions. She undercuts their capacities with her assertion that the oppressed tend to internalize their oppressions, and as a result, committed outsiders are better analysts of the oppressive situations because of the critical distance they possess. It is unjustifiable for Okin to make the judgment that Western women are less oppressed because they have the opportunity to work outside their house. It is notable that some "Other" cultures do not prohibit women from working for pay outside of the home. In fact, to better diagnose gender oppression in "Other" cultures (and in the Western culture), efforts from both directions are needed: On the one hand, the agency of the oppressed is crucial to the awareness of the oppression because they have the local

knowledge of their situations; on the other hand, outsiders can provide a helpful complementary perspective to fully assess the situations. More credence needs to be granted to minority women's agency and more work needs to be done in navigating the complex interdependence of gender and culture in individuals' experiences in that particular culture.

Second, Okin overlooks the more systemic aspects of patriarchy and thus she is limited to a controversial understanding of minority patriarchy. She assumes that a minority's distinctive set of norms would give rise to patriarchal forms of regulation to which women submit and that these norms also define these women's cultural identity. Yet, the specific patriarchy in minority groups should not be excluded from a broader sense of patriarchy. As a matter of fact, far from being neutral, majority norms—in some cases, patriarchal majority norms—have shaped both practices at the heart of cultural conflicts and normative frameworks within which claims for cultural accommodations are evaluated.

Last, Okin's suggestion that liberalism is a "one size fits all" solution to alleviate women's oppression is doubtful. By liberalism, Okin means the values of equality and individual freedom and from her statement of liberalism, it seems that she is certain that liberalism guarantees gender equality. Although there are internal contestations in liberalism and it has the potential to change, as tested out, liberalism as an ideal social theory does not function as effectively as it is projected. Although the United States publicly supports gender equality in many respects, struggles to transform social norms and practices to make such equality a reality are incomplete and ongoing. Liberalism is an idea to promote individual freedom, but it

is unknowable whether every culture will accommodate because: (1) Liberalism as a working theory is criticized by feminists within the United States; (2) liberalism might not be the solution to gender inequality in every culture because it can be rejected as a Western (and possibly imperialistic) ideology; and (3) something more suitable than liberalism to alleviate gender inequality in various cultures might grow from intercultural communications and competitions.

9. Challenging Multiculturalism

In the previous section, I argued that Okin's criticism of multiculturalism is inadequate. In this section, I will argue that multiculturalism is not beneficial for feminism, but my critique of liberal multiculturalism is based on a different rationale than Okin's.

The alternative concept of culture points to possibilities of expanding the narrow view that is associated with multiculturalism. However, I am not asserting that there would not be tension between feminism and multiculturalism if a different account of culture is in use. What I will argue is that multiculturalism is not a suitable framework for feminism. The interactive understanding of culture has important implications for normative debates over multiculturalism: (1) It shifts the focus from defining a culture to how cultural affiliations impact people; and (2) it emphasizes the need to develop context-sensitive approaches to evaluating claims of minority cultures. Culture cannot be conceptualized in the transformed sense within the framework of multiculturalism in Kymlicka's and Okin's sense. In other words, the alternative concept of culture is not compatible with the multicultural

framework. The liberal sense of multiculturalism that both Kymlicka and Okin

adopt is that the protection of minority "group differential rights" is based on the

liberal values of autonomy and equality. According to Kymlicka, culture not only

enables individual autonomy but also cultivates individual self-respect. I use the

term "multiculturalism" in Kymlicka's sense. I argue that multiculturalism should be

discarded not because there is an either/or choice between minority group rights

and feminism, but rather, because multiculturalists' emphasis, such as Kymlicka's,

on "group differential rights" can lead to separateness and divisiveness among

feminism—the opposite of feminist solidarity.

Multiculturalism has theoretical and practical advantages regarding

feminism. Theoretically, multiculturalism is a better way than ethnocentrism to

understand cultural differences among women. It undermines the tendency of a

certain group of women (White, First World, middle-class, educated, heterosexual)

to presume to speak on behalf of all women, thus it can increase the recognition of

social and cultural diversity. Practically, it aims to avoid social chaos by reconciling

the relationship between minority and majority cultural groups.

However, the multicultural approach also has theoretical and practical

limitations. The theoretical challenge that multiculturalism faces is that it relies on a

conception of cultures as well-integrated, clearly bounded, and self-generated

entities, defined by a set of key attributes, including a shared language or history.

This problematic account of culture is inherent in the idea of multiculturalism and is

also the prevailing concept of culture among those who advocate multiculturalism.

With a conception of culture as a coherent, self-contained, and distinct entity at the

heart of multiculturalism, multiculturalists assume culture is the exclusive source of freedom. For example, Kymlicka regards cultural membership as a key component to individual freedom. He defines culture as a "primary good," which means that cultures provide their members with meaningful ways of life, so every individual should have the freedom to possess this "good." On the flip side, the liberal understanding of "good" might trigger non-Western resistance to cultural imperialism. It seems that Kymlicka assumes that people have the same understanding of what "good" is. In fact, what "good" means might vary in different cultures. Accommodating group rights in liberal multiculturalism might not be the best solution for solving problems related to issues of cultural diversity. Like what Okin points out, the connections between culture and individual's freedom and self-respect are not as straightforward as Kymlicka suggests. Not every minority culture would associate the majority cultural membership with freedom and self-respect. At one point, Kymlicka points out that "cultures do not have fixed centers or precise boundaries"(1995, 83), but then he understands the history and language of that culture as *the* culture as if a culture does indeed have a center and boundary lines.

The practical challenge that multiculturalism faces is that it is not able to contribute to solidarity. The account of culture that Kymlicka and Okin utilize does not help with feminist solidarity because it overlooks the multidimensional nature of cultures and the ways in which gender practices in First World cultures and Third World cultures have evolved through cross-cultural interactions. Since the social structure of politics and the historical processes are all intertwined with culture, it is not an overstatement to say that culture is the source of values and norms. The

misconception that cultures are self-contained underestimates the possibility of interactions of women in various cultures. The presumption that "Other" cultures are more patriarchal than the Western culture without examining how patriarchy plays out in particular political and historical contexts can lead to separation between Western feminism and Third World feminism, resulting in a threat to feminist solidarity. Not all feminists would agree that solidarity is the goal of feminist projects. For instance, postmodernist feminism may not agree that solidarity is the solution to women's oppression. Yet, as I argued in Part One, women are oppressed as members of the category "women," so the alleviation and elimination of women's oppression should be collective and structural. Solidarity is a plausible goal for women to resist gender inequality collectively, however, multiculturalism as a framework does not help feminists attain this goal.

At this point, we need to consider the following objection: Some may argue that there are a lot of cultural exchanges going on under multiculturalism and this eventually would contribute to gender equality in cultures that are less patriarchal. For example, Andrew Mason argues that some multicultural assumptions can be reconstructed in order to avoid relying on "an essentialist conception of culture" (2007, 221). Although he does not specify how this reconstruction can happen and what would be the result, he suggests that "the truth, no doubt, lies somewhere between the extreme view that adapting to cultural change is either impossible or unfairly burdensome, and the view that the burdens associated with such change are never any greater than those borne by, say, a middle-aged worker who needs to retrain because the industry in which he has been employed no longer economically

viable" (243). I would argue that this objection overlooks two factors: First, the current cultural exchange is based on a model of tolerance and protection of "minority" cultures. Some feminists claim that we should tolerate minority group rights so that we would not make judgments of other cultures, but the consequence of this tolerance and non-intervention is that there is division among feminists due to its polite indifference or coldness. There is a demand for recognition from two competing claims: On the one hand, we want to protect women on the basis of their common oppression as women; on the other hand, we often base the protection on the specifics of their cultural groups. As a result, these cultural exchanges often do not result in genuine dialogues. Second, this statement seems to suggest that we should be applying a liberal ideology to presumed illiberal "minority" cultures, but that makes it sound like cultural chauvinism rather than cultural interaction. Cultural interactions should be initiated and negotiated among cultures rather than one assuming one's ideology is superior than others and taking it for granted that its own ideology would be helpful for "them" as well. This strategy is based on the assumption of a dichotomized picture of egalitarian majority cultures and oppressive minority cultures, resulting in cultural intervention than cultural interaction. This strategy also lacks self-reflection of one's own ideology, which might lead to resistance and hostility of another culture. Cultural interaction should be *inter*culture and *trans*culture, rather than have a monopoly on other cultures. In this sense, multiculturalism simply does not explore the relevant process of cultural interaction and change.

Conclusion

Multiculturalism is one of the key responses to the issue of difference raised in Part One. In this chapter, I presented Okin's concern that multiculturalism might be detrimental to feminism. Okin argues that the protection of minority cultures—the main claim of Kymlicka's version of multiculturalism—is in fact harmful for women and girls in those minority cultures. I argued that Okin's critique of multiculturalism is based on a problematic account of culture. Okin has a questionable assumption that the minority culture is often more patriarchal than the majority culture and she is insensitive to the political context in which minority cultural claims are made and the religions and traditions of a particular culture are internally static or irredeemably patriarchal. I argued that Okin's inaccurate understanding of Other cultures prevents her from finding a productive solution to women's oppression. I explained the weakness of multiculturalism while tracing the difficulty that multiculturalism encounters both intellectually and normatively. I argued that multiculturalism misunderstands cultures as separate, closed, and internally uniform and that cultures are more dynamic and loosely defined than multiculturalists suggest.

The problematic account of culture is inherent in the multicultural approach, so reconceptualizing culture means that we should abandon the multicultural framework. I have argued that the multicultural approach should be replaced by a new framework because (1) multiculturalism relies on a problematic account of culture; (2) critiques of multiculturalism within the framework of multiculturalism would not solve the problem; and (3) multiculturalism fails to contribute to feminist

solidarity. Ideally, the women's movement is a collective movement, which includes

resistance of various forms of oppression in different geographic domains. We need

to further assess multiculturalism and disclose the shortcomings of "taking a

multicultural approach" that result in a static apolitical vision of culture and instead,

choose a framework that endorses a political use of culture.

CHAPTER 4

DISPLACING MULTICULTURALISM WITH AN ALTERNATIVE: A WAY TO ADVANCE THE POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF MULTICULTURALISM

In Chapter 3, I criticized the problematic concept of culture used by liberal multiculturalism. Postcolonial feminists such as Uma Narayan and Chandra Mohanty argue that there is a major problem—the problematic understanding of "Other" culture—with multicultural studies. They manage to criticize the problematic concept of culture used by multiculturalists within the framework of multiculturalism with the hope that people in multicultural studies become more sensible to the context and the history of cultural differences. With the acknowledgement that the postcolonial critique of the problematic concept of culture is fruitful, in this chapter I will argue that this critique is inadequate because although it suggests the necessity of finding an alternative to the multiculturalist framework, it fails to provide such an alternative. Framework in this context refers to the social structure of power relations and its theoretical underpinning, under which policies regarding ideologies, politics, and economies are made, tested, and sustained or challenged.

I begin by critically assessing Narayan's critique of cultural essentialism and her proposal to foster international women's solidarity. Narayan argues that cultural essentialism results in sharp boundaries between the Western culture and particular "Other" cultures as if these cultures were neatly packed entities. Although Narayan rightly suggests that women's solidarity is important for creating women's cross-cultural interactions, her charge of the problematic concept of

137

culture as cultural essentialism is problematic in itself because assuming cultures as

distinctive entities is not cultural essentialism. I then examine Mohanty's critique of

problematic multiculturalism in the U.S. academy and her proposal of cross-border

feminist solidarity. Mohanty criticizes a harmonious and empty pluralism in the U.S.

academy and proposes to create cultures of dissent for building solidarities across

divisive boundaries. Although Mohanty rightly challenges the institutionalization of

multiculturalism, she nevertheless does not specify how cultures of dissent can be

built within institutionalized multiculturalism. The postcolonial critiques launched

by Narayan and Mohanty are useful for challenging various multicultural

assumptions and practices; however, they fail to provide an alternative framework

to replace multiculturalism. Without a transition of the framework, their

suggestions for the reconstruction of the concept of culture and for women's

solidarity are impractical. In the final section, I propose that feminists need an

alternative framework to multiculturalism, and I explain why shifting to this

alternative is necessary and urgent for feminist agendas.

1. Narayan's Critique of Multiculturalism

In this section, I will critically examine Narayan's critique of cultural essentialism

and her proposal of international women's solidarity. Narayan endorses

multiculturalism although she criticizes the problematic notion of culture used by

multiculturalism. She suggests that international women's solidarity is possible

within the framework of multiculturalism. I argue that Narayan's endorsement of

multiculturalism is incompatible with her critique of the notion of culture and that

multiculturalism does not support international women's solidarity. In the next section, I will make a parallel argument about Mohanty's critique of the notion of culture and her view on cross-border women's solidarity.

1.1 Exposition of Narayan's Critical Analysis

Narayan criticizes "cultural essentialism," which is the view that "assumes and constructs sharp boundaries between 'Western culture' and 'Non-western cultures' or between 'Western culture' and particular 'Other' cultures" (2000a, 82). According to her, well-intentioned feminists attempt to avoid gender essentialism but end up practicing cultural essentialism. These feminists distinguish entities such as "Western culture" or "non-Western cultures" as distinct from each other. Accordingly, women who live in those cultures are distinguished as "Western women," "African women," etc. In particular, "Western culture (women)" and "Non-Western cultures (women)" are set in a contrasting relationship as if they were sharply distinctive spheres.

Narayan argues that cultural essentialism relies on the problematic "Packaged Picture of Cultures," a view that "understands cultures on the model of neatly wrapped packages, sealed off from each other, possessing sharply defined edges or contours, and having distinctive contents that differ from those of other 'cultural packages'" (2000b, 1084). That is, the essentialist notion views cultures as distinct and separate entities. According to her, this notion of culture is essentialist due to the fact that it shares some problematic features: (1) It asserts that cultures are distinctive entities with arbitrary boundaries; (2) it assumes that cultures are static, rigid, fixed, or homogeneous with no internal plurality and ongoing changes;

139

(3) it assumes that cultures are ahistorical and apolitical; and (4) it assumes that certain aspects are the defining element of culture, such as dominant cultural norms that normally jeopardize women (See 2000b, 1084-85). Narayan argues that cultural boundaries are not naturally given, but are human constructs that involve political agendas, history, and changes. For instance, how an individual is assigned to a certain culture involves complicated political and historical processes.

Narayan agues that to understand cultural issues in national contexts other than their own, one needs to be sensitive to the national contexts on both sides of the border. For instance, dowry murder, in which Indian women are burned by their families for dowry, is understood by the Western academy as the typical outcome of domestic violence over women in India. Other aspects of domestic violence in India do not receive as much public attention as dowry-murder. Whereas in the United States, domestic violence-related homicides are less visible than general issues of domestic violence. Narayan's study shows that the proportion of women in the U.S. population who are fatal victims of domestic violence is similar to the proportion of women in the Indian population who suffer dowry-murder (see 1997, 96-100). One of the reasons that there is such "asymmetry in focus" (90) on fatal domestic violence in India is that there is a lack of explanation of the development of feminist issues in different national contexts. In this case, feminists fail to look into dowry-murder with both the consideration of the U.S. context and the Indian context. On the American side of the border, dowry-murder is selected as the represented feature of "Indian culture" in the American academic discourse. The selection not only singles out certain oppressive practices

140

against women as the social norms of Indian culture but also fails to reflect social changes over it and Indian women's challenges to such norms. On the Indian side of the border, it is more feasible for Indian women to organize against dowry-murder than against general issues of domestic violence due to the absence of an effective legal system, social welfare, education, etc. So dowry-murder stands out among domestic violence, which is misunderstood by Westerners as *the* issue of Indian women.

1. 2 Exposition of Narayan's Normative Position

Narayan shows the political implication of her critique of the notion of culture by arguing that the essentialist notion of culture is detrimental to feminist projects. She suggests that notions such as "Western culture" or any particular culture be reconstructed in antiessentialist ways and that feminists think of cultural differences in antiessentialist ways. Some antiessentialist strategies that she suggests include: (1) Being sensitive to the historical and political processes by which a particular culture is regarded as a distinctive culture; (2) emphasizing internal diversity, plurality, multiplicity, changes, and conflicts of a particular culture because culture is not internally consistent and monolithic; (3) being aware of the fact there is no single perspective of culture that can be the sole and authoritative representative of a particular culture because problematic generalization glosses over internal diversity; and (4) being actively engaged in women's issues in cultural contexts other than one's own and creating women's cross cultural interaction (See 2000a, 81-90).

Narayan points out that women's solidarity is important for feminist agendas and that feminists should encourage exchanges between feminist communities. In particular, she makes note that progressive Third World feminists are not immune from cultural essentialism. Some Third World feminists assert that notions such as "equality" and "human rights" are Western values and therefore there are no common interests between Western women and Third World women. Narayan argues that this sharply contrasting picture of Western culture and Third World cultures not only skims over the genuine conflicts within each culture, but also makes it hard to think of possible collaboration between Western women and Non-Western women. In so doing, progressive Third World feminists reject possible social changes for women. Narayan argues that Third World women should not reject "equality" and "human rights" as Western values because they would be performing cultural essentialism if they perceive these ideas as Western. That is, Third World women should not regard ideas such as "equality" or "human rights" as the essence of Western culture. They would not be able to team up with Western feminists to fight against gender inequality if they cannot avoid such an essentialist conception of culture. In Narayan's words, "rejection of feminism as a Western construct makes it problematic for international women's solidarity" (2000a, 92).

Although she criticizes the notion of culture used by multiculturalism, Narayan endorses multiculturalism and proposes to "develop and sustain robust, credible, and genuinely enriching forms of multiculturalism" (1997, 157). She suggests that Third-World individuals play an active role in shaping the agendas and understandings of multiculturalism.

> I believe Third-World individuals are crucial partners for many mainstream Western voices engaged in criticism of the agendas and understandings of those who are virulently opposed to all forms of "multiculturalism" even as we serve as critical interlocutors of some of the understandings and strategies at work in versions of academic multiculturalism espoused by mainstream Westerners. Not all visions or versions of multiculturalism are moral or political equals, and both mainstream Western and Third-World subjects need to engage with the question of what sort of multicultural perspectives we wish to support or endorse. (1997, 156)

That is, Narayan suggests that there are different versions of multiculturalism, but it is not clear in this statement which version or versions of multiculturalism she supports or endorses and what claims the version(s) of multiculturalism make. Yet, it seems that she mainly talks about "multiculturalism within U.S. academia" (see 1997, 154-57), in which Westerners refuse to judge "Third-World issues" thus failing to critically engage with Third-World individuals. The flip side of this multicultural attitude is that Third-World individuals are assigned (by Westerners within U.S. academia) roles of Emissary, Mirror, and Authentic Insider to be the representative of their own cultures, which suggests that these are the only roles that Third-World individuals can play and the only space that they can inhabit. Narayan describes the assignment of these roles to Third-World individuals as sending kids to their rooms, which prevents them from dealing with "important political questions that have to do with the complexities of national and global cohabitation" (1997, 155). It seems that Narayan uses the term as if "Third-World" is in contrast to "Western" although she argues against the sharp contrast between "Western women and Third-World women" (1997, 50).

