

## Introduction

WHAT MAKES ALLIANCES work? This question has become central in many of the debates in feminist ethics and politics.<sup>1</sup> As the practice of feminist politics has demonstrated, the moral commitments of feminism to resist domination and enable the well-being of women refer not to a simple or singular category, but rather to a diverse and complex group of persons with varying interests, needs, and desires. This diversity and complexity implies that feminism, rather than being constituted through the practice of a single movement, depends on a series of alliances among and across a spectrum of issues and movements. The past several decades have seen repeated challenges to dominative feminist theories and practices which would deny the diversity and complexity of those women who are the subject of feminist movement(s).<sup>2</sup> Women of color, lesbians, poor and working-class women, Jewish women, "third world women," sex radicals, disabled women... (this list can never be completed) have repeatedly challenged theoretical and political practices which would narrow the focus of feminism and reinscribe social structural dominations along the lines of race, sexuality, class, religion, ability... (Beck 1982, Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981, Lorde 1984, Samois 1987, Zandy 1990, Mohanty et al. 1991, Eiesland 1994). These challenges have established a recognition that any feminist undertaking is the site of complicated alliance politics and further that any woman is herself the subject of diversity and complexity, living in the midst of (sometimes contradictory) alliances and divisions (de Lauretis 1986).

The recognition that diversity and complexity are the subject of feminist movement(s) has raised further questions about contemporary democratic politics. Feminist movements challenge public spaces which exclude or subordinate women, and they raise the question of whether democracy itself depends on alliance formation in and among public spheres. Why, for example, have the modern democratic promises of liberty and justice for all remained unfulfilled for the majority of persons? Put in terms of ethical theory, why have the enlightenment moral claims which supposedly ground democratic politics, particularly the claim to universal respect for all persons, been persistently accompanied by historical dominations? And, what of the social movements which have over the past two centuries been dedicated to addressing and redressing inadequate democratization—women's movements, anti-racist movements,

anti-colonialist movements, labor movements, Marxist movements? Why have the achievements of social movements in extending democratic participation remained partial? Have counter-public social movements been fully democratic themselves? How can the constitution of radically democratic alliances within and among social movements contribute to the constitution of democratic public spheres?

Despite the current emphasis on alliances in feminist theories and practices, the production of alliances has proven difficult, often with significant consequences. Feminist movements have sometimes broken down over the failure to form alliances, while right-wing groups seem at times to be more effective at alliance politics than do feminists; hence, the urgency of the question, How do alliances work? The challenges of alliance politics can be more usefully addressed, however, by focusing on the activities and processes of alliances building, thus, reversing the question, How do alliances work? to How do we work—in, with, through—alliances? How can we make alliances work? This shift toward the active unsettles some of the assumptions which have proven problematic for alliance formation, assumptions, for example, that women share some commonality prior to the activity of movement or that unitary, pre-given selves and communities are the building blocks of alliances. A focus on the activities and processes of alliance building brings to the fore questions of constitution: How do women become a movement? How are various women's movements related? How do they interact?

Through this shift in focus, the "we" that turns the question of alliances from the passive to the active voice—that turns How do alliances work? to How do we work alliances?—is recognized as the active site of alliance formation. "We" is a term which has been the subject of much criticism because of its tendency to assume as already existent the very relationships which it constitutes. Naming and claiming a "we" can establish a group of diverse and complex persons as a collectivity or even a movement. Yet, this act of naming a particular "we" can establish a series of exclusions, inclusions, and marginalizations, while also obscuring the action of constructing these relational locations, making both inclusion and exclusion appear pre-given or natural. Naming a particular "we" creates a "they" which is not part of "us," while it can also falsely include persons who do not recognize themselves within a particular movement or who may be included only on the margins with little influence in structuring the relationships implied in "we." The temptation to give up on the "we" (as both linguistic term and social location) is countered by the possibility that such a denial will once again erase the operations of social construction, hiding the particular activities which form social relationships and, thereby, removing them from potential criticism. Thus, the task of alliance politics is to constitute the term "we," while simultaneously questioning it and pushing its limits.