1.3 Assessing Narayan's Critical Analysis

Narayan does not define what "culture" is in her critique of the "Packaged Pictures of Culture." It appears that she might regard culture as a form of social reality, which converges with nationality and social identity. For instance, she talks about "Indian culture," "African culture," and "Western culture," which should be considered more dynamic than they are normally perceived. I agree with Narayan's critique of the problematic concept of culture being ahistorical, apolitical, decontextualized, and lacking internal diversity. Her critical analysis of culture reveals that the concept of culture is more sophisticated than treating culture as static and fixed. However, I do not agree with her criticism of Western feminism that charges them with committing "cultural essentialism." My disagreement can be supported by two reasons.

One reason is that it is problematic for Narayan to define "Packaged Picture of Culture" as "cultural essentialism." Cultural essentialism should not be the target of critique because the problematic account of a neatly packaged culture does not commit essentialism. Assuming cultures as distinctive entities is not essentialism because lack of history and politics is not the essence of western culture or other cultures. Reduction of the complexity of culture is not the essence of culture. It seems to me that Narayan misuses the term "essentialism" because multiculturalists who use the problematic notion of culture (ahistorical, apolitical, or decontextualized) are not taking these features as the *essence* of culture. For instance, saying that Western feminists believe that Indian women (in general) suffer from the dowry-murder of Indian culture is not the same as saying that these Western feminists believe dowry-murder is the *essence* of Indian culture. In other

144

words, Western feminists do not commit cultural essentialism when they make such problematic statements about certain cultures. Similarly, when Third World feminists assume that "equality" and "human rights" are Western values, they do not actually take these features as the *essence* of Western culture. Therefore, it is problematic for Narayan to charge the problematic "Packaged Pictures of Cultures" as essentialist.

The other reason that cultural essentialism is a problematic charge is that Narayan does not explain why it is a fallacy to consider that culture has an essence. Narayan adopts the essentialism language, and in doing so, she does not get to the real problem that makes the concept of culture troubling. The criticized notion of culture is problematic is not *because* it is essentialist; but rather because it fails to comprehend the fact that (1) cultures have variability (internal plurality, real differences); and (2) cultures have dynamics (the historical and the political contexts, and the ongoing changes). It is intellectually inadequate and confusing for Narayan to use concepts such as essentialist or essentialism without properly explaining them.

1.4 Assessing Narayan's Normative Position

Narayan does not specify what she means by "multiculturalism," so it might be justifiable to assume that she adopts this term in the same sense as Will Kymlicka and Susan Okin uses it. That is, multiculturalism means that cultural groups, especially minority cultural groups, deserve differential group rights. Yet, Kymlicka distinguishes a narrow sense of multiculturalism, which is the preservation and

protection of minority group rights, from a broader sense of multiculturalism, which is commonly used in the U.S. In Kymlicka's words,

> Some people use "multicultural" in an even broader way, to encompass a wide range of non-ethnic social groups which have, for various reasons, been excluded or marginalized from the mainstream of society. This usage is particularly common in the United States, where advocates of a "multicultural" curriculum are often referring to efforts to reverse the historical exclusion of groups such as the disabled, gays and lesbians, women, the working class, atheists, and Communists. (1995,17-8)

Kymlicka claims that these two senses of multiculturalism express themselves in different countries: Multiculturalism refers to the right to preserve ethnic identity of immigrants in Canada, while it refers to the inclusion of marginalized social groups in the United States.[13] It is not clear in what sense Narayan uses the term "multiculturalism," but in any case she endorses multiculturalism.

Narayan's normative position rightly points to the strategies for resisting the problematic notion of culture and encourages feminists to restore history and politics to the notion of culture. She also rightly points out the direction of possibilities for feminist agendas, that is, women's international solidarity. I agree with her that women's solidarity is important for feminist projects because feminists can use solidarity as a political goal to resist gender oppression in various cultures. Although not all feminists would agree that solidarity is *the* goal of feminist agendas, it is important to bear in mind that fostering women's solidarity is an effective way for making more people aware of the social structures of gender oppression and a crucial step for disrupting oppressive social structures. However, Narayan's account is unable to foster women's solidarity by failing to provide a philosophical alternative to multiculturalism. It seems that there is disconnect

between her endorsement of multiculturalism and her proposal of international women's solidarity. The disconnection can be demonstrated in three aspects.

First, Narayan fails to detect that the notion of culture is problematic might be due to that multiculturalism as framework is problematic. It is not clear why Narayan does not draw the conclusion that multiculturalism fosters "cultural essentialism" when she criticizes "cultural essentialism." It seems to me that there is a clear link between multiculturalism and Narayan's sense of "essentialist" picture of cultures. In other words, multiculturalism can be suspected problematic in the same sense that the concept of culture is questioned. Narayan fails to discern the incompatibility between her notion of culture and the multicultural framework. As I stated earlier, it is not clear in what sense Narayan uses the term "multiculturalism," but she endorses multiculturalism as the framework for her postcolonial critique of the problematic concept of culture that is utilized by multiculturalists. It remains a question how a multiculturalist framework can host a "non-essentialist" (in Narayan's sense) notion of culture given the fact multiculturalism by default considers some values as the essential components of a particular culture. Narayan's postcolonial feminist critique indicates that there is a severe limitation in the framework that multiculturalists employ. It would help her argument if Narayan would identify the shortcomings of the notion of culture as the result of a bad framework.

Second, Narayan does not fully address how exactly "cultural essentialism" makes the formation of cross-cultural knowledge problematic. At one point, she explicitly specifies that cultural essentialism is different from ethnocentrism

147

because there are "multiple mediations" (1997, 104) going on when cultural essentialism comes into being. According to her, "multiple mediations" not only make the perception of a certain trans-border culture filtered and distorted by essentialist and/or ethnocentric Western lenses but also make it filtered and distorted by essentialist and/or ethnocentric Third World lenses. She clarifies that cultural essentialism cannot be reduced to ethnocentrism or racism because ethnocentrism only contributes partly to the perpetuation of such distortions. Other factors beside ethnocentrism play a part in the perpetuation of cultural distortions. "Multiple mediations" filter the information that crosses national borders and reshapes, edits, and reframes it in a Western national context. However, performing "multiple mediations" is not cultural essentialism because the misperception of a particular culture through distortion and filtration is not the same as assuming a certain essence to that culture. Narayan needs a clearer explanation of the relationship between cultural essentialism and "multiple distortions."

Last, Narayan fails to recognize that women's international solidarity cannot happen within the multicultural framework. That is, multiculturalism as a framework does not foster women's solidarity. It seems that a fruitful reconstruction of the notion of culture and a framework that relies on a problematic notion of culture are an odd combination to utilize as a strategy to achieve women's international solidarity. Narayan suggests resisting various forms of anti-multiculturalism by both being critics of anti-multiculturalism (to defend multiculturalism as a working framework) and being critics of multiculturalism (to

revise certain aspects of multiculturalism such as the notion of culture). Yet, she

does not explain how feminists can complete these two tasks at the same time.

To sum it up, Narayan's reconstructed notion of culture provides a more

contemplative understanding of cultures because her consideration of political

agendas and historical processes. The possibility of women's international

solidarity points out that it is crucial not to defuse conflicts and contestations in

order to establish a dialogical relationship among feminists and work toward the

direction of women's resistance and struggle. However, Narayan's criticism of the

notion of culture is unfruitful because she does not complete the criticism by

suggesting a change of framework. Although her criticism has some elements of

truth in it, it is hard to imagine how multiculturalism can accommodate the

reconstructed notion of culture and international women's solidarity.

Multiculturalism as a framework seems to foster neither the reconstructed notion of

culture nor women's international solidarity. My criticism of Narayan is more from

the perspective that her critique of Western feminism does not provide a

philosophical alternative to multiculturalism, even though her critical analysis has

elements of the alternative.

2. Mohanty's Critique of Multiculturalism

In the previous section, I attempted to critically examine Narayan's critique of the

problematic notion of culture. I have argued that Narayan fails to provide a

philosophical alternative to multiculturalism although her critique has some

elements of an alternative. In this section, I shall focus on Mohanty's criticism of the

concept of culture. In doing so, I argue that Mohanty's criticisms are sound but

inadequate because she does not point out the possibility of a new framework

either.

2.1 Exposition of Mohanty's Critical Analysis of the Concept of Culture

Similar to Narayan, Mohanty criticizes the idea that cultures can be examined as if

they were separated from power relations. It seems that she regards "culture" as

counterpart of ideology and economy.

> Western feminist scholarship on the Third World must be seen and examined
> precisely in terms of its inscription in these particular relations of power and
> struggle. There is, it should be evident, no universal patriarchal framework
> that this scholarship attempts to counter and resist—unless one posits an
> international male conspiracy or a monolithic, ahistorical power structure.
> There is, however, a particular world balance of power within which any
> analysis of culture, ideology, and socioeconomic conditions necessarily has to
> be situated. (2003, 20)

That is, a static and distinct concept of culture is problematic because it does not

reflect internal contradictions and ongoing changes and it risks becoming

dehistoricalized and depoliticized. According to her, certain concepts of culture lack

an account of power relations, thus relations of domination and resistance are not

reflected in the problematic concept of culture. The dehistoricalized and

depoliticized concept of culture is depicted as such distinctive spheres that there is

no way to compare and evaluate cultural differences due to the neglect of larger

political processes. Mohanty claims that women's studies classroom in the United

States adopts "a discourse of cultural pluralism," which is problematic.

> [It is] a pedagogy in which we all occupy separate, different, and equally
> valuable places and where experiences is defined not in terms of individual
> qua individual, but in terms of an individual as representative of a cultural
> group. This results in a depoliticization and dehistoricization of the idea of

culture and makes possible the implicit management of race in the name of cooperation and harmony. (204)

That is, Mohanty challenges "a harmonious, empty pluralism" in higher education (193) and "the proliferation of ideologies of pluralism" (196). According to her, pluralism as ideology was heavily promoted on campus in the past few decades. "Harmonious, empty pluralism," in which harmony replaces conflicts, becomes the symbol of the achievement of cultural pluralism. In "harmonious, empty pluralism," White faculty and students play the role of listener and Third World individuals are considered as authoritative representatives of particular cultures. According to Mohanty, there are two dangers associated with the idea of "harmonious, empty pluralism": One is tokenism, which mistakes personal or individuated discourse of culture as the authentic picture of a particular culture; the other is that the personal narrative of culture glosses over larger issues stemming from structural political and power relations. As a result, the promotion of cultural pluralism not only avoids genuine conversations on cultural differences, but also contributes to making cultural pluralism manageable. Cultural pluralism becomes manageable because the institution of pluralism, such as Affirmative Action laws and programs, determines the voices a minority person can have and to what extent they can be heard. Because power relations and political agendas are crucial to cultural differences and because "harmonious, empty pluralism" does not touch the deep political and power issue of cultural conflicts and contestations, the current cultural pluralism is an inadequate response to cultural differences.

To redefine the concept of culture, Mohanty suggests that feminists need to create "cultures of dissent" because such cultures are not in existence yet (215).

Cultures of dissent make the structure of power relations and politics visible in the concept of culture, so that oppositional and collective voices are heard rather than the empty harmonious and individual voices. According to her, cultures of dissent are sites of resistance and struggle, which reflect conflicts, privileges, and dominations, rather than the collection of various discrete cultural entities.

2.2 Exposition of Mohanty's Normative Position

Mohanty endorses multiculturalism although she criticizes the concept of culture used by multiculturalism and of cultural differences in the multicultural discussion. She states, "While multiculturalism itself is not necessarily problematic, its definition in terms of an apolitical, ahistorical cultural pluralism needs to be challenged" (208). She argues against "the institutionalization of multiculturalism in the academy" (208).

> In the last few decades there has been an increase in this kind of activity, often as a response to antiracist students organizing and demands or in relation to the demand for and institutionalization of "non-Western" requirements at prestigious institutions in a number of academic institutions nationally. More precisely, however, these issues of multiculturalism arise in response to the recognition of changing demographics in the United States. (208)

That is, multiculturalism is not problematic as long as it is defined in terms of a political and historical cultural pluralism: What is problematic is not multiculturalism itself, but rather the institutionalization of multiculturalism.

Mohanty suggests building "solidarities across divisive boundaries" (191). She argues that if we are able to understand our collective cultural difference within a political and historical context, then we will be able to build solidarity across borders. She proposes a feminist solidarity model to contribute to cross-border

solidarity. The feminist solidarity model allows two things to happen: One is that rather than focusing on differences, it focuses on "mutuality and common interests" (243); the other is that it can bridge local feminist movements with international feminist movements given that the redefined concept of culture is not a sharply defined and separated one. Mohanty argues that cross-border solidarity should be built on the basis of "common differences." She uses the phrase "common differences" to show that differences are not simply "differences," but are specifically located in a dynamic relationship between particularities and commonalities.

> In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining. The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings better and more accurately. It is this intellectual move that allows for my concern for women of different communities and identities to build coalitions and solidarities across borders. (226)

That is, through the feminist solidarity model, feminists can put into practice the idea of "common differences" as the basis for coalitions and solidarity across differences and borders.

2.3 Assessing Mohanty's Critical Analysis

Mohanty does not specify what she means by "culture," but her concept of "culture" is more closely related to the power relations between nations, or groups of nations. For instance, Mohanty suggests using languages such as "One-Third/Two-Thirds Worlds," which refers to the division of social power, in conjunction with "First World/Third World" and "North/South" to overcome the limitation of the false dichotomy of First/Third World (See 226-27).

Mohanty's critique of the "harmonious, empty pluralism" powerfully challenges the problematic way of dealing with cultural differences. Her proposal of creating cultures of dissent is helpful for associating power relations and political agendas with the understanding of culture. However, I am not confident about how cultures of dissent are manifested in multiculturalism.

I suspect that the "harmonious, empty pluralism" might overpower cultures of dissent. The diversity talk on the university campus mostly promotes tolerance of cultural differences rather than confronting cultural conflicts. Well-intentioned people, especially White faculty and students who are aware of their White privileges, learn to be sensitive to cultural differences to a degree that their sensibility evolves into avoidance of negative judgments on "Other" cultures. This kind of avoidance has a positive consequence that people are more sensitive to cultural differences, but it also has a negative consequence that an institutional avoidance of conflicts is proliferated. Individuals from the "mainstream" culture and those from "Other" cultures are all left voiceless because: (1) Individuals from "Other" cultures do not ask for more interaction since their cultural differences have already been acknowledged; (2) "mainstream" individuals might risk being "not sensitive to diversity," or "racist" when they initiate cultural contestations and conflicts. As a result, neither of the parties assumes they are in the position to be dissenters of the "harmonious, empty pluralism." To prove her proposal—cultures of dissent could be formulated in Western academia—is plausible, Mohanty needs to show whether the academy could provide incentives for dissent and provide strategies to discourage the proliferation of the "harmonious, empty pluralism."

2.4 Assessing Mohanty's Normative Position

Mohanty rightly proposes cross-border feminist solidarity as the avenue for women's connection and communication. As I argued above, feminist solidarity is crucial for women's resistance to structural gender oppression. However, it seems that Mohanty does not acknowledge there are problems regarding her endorsement of multiculturalism and her proposal of feminist solidarity. I will specify my concerns from three perspectives.

First, I find Mohanty's statement that multiculturalism is not problematic is disputable. Mohanty insists that multiculturalism itself is not problematic while suggesting the definition of multiculturalism needs to be challenged to transform "an apolitical and ahistorical cultural pluralism" into a political and historical cultural pluralism (208). This statement is saying that if we redefine culture and cultural differences with the consideration of politics and history, then multiculturalism would remain unproblematic. It is not immediately clear what Mohanty would make of the relationship between "multiculturalism" and "cultural pluralism." It seems that she does not use these two terms interchangeably, otherwise the challenge of "an apolitical, ahistorical cultural pluralism" would be equal to the challenge of "an apolitical, ahistorical" multiculturalism. Since Mohanty views multiculturalism as unproblematic and that cultural pluralism is problematic, we can draw the conclusion that "multiculturalism" and "cultural pluralism" are defined differently. This conclusion is rather puzzling because normally multiculturalism and cultural pluralism can be used interchangeably. Maybe Mohanty means that multiculturalism built on cultures of dissent would be different

155

from the "harmonious, empty pluralism," but even if this was the case, it remains unclear how multiculturalism can be unproblematic while cultural pluralism is under severe attack.

Second, it remains a question whether multiculturalism would nurture "common differences," which Mohanty considers as the basis of feminist solidarity. Mohanty proposes the creation of cultures of dissent and feminist solidarity at the same time, which is why she comes up with the idea "common differences." She states, "In knowing differences and particularities, we can better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining" (226). Maybe she means that we need to consider commonality with difference and conflicts. By "common differences," she means that what we have in common is that we all have experiences of differences, but the experiences of differences can be different. It seems that the idea of "common differences" is the consideration of commonality among differences and conflicts, which is a dialectical relation that can be found in the following statement: "The challenge is to see how differences allow us to explain the connections and border crossings better and more accurately, how specifying difference allows us to theorize universal concerns more fully" (226). That is, the basis of feminist solidarity is both commonalities and differences. This statement is powerful because it helps us recognize that having commonality does not naturally generate solidarity. That is, solidarity is in fact *not* so much challenged by the existence of *differences* among people, as it is by the *assumption*, in advance, that solidarity only comes naturally when we can recognize commonality. However, it is not clear

156

whether multiculturalism would be able to acknowledge the powerful concept of "common differences."

Last, Mohanty intends to reconfigure the conception of cultural differences and to foster cross-cultural feminist solidarity, but adopting the multicultural approach does not help her complete this mission. The multicultural approach does address cultural differences, but it leaves inherent conflicts unresolved and weakens a potential for achieving solidarity. It is not merely about the acknowledgement of differences, but also about which specific differences are acknowledged and what feminists should do with differences. Both the theoretical difficulties that Mohanty's critique reveals and the factual split of feminism indicate the urgent need to examine limitations of the multicultural framework and to look for an alternative. Mohanty's critique points to the fact that there is something wrong with the multicultural approach, but she does not suggest that the multicultural approach needs to be replaced.

To sum up, I agree with Mohanty that the concept of culture needs to be redefined to include genuine diversity with consideration of power relations and political agendas and that feminist solidarity is crucial for feminist projects. However, with the redefinition of the concept of culture, multiculturalism as a framework would fall apart. I doubt that multiculturalism should and can continue to work as a framework and that the feminist solidarity model that Mohanty envisions would be possible within the framework of multiculturalism.