A further question is raised by asking how we work in and through alliances: the question of how "we" become allies. The term "alliance" usefully includes a reference to a subject position within the context of alliance, that of the "ally." How does working in solidarity also work to create persons who can be allies? Persons or groups do not necessarily come to alliances with pre-determined needs and interests, or even selves and communities.<sup>3</sup> Rather, the processes of interaction which are alliance formation constitute both persons and groups. Chela Sandoval's (1990, 1991) analysis of "oppositional consciousness" as a site of alliance among "women of color" or "third world women" is a salient example of this type of self- and alliance-constitution. There is no necessarily shared interest among the groups of women named by Sandoval. In fact, much of dominative U.S. politics is dedicated to creating divisions among these groups. Thus, only by creating a joint position (as Sandoval argues was done, for example, in certain struggles within the National Women's Studies Association in the early 1980s) could the "oppositional" subject position of women as allies over against the power structures of enforced separation become a site of political activity. Sandoval further argues that positions of alliance across difference must continually shift, be constantly re-created, as the differences among women "give us access to ever new and dynamic tactics for intervening in the systems which oppress us—tactics which are capable of changing to confront the ever-changing movements of power" (1990, 67). Focusing on the question of how we not only create alliances, but how we also create ourselves as allies, denaturalizes both the "we" and the "I" who are the subjects of moral agency.

In raising issues of moral agency I am engaging a field of contemporary feminist theorizing which has been constituted around questions of "agency." Debates over modern or postmodern theories, for example, frequently revolve around the question of whether modern theories constrain, or postmodern theories undercut, possibilities for agency.<sup>4</sup> In these arguments agency means variously ethical agency or political agency or simply human action. Given that the possibility of agency, of action, is seen as central to the possibility of human subjectivity, agency and subjectivity are frequently intertwined.<sup>5</sup> I will argue that the subject of agency is constituted in and through activity, recognizing that social power relations both enable and constrain, but don't simply determine, this constitution. As anthropologist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing points out, "[p]eople play with, pervert, stretch, and oppose the very matrix of power that gives them the ability to act" (1993, 232). Alliances and moral agency will be read as interactively constituted within fields of social power. I undertake this study as an ethics in order to address these questions of agency directly, but in so doing I also challenge the boundaries which have traditionally contained the ethical, reconnecting ethics to both politics and subjectivity. The purpose of my analysis is to consider how feminist movements think and

do "agency," and how we might think and do agency "differently." Thus, I use ethical theory as a prism for rethinking issues of difference, in part because ethics has served as a central site for the constitution of the coherent, modern subject in relation to the normal/normative. I argue, however, that ethical spaces can be constituted as places of required contestation, thus, subverting the supposedly coherent subject of agency.<sup>6</sup> This move marks the ethical as a space of both diversity and complexity, even as it marks agency as a space of alliances.

### **The Problem of Diversity**

Contemporary challenges to modern moral reasoning from a number of perspectives have led to a recognition that moral claims are made within a social world of moral multiplicity.<sup>7</sup> This world is marked by diversity and complexity—diversity created by differences within and among persons and a correlative complexity created by multiple criss-crossing power relations and resulting contradictions. Challenges to modern moral reasoning have also incited a passionate debate as to whether morality can be sustained at all in the face of moral diversity. Political theorist Arlene Saxonhouse (1992) traces the fear of diversity in western thought to the pre-Socratics, and yet, she argues that even in classical thought unity and diversity are most often intertwined, the question being not how to establish either unity or diversity alone, but how to establish the relationship between the two. Modern moral reasoning was supposed to provide precisely this type of coherent relationship between unity and diversity. The promise of enlightenment ethics was that conflict, specifically the interreligious conflict sparked by the Reformation, could be resolved while maintaining universal respect for diversity. The light of reason, a reason supposedly universal to all humanity, was to fulfill this promise. Thus, reason was thought to provide the key to maintaining a unified moral framework which could both respect and contain diversity.

This modern moral tradition, however, has also been widely criticized by feminists, among others, as reinscribing biases which block rather than facilitate emancipatory politics and the recognition of diversity, and, thus, the modern promise of emancipation remains unfulfilled (Eisenstein 1981 and Jaggar 1983). Enlightenment ideals of respect, freedom, and equality have been accompanied by gender domination and a historical period of western domination in the form of colonialism and imperialism; furthermore the institution of the liberal state maintains persistent underrepresentation.<sup>8</sup> Similar problems have carried over into feminist ethics and politics, particularly into efforts to form effective alliances. As the case studies in the first two chapters of this book show, enacting feminist commitments to resist the domination of all

women and correlatively to respect differences among women has proven to be difficult, a difficulty which frequently makes calls for alliance politics ineffective.

The central argument of this book is that this difficulty persists because of a dis-articulation of diversity from complexity. Learning to work with, rather than contain diversity and its accompanying complexity is the task of alliance building, and yet ethical theory and its assumptions as enacted in politics frequently leads away from this work and toward efforts to contain diversity and flatten complexity. Complexity is under-theorized in both liberal political and economic discourses of pluralism and free markets, and in counter-public discourses and movements constituted around identity politics or a (single-axis) politics of "difference." <sup>9</sup> Even a politics focused on diversity and the elaboration of difference(s) that fails to recognize complexity can run into problems of recuperation. As long as diversity is not articulated in and through complexity, moral commitments to respect diversity and efforts to form alliances will remain ineffective.

A simple commitment to diversity is inadequate because it does not articulate the relations of production which create that diversity. In the contemporary United States, diversity is produced through social processes of differentiation along various interrelated but relatively autonomous axes of differentiation (West 1988). The axes run along lines of gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, ability, age.... This list can never be completed as long as capitalist relations of production ensure that we will always produce more units of "difference" (Lorde 1984, 114). These processes of differentiation create social categories which form the matrix of social life into which each individual is born and within which each lives. These units of difference can be produced, however, so as to dis-articulate diversity from complexity. For example, gender difference can be produced as a difference between two, and only two, types of persons—men and women—which does not allow complexity either within or between these two "units" of difference.

Complexity arises, however, because processes of differentiation fail to create coherent units of difference, but instead are implicated in intertwined criss-crossing matrices of conflictual and contradictory relationships. Experiences of living through such social categories never fully fit the boundaries of categorization. An individual is never only or fully a woman. Social sanctions against those who deviate from their ascribed categories, including the fact that one can be accused of not being a "real" woman, imply that slippage between the category "woman" and lives lived by women is a constant possibility. Thus, there are always gaps created by processes of differentiation. Moreover, because the lines of differentiation cross each other, the coherence of categories based on any single "difference" is undermined as any given gender

"identity" is differentiated by race, class, and sexuality... while racial identity is simultaneously differentiated by gender, class, sexuality.... Criss-crossing lines or axes of differentiation create intersections of social relations and open spaces or interstices which cannot be fully represented in a language structured by differentiation. Frequently, the site of intersection is also a gap, an interstice. Hortense Spillers (1992) has argued, for example, that African American women's sexuality is constituted at the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality, which is also an interstice created between "women's sexuality" articulated by white women and African American sexuality articulated by black men.<sup>10</sup> As a result persons and groups act within and, yet, exceed social categories of differentiation. Any particular woman cannot fit the category "woman" or "women" and this mis-fit occurs in more than one direction—she cannot be all of the possibilities of what it might mean to be a woman, and what it means to be a woman cannot articulate all that she is. Given this multi-dimensional mis-fit, diversity will always be accompanied by complexity.

Diversity and its accompanying complexity are central to feminist movements because social processes of differentiation are not simply productive of social differences or the identities through which those differences are lived. They also form the basis of social hierarchies and dominations. Thus, for example, "woman" is not only different from, but also subordinate to "man." This hierarchy is a social domination in the sense described by Michel Foucault (1984b). A hierarchy becomes domination when there are few, if any, avenues for reversal of the relationship or for resistance to the claims of the superordinate party in the hierarchy. Following from this understanding of domination, the central ethical problem is not to establish freedom from power relations, but to resist domination within fields of power (1984b, 18).

By defining domination in this way, Foucault avoids the problematic implication that to be free from domination is also to be free from power relations. Thus, he recognizes that not all power relations, not even all hierarchical power relations, are relations of domination. The asymmetrical institutionalization of power between a teacher and student, for example, is not necessarily a domination. This definition implies that emancipatory projects such as feminist movements always occur within—are never emancipated from—power relations. The purpose of social movement is to resist relations of domination and change the structure of power, not to escape implication in power. This definition also names as domination, however, those rigidly maintained hierarchies, such as gender hierarchy, which have been historically justified as "divinely ordained" or "natural" or "biological" and, therefore, as legitimate. In this sense, Foucault is suspicious of social legitimation for relationships which narrowly circumscribe particular persons and groups from avenues of social power. His example of this type of domination is "the traditional conjugal relationship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."