3. Beyond Multiculturalism

In the previous two sections, I have called attention to both Narayan's and

Mohanty's reconfigurations of the notion of culture and their proposals of cross-

cultural feminist solidarity. I argued that they rightly criticize the concept of culture

that multiculturalism utilizes, but both Narayan and Mohanty fail to point out that

multiculturalism as framework is not compatible with the reconstructed concept of

culture and that multiculturalism does not support cross-cultural feminist

solidarity. In this section, I shall first show what limitations and shortcomings

multiculturalism has and why we need an alternative framework to

multiculturalism. I then propose that feminism needs a transition of framework

from multiculturalism to an alternative. I argue that rather than remedying

multiculturalism, we need a shift of the framework from multiculturalism to an

alternative. I also argue that the alternative must be compatible with the

reconstructed notion of culture and that it must support cross-cultural women's

solidarity. At the end of this section, I consider one of the possible objections to my

proposal and respond to the objection.

I begin by specifying both theoretical and the practical limitations and

shortcomings of multiculturalism. Theoretically, multiculturalism relies on a

problematic notion of culture, in which culture is viewed as a set of shared

characteristics and attributes and as a separate, closed, and internally uniform

entity. If one adopts multiculturalists' definition of culture, it would be self-

defeating for her to believe the establishment of substantial rather than superficial

interaction: On the one hand, the self-containment of the cultural definition

presumes some barrier and boundaries among cultures; on the other hand, the

multicultural definition of culture demarcates cultures and makes differences tangible to such an extent that it leads to the perception that the perceived barriers are insurmountable. I am not positive that multiculturalism will be able to accommodate the reconstructed notion of culture as Narayan and Mohanty hope for because if cultures are more dynamic than multiculturalists suggest, then multiculturalism as a framework needs to go through a substantial transformation to accommodate a redefinition of culture. It remains a question whether multiculturalism is still multiculturalism if it is transformed substantially. The postcolonial feminist critique indicates the necessity of a shift from multiculturalism to a new framework but it fails to specify what it would be.

Multiculturalism also is limited in its capacity for increasing cross-cultural exchanges due to its lack of significant engagement. The purpose of the "difference critique" is to draw attention to the fact that feminism does not do sufficient work to be inclusive. The intention of the "difference critique" is that women should be collaborative instead of being unintentionally influenced by ethnocentrism. The direction of feminism took an unfortunate detour by going from Friedan to multiculturalism rather than to a different framework. Certain aspects of cultural differences focus on the ethnic portion of cultures without situating differences within histories and contexts or reflecting on why and how certain cultural phenomena are picked as different (from Western culture). The divide of feminism is not healed by the "difference critique;" but rather, against the good intentions of the "difference critique," the divide is made broader. Thus, the multicultural assumption that cultures are simply separated entities becomes an intellectual

obstacle that impedes feminist solidarity instead of contributing to genuine

collaboration and interaction.

To correct the limitations of multiculturalism, feminism needs an alternative

framework to replace multiculturalism. I suggest that we need to go beyond the

current multicultural framework and make a transformative shift to an alternative

framework and theoretical model. This alternative should emphasize the aspects of

communication and dialogue that can create not only the sensitivity to cultural

differences but also an active engagement between cultures. This alternative should

be executed with full awareness, courage, and devotion to problems affecting

"Other" women. To complete this task, we need a good understanding of the

alternative to multiculturalism and how it is different from the multicultural

approach. Next, I will explain what an alternative to multiculturalism has to do with

the problem of multiculturalism and how the alternative succeeds where

multiculturalism fails. I specify the advantage of having the alternative as the

framework from both the theoretical perspective and the practical perspective.

From the theoretical perspective, the alternative to multiculturalism must

hold a dynamic concept of culture, which allows us to see that cultures are not only

internally contested but also interactive and mutually constitutive. This view of

culture also acknowledges the contingency and variability of individuals'

experiences of cultural experiences. Thus, the alternative to multiculturalism must

have an intellectual concept and practice of culture that is different from that of

multiculturalism. In this new framework, the negative and the positive aspects of a

culture would be faithfully recorded. Rather than the Western avoidance of a

critique of Third World cultures, we need a framework in which a true story of Third World culture is revealed. For instance, the oppression of Indian women and the liberation of them would be both discussed.

In addition, the alternative to multiculturalism must recognize that cultures are not rigidly defined, but are open-ended, overlapping, and in need of intercommunication. An alternative is crucial in analyzing gender and cultural diversity in the cross-cultural context: Not only should Westerners recognize Third World cultures are different from their own, but they should also recognize that their culture is different from Third World cultures. That is, the Western culture should quit being the referent norm and both the Western culture and Third World cultures should attend to their own limitations as well as to their internal diversity and conflicts. For instance, even in North America, Canada and the United States share some commonality but also exhibit important distinctions. For another example, there are numerous evidences that gender inequality persists in the Western culture. The humble recognition of limitations may help cure the Western culture of ethnocentrism, thus enhancing the dialogue between cultures. The alternative must be able to promote genuine cultural dialogues since it is going to confront cultural contestations and conflicts.

From the practical perspective, the alternative must be helpful in facilitating solidarity across cultural differences. A key normative implication that follows from adopting a dynamic view of culture is that there should be a shift for evaluating cultural claims from one that is based upon inherent features of cultural groups to one that is based upon the social and political effects of cultural differences. The

161

alternative must adopt a view of culture that is more attentive to the politics of cultural construction and contestation: Cultural communities have long interacted and shaped one another in their interactions, and they have been internally heterogeneous from the start (so the cultural difference is not a concern). This dynamic concept of culture is the product of not only internal contestations within a specific culture, but also of complex historical processes of interaction with other cultures. Hence, the social condition of women's solidarity should be characterized as transcultural rather than multicultural. Given the right conditions, feminism under the alternative framework is more promising than multicultural feminism. That is to say, the alternative must be compatible with women's solidarity, while multiculturalism is inherently not.

I have argued that it is inadequate to simply criticize the problematic concept of culture and that feminism needs a framework transition from multiculturalism to an alternative. Some postcolonial multicultural feminists might object that it is sufficient to have a reconstructed notion of culture and that the transition from multiculturalism to an alternative could be a nominal transition, which would not bring any substantial changes to feminist projects. In other words, they might claim that if feminists amend the problematic concept of culture, multiculturalism would function as the framework, to which I have three objectives.

First of all, multiculturalism as a framework relies on the problematic concept of culture, so the framework would fall apart if we reconstruct the concept of culture. The reconstruction of the concept of culture would be substantial enough to distinguish itself from the problematic concept of culture, thus the reconstructed

concept of culture cannot function as the foundation of multiculturalism. For instance, we observe that in the United States nowadays, minority cultures are not distinctive cultures that are sharply separated from the "American culture" or from each other. In other words, minority cultures such as the Chinese culture and the Latin cultures have vague and obscure contours. Especially in California, where members of both cultures might have more in common with each other than they would with their own cultural members in their countries of origin. Given this acknowledgement of culture being vaguely defined, the replacement of multiculturalism with an alternative is what the reconstructed concept of culture requires. The replacement of multiculturalism with transculturalism is a substantial theoretical change rather than a semantic exercise.

Second, multiculturalism is problematic because it works with an inadequate idea of culture. That is, if we want to start to reconstruct the concept of culture, we need to stop referring to the problematic framework because it is exactly the framework where multiculturalists generate their problematic concept of culture. If feminists continue to work within the framework multiculturalism, then it remains a question of how the reconstruction of the concept of culture is possible. We need to consider the relationship between the problematic concept of culture and multiculturalism.

Last, I am skeptical that a reconstructed concept of culture—political, historical, closely connected to power relations, and contested in terms of cultural majorities and minorities—proposed by postcolonial feminists would sustain multiculturalism because it does not adequately address the underlying deficiencies

163

associated with the multicultural framework. For the moment, let us suppose that multiculturalism as a framework is not as problematic as I have argued and that we are going to live with the reconstructed concept of culture within the multicultural framework. Then we would have to reconcile the idea of multiple cultures being distinctive from each other (by the definition of multiculturalism) and the idea of cultures not being distinctive from each other (by the reconstructed concept of culture). In other words, cultures are semi-distinctive from each other. For instance, a Chinese individual living in America would identify with being both Chinese and American, and neither Chinese nor American at the same time. Although this would fit into many cross-cultural advocates' reconfiguration of identity, the confusion of cultural belongs could be troubling because of the problematic assumption that someone should belong to a particular culture. According to the assumption, one should be troubled if she is not certain which culture she belongs to because the norm is that a person should be certain about her cultural identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented both Narayan's and Mohanty's critique of the notion of culture used by multiculturalism. I have called attention to their proposal that feminism needs a concept of culture that can capture the variability and the dynamics of cultures. I have argued that these two postcolonial feminists fail to provide a philosophical alternative to multiculturalism even though they suggest that certain aspects of multiculturalism are problematic. They unwittingly adopt

164

aspects of the positions that they otherwise reject. That is, they assume that there is no problem with multiculturalism itself. I have proposed that feminism not only needs to have a reconstructed concept of culture, but also needs a new framework. I have argued that the reconstruction of the concept of culture challenges the foundation of multiculturalism. I have also argued that an alternative is more favorable than multiculturalism because: (1) the alternative accommodates the reconstructed notion of culture; and (2) the alternative enhances women's cross-cultural solidarity.

By proposing a framework transition from multiculturalism to a new alternative, I sense that feminists would have a better framework to understand cultural differences and actively engage in cultural dialogues. I also think that feminists would have a better framework to initiate and foster solidarity across borders, whether it be national borders or assumed cultural borders. I will introduce the alternative to multiculturalism and specify how it would manifest it in feminism in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE TRANSCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE AS THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE MULTICULTURAL APPROACH

In the previous chapters, I argued that feminist debates over the difference among women and the related problematic generalization are in part due to ethnocentrism. Although ethnocentrism is not the only criticism of multiculturalism, I argued that the current multicultural framework does not suppress ethnocentrism but unintentionally encourages it. In this chapter, I will suggest that a transcultural perspective might provide an alternative to the multicultural approach for discussing cultural differences among women. I will specify what the transcultural perspective is and what it promises for feminism. I argue that if feminism employs the transcultural perspective, it will be able to make generalizations without falling into ethnocentrism. The transcultural approach was developed by the Russian-American cultural theorist Mikhail Epstein, who offers a very useful metaphysical framework for feminists to adopt for exploring the possibility of women's collective struggles. Unlike the multicultural approach, which asserts a completeness of each culture, the transcultural perspective suggests that if a specific group loosens the hold of the oppression of a specific cultural identity by virtue of transcultural experiences, then they will have a starting point to emancipate themselves from the subordination that is imposed by the culture of origin, which consists of social factors such as race and class.

I begin by introducing the transcultural perspective through a critical exposition of Epstein's conceptions such as "transculture" and "interference." I

explain why interference is crucial for transcultural experiences and I examine the

difference between multiculturalism and transculturalism and I argue that

transculturalism is preferable to multiculturalism. I then specify that the

transcultural themes have been present in the background of feminist scholarship,

such as the work by María Lugones. I utilize Lugones's work to demonstrate that

elements of transculturalism are present in feminist philosophy as well as to point

to her oscillation between the multicultural approach and the transcultural

perspective. I conclude by bringing together the advantages and limitations of the

transcultural perspective. I argue that the transcultural perspective is promising for

forging women's solidarity because of the ways it helps feminists to challenge

gender oppression and to transform the oppressive social structures.

1. The Transcultural Perspective

In this section, I first present Epstein's conception of transculturalism and his view

of identity. I then examine the normative implication of his account of transculture

by further exploring his conception of interference and his view on the difference

between transculturalism and multiculturalism. I argue that the conception of

transculture is useful to feminism, but I also criticize Epstein's related conception—

the denial of identity.

1.1 Epstein's Critical Analysis

Epstein introduces the concept of transculture as a type of consciousness of

envisioning the yet unrealized potentials and possibilities of existing cultures. To

him, culture is a complex of tightly interconnected levels or types of activity, each of

167

which is separable from another in theory, but woven together in practice. The

transcultural world, which is like a multidimensional space, does not lie apart from,

but lies within all existing cultures. This multi-dimensional space is the site of

interaction among all existing and potential cultures, thus transculture is richer than

the totality of all known cultural traditions and practices. Transculture is not a

specific culture or cultural identity, or the sum of them; rather it is "beyond" the

entire cultural realm, and yet not fully outside any specific culture. To Epstein, just

as culture helps individuals to break the dependence on nature, transculture will

help individuals to break dependence on specific cultures. It does so because a

culture is capable of exceeding its own boundaries and contains possibilities for

transculture. "Transculture" is not a property or feature shared by all individual

cultures, although all cultures are already in relation with, or overlap with, other

cultures. Rather, "transculture" has to do with a potential inherent in all cultures for

moving beyond what is specific to any given culture. The purpose of breaking free

from any given culture is that individuals can be rid of isolated symbolic systems

and value determinations of their culture and gain creativity at the cultural

boundary crossing, rather than escaping from their given culture. As Epstein states,

> Transculture lies both inside and outside of all existing cultures as a
> Continuum, encompassing all of them and even the gaps and blank spaces
> between them. The transcultural world is a unity of all cultures and
> noncultures, that is, of those possibilities that have not yet been realized.
> (2009, 333)

That is to say, being "beyond" means that transculture is both inside and outside of

specific cultures and the "unity" is not necessarily the sum of all cultures. In

transcultural experiences, individuals transcend their cultural identities and are

outside of any specific culture and they stop clinging to their national, racial, sexual, ideological, or other identities. Transculture, as it is defined, seeks to move beyond the hegemony of any single dominant culture by recognizing the existence of a multiplicity of distinct cultures, which presupposes an existing interaction between cultures. That is, transcultural thinking aims to broaden one's framework of identification so that one may imaginatively inhabit a range of cultural identities that are themselves shifting and mutable. Transculture means the freedom of every person to live on the border of one's "inborn" culture or beyond it. According to Epstein, transculture enables individuals to be free from their own cultures, just as cultures liberate individuals from their dependence on nature. Transculture is both deconstructive and constructive: It deconstructs determinism and constructs new possibilities with new creativity. Epstein uses the word "deconstruct" in a similar sense to Jacques Derrida, who does not refer to it in a negative operation that destroys structures of meanings; but rather, deconstruction has the potential of reconstruction. As Epstein states,

> I suggest that the term "potentiation" would better accommodate positive aspects of deconstruction of alternative readings and interpretations, future projections that might never be actualized as "the present." Such a "positive deconstruction" celebrates the proliferation of interpretive possibilities and unrestricted semantic play set free from any one signified, not by negating the "signified" as such, but by the potentiation of new *signifiables*. (1999, 160-61 emphasis in original)

That is, transcultural experiences bring out the actualization of potentials.

According to Epstein, any specific cultural identity is too narrow for the full range of human creative potentials. Multiculturalism prevents infinite self-differentiation by affirming certain cultural identities on individuals, but an

169

individual should not be determined in terms of race, nation, gender, or class. Identities are self-enclosed and highly oppositional, for instance, female is set as the opposition of male and white is set as the opposition of black.[14] In transculture, gender, national, and racial identities are replaced by an endless process of multiple identifications.

> The global society can be viewed as the space of ultimate diversity: diversity of free individuals rather than that of fixed groups and cultures. Once again, a rule of thumb for transcultural diversity: oppose yourself to nobody, identify yourself with nothing. No identities and no oppositions—only concrete and multiple differences. The deeper is differentiation, the better is the prospect for universal peace. (2009, 349)

However, Epstein also claims that cultural identities are necessary because one needs cultural identities to think and work transculturally to surpass them. It is important to understand Epstein's view on the relationship between "culture" and "transculture" in order to understand his idea of cultural identities. To Epstein, transculture is a higher level of human liberation than culture. Cultural activities, such as literature and cinema, liberate human beings from natural factors like physical conditions, but these cultural activities also create a system of symbolic meanings that transculture—a higher level of human liberation—liberates human beings from. For instance, the symbolic meanings of being female or male, black or white, are dissolved in transculture. In this sense, transculture is the self-transformation of culture and "the transcultural model is not just a field of knowledge but also a mode of being, located at the crossroads of cultures" (1999, 25).

Epstein uses the term "culture" as a descriptive rather than a normative concept both in the singular and plural forms. To him, "*Culture* as an integrity of disciplinary spheres presupposes the diversity of *cultures* as multiple national and historical types, each having its own formative principle, irreducible to others" (1999, 17 emphasis in original). According to Epstein, transcultural individuals do not escape cultures or abolish cultures, but rather they abolish human slavery to cultures. Transcultural practice is a way of expanding the limits of our ethnic, professional, linguistic, and other identities to new levels of indeterminacy without diminishing our primary symbolic identities, for instance our symbolic identities such as being a woman, or being an American. He argues that we need to question the very category of identity as a cultural and ethical value because "violence occurs between groups with firmly established identities" (1999, 347). As a result, he urges to move from the diversity of cultures to the even greater diversity of individuals, transcending their rigid cultural identities.

> Culture relativizes natural identities, whereas transculture demystifies cultural identities. This process has no limit. From a transcultural perspective, multiculturalism is right in asserting the natural origins and physical essences of existing cultures, whereas deconstruction is equally right in demystifying these origins and essences. It is not merely a contradiction within the postmodern paradigm but the very engine of its further transformation. Origins need to be acknowledged in order to be exceeded in the transnational movement of culture that at a certain stage passes into transcultural movement. (1999,85)

In this way, the global society can be viewed as a diversity of free individuals rather than that of fixed groups and cultures. Cultures are enriched by transcultural experiences, in which the cultural ground of their origin is recognized but not clung to. Transculture dissolves rigid, naturalized features of culture, such as being

American or Chinese, male or female, and gives new flexibility and compatibility to elements of different cultures.

1.2 Epstein's Normative Position

Epstein emphasizes the importance of interference, which refers to "not only a necessary, mutual, and multidirectional process, but also a wavy and fuzzy one (as the original scientific use of this term suggests) that transposes the borders of interacting culture, mentalities, and disciplines in multiple direction" (1999, 11). Interference lies at the foundation of the transcultural project and is originated from but not limited to principles such as opposition, identity, and difference. Through interference, differences complement each other and create a new interpersonal transcultural community to which we belong, not because we are similar but because we are different. Different cultures should not be satisfied with merely tolerating one another, but rather they should be creatively involved with one another. Transcultural transcendence happens through the interference of one culture with another while self-deconstructing and self-transforming one's cultural identity. For instance, a white male should interfere with individuals with other identities, such as a woman, a black, a disabled person.

> Every culture is intrinsically insufficient and needs interaction with other cultures to compensate for its deficiencies: rational culture needs sensual elements, male culture needs female elements, and vice versa. The principle that applies here is not that of difference, but that of "interference," of "dispersion" of symbolic values of each culture in the field of all others. (2009, 334)

That is, the interference of cultures is a normative state of "sufficiency" and "completeness." In this sense, cultures are not sufficient or complete if they do not interfere with each other. A culture is insufficient or incomplete when it is not open

172

to mutual involvement. For instance, multiculturalism assumes cultures are

sufficient in the sense that there are clear boundaries between cultures,

presupposing cultures are finished entities that are not open for mutual

involvement. The process of interference among various cultures or various kinds

of cultural activity would increasingly complement their progressive differentiation,

which means differentiation works at the goal of transculture and interference that

is more progressive than multiculturalism and difference. For instance, it is crucial

for one's development to explore positions that differ from one's own and try to

think in ways that other people might think as a way to support each other's

differing positions. In this process of interference-through-difference, one can start

self-differentiation without losing one's own identity.