We cannot say that there was only male power; the woman herself could do a lot of things: be unfaithful to him, extract money from him, refuse him sexually. She was, however, subject to a state of domination in the measure where all that was finally no more than a certain number of tricks which never brought about a reversal of the situation. (Foucault 1984b, 12)

There are several mechanisms for maintaining such domination. Social sanctions can work to restrict the activities of gendered persons to male and female roles and, then, to ascribe powers and privileges to those gendered as "men." Thus, disempowerment can be enacted through mechanisms of exclusion, where the subordinate member of the opposition is excluded from institutions and social relationships which are major sites of power, such as the exclusion of women from political life or voting. Disempowerment can also be enacted through marginalization where a dominant group of persons establishes themselves as the center of activity in relation to which "others" are "included" but peripheral.

Domination is also produced and maintained through discourses—languages and activities in their social and institutional contexts—which work to contain diversity and flatten complexity as persons are induced to try to fit the simple categories of differentiation and complex relationships among axes of differentiation are elided.<sup>11</sup> One of the main discourses to constitute social differentiation as hierarchy and domination is that of binary opposition. Binary oppositions define social differences as oppositional pairs, one of which is defined in terms of the other. Binary oppositions work so effectively by defining a field of opposition so as to make it appear that the entire field of social relations is encompassed. So, for example, gender relations work to produce opposing types of persons where woman is defined in terms of man and where only these two positions are available as "genders." Opposition is created because woman is "not man," implying that woman is "other" than man and that the categories must remain rigidly differentiated. Thus, two possible positions for lived experiences (subject positions) are established: the norm or position of identity, meaning man, and the position of difference, that which is different from or not man, meaning woman. This negative definition further establishes hierarchy between the pair, hierarchy which becomes domination when opportunities for inhabiting the subjectivity of "woman" are so restricted as to make the negative meaning "not man" rigidly determinative of women's possibilities. Such determination denies the possibility of gendered lives which are not "opposed," while simultaneously denying possibilities for multiple gendered positions (for example, hermaphrodites, transgenders, or androgynies). Finally, this opposition denies the multiple meanings of gender as it is itself differentiated by other axes such as "race" or "class" or "sexuality."

Binary oppositions both invoke and contain diversity and complexity, by

operating within networks of differentiation. As Catherine Bell (1992) notes, sets of oppositions are hierarchically interrelated so as to generate "a loosely integrated whole in which each element 'defers' to another in an endlessly circular chain of reference" (101).<sup>12</sup> Bell goes on to argue:

Homologous oppositions (light-dark, good-evil, male-female) can organize taxonomic sets (the set of light, good, and male, or the set of dark, evil, and female) simply by the juxtaposition of activities that use these oppositions. In actual practice only a few elements from a 'set' need be invoked to imply a whole series of relationships and implications. Such homologized spheres are orchestrated (or confused, or collapsed) so as to produce an experience of their basic identity or coherence. This experience of coherence, however, simultaneously facilitates the emergence of some symbolic terms in a dominant relation to others. The sense of general identity of the whole naturalizes such hegemony. (104)

Thus, the oppositions invoke a complex field of interrelated differentiations—the gender opposition male-female also invokes a moral field of good and evil—and, yet, such oppositions also condense the complexity of these inter-relations such that male and female appears to be identical to good and evil. Bell's argument demonstrates the need for a theory and practice which addresses the complexity of differentiation, rather than simply focusing on any single binary. Feminist politics cannot be effective if it focuses only on a "gender."

A politics which does not take such complexity into account plays into the "dilemma of difference" in U.S. politics (Minow 1990) and establishes bifurcated choices which sparked the "equality vs. difference" debate within feminism (Scott 1988). When only two positions can be acknowledged—the norm and that which is different from the norm—the norm/difference hierarchy is inscribed as the very definition of "different." In the case of equality versus difference these terms imply that difference must also mean inequality and equality must mean sameness. Thus, within the terms of the "dilemma of difference" only two social moves are allowed, each of which reinforces the normative center: 1) A political focus on difference can trap women in a separate sphere of activity, which because different can never be equal; 2) a focus on equality, when equality is configured as identity or sameness to men, can reestablish "men" as the normative gender to which women must aspire and in relation to which they will always prove inadequate.<sup>13</sup> Minow suggests that this dilemma can only be addressed by shifting the terms of "difference" and challenging the institutions which create difference as a burden to be carried by those identified as different from the norm.