Epstein claims that interference is quite different from difference. According

to him, difference is "a self-justified and self-contained principle of contemporary

cultural reformation" (1999, 8). However, difference should not be viewed as a

multiplicity of self-contained and disconnected cultural worlds each assuming

tolerantly indifferent positions towards the other.

> "Interference" has the same Greek and Latin root as the word "difference" but
> while "differ" means to carry apart, "interfere" means to bear or bring
> between. Within a transcultural model, spaces between diverging cultures
> are filled by the effects of their interference. Interference produces not
> unification but rather more diversification within existing diversity;
> differences no longer isolate cultures from each other but rather open
> between them perspectives of both self-differentiation and mutual
> involvement. (1999,9)

Interference produces more diversification within existing diversity in such a way

that differences make it possible for both self-differentiation and mutual

involvement to co-exist. As Epstein states,

173

> As difference has the potential of maturation, it grows into interference, the "wavy" and "fuzzy" intersections and overlappings of two or more cultural entities, mentalities, principles, intuitions. It is a kind of wholeness that acknowledges difference but can be reduced neither to external differences between entities, nor to their predifferential unity. "Interference" leads to the construction of a "non-totalitarian totality" that is produced by the second order of difference—its differentiation from itself. (1999,99)

That is, within the multicultural framework, differences are accepted and valued, but they are often promoted for their own sakes and kept distinct. This can result in a kind of cultural leveling in which differences may in fact be transformed into their exact opposites, thus leading to a relativistic and cynical "indifference" among cultures. As a result, multiculturalism erects new walls among cultures, contrary to its original benign intentions, rather than making ruins of the old ones. Epstein uses the term "multiculturalism" in the sense that "the U.S. multicultural model that posits aggregates of discrete subcultures (based on racial, ethnic, sexual, or other differences), each of which seeks to constitute and maintain its cultural specificity in the face of a homogenizing dominant culture" (1999, 2-3). According to him, transculturalism is different from multiculturalism.

> From the multicultural perspective, each culture is perfect in its own way, as a self-enclosed and self-sufficient entity; from the transcultural perspective, each culture has some basis incompleteness that opens it for encounters with other cultures. (1999, 97)

That is to say, the potential richness of cultural experiences will be lost if all existing cultures are treated as self-sufficient and perfect in their own ways, because a culture cannot embrace difference effectively unless it recognizes its own incompleteness. Epstein does not specify who are the subjects of cultures, so it appears that cultures are the subjects rather than individuals or groups located in cultures. Cultures are incomplete in the sense that Western cultures need Asian

cultures, male cultures need female cultures, and white cultures need black cultures

to reach completeness in "transculture." Transculture is both a norm and a state of

being: The realization of incompleteness opens a culture for encounters with other

cultures, thus transitioning from difference to interference.

Epstein argues that the deconstruction of identity helps to make peace. He

follows Derrida's usage of the term "deconstruction;" that is, deconstruction has a

positive aspect of reconstruction. If people interact with difference, rather than

clinging to group identity, cultural, social, or ideological differences, then differences

will not be hardened into oppositions. In Epstein's opinion, categories such as

"identity," "opposition," and "difference" are in a dialectical relationship that is

similar to the relation between thesis and antithesis. Differences complement each

other and create a new interpersonal transcultural community in which differences

are cherished while categories such as cultural identity might give rise to opposition

or even violence. On the contrary, emphasizing differences has a moral value

because being different from one another does not cause an opposition to one

another. If the oppositional components of self-definition are eliminated, the

component of identification will be abandoned.

Epstein goes on to develop the contrast between transculturalism and

multiculturalism. He argues that although fundamental differences remain between

the two ideas, transculturalism and multiculturalism have a common desire to

dislodge a vision of cultures as unitary and monolithic even though they share an

attempt to unite different cultures while recognizing their multiplicity.

Multiculturalism praises "pride" in any single culture (and especially of cultural

minorities), while transculturalism "embraces the moral value of humility that makes one culture open to other cultures" (2009, 334). Multiculturalism is a pluralism that is based on the ethical impulses of pride—in relation to one's identity, and tolerance—in relation to other cultures and emphasizes the virtue of "faithfulness" to one's own native soil and natural roots. Multiculturalism also thinks in terms of racial or gender identities and "presentation"; for instance, individuals express themselves as representatives of male, white, black, etc. In contrast to the multicultural framework, the transcultural approach asserts the fundamental incompleteness of any culture and thus its need for radical openness to and dialogue with others, because "what is at stake now is not whether different cultures can tolerate one another but whether they can be creatively involved with one another" (1999, 97).

1.3 Assessing Epstein's Critical Analysis

Epstein's conception of transculturalism is inspiring for feminism. The transcultural perspective has the potential to transform the social structure of power relations into a less oppressive form if we understand the relationship between interference and power, and use that understanding as a motivation to challenge the oppressive power relations. For instance, second wave feminists and third wave feminists, Western feminists and Third World feminists should all go beyond their racial, class, cultural, sexual orientation differences, and engage with each other in order to grow and be liberated collectively.

An example of the transcultural practice can be demonstrated by Chinese immigrants in the United States. The first wave of Chinese immigrants to the United

States were drawn by the economic boom associated with the 1849 California "Gold Rush" and they worked as labor of services such as laundry and restaurants. Unlike the older generations of immigrants, current Chinese immigrants are more likely to be professionals with advanced degrees or persons with exceptional skills in certain fields that can benefit the national economy, cultural or educational interests or welfare of the United States. According to a recent study on the status of Chinese immigrants in the United States, Chinese-born adults were more likely than the native born to have a bachelor's degree or higher level of education. Almost one-quarter of employed Chinese-born men worked in information technology and other sciences and engineering occupations in 2010. Chinese-born women were more likely than Chinese-born men and immigrant men and women overall to work in management, business, and finance professions in 2010. In 2010, roughly 1 percent of all unauthorized immigrants in the United States were from China.[15]

Compared to Chinese immigrants a century and a half ago, new Chinese immigrants have more bargaining power due to: (1) self-esteem stemming from an increasingly powerful home country, (2) self-confidence that they have something unique to contribute to the host country, and (3) flexibility of going back and forth between the United States and China. In this sense, transcultural experiences expand immigrants' vision and grant them more freedom for individual development, which is true to comparable experiences of immigrants from various countries in the previous generations. Although only a small percentage of new immigrants would intentionally forgo their cultural identity and become entirely international cosmopolitans, descendants of immigrants in the United States

transform their cultural identities in transcultural experiences. For instance, a

Chinese American may identify herself as a Chinese, an American, both Chinese and

American, or neither Chinese nor American.

Relatedly, Epstein's denial of identity is problematic. Epstein has a

reservation about the multiculturalist "politics of identity" because he does not

endorse "solidified" identities (2009, 337). Yet, Epstein is inconsistent with his view

on identity. Sometimes he claims that our slavery to cultural identity is the barrier

to freedom, other times it seems that he admits that human beings cannot escape

their cultural identity. For instance, saying "I am a Chinese" is a way of partial

identification. If one claims that "being Chinese" is her identity, she appears to claim

that "being Chinese" is an exhaustive quality of hers. As a matter of fact, she might

have other qualities to identify with other than "being Chinese." So the best

strategy, according to Epstein, is to identify oneself with nothing because "the

question is not who I am but who I might become and how I am different from

myself" (1999, 94). At one point, he argues that there should be no identities and

"only concrete and multiple differences " (2009, 349). It seems that he is saying that

what exists is anarchic difference and nothing else, but it remains a question how it

is possible that one can transcend (stop being a slave to) her cultural identity and

still attach oneself to a cultural identity at the same time. At times, he talks about

identity in its positive sense; for instance, he claims that interference is "an attempt

at self-differentiation without losing one's own identity"(1999,11).

Due to Epstein's reservation about identity, it is unlikely that he would

endorse women's identity, but he does advocate a society of androgynism, in which

people are not judged or discriminated by their gender. So, it seems that his view of

transculture has the potential of being transformed into a view for aiding a feminist

transculturalism. In the feminist adaption of the transcultural perspective, some

flaws of Epstein's version of transculture can hopefully be amended; for instance,

feminists can generate a transcultural view without denial of identity. As Epstein

argues, clinging to certain identities does lead to opposition and violence. Some of

the racial or national conflicts are, as Epstein argues, due to the self-righteousness of

their values and identities. However, women's identity is not meant to impose self-

sufficiency of being women, but rather engagement with both feminist men and

women in this world. In this sense, Epstein's idea of transculture offers feminism a

useful ethical and moral framework to work with. I will discuss this point in detail

in the next section to show what is at stake with the idea of identity and the concept

of transculture.

1.4 Assessing Epstein's Normative Position

Epstein rightly argues that transculturalism is more favorable than

multiculturalism. As I argued in Chapter 4, feminism needs an alternative to

multiculturalism. Here I propose that transculturalism is a proper alternative,

although we need to adapt Epstein's idea of transculturalism to a feminist usage.

Epstein's statement that each culture is insufficient or incomplete could easily be

misunderstood in a society that promotes multiculturalism as claiming that *some*

cultures are insufficient or incomplete rather than *all* cultures are insufficient and

incomplete. It seems that there is an unspeakable satisfaction of having a

multicultural and diversified environment and there is also the fear that by pointing

out cultures are insufficient or incomplete one is judgmental about other cultures.

However, if we strive to be self-reflective and critical, we will not be afraid to say

that our culture or other cultures are in the need of constructive critiques. If we are

eager to engage in diversity, we should not be afraid of giving constructive

suggestions. Epstein's critique of multiculturalism rightly hits the stagnant

contentment of Americans who are satisfied with "I tolerate cultural differences, and

I am for diversity." This superficial diversity needs to be challenged in a

constructive way. For instance, as a critical theory, feminism can initiate the

challenge by adopting a framework other than multiculturalism because (1) with

more interaction among nations, we need a framework to examine border issues;

(2) even within the border, we need transculturalism because cultural interactions

are increased to such an extent that there is more internal dynamism than ever

before; and (3) multiculturalism is a fact in the United States and women identify

with multiple identifications, so transculturalism would not start with a blank slate

but at a thoroughly multicultural mindset. We need a richer conception than

"interaction" provides in order to address transcultural communications such as

what was mentioned above. In this aspect, transculturalism has a specific advantage

to multiculturalism.

Epstein's conception of interference is extremely useful for feminism.

Interference as a kind of activity or practice is central to transcultural experiences.

The root of the word "interference" is the combination of Latin elements *inter-*

"between"+ *ferire-* "to strike." Interference is defined as "the mutual effect on

meeting of two wave trains (as of light or sound) that constitutes alternating areas

of increased and decreased amplitude (as light and dark lines or louder and softer sound)" (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary eleventh edition 2003, 652). The effect of interference in natural science can be manifested by natural patterns such as the butterfly's markings, the rainbow colors of a film of oil on water, or iridescence on the surface of soap bubbles. In constructive interference, two or more light or sound waves interact in such a way that the amplitudes of their frequency reinforce each other and form a wave that has an amplitude equal to the sum of the individual amplitudes of the original waves. In the deconstructive interference, two intersecting waves neutralize each other and cancel each other out. What we focus here is constructive interference in transcultural experiences.

The metaphoric meaning of interference implies the ethical aspect of cross-cultural interference and collaboration. Interference can mean the disturbing effect of new pressure on the performance of previously learned behavior with which it is inconsistent. Difference, friction and conflict are aspects of interference, which is a faithful reflection of the reality of cultural exchanges. That is to say, transculture does not simply mean the co-existence of different cultures, but rather the interference of all the differences. We can take Chinese young professionals participating in the cultural exchange between the United States and China as an example of interfering with each other in a positive way to demonstrate what interference means, what a transcultural experience is, and in what circumstances one might have it. At a token level, this kind of cultural interaction encourages a deeper understanding of cultural differences compared with the mutual ignorance and misunderstanding that previously existed between the two nations. The

181

American culture is transformed into a transculture through the interference of the American and Chinese cultures. The transculture is more complete in Epstein's sense than the sum of the American culture and the Chinese culture because the transcultural experiences bring more richness to the original American culture. Transcultural experiences as such have been practiced in the American culture by immigrants and visitors over generations, which makes the American culture a richer culture than the sum of all the immigrant cultures and the indigenous cultures. The interference is an ongoing process, which the transcultural experiences of the Chinese young professionals are part of.   This kind of interference and transcultural experiences not only make the American culture a richer culture, but also makes the Chinese culture richer because these people travel back and forth between cultures. People who travel, do business, live temporarily or permanently in different cultures all experience and contribute to transculture, so they make the world culture more complete through the growth and evolvement in the development of culture. On the contrary, if we think and practice from a multicultural perspective, according to which the majority culture protects the minority differential group rights, there would be less interference in the preservation of cultures and less engagement in cultures. In other words, cultural development is in a more engaging and active mode from a transcultural perspective than it is from a multicultural perspective.

2. The Transcultural Trend in Feminism

In the previous section, I presented Epstein's notion of transculturalism, in particular his view on group identity and his concept of interference. I argued that Epstein's concept of interference is useful for feminism and his postmodern denial of group identity should be corrected. In this section, I will draw on Lugones's work to demonstrate how to approach women's solidarity by defending identity politics while going along with the transcultural perspective. I show that the transcultural perspective and the feminist goal are compatible, thus demonstrating that the transcultural perspective is a promising alternative to the multicultural approach; In fact, the transcultural perspective is already present in feminist theories and offers a great promise to end this divide within feminism. I also show that feminists such as Lugones have not fully distinguished the transcultural perspective from the multicultural approach. The purpose of this section is to show that my suggestion that transculturalism is good for feminism can be confirmed by the presence of elements of it in some important feminist theorists. At the same time, we see the value of being more explicit about issues such as transculture, transcultural experiences, and interference when we see that someone like Lugones does not go far enough in the transcultural direction.

2.1 Lugones's Critical Analysis

The strategy of transculture has been implicit in the rhetoric of feminists at times (for instance, see Anzaldúa 1999 and Lugones 2003). Transcultural themes occasionally lurk in the background of feminist scholarship, which can be

demonstrated by Lugones's notion of interaction and collaboration. This is an

example and indication of the values of the transcultural perspective in feminism.

Lugones argues that oppressions are intermeshed rather than interlocked,

because "interlocking" implies that the oppressed are categorically separated from

each other and categorically lumped together while intermeshed indicates the

inseparability of various oppressions. Accordingly, resistance to oppressions should

be a struggle to connect with each other.

> The interlocking of oppressions is a central feature of the process of social
> fragmentation, since fragmentation requires not just shards or fragments of
> the social, but that each fragment be unified, fixed, atomistic, hard-edged,
> internally homogeneous, bounded, repellent of other equally bounded and
> homogeneous shards. (2003, 231n1)

The conception of interlocking follows the logic of the presentation—the logic of

purity and the logic of fragmentation as an instrument of social control. Lugones

asserts that feminists should reject the logic of fragmentation and embrace "a

nonfragmented multiplicity that requires an understanding of oppressions as

interlocked" (141).[16] Fragmentation occurs when oppressions are looked at as

interlocked rather than intermeshed because social subjects are divided into groups

or communities of the same interests. Fragmentation occurs when every group

member identifies with the group value, so there is no difference, contestation, or

conflict among group members but only between groups. Therefore, the

intermeshing of oppressions of some group members is not revealed in this

fragmented group picture.

According to Lugones, to overcome social fragmentation, we need to identify

with each other as oppressed as well as being capable of overcoming and resisting

oppression. The identification does not require sameness and independence, but

rather, difference and interdependence, "seeing ourselves and each other

interrelating 'worlds' of resistant meaning" (85). Social subjects should be

multiplicitous as well as non-fragmented. That is to say, we should not erase our

complexity simply for the sake of the group when we move from one group to

another because the self is multifaceted, but not fragmented.

Lugones distinguishes between the logic of impurity and the logic of purity.

The logic of impurity is a logic of curdling, which results in multiplicity, while the

logic of purity is a logic of splitting, which results in fragmentation. According to

her, the fundamental assumption of purity is that there is unity underlying

multiplicity, which is split-separation. Different from split-separation, curdle-

separation is a form of solidarity that does not stem from communities consisting of

the same qualities. Lugones specifies the difference between the logic of impurity

and the logic of purity:

> *According to the logic of curdling, the social world is complex and*
> *heterogeneous and each person is multiple, nonfragmented, embodied.*
> *...According to the logic of purity, social world is both unified and fragmented,*
> *homogeneous, hierarchically ordered. Each person is either fragmented,*
> *composite, or abstract and unified—not exclusive alternatives.* (127, emphasis
> in original)

That is, the logic of impurity is the logic of curdle-separation and of heterogeneity.

The world should not be perceived as consisting of separated fragments, but rather

of curdled elements. In other words, heterogeneity does not simply mean the co-

existence of various elements that are clearly separated from each other, but rather

it means the intermeshing and interfering of elements. She uncovers the connection

between impurity and resistance and takes *mastizaje* as an example for this

185

connection. Lugones uses a metaphor of mayonnaise as an oil-in-water emulsion to describe something or someone in the middle of either/or, impure and mestizo.[17] According to her, curdling is an art of resistance, in which one is both separate, curdled, and resisting by "looking at oneself in someone else's mirror and back in one's own, of self-aware experimentation" (145).

Lugones argues that the group identity is based on differences among group members in terms of race, gender, culture, class, and other differences that affect and constitute the identity of the group's members. According to her, her emphasis on differences is entirely different from the postmodern agenda of promoting difference. Postmodern endorsement of difference "goes against a politics of identity and toward minimizing the political significance of groups" (142), while her discussion of difference emphasizes the importance of the impact that multiple oppressions have on the identity of the group's members.

2.2 Lugones's Normative Position

Lugones emphasizes the importance of interaction. She criticizes ethnocentrism, which she defines as the belief that one's culture and cultural ways are superior to others. She also sees ethnocentrism as an arrogant indifference to other cultures that devalues them either through under-appreciating and stereotyping or through accepting such stereotypes. Lugones claims that what is missing in the feminist work that deals with the "problem of difference" is the interactive step. Normally it is not women of color who tell White women that "we" are all alike, rather, it is White women who tell women of color so. Lugones states that when women of color challenge White women on what they mean by "we," they actually call out "an

interactive demand, a demand for an answer" (70). Unfortunately, White women

hear that demand as an attack on the activity of their theorizing rather than on

White racism. It is this misinterpretation that generates the "problem of difference."

That is, the challenge for interaction from women of color to White women is one

that White women unintentionally dismiss by labeling the challenge as "difference."

Why is there a lack of deeper interaction between White feminists and

women of color and why do some White feminists merely emphasize their

theorization rather than interacting with actual women of color? Lugones explains

that it is because racism plays two tricks on White women theorists. The first trick

is that White women do not notice women of color, so they do not think that the

difference between them is important, which leads to their generalization that all

women are the same. The second trick is that White women conceive this lack of

noticing women of color as a theoretical problem—the "problem of difference."

Lugones argues that what lies at the root of ethnocentrism is racism. According to

her, racism is partly due to one's lack of recognition of "the structure and

mechanism of the racial state" (44). She asserts that by noticing the race issue, we

see "the possibility and complexity of a pluralistic feminism" (77). Lugones argues

that theorizing is not the solution to the "problem of difference"; rather, the solution

lies with White women interacting with women of color, because by doing so,

women of color act as mirrors in which White women see themselves in a way that

no other mirrors can reveal.

Lugones presents a consciousness called "world"-traveling as a way of

identifying with others and resisting oppression. "World"-traveling is an active

subjectivity, which presupposes collective intentionality. Lugones does not identify

"world" with culture because she regards "world" as less determined than culture.

As she explains,

> My use of the word "world" understands meaning and communication to be
> both less coded and less determined by cultural codes. And it understands
> the existing codes as less ossified and, as the result of ongoing
> transculturalism, interworld influencing and interworld relations of control
> and resistance to control. (25-26)

"World," for Lugones, does not identify with the physical world in the sense that

"world" is not as solidified as the physical world. Through traveling to the "world"

of the other, one can identify with her and discover the need of interdependence of

each other. By traveling to others' "worlds," we gain knowledge of their "worlds,"

thus getting to know the people that inhabit other "worlds."

Lugones recommends that traveling across "worlds" be partly constitutive of

cross-cultural and cross-racial loving as a new meaning of coalition. As mentioned

earlier, she proposes a "playful" thought experiment called "world"-traveling as a

way of identifying with others. "World"-traveling generates deep understanding

and makes one feel at ease. Playfulness is the loving attitude towards others and an

openness to uncertainty while traveling, because when we are playful, we are not

self-important, nor stabilized in any particular "world," but rather being creative

and open to further self-construction and new possibilities. According to Lugones,

by traveling to others' "worlds," we can understand what it is to be like others and

see ourselves through the eyes of others. The flexibility of "world"-traveling is

necessary for outsiders because it is partly constitutive of cross-cultural and cross-

racial loving. As Lugones states, "I recommend to women of color in the United

States that we learn to love each other by learning to travel to each other's 'worlds'"

(78). This identification means that we are disloyal to being arrogant perceivers. If

we perceive someone arrogantly, we fail to identify with them, and thus fail to love

them. This identification also means that we should quit being servants because

love is not the same as unconditional servitude. Lugones thus proposes an I→we

model, which indicates that women inhabit multiple liberatory trajectories. Women

engage in interactive multiple sense-making by encountering "at the intersections of

local and translocal histories of meaning fashioned in the resisting←→oppressing

relation" (228). That is to say, the emancipatory sense-making occurs in a complex

intersubjective context with a transitional intentionality.

Lugones advocates a polycentric multiculturalism, which is to break

boundaries and produce heterogeneity. She mainly endorses multiculturalism:

> A polycentric multiculturalist perception that emphasizes the production of
> space perceives against the grain of social fragmentation and reduction of
> heterogeneous subjects and communities into bounded, isolated, simple,
> because homogeneous, units. (200)

This is to say, the critique of social fragmentation and the purpose of "world"-

traveling is to sustain this polycentric multiculturalism. Lugones's sense of

polycentric multiculturalism is somewhat different than the one that Epstein and I

attack, but it is clear that Lugones still thinks and argues within the multicultural

framework.

2.3 Assessing Lugones's Critical Analysis

There are similarities in Lugones's account of intermeshed, the logic of

fragmentation; and curdle-separation and Epstein's account of transcultural

experiences. In particular, Lugones uses the term "intermeshing," which is similar

to Epstein's "interference" although Lugones never uses the term "interference." The distinctive difference between Lugones and Epstein is that Lugones emphasizes the importance of group identity while Epstein rejects identity.

There are at least three similarities between Lugones and Epstein. First of all, Epstein argues that transculture seeks to move beyond the hegemony of any single culture by recognizing the existence of a multiplicity of distinct cultures. This is similar to Lugones's account of *mastizaje*, which is non-fragmented multiplicity. Lugones quite rightly points out that oppressions are intermeshed. The conception of "intermeshed" reveals the fact that social categories are not unified, self-contained, and internally homogeneous entities; rather, they are as inseparable as an oil-water emulsion. Because oppressions are intermeshed, people need to connect with each other to resist oppressions.

Secondly, it seems that both Lugones and Epstein argue against the self-representation of certain cultures or certain groups. Lugones criticizes that privileged White women take themselves as the representative of women. Epstein criticizes that Western cultures assume themselves as the representative of culture. Lugones argues that fragmentation happens when social subjects are divided into groups or communities of the same interests while Epstein points out that it could be detrimental if one clings to the pride of being the representative of one's culture. Lugones's critique of the logic of fragmentation is similar to Epstein's critique of the multicultural view of cultures being separate entities.

Lastly, Lugones's conception of curdle-separation is similar to Epstein's conception of interference. Lugones's idea of curdle-separation implies that there is

something new being generated in the process of curdling just like there is

something new being generated in the process of interference. In Epstein,

difference can be self-differentiated into interference in transculture, which is an

endless process. In Lugones, people's identities can be multiplied into

heterogeneous identities just like oil and egg yolk can be emulsified into

mayonnaise. Individuals in transculture are either/or and both/and just like

mastizaje in its curdled state, both separated, curdled, and resisting at the same

time. Both Lugones and Epstein depict the necessity and urge for interaction and

interconnection, no matter the purpose of doing so is to rid society of cultural

rigidness or gender oppression.

However, Lugones has a quite different view on identity from Epstein's.

Epstein views identity as the barrier to the full human potential because one can be

anything if one does not identify her with something. According to him, denial of

identity can also avoid the danger of opposition, which leads to conflicts and

violence. For instance, transcultural Chinese individuals may or may not identify

themselves with either Chinese or American, but they carry identities, which could

be transcultural beings, cosmopolitan beings, or Chinese aliens living in the United

States. That is to say, identity is not incompatible with transculture. In this sense,

Lugones's emphasis of identity is very important for reminding feminists of the

purpose of being *mastizaje*: Women want to be *mastizaje* not simply for the sake of

being *mastizaje*, but rather they want to be connected with other feminists and to

eliminate intermeshed oppressions including gender oppression.

2.4 Assessing Lugones's Normative Position

It seems that differences among women mean class and racism to Lugones, but she does not talk about them separately from culture. By defining ethnocentrism as the belief that some cultures are superior to others, she mainly regards racial and class differences as cultural differences. Thus, Lugones talks about culture in the sense that culture is characterized as the stratification of race and class in the United States. She discusses race and class as other forms of difference and conflict, in which the "problem of difference" is situated. In a sense, Epstein and Lugones share similar views about the transcultural perspective. For instance, Epstein's notion of transculture is similar to Lugones's idea of "world"-traveling. Epstein's concept of interference is embodied in Lugones's argument about interaction and interdependence. We can find Epstein's idea of the potential of self-transformation in Lugones: Lugones notices the resistance imbedded in "world"-traveling. The desire and importance for interaction among women addressed by Lugones echoes a realization of incompleteness that Epstein points out.

Lugones's account of the need for interaction and "world"-traveling offers feminists a way to explain the intermeshedness of oppressions, which can direct feminism back to solidarity. According to her, knowing other women is a way of loving them, which is intelligible in the sense that women should stop perceiving other women with arrogant eyes because arrogance is a destructive attitude. Lugones rightly believes that the change we need to make to improve women's situations cannot be made without there being solidarity among women of different cultures or ethnicities or class. She implies that women can learn how to generalize

the consciousness of playful "world"-traveling into a more political solidarity once they figure out personal friendship, but it remains unclear how women can transit from this personal friendship to a political solidarity. In this sense, it *appears* that Lugones is rather individualist in orientation just as Epstein is. However, although there are certain issues left unaddressed in Lugones's account, it is important to note that we cannot lose sight of the impact of women's friendship on women's solidarity and women's personal friendship as a useful component of women's solidarity.[18]

This ambiguity is a possible explanation of why we can find both the multicultural approach and the transcultural perspective in Lugones. We can see that Lugones oscillates between multiculturalism and transculturalism from time to time. Sometimes her arguments lean toward multiculturalism, which shows that how prevalent multiculturalism is and how necessary transculturalism is. When Lugones confirms the existence of "world" and thus encourages women to travel to each other's "world," she in fact implies that the "world" is to some extent self-contained although she claims that "worlds" are open to surprises. Yet, she leans toward transculturalism when she defines "world" as the result of ongoing transculturation although she does not use terms such as "transculture" or "interference." The oscillation indicates that difference and interference are inherently connected because only when one acknowledges differences, can one start to interfere with others. The oscillation also indicates that feminism is in need of transculture, but has not explicitly specified it as the appropriate direction for feminism. This lack of recognition not only explains why the problem of the division

of feminism has not been fully solved in feminism, but also demonstrates the necessity and significance of an explicit endorsement of the transcultural perspective.

3. The Advantages and Limitations of the Transcultural Perspective

In the previous sections, I presented Epstein's account of transculture and interference and Lugones's account of interaction and "world"-traveling. I argued that there are similarities between Epstein's transculture and Lugones's "world"-traveling, but Lugones's emphasis on group identity can helpfully amend Epstein's version of transculturalism. In this section, I will further explore how feminists can transform the transcultural perspective by summarizing and weighing the advantages of the feminist transcultural perspective with its limitations.

To better serve feminism, we need to apply the transcultural perspective to a feminist cause. For instance, Epstein's term "transcendence" should be interpreted in the political sense. In the context of feminism, transcending cultures or borders does not mean we transcend into nothingness, but rather it means we set a reflective distance between women and oppressive cultures. A reflective distance is generated when one observes and reflects on the culture she is originally from and when one has a better ability to analyze the structure of power relations in that culture. The reflective distance helps women to understand gender oppression more thoroughly and have a starting point to generate resistance to the oppression. As we discussed in Chapter 4, Western feminists and Third World feminists desire interaction among women, which is exactly what the transcultural project brings

about. The feminist transcultural perspective has at least four advantages

compared to Epstein's version of transculturalism since his version denies women's

identity.

First of all, the feminist transcultural perspective aims to understand,

challenge, and transform the oppressive social structures by setting a distance

between the oppressed groups from the culture they are located in. By setting a

reflective distance, I do not mean uprooting the oppressed group, but rather

examining the bigger picture of their situations. The distance provides the

macroscopic perspective that is crucial in understanding the structure of

oppression, so the marginalized are reflectively distant from their respective

cultures via their transcultural experiences. Those experiences in different ways

suggest the evolution of a critical consciousness that deflects the claims of a singular

culture. Since the oppression is systemic and structural, the emancipation should be

systemic and structural as well. Feminism should explore the relationship between

agency and structures of oppression and find out how agents can challenge or

subvert gender norms. This reflective distance is quite different from the distance

proposed by Okin, who claims that Western women have an epistemic advantage of

understanding the oppression of Third World women due to Western women's

distance from the Third World Women's oppression. Rather than a global

expansion and reconfiguration of a dominant race, gender, or culture, a

transcultural perspective provides women with power to resist oppression. Women

gain distinctive agency due to both their social locations and the distance from the

locations, and thus express unique voices to critically observe and explain the social structures of power relations.

Secondly, from a feminist transcultural perspective, transcendence from the specific culture does not conflict with the situatedness of women and intermeshedness of women's oppressions. Being conscious of, or sensitive to cultural differences does not only mean the recognition of differences, but also means transcendence of differences by distantly reflecting on communicative needs of each culture. However, it is not completely distant, but rather transcendent with reciprocal recognition of and identification with others. When a person reflects on the culture that she is situated in, the reflection is aided by the experience of *different* cultural perspectives or practices. This reflection is an attitude of resistance; transcendence from a culture is different from avoidance of that culture. A transcultural perspective encourages a de-centered cultural and political relationship to cultures, which can foster an interreferencing sensibility that is crucial for initiation and generation of resistance. Transcultural experiences deepen self-reflection and mutual recognition and are able to promote new imaginations about power and about the self. Therefore, the transcultural perspective helps ease the tension between the dominant culture and the marginalized culture created by globalization because one culture needs the other to engage in cultural dialogues.

Thirdly, the feminist transcultural perspective suggests that feminism must reconcile the competing interests of having a multiplicity of identities and construct also a unity based on certain principles of collaboration. That is, each identity might imply distinctive and competing interests. For example, Chinese women who have

transcultural experiences would be more likely to understand, sympathize, and incorporate the interests of American women, and vice versa. Over time, those interests would become part of their identities and as a result, their decisions and actions might be an expression of these competing interests. On a similar note, the transformation of systematic structures of social power should be in a collective form as well. Feminism is a collective movement rather than the emancipation of individuals, so an account of collaboration should include various resistant practices, a conception of power, and connectedness. The tension and conflict that results from differences among women can be resolved through transcultural processes and practices, which can in turn inform a new politics of difference in feminism. That is, recognition of and reflection on the shortcoming of each version of feminism or each culture highlights differences among women and encourages the interaction between them. A transcultural perspective offers an ethical perspective within which one might work with different identities but also sustain collaboration across these identities. What needs to be noted is that although the feminist struggle is considered a collective one, the idea of collaboration among all women does not necessarily mean that a movement should always consist of every woman. Instead, there may be different kinds and aspects of collaboration, in which subsets of women can be brought together by a universal category.

Lastly, the transcultural perspective is necessary for the feminist political movement for practical reasons: Transculture, by providing a model of engagement and interaction that builds on differences, holds great promise for feminism to find a way to deal more productively with differences among women other than treating

197

feminism as the sum of various kinds of feminism, such as African American feminism, Asian feminism, or Lesbian feminism. Differences among women are concrete and contextual rather than an abstract summary of being simply different in reference to the dominant group, so feminism should treat oppression as multiplicative and concrete rather than abstract because oppressions are intermeshed. The transcultural perspective does not simply emphasize that cultures are different, but rather stresses the significance of interaction and interdependency of cultures. For example, the transcultural practice in which women engage in the interference of different cultures can cure the myopia of viewing women's experiences only through the lens of the Western culture. The transcultural perspective would encourage women, especially those in the dominant cultures or those who have privileges, to stop taking undue pride of their cultures or social positions. At the same time, it encourages women in the less dominant cultures to be humble with other cultures and reflect on their own cultures. The category of women, which embraces similarities and differences among women, reminds women in various cultures that they share a collective mission. Employing the transcultural perspective thus makes it possible for women to understand each other and share a political solidarity in order to eliminate gender oppression.

However, the transcultural perspective has its own limitations that might be detrimental to feminism. I will point out three limitations here. First of all, various forms of deconstructive interference such as colonialism, cultural imperialism, and international exploitation can take place in the name of transculturalism. Epstein only focuses on the constructive interference without talking much about

deconstructive interference. Transculturalism faces challenges with the rapid

development of global economic capitalism, which appears to be widening the gap

between the developed countries and the less-developed countries and thus further

marginalizing women, ethnic or indigenous minorities, and the working-class in the

Third World nations. With the increased mobility through global economic

expansion and immigration, neo-colonization emerges. While globalization

increases the connection between nations to a degree, we are caught in a larger

struggle where transnational exploitation and cultural imperialism operate in less

explicit ways but on a larger scale. The transcultural perspective calls for support

from the local and global economy and politics, but transcultural feminists should be

aware of and more cautious about political agendas that can occur as a result of

cross-border information filtering and reframing. For instance, more and more

Latino and Filipino women come to the United States to provide domestic work and

"liberate" some women from domestic work. This kind of transcultural experience

(in Epstein's sense) improves housework providers' economic ability but also harms

their own well-being and their families and creates a social vulnerability based on a

new internationally gendered system.

Second, feminists should be aware of the increasing tokenism in feminism

that is formulated in transcultural experiences. Tokenism is the practice of making

a symbolic effort to recruit a small number of people from underrepresented groups

in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality in circumstances such as

workplaces and committees. Tokenism might happen in the transcultural process in

Epstein's sense because "interference" could possibly only engaged by

representatives from underrepresented groups. For example, on a U.S. campus, the fact that a women of color faculty member can sit on an academic diversity committee to show that the university is a diversified campus does not necessarily mean all women of color are represented on campus. Having that women of color faculty as a token representative sends a misleading message that women of color are recognized without fully engaging with the whole body of women of color on campus. The division of feminism and the lack of engaged interaction among women are partly due to the self-representation of certain Third World feminist figures, who provide knowledge about Third World cultures without examining whether they offer authentic depictions of their cultures. This tokenism exempts both Western feminists and Third World feminists from active engagement in cross-cultural activities and creates problems for both sides. On the one hand, Western feminists assume that acknowledgement and inclusion of these token Third World feminists resolves the issue of Third World women, therefore, further engagement is unnecessary. On the other hand, Third Word feminists assume that Third World issues are "our issues" and that White women are not in the position to talk about "our issues." This tokenism and self-representation also increases the distance between Western feminism and Third World feminism.

Lastly, there is a dangerous tendency by people located in the Western culture to reassure themselves that their values are, and should be, the norm of the world. The Western world tends to take the credit for the advancement and development of other countries in transcultural exchanges. For instance, in a recent TIME magazine article on Kim Jung Un, the new leader of North Korea, the author

poses the question whether Kim would liberalize the economy of North Korea as

China's leader did more than 30 years ago. The author's speculation is based on the

fact that Kim went to school in Switzerland for several years when he was a boy,

which shares similarity with Deng Xiaoping, who was the leader of China and was

once an international student in France. The author asks:

> The time that young Kim Jong Un spent in Switzerland, dressing in Dennis
> Rodman Jerseys, playing video games and befriending Westerners, prompts
> some to think the young man must know these decisions [such as liberalizing
> the economy and giving up its pariah status as a rogue nuclear state] are no-
> brainers. He experienced the outside world and then witnessed the abject,
> criminal poverty of his own country. After all, didn't Deng Xiaoping, the
> mastermind of China's opening, spend time in France with Zhou Enlai when
> he was young?[19]

It is interestingly strange that the rhetoric of this article seems to suggest that

China's economic development was due to its leader's transcultural experiences (in

Epstein's sense)—mostly learning from the Westerners. Such mass media rhetoric

unfortunately reinforces the problematic assumption that the values of the Western

culture are superior to those of other cultures.

One may object that women's oppression in Third World cultures would not

be solved by transculturalism. For instance, issues such as the protection of

minority cultures that concerns Kymlicka cannot be improved through

transculturalism. This objection leads us to ask two questions about

transculturalism: Is it possible that transculturalism can ease the tension between a

majority culture and minority cultures? And if we become transculturalists, what

will change and what could be changed? I would argue that the transcultural

perspective does not defend the value of a particular culture simply because the

culture is in the minority or majority. In other words, being minority or majority

does not assign a moral value to a culture. Yet, this does not mean the value of a

particular culture is not worthy of respect and given serious consideration. Rather,

values of the whole cultural world are adapted and revised because of the

transcultural communication, through which each culture recognizes advantages

and disadvantages of their value systems and is more open to further

communication. This is not an easy mission to undertake, especially when we are

caught up with the satisfaction of being multicultural, diversified, and tolerant. The

advocate of the transcultural perspective would provoke uncomfortable

engagement and communication patterns, but this kind of uneasy confrontation is

exactly the starting point of genuine dialogues.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the transcultural perspective is superior to the

multicultural approach regarding the discussion of gender differences and culture

differences for the following reasons: (1) The transcultural perspective creates a

useful space with which women can distantly reflect on the various living

experiences of women; therefore, the transcultural perspective holds the promise of

opening dialogues among women who are from different backgrounds; (2) the

transcultural perspective helps ease the tension between the dominant culture and

the marginalized culture by emphasizing the need of one culture of another to

engage in cultural dialogues; (3) the transcultural perspective offers an ethical

perspective within which women might work with intermeshed identities but also

sustain collaboration across their identities; and (4) employing the transcultural perspective makes it possible for women to understand each other and share a political solidarity in order to eliminate gender oppression.

This chapter provides the basis for a concept about accommodating cultural differences. The critique of essentialism argues that the concept of women excludes other women, but we can show that in transculturalism the category of women does not exclude other women. If we pursue transculturalism, then we can have women connecting with women while having a concept of women. We should note that a transcultural perspective is encountered and sustained by keeping inequality and class in mind. That is, the two kinds of differences run through the discussion of cultural differences. There may be certain conditions required for the transcultural process to have the desired effects, for example, some degree of economic equality or shared participation in a social movement. In any case, we need to acknowledge the question of the needed preconditions for applying or embodying the transcultural process. Transcultural themes, such as "world"-traveling, have been implied background of feminist scholarship and they hold the promise for achieving women's solidarity if more fully exploited.

Part Two Conclusion

In this part, I criticized the problematic concept of culture used by liberal

multiculturalists. I argued that their concept of culture does not adequately account

for the variability of cultures and the possible dynamic within and among cultures.

By critically assessing postcolonial multiculturalist feminists' critique of the concept

of culture, I proposed that feminism not only needs a reconstructed concept of

culture, but also needs a transition of framework from multiculturalism to

transculturalism because multiculturalism does not identify where cultural

dialogues are needed and how they are possible. I argued that transculturalism as

an alternative framework would not only help feminists better understand cultural

differences but also help them foster cross-border solidarity. If we think

transculturally, then the possession of a vague cultural identity would not be

anymore confusing than having a single cultural identity. Moreover, having a single

cultural identity in the transcultural model would be less and less possible due to

the increase of cultural exchanges. Individuals in the transcultural setting would be

more amenable to identifying transculturally owing to the physical mobility of

others even if they remain located in her country of origin.

The reason that I propose transculturalism as the alternative to

multiculturalism is that it is urgent for feminism to find the balance at the

intersection between the debate about women's oppression in various cultures *and*

the debate about the possibility for women to reach gender equality. The notion of

solidarity suggests that there should be strong connections among women, but this

idea is not adequately illuminated in the multicultural approach. Transculturalism,

however, is a framework that cultivates an idea that involves both the variability and the dynamics of women and of cultures. Now we are ready to return to the topic of solidarity, which runs through the discussions in both Part One and Part Two and will be discussed in detail in the concluding chapter.

CONCLUSION: BRIDGING THE DIVIDE IN FEMINISM WITH TRANSCULTURAL FEMINIST SOLIDARITY: A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF FEMINIST COALITION POLITICS AND GLOBAL FEMINISM

This chapter focuses on the theme of solidarity. The theme of solidarity is important from at least two perspectives: (1) from the epistemological perspective, women have different experiences of gender oppression and do not automatically come together collectively to strengthen each other, so solidarity is a political strategy for them to recognize gender oppression on a macroscopic scale; and (2) from the political perspective, solidarity is crucial for women to resist structural gender oppression. The discussion of solidarity roughly runs parallel to the discussion of women's identity: A concept of solidarity denies women's group identity, affirms women's group identity, or uses it strategically. The discussion of solidarity also roughly runs parallel to the discussion of cultural differences among women, in particular, the divide between U.S. women of color feminism and Third World/transnational feminism. That is to say, I will talk about women's solidarity from two aspects in this chapter: One aspect is the theme of identity politics and the other aspect is the theme of cultural differences.

I begin with the concept of solidarity itself and why it is important to feminism. In Section 2, I turn to the related theme of identity politics by discussing Amy Allen's work, in which she employs a strategic usage of "a mediated concept of group identity" and proposes a concept of political coalition as feminist solidarity. I argue that a discussion of feminist solidarity needs to emphasize women's group identity because women are oppressed *as women*. In Section 3, I focus on the relevance of cultural differences by addressing Charlotte Bunch's idea of global

feminism, a main claim of which asserts that women's rights are human rights. However, Elora Chowdhury criticizes the problematic construction of global feminism in the U.S. academy, arguing that the politics of global feminism is based on a justification of Western liberal notion of democracy. Chowdhury proposes braiding U.S. anti-racist/women of color feminism and Third World/transnational feminism to resist both hegemonic White feminism and Western feminism. This approach resembles Chandra Mohanty's conception of transnational feminist solidarity. In Section 4, I argue that both Mohanty and Chowdhury foreshow an idea of transcultural feminist solidarity although they do not articulate their concepts in this way. In Section 5, I show that the transcultural approach is needed to conceptualize collaboration among women in different cultures; for instance, it will help us understand the relationship between U.S. feminism and Chinese feminism. In the final section, by pointing out obstacles and limitations to solidarity, I demonstrate how a new solidarity can emerge from the idea of transculture.

1. What is Solidarity and Why is it an Important Concept for Feminism?
Solidarity is individuals acting together with one another with a bond or goal that differs from the pursuit of self-interest in relation to shared or similar life conditions, i.e., certain patterns of oppression. Identity and a feeling of interdependence constitute the basis for solidarity with others. The goal of solidarity is to realize certain personal or collective interests that are not possible without establishing a relationship to others. Solidarity increases strength and influences in confrontation with an adversary. It can be expressed in various terms,

such as cooperation, shared identification, and shared interests. I define solidarity as collective resistance and empowerment and I define feminist solidarity as creating a self-consciously constructed space where the resistance to gender oppression is established by forming a coalition around women's group identity and around resistance itself while recognizing the different forms that gender oppression takes. In this sense, the issue of women's group identity and the resistance to gender oppression are connected.

Not all feminists regard solidarity as a necessary component of the feminist movement. For instance, postmodernist feminists do not advocate solidarity or solidarity of all women (though some of them advocate solidarity among certain groups of women). However, the issue of women's solidarity is important for feminism for the following two reasons. The first reason is that solidarity helps women be aware that women endure oppression as women and the issue of women's solidarity is in fact an issue of women's collective consciousness raising and empowerment. Feminist solidarity is not a goal or end, but rather a way through which women can act collectively to achieve the goal of ending gender oppression. Women's oppression cannot be eliminated by women individually; rather, the elimination of women's oppression requires collective and political action. For instance, postmodernist feminists criticize feminist multiculturalism, but they do so primarily in a way that stresses limitations of identity politics. They assume that identity politics is built upon a fixed identity, and propose a form of political practice that is built upon overlapping alliances, which are formed over common interests instead of identity politics. In other words, they propose coalition

politics in which individuals work together upon shared agreements to reach a common goal. As Cressida Heyes observes, these feminists reach "the conclusion that 'coalitional politics' is a more appropriate form of organizing than conventional 'identity politics'" (2000, 60).

The second reason that solidarity is important is that women's solidarity suggests that there should be strong connections among women, but this idea is not illuminated in the positions that address differences among women. Women's solidarity suggests a point where social changes regarding gender inequality can lead. The "difference critique" points feminist scholarship in the direction of multiculturalism. In the context of the "difference critique" and multiculturalism, feminism seems to be drifting away from its initial goal as a collective activity for the elimination of gender oppression by focusing on the discussion of differences (although the discussion of differences might be for the purpose of eliminating gender oppression). Women's solidarity is particularly important for the issues in question of this dissertation—the increasing divide and fissures of feminism in the past three decades partly due to debates over differences among women—but the divide has less to do with differences than the way some feminists theorize differences among women. Acknowledging differences is a necessary step for eliminating women's oppression, but feminists should gain collective power to achieve the goal of the feminist movement while acknowledging differences among women. As Marilyn Frye rightly points out, "the idea that articulating and elaborating differences among women was a route to viable female identity and solidarity was not an easy idea to grasp; Indeed, it has had to be invented" (1996,

1006). Gaining collective power is the key to overcoming women's oppression

because resisting women's oppression is impossible to achieve through individual

efforts and struggles. Feminists have not reached the consensus that differences

among women can lead to feminist solidarity in part because of the pervasive

misconception that solidarity must be built upon commonality and sameness.

Some feminists have attempted to discuss women's collaboration despite

their differences, but not many of them have translated their discussions into a

useful account of solidarity; thus, solidarity remains a problematic concept in

feminism. A number of feminists, such as Robin Morgan (1984), Jodi Dean (1996),

Amy Allen (1999), Charlotte Bunch (2001), Sandra Bartky (2002), María Lugones

(2003), Chandra Mohanty (2003), and Elora Chowdhury (2009) developed a variety

of approaches to women's solidarity. These attempts are related to, but are not the

same as, actual political solidarity. For instance, Robin Morgan's concept of "global

sisterhood" is frequently seen as a founding element of global feminism (though

later global feminism diverges from Morgan's notion of "global sisterhood").

Assuming a universal patriarchy and a common experience of oppression of

women around the globe, as a representative of early second wave feminism,

Morgan believed that women could build a unified front against patriarchy by

disregarding divisions of class, race, sexuality and national origin between women.

In the introduction to *Sisterhood is Global*, an anthology she edits, Morgan argues

that what characterizes women across cultures and histories is a common condition

and worldview, which is what women share and thus is referred to as the suffering

inflicted by a universal "patriarchal mentality" (1984,1). In Morgan's opinion,

women are not different from each other and have an essential bond because they are victims of male supremacy, which is a common condition that is "experienced by all human beings who are born female" (4). Morgan's intent is to further dialogues between women from different social locations. To her, solidarity "as a real political force requires that women transcend the patriarchal barriers of class and race, and furthermore transcend even the *solutions* the Big Brothers propose to problems they themselves created" (18, emphasis in original).

Morgan's idea of "global sisterhood" presents a widely recognized but heavily criticized notion of solidarity. In the next two sections, I will present two feminist critiques of Morgan's idea of "global sisterhood," which focus on the critique of identity politics and the activist work of building global networks across cultures respectively.

2. Feminist Solidarity after Identity Politics: Allen's Concept of Solidarity

In the previous section, I explained that the concept of solidarity is crucial to the feminist movement because the concept of solidarity is necessary to think through how women may overcome patriarchy collectively. It seems that the problem is how we can contextualize potential solidarity and locate processes by which it can be achieved. In this section, I will examine Amy Allen's alternative to a universal concept of women's solidarity to construct a concept of feminist solidarity.

2.1 Allen's Concept of Women's Solidarity

Allen discusses a strategic use of women's group identity and tries to find a middle way between two positions: Having a women's group identity and not having a

women's group identity. If we embrace an identity for women, we will then have a basis for theorizing the common experience of women's oppression and make collective efforts to resist such oppression. However, by doing so we exclude some women from the feminist discourse. If we totally avoid asserting a women's group identity, then we can avoid the problem of exclusion, but we would lose the basis for theorizing oppression and collective resistance. The middle way that Allen finds helpful involves women acting in concert without committing to a sisterhood that relies on a fixed identity of women. She assumes that such an identity suppresses differences within women. Allen argues that the sisterhood model of solidarity that Morgan advocates relies on problematic essentialist notions of women or women's common experience, which reflects "an exclusionary and repressive conception of women's shared essence or experience of oppression" (1999a, 109). According to Allen, these problematic notions restrict women's experiences of oppression to such an extent that they appear to marginalize or even exclude groups such as Black women, queer women, and working-class women. Accordingly, this shortcoming of the sisterhood model of solidarity might lead one to think that in criticizing identity politics one must also criticize the idea of solidarity, at least of the idea of solidarity relying on "an exclusionary and repressive" identity.

Allen adopts "a mediated conception of group identity" that stands in a dialectical relationship between identity and non-identity (1999a, 99). She argues that the opposition between identity and non-identity is false because neither option is defensible. On the one hand, she asserts that an identity politics that relies on the category of women has the merit of talking about common experiences and

shared goals that contribute to the feminist movement, but the category of women

that is posited by some feminists is "fixed, pregiven, and perhaps even 'natural'"

(1999a, 100). On the other hand, she acknowledges that a fragmented non-identity

makes it impossible to talk about solidarity among women because it abandons all

notions of solidarity among political actors. Allen observes that the feminist

movement is increasingly fragmented in the debates over identity politics, so she

claims that the feminist movement cannot rely on fragmented non-identity because:

> [W]e cannot be powerful if we are dispersed and fragmented, if we reject any
> and all forms of group identity in favor of an absolute non-identity or
> difference. For once we do this, it is impossible to understand how we can
> talk to one another, dispute our priorities, come to pragmatic agreements,
> and formulate provisional but nonetheless shared goals. In other words, we
> make it impossible to have a movement. (1999a, 114)

That is, Allen does not entirely reject the concept of women's group identity since it

is crucial for the feminist movement. She draws on Hanna Arendt's term "plurality"

to explain this dialectical relationship between identity and non-identity, and

between sameness or commonality and difference. According to Arendt, "plurality

means that 'we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever

the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live'" (Arendt 1958, 8; Allen

1999a, 105). In other words, plurality is an unchangeable aspect of the human

condition, which means that humans are both set apart and bound together through

action. Allen claims that it is antipolitical to reject all identity categories, "especially

when those identities are under attack" because by doing so "it renders all

resistance to persecution and domination impossible" (108). However, Allen's

approach to group identity is strategic in the sense that involves being compelled to

defend oneself in terms of identity only when her identity is under attack.

> The category of women is neither incontrovertible fact nor pure fiction; it is a political fact; as fact it is undeniable, and to attempt to deny it is to blind oneself to political realities, but as political it is changeable. One changes it by resisting, but one can resist only in terms of the political fact of an identity under attack. (1999a, 112)

A political fact is that a group of people can be attacked on the basis of their sharing the same group identity; for instance Jews are attacked simply because they are Jews.

Despite her recognition of the usefulness of shared group identity when it is under attack, Allen claims that identity politics is passé for the discussion of feminist solidarity, which "must move beyond the terms of the identity politics debate and formulate non-repressive, non-exclusionary conceptions of group identity. …reformulate solidarity as the result of concerted action, rather than as a pre-given, fixed and, hence, repressive identity" (1999a, 106). In this way, according to her, feminists can bind the feminist movement together and link it to related social struggles against racism and heterosexism without the exclusion and marginalization of those who do not fit into fixed identity categories. Allen thus proposes a concept of solidarity after identity politics (without rejecting identity altogether). That is, the feminist concept of solidarity grows out of the dialectical interplay between identity and non-identity and rests on "a mediated conception of group identity." She believes this concept of solidarity should replace the sisterhood model of solidarity that rests on "an exclusionary and repressive conception of women's shared essence."

> The conception that goes along with such a politics views solidarity as something that is achieved through a shared commitment, a promise, to act in concert, not an exclusionary unity that is presumed in advance. (1999a, 113)

214

In other words, solidarity is the power that arises out of reciprocal commitments to act in concert. Feminist men and women are bound together as political actors to fight against the system of domination by promises and shared commitments, which are open to contestation, reinterpretation, and revision.

2.2 Critique of Allen's Concept of Solidarity

Allen rightly points out that feminists need some basis to bind together to make a common cause, but her account of using "a mediated conception of group identity" only when the group identity is under attack (for instance, when Jews are persecuted because they are Jews) is confusing. Allen is vague about why a group identity can only be used when that particular identity is under attack. It seems that she suggests that if an identity is not under attack, then it is not contestable and is not changeable; that is, it cannot embrace differences. It is theoretically wrong for Allen to assume that if we construct the category of women, it must be built on a notion of shared experiences in which women endure gender oppression in the same form. It is problematic to assume that if one embraces the category of women (when it is not under attack), then the category excludes other women, because embracing the category of women does not necessarily marginalize or exclude certain groups of women from the feminist discourse. It seems to me that Allen is saying that identities are changeable but existing identities are limited and limiting in some ways, but her explanation of "the dialectical interplay of identity and nonidentity" need further clarification. It would be helpful to consider historical constructions of group identities, which Allen clearly does not do in her discussions, to understand that one does not necessarily need "the dialectical interplay of

215

identity and nonidentity" to be able to sort out limitations of "an exclusionary and repressive identity." An identity does not have to be exclusive and repressive: A useful way of categorizing women without suppressing differences among women is to regard the categorization as the practice of differences. In this way, a women's identity can avoid Allen's concerns by showing its ability of grasping both the variability and the dynamics of women.

It seems to me that Allen tries to draw a distinction between a philosophical conception of women (such as her idea of "a mediated conception of group identity") and a women's identity. I agree with Allen that there is a distinction between a philosophical conception of women and women's identity, but in contrast to Allen, I argue that a women's identity, rather than a philosophical conception of women (such as Allen's account of "a mediated conception of group identity"), is necessary for feminist solidarity. A philosophical conception of women is not necessarily a women's identity although one can link the former to the latter. It is theoretically possible that a philosophical conception of women can tell us why there is no such a thing as a women's identity, but this does not necessarily mean that a women's identity is not needed for feminist solidarity. Identification plays a role in solidarity, but it is not clear what kind of identification is necessary for solidarity. Allen seems to say that one does not need to have a unified conception of women, or even necessarily a unified identity of women to have solidarity among women. That is, there could be solidarity among women without a philosophical conception of women. One of the reasons that we separate the idea of women's shared group identity (such as what I claim) from a philosophical concept of women

216

(such as what Allen claims) is that the identity that women share and the respect in which women identify with each other do not in any way homogenize them. Having a shared women's identity means that their lives are in some general sense shaped by their gender reality; the way that they live their gender reality is that they are oppressed *as women*. In other words, it is because they are women that they are oppressed. Yet, they do not have to be oppressed in the same way to be oppressed *as women* because there can be differences within the shared gender oppression. This dialectic relationship between differences of women's oppression and a shared women's identity fits with the idea that there can be solidarity among women who are located in very different social and political circumstances. A particular woman may feel solidarity with women who are oppressed very differently than she is, because although gender oppression has different local meanings for her and other women, the solidarity is rooted in the fact that they are both oppressed *as women*. Maybe for some feminists (Allen for instance) differences undermine the possibility of there being a women's group identity, so having a philosophical conception of women is sufficient for feminist solidarity. However, in the discussion of women's solidarity, a women's group identity is a more useful concept than a philosophical conception of women. We can generalize about women no matter how different they are because they all are susceptible to oppression *as women*. In practice women all experience being treated *as women* in societies across borders, whether it is in the form of inequality or some other oppressive forms.

The idea of "women's group identity" can be ambiguous because the notion of "group" often suggests that members of the group act together or are capable of

acting together. In the context of forging women's solidarity, "women's group identity" obviously does not have this implication because what is built into the idea of "women's group identity" is not beyond there being an identity that all women share. That is, it is possible to have an identity to share with other people without existing as group in any practical sense. Allen asserts that identity politics is inadequate and that solidarity does not require identity politics, but it remains a question whether the concept of solidarity that Allen visions would actually advance the feminist movement due to her ambiguity of women's group identity. So it is necessary to further examine the issue of women's group identity by pointing to the inadequacy of Allen's concept of solidarity from two aspects.

One aspect is that it states that the mainstream feminist movement marginalizes or excludes certain groups of women (although the feminist movement started to focus on differences among women in the late 1960s and the 1970s). It is undeniable that the concept of women being used in the feminist literature is in fact sometimes too narrow. However, Allen's argument attacks the wrong target because what caused the marginalization and exclusion is not the category of women that assumingly excludes certain groups of women, but rather the assumption that the category of women cannot embrace differences among women. An alternative method that she suggests for feminist theories is one that she claims will minimize the emphasis on the membership in a social group and will instead stress the possibilities for alliances founded on non-identical connections such as "acting in concert." The alternative indicates an identity crisis and generates a situation where feminists aim to speak and make political demands in the name of

women, and at the same time reject the idea that there is a unified category of women. This alternative fails to explain what role that social groups play in the structure of male domination, neither does it explain what role women as a social group play in the elimination of gender oppression. Since she regards group identity only as a political fact, Allen is unable to recognize that women's group membership is the basis on which gender oppression occurs. As a matter of fact, identity politics helps women understand the structure of male domination and female oppression, because it provides a viewpoint for looking at women in terms of their membership in the social group *women*. A number of feminists who claim that male domination is a power also embrace the idea of women's group identity and believe that women are oppressed as a group (for instance, see Schwartzman 2006).

The other aspect of the inadequacy of Allen's concept of solidarity is that her concept of solidarity as "acting in concert or shared agreement" can lead to unexpected results. Feminist solidarity cannot simply be understood through reconstructing the communicative underpinnings of feminist coalitional practices or a politically constructed mutual recognition. If this kind of "coalition politics" is considered as a more appropriate form of organizing than identity politics, it would lead to further marginalization and exclusion within the feminist movement. For example, more and more Third World immigrant women are employed as domestic laborers in the global North, freeing their female employers to work outside of their home. If we adopt Allen's concept of solidarity, then this redistribution of domestic labor would be considered as emerging from a shared agreement since women in the global North do not force women in the global South into the international

domestic work market. We can even regard this arrangement as some sort of

solidarity in the sense of "acting in concert or shared agreement" because women in

the global South would be empowered at least financially through seeking

employment in the global North. Women in the global South and North have some

common interests and common goals, such as focusing on bettering themselves, but

these interests and goals are rather immediate, which mask the hidden conflicts of

self-interest. This kind of coalition should be scrutinized because there is also

exploitation along with the economic empowerment in the above scenario.

Although alliance between such groups of women are possible, Allen's concept of

solidarity does not help us fully see through the complex interplay of social power.

Some may object that Allen's concept of solidarity is useful for strategic

coalitions and alliances because it is attentive to differences and generates some

sort of sympathy feeling with fellow allies. I would respond that as far as sympathy,

love, and feeling-with are important components of feminist solidarity, strategic

coalitions and alliances built upon shared agreements are not sufficient for the

elimination of gender oppression because they fail to challenge the deeply rooted

patriarchal social structure. Gender oppression is experienced by members of the

social group *women*, which makes it crucial to construct a category of women as a

significant part of feminist solidarity

3. Global Feminism and its Critique

In the previous section, I focused on the aspect of women's group identity in the

discussion of feminist solidarity. In this section, I will focus on the aspect of cultural

differences by addressing a notion of global feminism and a critique of it.

3.1 Bunch's Notion of Global Feminism

Like Allen, Charlotte Bunch also concerns the relationship between diversity and

commonality and tries to find a common basis for women to be organized. Bunch

proposes a global perspective on feminist diversity through which women can learn

from each other. She argues that a global perspective on feminist ethics requires a

global vision of feminism—a feminism that is inclusive and seeks to reflect a wide

diversity of women's experiences and views. She suggests feminists not only

acknowledge and respect differences, but also struggle against social power that

divides women along differences.

> When diversity is understood as richness of possibility, it is possible to move
> beyond tolerance toward genuine engagement around difference. ...Feminist
> appreciation of diversity must move beyond tolerance to valuing diversity
> not by condescendingly allowing others to live but by learning from them.
> (1992, 181)

That is, a global perspective is one that regards the domestic life and the

international sphere as interconnected. Accordingly, feminists need to go beyond

nation-state boundaries to strengthen solidarity. Although Bunch acknowledges the

importance of solidarity, she nevertheless argues that the global networking should

go beyond solidarity to "a more integrated understanding of the connection

between what's happening in one country or another" (2001, 134). Bunch thus

advocates women's global networking, by which she means that women need to

understand the connection between local issues as well as the connection between

local issues and international issues. She argues that although there are differences among women's oppression, feminists need to find a common basis for women's global networking. What she finds compelling is "a commonality in the stories that they told about the discrimination and violence that they faced as women that brought them together in spite of their differences"(2001, 130), which justifies her belief that one of the universalities of the feminist struggle is the commonality of women's oppression. Bunch explains that the commonality of women's oppression can be shown in various forms of gender-based violence, such as battery, rape, female genital mutilation, female infanticide, and trafficking, which are human rights violations.

Bunch is actively involved in network building effects such as the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights, a loose worldwide coalition of groups and individuals formed in 1993. The driving force of this campaign is a commitment to building linkages among women across multiple boundaries locally and globally. Bunch asserts that women's networking develops a model that affirms the universality of human rights, which includes specifically women's rights, while respecting the diversity of particular experiences. She claims that feminist struggles are based on the commonality of women's oppression and that human rights are universal. As she states,

> The *universality* of human rights means that human rights should apply to every single person equally, for everyone is equal in simply being human. ...It is important to note that the concept of universality in human rights does not mean that everyone is or should be the same, but rather than all are equal in their rights by virtue of their humanities. (2001, 140, emphasis in original)

3.2 Chowdhury's Critique of Global Feminism

Some feminists not only dispute the commonality of women's oppression, but also criticize the political agenda of global feminism. For instance, Elora Chowdhury launches a critique of global feminism, which she believes to be critical of the notion of global sisterhood but nevertheless attaches itself to earlier western liberal feminist notions of democracy. She questions the role that global feminism plays when it addresses "women's issues elsewhere" in the U.S. academy and in global feminist politics and argues that global feminism (unintentionally) aids hegemonic maneuvers of the U.S. administration. There are two focuses in Chowdhury's criticism of global feminism: One is her critique of U.S. White feminists assumptions, such as "women elsewhere" are victimized by their cultures or countries, which flattens the oppression of women in other cultures; the other is her critique of the unreflected consequences of global feminist actions such as the advocacy of (a Western notion of) human rights in other countries. Both critiques point to the necessity of bridging U.S women of color anti-racist feminism and Third World transnational feminism to resist the hegemony of Western White feminism.

First of all, Chowdhury argues that the utilization of discrete categories such as "women of color" and "Third World women" hinder feminist alliances because the former is normally used to refer to women of national minorities within the United States while the latter refers to "women elsewhere." Accordingly, global feminism focuses on addressing "women's issues elsewhere." Chowdhury argues that although the theory of intersectionality is applied to analyze women's experiences in the United States, the intersectional analysis has not yet been utilized to analyze women beyond borders, which leads to the result that "women in the USA

223

become a singular individual with freedom to choose in opposition to her victimized singular third world counterpart" (2009, 60). Although she recognizes the importance of alliances between U.S. women of color and Third World women, Chowdhury does not intend to integrate these two categories into one category because doing so "smudges over the necessity of analyses around nation as well as race" (57). She claims that struggles experienced by women of color and Third World women are ignored (by White women) because they are divisive. She thus suggests connecting "the struggles of US anti-racist and third world feminists—at times viewed as divisive—in order to envision a collective response to the hegemony of white feminism" (58). In this sense, she acknowledges both the intersections and the divergences of U.S. women of color anti-racist feminism and Third World transnational feminism.

Secondly, Chowdhury asserts that global feminism posits itself as a benevolent savior of women in other cultures, which relies on an assumption that the United States is a free country where human rights are respected while women in Other cultures are abused by their cultures. This opposition between "free us" and "oppressed them" has the consequence of justifying Western liberal notion of democracy and leaving its role unexamined in the hegemonic reconstruction of a U.S. empire through governmental military intrusion of other countries.

> [G]lobal feminism aids the US government's political strategy of positioning America as the site of authoritative enunciations of freedom and rights whose representatives can judge the immoral practice of other nation states. Using the logic of global feminism, female US government representatives support US foreign policy strategies and interventions in the name of women's rights activism. (61)

By doing so, Chowdhury claims, global feminism reproduces "the West as its predetermined default frame of reference" (51). For instance, global feminism uses a universal human rights paradigm to posit itself as the savior of women in non-Western societies. She argues that the advocacy of women's human rights by global feminism perpetuates a framework of commonality of women's oppression because it flattens experiences of Third World women into "wounded experiences" by ignoring historical contexts of these experiences; meanwhile, the agenda of global feminism and its political implications remain unexamined.

Chowdhury's alternative to the problematic notion of global feminism is braiding U.S. women of color and transnational feminisms. She claims that bridging U.S. women of color anti-racist feminism and Third World transnational feminism helps to deepen our understanding of globalization and global feminism. According to her, this alternative is similar to Chandra Mohanty's mission. Mohanty claims that the common context of struggles against exploitation can potentially create "transnational feminist solidarity" among Third World women or women of color (2003,144). That is, Mohanty promotes an anticapitalist transnational feminist solidarity to struggle against capitalism and globalization. She argues that globalization is a site for recolonization of peoples in the Two-Thirds World, but their exploitation in globalization in turn give them epistemic privilege and the potentials to form a particular form of solidarity that is anticapitalist and antiglobalist. Mohanty uses both Third World/South and Two-Thirds World to refer to women who are the social minority of the globe. One-Third World and Two-Thirds World are categories that incorporate social power relations and are based

on a quality of life gradation. According to her, underprivileged and marginalized

women have epistemic privilege and therefore the discourse and practices of social

justice is going to be able to reveal how the social power works and be the most

inclusive if it includes these women's marginalized social locations and experiences.

Furthermore, because these women are marginalized and exploited by capitalism's

effects, they have the potential ability to analyze and act against capitalism. As

Chowdhury comments on Mohanty's account of feminist solidarity,

> Drawing connections between the critique of white feminism by women of
> color and of "western feminism" by third world feminists working within
> paradigms of decolonization, Mohanty called for the building of a
> noncolonizing feminist solidarity across borders. (2009, 73 n1)

That is, it seems that both Chowdhury and Mohanty argue that the purpose of

formulation of transnational feminism is to resist (hegemonic) white and western

feminism. [20]

4. Imagining Transcultural Feminist Solidarity

From the previous discussions about the various feminist approaches to solidarity,

it seems that the issues centered around women's solidarity are: (1) the question of

the relation of a philosophical conception of women to feminist solidarity, which is

different from the question of the relation of a women's identity to feminist

solidarity; and (2) how should a concept of feminist solidarity confront the cultural

differences in an increasingly transnational condition. If we have an adequate idea

of women's identity and an adequate idea of culture, then what would be the

conditions for solidarity? How would we forge solidarity, and how would it be

expressed or recognized if the transcultural approach is materialized? In what follows, I will offer a description of the normative ideal of solidarity in order to argue that a transcultural feminist solidarity is related to an adequate idea of women's identity in the context of cultural differences. I speculate that as the normative ideal of feminist solidarity, transcultural feminist solidarity would at least include the following two aspects.

From the aspect of identity politics, transcultural feminist solidarity emphasizes women's group identity, which includes identification as women because women are subject to oppression *as women*, so it helps ease the tension between the commonality of conditions and differences among the members from a gender standpoint. It seems that the relationship between commonality and difference plays an important role in the discussion of women's solidarity, which is a practical as well as a theoretical idea. The normative ideal of feminist solidarity recognizes the diversity of individual women but also focuses on building the common cause for solidarity. As we saw in Part One, a category of women can accommodate differences among women rather than reduce differences to attributes or an essence that women share. Transcultural feminism understands these differences as necessary transcultural conditions for women's solidarity, which is different from the universalist understanding that views differences as the primary threat to solidarity. The "difference critique" has launched debates about how relations between White women and women of color have often been constructed to reinforce differences in social and institutional status that are founded on race, class, and culture. In this context, transcultural feminist solidarity

should also address class and structural inequality because there is a tension between the commonality of conditions and differences among members from the standpoint of class. Feminist solidarity in the feminist movement does not isolate itself from other social movements because woman is a category concerning racial, sexual orientation, religious, and class differences. That is, feminist solidarity is aligned with other kinds of solidarity. We do not need to reach the commonality among women to attain women's solidarity. There is no need for commonality at any level to have solidarity because in the space of interference, commonality and differences do not have much value and significance.

From the aspect of cultural differences, transcultural feminist solidarity is an account for creating a self-consciously constructed space of transcultural interference where women's resistance to male domination is established by consciously forming a coalition in the name of women. Solidarity connects U.S. women of color feminism with Third World transnational feminism. In fact, the divide between these two feminisms is one of motives for transcultural feminist solidarity. The normative ideal of feminist solidarity should provide the flexibility that enables individuals to loosen themselves from certain cultural backgrounds and sample other cultures without pretending to be deeply enmeshed with any particular cultural background. Transculturalism could provide such flexibility because a preliminary summary of transcultural feminism is that it represents a serious attempt to overcome shortcomings of various feminist approaches to solidarity such as "global sisterhood," political coalition, and global feminism. Transcultural feminist theorizations center around differences between women of

different cultures and largely appropriate contemporary analysis of transnational

capitalism to formulate theories and practices, and to understand themselves as

generated by a novel transnational condition.

We can see that the concept of transcultural feminist solidarity is already

present in the feminist discussion of solidarity when we look at Chowdhury's and

Mohanty's accounts of feminist solidarity. Chowdhury points out the limitation of

feminist understanding of Other cultures, which is a similar argument to the

problematic notion of culture in my discussion of feminist multiculturalism. She

also points out the limitation of the theory of intersectionality when it comes to

transnational issues. For instance, there is a stark distinction between a discussion

of the complexity of "our issues" such as the intersection of race and gender *and* a

simplified "their issues" such as the lack of human rights. This shows that some

approaches of "difference critique" in feminist multiculturalism are unable to

capture the complexity of transnational issues. Feminists such as Chowdhury and

Mohanty demonstrate that feminists can develop a women's collaboration that is

grounded in differences, rather than working towards solidarity that is founded on

sameness. The plausibility of Chowdhury's and Mohanty's accounts of women's

solidarity is partly due to, I argue, their employment of something like what I am

calling the transcultural approach. For instance, although Mohanty's concept of

solidarity is articulated within the context of multiculturalism, it nevertheless has

elements of transcultural feminist solidarity. Mohanty rightly points out that

capitalism and globalization are the sources of some Third World women's

oppression. For example, some Third World women go abroad as domestic

laborers. From the perspective of globalization, this kind of immigrant work is a

free exchange of labor; but from the perspective of antigloblization, the nature of

exploitation is also displayed in laborers' struggles. This understanding of solidarity

fits the agenda of the transcultural approach. In fact, Mohanty addresses women's

solidarity by employing a transcultural approach, although she has not explicitly

expressed it or distinguished it from multiculturalism.

However, according to Chowdhury's and Mohanty's discussions, it seems that

solidarity between the U.S. women of color anti-racist and Third World

transnational feminism is possible only if the target of their resistance is White

feminism and Western feminism. I argue that we should resist this kind of

dichotomy between White Western women and women of color or Third World

women. After all, there is no such a stark distinction between White Western

women, women of color, and Third World women when it comes to gender

oppression. With a transcultural consciousness and the principle of interference,

women can interact with other women in a larger scale across

culture/ethnicity/class lines. Emergent feminist transcultural solidarity involves a

practice or learning that is specific to a transcultural commitment to interference.

Employing the conception of interference breaks the momentum of simply focusing

on differences. Transcultural experiences help women to understand the

importance of interference and to think about the basis for women acting

collectively.

5. Applying the Notion of Transcultural Feminist Solidarity in the Formulation of Solidarity between Chinese Women and U.S. Women

Previously, I argued that Mohanty's account of transnational feminist solidarity and Chowdhury's proposal of braiding U.S. women of color feminism with Third World transnational feminism foreshadow a form of transcultural consciousness. To further elaborate on this issue, I will explore the relationship between Chinese women and U.S. women as a way to test out whether transcultural feminist solidarity is helpful for forging mutual understanding and to examine implications of the previous discussions of feminist solidarity in Chinese women's situations. I look at the relationship between Chinese and U.S. women because the two countries are increasingly involved with each other. I will argue that the transcultural approach can help feminists: (1) Recognize the need to enhance communication among women in China and in the United States; (2) understand the uniqueness and complexity of Chinese women's situations; and (3) examine the hidden exploitation of Chinese women in the context of globalization.

First of all, the transcultural approach illuminates a lack of communication between Chinese women and U.S. women that multiculturalism fails to reveal. In the U.S. academia, some feminists are challenged by Third World women, which has resulted in segregated feminisms such as Third World women feminism and various area studies of women. The feminist "difference critique" in the United States occurred concurrently with the Chinese policy of opening its door to the world. Yet, there is a lack of discussions of Chinese women's experiences in (Western) feminist literature. This is not only due to the fact that Western feminism "ignores" the

situations of Chinese women, but also due to the fact that Chinese women do not take the initiative to participate in dialogues with U.S. women. The model of multiculturalism does not contribute to the consciousness-raising in China because feminism is regarded by Chinese women as a Western concept that has little to do with their Chinese situations. Examining how Western feminist theories of oppression, identity, and solidarity apply to Chinese women is an underexplored area of feminist scholarship. It is worth exploring why Chinese women are seldom mentioned in the multicultural feminist rhetoric or are only placed in stereotypical positions when they are discussed, and why the study of Chinese women is neglected academically, and how the transcultural approach would improve this situation. For instance, it is disturbing to see the Western feminist literature uses foot binding—a phenomenon that becomes more and more distant to contemporary Chinese women—as a symbol of Chinese women's oppression. The neglected and outdated stereotype of Chinese women in the (Western) feminist literature (1) presents a distinctive challenge to a Western paradigm case ("free us" versus "oppressed them"); (2) shows us that the complexity and changes of Chinese cultures (and women) are unexamined by feminist multiculturalism, which in turn provides evidence of limitations of multicultural approaches; and (3) demonstrates the promise of the transcultural approach, which not only addresses why there is a lack of Chinese women's voice in the feminist scholarship, but also offers an approach to forge women's solidarity globally.

Secondly, the transcultural approach can help us explore the uniqueness and complexity of Chinese women's situations. Chinese women have their own

understandings of issues that concern both them and Western feminists; for example, in the context of poverty elimination, Chinese women view reproductive rights differently from U.S. feminists. It is broadly accepted in the United States that women's reproductive rights are women's right and thus human rights, so the Chinese state regulation on women's reproductive right is viewed as oppressive and inhuman. However, the assumption that there is a positive correlation between economic growth, the population control, and the advance of women is generally accepted without critical examination in China. An immediate but complicated case is the Chinese government's one-child policy, which Western feminists criticize as detrimental to women, but the policy has broad support in China, especially among urban Chinese women. To understand Chinese women's "insensibility" to, acceptance of, and support of policies that are claimed to be anti-human rights, we need to locate these issues within the historical and contemporary context of China rather than speculating and scrutinizing them from a universalist (and Western) point of view. The issue of reproductive rights does not seem to be the most pressing issue from the perspective of ordinary Chinese people. Although the issue of reproductive rights is a legitimate human rights issue, focusing on it ignores the most immediate issues to Chinese women. There are other issues of concern to Chinese women that are ignored in the rhetoric of women's human rights. To most Chinese, government corruption, social and economic disparity, poverty, unemployment, housing, medical care, education, inner migration, etc. are more pressing than other social issues. Women in post-1949 China believe that the degree of their liberation is rather high, certainly in comparison to the previous

generations and probably also higher than women in most other contemporary countries. There is a huge contrast in life quality in terms of materials and education within the three decades since the one-child policy took effect, though one may argue that this concurred with the rapid growth of Chinese economy and it came with a very high price. But to the Chinese, the achievements are visible and immediate, so the price is often overlooked.[21] Maybe having a better quality of life is one of the reasons that Chinese women support the one-child policy. One may argue that educated Chinese women are "brainwashed" by the government reproduction propaganda while less educated Chinese women remain intact (since the one-child policy encounters more obstacles in rural areas than in urban areas), but it is questionable whether choosing between endorsing an unrestricted reproductive choice and promoting a higher life quality is a hard choice for most Chinese women.

Lastly, the transcultural approach can help feminists understand and address the exploitation of Chinese women in the global market. Similar to women in other developing Third World countries, Chinese women face the dilemma of economic development versus capitalist exploitation. China has been going through new class stratification under the influence of capitalization and globalization. More and more urban professional Chinese women hire women who migrate from rural areas as caregivers. More Chinese women work in industries that are part of the global economy, either within or outside China. Domestically, one sees female inner migrants provide service and domestic labor to urban people as nannies, cleaning ladies, senior caregivers, street food vendors, massagers, etc. Internationally, one

sees Chinese women work in nail salons, small restaurants, shopping mall massage kiosks, someone's house, etc. There are also Chinese women who work in manufacturing plants, make clothes, clean and package food, most of which is exported overseas. For instance, cities and towns on the East coast of China prosper on exporting packaged seafood and fresh produce to other countries, which relies on female laborers who work 10 hours a shift. The wall between being employed in the assembly line filleting fish and sitting at the dinner table eating the fish someone else fillets, for the majority of Chinese, is education, which they believe is the most effective way to shake off poverty and improve social status. There is a strong belief in China that education is the most effective means for a country and its people to resist exploitation. With limited education resources and a large population, population control together with the dramatic expansion of higher education is an effective strategy to guarantee that more Chinese receive higher education. It is not surprising that an increasing number of Chinese students and young professionals study and work in the United States. A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that 47% of all foreign applications for fall-2012 graduate spots are from China.[22] Hopefully, the younger generation would be able to better solve the dilemma of population control and development and simultaneously build a cultural bridge between China and the United States. In this sense, transcultural experiences can greatly change the demography and understanding of cultures and the interaction between the U.S. and Chinese cultures would demonstrate that cultural boundaries are porous and that individual cultures are dynamic.

6. Obstacles to Transcultural Feminist Solidarity

In this section, I will address obstacles to transcultural feminist solidarity and propose some intermediate ways toward transcultural feminist solidarity. By pointing out obstacles and limitations to solidarity, I show that new solidarity can emerge from the idea of transculture and that the transcultural approach fosters a high potential for solidarity.

Transcultural feminist solidarity may encounter obstacles. For instance, the individual lives of women, such as family ties, individual interests, and religious commitments, are so different that it is difficult for women to act together. Discussions of differences and other factors lead to the divide of U.S. women of color feminism and Third World feminism. It is even more challenging for women across class, racial, ethnic, and national lines to forge solidarity. In particular, the class difference remains a potential obstacle to achieving transcultural solidarity. The class issue is not a conceptual issue; rather, it is a practical issue. The class issue raises the need for adequate understanding of social conditions that block solidarity. However, it is exactly these obstacles that make it important for women to forge solidarity to resist male oppression, because women need mutual understanding, common activities, and political initiatives to transform the patriarchal framework. So, transculturalism must be combined with social movements, i.e., the combination of theoretical transculturalism and activist work to lead to solidarity. There are also limitations that can be speculated about transcultural feminist solidarity. One limitation has to do with the power of terms such as transculturalism, which can be suspected to lose its power in politics. For instance, it remains questionable how it

would be received by people or communities who are more concerned with race or class issues. What needs to be acknowledged is that as a valuable term, transculturalism works better in some contexts but not in others. I use terms such as transculturalism mainly in a context of transnational interactions and globalization and I fully acknowledge that it might lose its power in certain power relations. The reason that I promote this term is that it is appropriate to use for describing and analyzing transcultural experiences that more and more people are experiencing.

In addition, the stability of solidarity fostered by the conception of transculture requires support from the society, so the society has to be transformed in reference with the transcultural approach as well. People who benefit from the patriarchy are unlikely to share the same goal with feminists, thus transcultural feminist solidarity still faces severe challenges. Because of the mobility brought by immigration, connections among women across national borders are strengthened, but they also confront new barriers. For instance, in the case of international immigration, it is more likely for new female immigrants to seek alliance with ethnic groups than with native women, because there are cultural and language barriers to the communication between immigrant women and local women. In this case, feminism aims to transform oppressive social structures of gender inequalities. The transformation process is more like an evolution, which requires feminists to seek alliance with feminist men. If women want to establish an international female solidarity, then they need to formulate collective power to transform the current patriarchal framework. In this sense, political solidarity may not be the only point

of reference. For instance, we should place a political notion of solidarity in the context of other concepts of solidarity that are relevant to challenging gender oppression. We can consider other kinds of group bonds that involve a kind of social mutuality and cooperation that defies the individualist model. It is plausible to think of a notion of "intermediate solidarity" as a transitional stage in between women's personal friendship and international women's solidarity. For instance, unions such as clubs, communities, cultural organizations, neighborhood associations, and support groups are all necessary to forge certain scales of women's solidarity locally. However, these groups should be formulated under the guidance of female political solidarity to a national level. Eventually, women need another movement like the consciousness-raising movement to forge solidarity across borders while emphasizing the importance of cultural, racial, and class differences.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the concept of solidarity is crucial for the feminist movement from two aspects: (1) Solidarity reminds us that the feminist movement is a collective movement and participants should be empowered collectively, which has to do with the necessity of a women's group identity; and (2) solidarity is particularly necessary when the feminist discourse focuses on differences among women to such an extent that there is a divide in feminism.

I have made my argument from the first aspect by criticizing Allen's concept of solidarity since she is not fully committed to women's group identity. Women are

not oppressed as individuals, but rather as members of the social group *women*; and

men benefit from the group-based male supremacy. Women's oppression cannot be

reduced to economic inequalities, class exploitations, racial discriminations, cultural

imperialism, or other social injustices because these social forces are

interdependent and intertwined, thus resulting in the complexity of gender

oppression. Only by acting collectively and by forging transcultural solidarity will

women solve these structural and systemic problems. I have made my argument

from the second aspect by criticizing Bunch's notion of global feminism. The divide

of feminism is partly due to the pervasiveness of multiculturalism in feminism.

According to multiculturalism, culture is a self-enclosed and self-sufficient entity,

thus there are differences between "our culture" and "their cultures" and we

(Western feminists) should "help them." This salvation attitude lacks meaningful

engagement and does not foster solidarity because of its superficial

acknowledgment of differences without addressing the interaction of differences.

The feminist approaches to solidarity has its advantages as well as

shortcomings, which shows that we need an alternative concept of solidarity to

guide the feminist movement to realize the goal of eliminating women's

subordination. It seems that Allen, Bunch, Chowdhury, and Mohanty all agree that

feminists should bridge the divide in feminism, no matter what their opinions about

identity politics and cultural differences are. So we need a specific account of

women's political solidarity across cultures to address concerns that feminists have

about differences among women. The alternative perspective, which I name

transcultural feminist solidarity, endorses women's group identity and addresses

structural inequality, global injustice, and cultural differences. Practices or initiatives that draw from the transcultural approach (or at least act in a way that is consistent with such an approach) can foster solidarity. By showing challenges to transcultural feminist solidarity, I argued that the transcultural approach intends to promote the interaction of feminism, even of those women who are from different cultural backgrounds and class locations. These interactions, such as genuine dialogues between Chinese and American feminists, would benefit from following the transcultural approach and as a result they would contribute to women's solidarity in general.

This chapter managed to bring the discussions in the previous chapters into a normative discussion of feminist transcultural solidarity. I demonstrated that the conclusions from previous chapters, such as a category of women with the variability and the dynamics of women, a concept of culture with the variability and the dynamics of cultures, and a transcultural approach that is promising to overcome the flaws of multiculturalism, contribute to the conclusion that I made in this chapter. That is, while we acknowledge differences among women and among cultures, we should learn to understand differences, confront conflicts, and intentionally build bridges to decrease the divide in feminism. This dissertation is a small step toward the bridge building from an individual who benefits from transcultural experiences, through which, one does not only understand others better but also understands oneself better.

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[1] It is important to note that the "problem of difference" was not a phenomenon that was new in the 1980s. As a matter of fact, differences among women, such as class, race and sexuality, were already salient concerns for feminist solidarity in women's movements in the late 1960s and the 1970s. For instance, Marilyn Frye mentions that the National Organization for Women in the 1970s raised issues such as race and sexuality (see Frye 1996, 1006 n17). However, feminism in the 1960s and 1970s was more concerned with women's common interests while the feminist theory has turned its focus on women's differences since the 1980s.

[2] Spelman does not use the term "particularity argument" herself, but her argument about "inessential woman" is arguing for the particularity of women. I use the term "particularity argument" to refer to this emphasis of hers.

[3] Contemporary feminist uses of intersectionality became popular in the early 1980s when U.S. academic feminism underwent a dramatic paradigm shift. At the time, groundbreaking books challenged the essentialist underpinnings of White academic feminism and its accompanying account of gender. These books include Angela Davis's *Women, race and class* (1983), bell hooks, *Ain't I a woman? Black women and feminism* (1981), Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's *The bridge called my Back: Radical writings by women of color* (2002 [1981]), Gloria Hull, Patricia Scott and Barbara Smith's *But some of us are brave* (1993 [1983]), Audre Lorde's *Sister outsider* (2007[1984]), Elizabeth V. Spelman's *Inessential women: Problem of exclusion in feminist thought* (1988), and Patricia Hill Collins's *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* (2008 [1990]). Using this basic insight, feminist critical race theorists coined the term "intersectionality" to name approaches to discrimination that treated oppressions as multiplicative rather than additive. Amongst the discourses on intersectionality, Crenshaw's crossroads and traffic metaphor is a popular tool.

[4] Crenshaw states, "Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group...tries to navigate the main crossing in the city....The main highway is 'racism road.' One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street....She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, those named as road signs, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression." See Crenshaw, 2001, "The intersection of gender and race discrimination," paper presented at the World Conference Against. The paper is cited in Yuval-Davis 2006,196.

[5] Brown states that postmodernity to her signifies "a pervasive condition and experience of 'being after'" (31). For instance, it means after Platonic forms, Hegelian totality, and Kantian reason and will, etc.

[6] For more discussions about the theory of intersectionality, see the section about Crenshaw in Part One.

[7] William Sewell (1999, 52-55), Bennett (2005, 68), and Song (2007) discuss this transformed sense of culture.

[8] See Kymlicka 1995, 103, 218 n29 for his discussions of a shared language.

[9] Kymlicka argues that group-differentiated rights should be granted for ethnic groups and national minorities can be justified via three arguments: (1) equality-based arguments, which claim that disadvantages that the minority face can be corrected by group-differentiated rights;(2) history-based arguments, which claim that the minority should be granted group-differentiated rights because of historical reasons; and (3) arguments that cultural diversity has intrinsic values. (See 1995, Chapter 6)

[10] Neither Kymlicka nor Okin defines multiculturalism in terms of disadvantaged groups such as women, people of races other than Caucasian, gays and lesbians, formerly colonized people, and indigenous people (see Kymlicka 1995, 198 n10 and Okin 1989, 661).

[11] Okin published two overlapping articles on multiculturalism and feminism in the late 1990s. One is "*Is Multiculturalism Bad for Feminism?*" (1999), and the other is "*Feminism and Multiculturalism: Some Tensions*" (1998). In the article "*Multiculturalism and Feminism: No Simple Question, No Simple Answers*" (2005), Okin states that the "*Some Tensions*"(1998) article, which has a more neutral title, contains a longer and more philosophical version of the same argument she makes in the 1999 article. She argues that readers misinterpret her when they consider her holding an affirmative answer to the question "Is multiculturalism bad for feminism?" or consider her suggesting societies have to choose between feminism and multiculturalism. (See 2005, 71-2) To do justice to Okin's argument, I mainly discuss and cite her "*Some Tension*" (1998) piece in this part.

[12] To avoid the feminism/multiculturalism dilemma, Kymlicka distinguishes two kinds of "group rights": One is "internal restrictions" and the other is "external protection" (1989). "Internal restrictions" claim rights to restrict the choice of its own members in the name of preserving the culture, while "external protections" claim rights against the power of the larger society. From a liberal standpoint, "internal restrictions" are impermissible because they create or exacerbate inequality and injustice within the group, while "external protections" are acceptable because they help promote justice and autonomy of individuals. Kymlicka argues that both feminism and multiculturalism challenge the inadequacy of the traditional liberal concept of individual rights. That is, feminism and multiculturalism have a common interest in fighting the liberal complacencies: (1) Both pay attention to the structure of societal institutions, including the workplace and family; (2) both provide the same explanation for why traditional liberal theories are not satisfactory—the distinctive needs and interests of women and ethnocultural minorities are never addressed in the traditional liberal theory; and (3) both look to similar remedies for the inadequacy of the traditional liberal theory—rights for women that are not available to men are required to replace the

traditional identical treatment of the liberal theory that fails to recognize the interests of women and cultural minorities.

[13] Kymlicka states the different senses of multiculturalism: "These various senses of culture are reflected in the different meaning attached to the term 'multiculturalism' in different countries. In Canada, it typically refers to the right of immigrants to express their ethnic identity without fear of prejudice or discrimination; in Europe, it often refers to the sharing of powers between national communities; in the USA, it is often used to include the demands of marginalized social groups." (1995, 198 n9)

[14] Epstein does not capitalize "black" or "white" when he refers to races.

[15] Kristen MaCabe. "Chinese Immigrants in the United States," accessed January 2, 2012. http://www.migrationinformation.org/USfocus/display.cfm?ID=876

[16] Although Lugones was aware that "*interwoven* or *intermeshed* or *enmeshed* may provide better images," she was not "ready to give up the term [interlocking] because it is used by other women of color theorists who write in a liberatory vein about enmeshed oppression. …At the time of this writing, I had not drawn the distinction between intermeshed oppressions and the interlocking of oppressions" (Lugones 2003, 146 n1, emphasis in original).

[17] "I am making mayonnaise. I place the yolk in a bowl, add a few drops of water, stir, and the add oil drop by drop, very slowly, as I continue stirring. If I add too much oil at once, the mixture separates. …In English, one might say that the mayonnaise curdled. Mayonnaise is an oil-in-water emulsion. As all emulsions, it is unstable. When an emulsion curdles, the ingredients become separate from each other. But that is not altogether an accurate description: rather, they coalesce toward oil or toward water, most of the water becomes separate from most of the oil—it is instead, a matter of different degrees of coalescence. The same with mayonnaise; when it separates, you are left with yolky oil and oily yolk." (Lugones 2003, 122)

[18] For instance, Sandra Bartky (2002) emphasizes the function of sympathy in forging women's solidarity from the perspective of phenomenology. According to her, genuine collective fellow-feeling is crucial for the development of feminist political solidarity because fellow-feeling experience can promote the kind of solidarity that encourages attentiveness to difference. However, an endorsement of political fellow-feeling to form a common goal is different from deconstructing gender in the feminist discourse. In other words, solidarity is a political practice rather than a strategic practice of fellow-feeling.

[19] Bill Powell. "Meeting Kim Jong Un." TIME. February 27, 2012, p. 34.

[20] Although Mohanty criticizes both "essentialist" identity politics and postmodernist skepticism about identity, she is ambiguous about women's identity: On the one hand, she disassociates herself from postmodernism and claims that the hegemonic postmodernist discourse "emphasizes only the mutability and constructedness of identities and social structures" (2003, 225); on the other hand,

she draws on Jodi Dean's notion of "reflective solidarity," which is crafted on the basis of an interactive, communicative, and in-process understanding of the "we." [21] Looking at some of the data would help us understand better why Chinese women in general support this "inhuman" one-child policy. The population of China was 563 million in 1950, after which China went through a baby boom, when the majority of Chinese went through poverty. With a similarly sized land, the United States had a population of 311 million while China's population was estimated to be 1.3 billion in 2011. In 2010 China's GDP per capita—a proxy for standards of living—was 16% of the United States (up from just 2% in 1980 and 7% in 2000). In 1980, a year after one-child policy took effect, China's GDP per capita was $193, while U.S.'s was $12,186. In 2010, thirty years after the one-child policy took effect, China's GDP per capita was $4,428, while U.S.'s was $47,199. World Bank website. Accessed April 5, 2012. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD. In terms of education, in 1979, Chinese college admission rate was 6.1% (280,000 freshmen out of 4,680,000 national college entrance exam takers) while in 2011 it was 72% (6,750,000 out of 9,330,000). In 2000, twenty years after the one-child policy took effect, the college admission rate was 59% (3,200,000 out of 3,750,000). The data shows that in China, it is common knowledge that the life quality, which is indicated by the income and the educational level, is closely related to population. Zhongguo Boke Wang (Chinese Blog Site). Accessed April 4, 2012. http://www.cnblogs.com/tohen/archive/2011/06/07/2074518.html.

[22] Fischer, Karin. "Chinese students account for about half of all international applicants to U.S. graduate programs." The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 3, 2012. Accessed April 4, 2012. http://chronicle.com/article/Chinese-Students-Account-for/131416/.