The challenge for feminism is to develop social movements which could effect such change. Scott suggests the need for a double move in order to meet this challenge, "the unmasking of the power relationship constructed by posing



equality as the antithesis of difference and the refusal of its consequent dichotomous construction of political choices" (Scott 1988, 44). For Scott this double move opens the door to an alternative strategy which subverts the terms of the dilemma by incorporating the articulation of complexity into a politics of equality in relation to difference. "It is not sameness *or* identity between women and men that we want to claim but a more complicated historically variable diversity than is permitted by the opposition male/female, a diversity that is also differently expressed for different purposes in different contexts" (1988, 46). Thus, it is possible to subvert the dilemma by a politics which articulates both diversity and complexity—a diversity which undercuts the binary nature of gender difference (in Scott's example by recognizing diversity within the categories "women" and "men") and a complexity which can articulate the (historically variable) power relations which constitute "gender." A politics dedicated to subverting binary oppositions is necessary so as to challenge the construction of asymmetrical power relations through the definition of a norm and its "other." Analysis of the "dilemma of difference" also shows, however, why a politics which focuses only on binaries, such as a feminist politics which focuses only on the "opposition" between men and women will ultimately prove inadequate to the complexity of gender(s) (Ong 1988).

A feminist politics addressed only to oppositional gender is part and parcel of a political configuration which isolates binary pairs from each other so that gender, race, class, and sexuality are all constituted as separate areas of analysis and of political action. In this configuration, analyses of race focus on a black/white opposition, class analyses concentrate on the bourgeoisie/proletariat split, the study of sexuality focuses on the hetero/homo binary, while gender analyses become the study of men and women as opposites. This type of knowledge production and its concomitant politics does not ultimately challenge the binary pairs on which it depends, nor can it articulate relationships among marginalized persons and groups. Because alliance politics does not focus on a single axis of social differentiation it shows how relations of domination are produced through shifting, interlocking structures of difference. These complex processes of differentiation work at the margins as well as between center and margin, contributing to the production of hierarchies and dominations within and among marginalized groups.

The singular politics of "difference" produces a version of diversity which is made up of multiple "units" of differences, but which ignores complexity. These coherent "units" of difference are placed in horizontal lists, producing a liberal pluralist version of diversity which assumes coherent separations and clear boundaries. The horizontal placement of various "differences" fails to articulate either power relations or historical conflicts among "different" groups. Chandra Mohanty critiques the production of this version of diversity, arguing that "Difference seen as benign variation (diversity), for instance,

rather than as conflict, struggle, or the threat of disruption, bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious empty pluralism" (1994, 146). This version of pluralism cannot articulate complex issues of interaction and interrelation which produce "differences" and which must be addressed in both alliance formation and political struggle. Instead this practice of pluralism erases these very issues while inscribing lists which will be extended *ad infinitum* in the attempt to name, ever more accurately, coherent units of diversity which are actually interrelational complexities.

As Mohanty points out, this reductive pluralism facilitates an institutional approach to differences as "diversity management," where historical political struggles are transformed into matters of individual prejudice and misunderstanding to be managed within institutions ranging from the "multi-cultural" university to the "multi-national" corporation. Diversity management employs discourses of authentic "otherness" to discipline those "others" who do not fit the model of authenticity, who do not speak or act like "real women" (Lugones and Spelman 1983, Chow 1993). The units of diversity—for example, "woman"—control complexity within the categories, while simultaneously producing a form of diversity which can easily be transformed into homogeneity. The desire within pluralism for difference(s) to speak or show themselves, for example, the desire to hear the "woman's" voice, can further serve as a means of inducing or enforcing "others'" speech within the structures of dominant discourses. Thus, women might speak, but could only be heard in the language already established through their exclusion. In this way, pluralism can once again devolve into singularity as "otherness" comes to mirror the center's conception of *itself*.

The problems of a managed diversity dis-articulated from complexity are evident, for example, in the construction of various "studies" programs at contemporary universities—Women's Studies, American Indian Studies, African American Studies, Mexican American Studies, Latin American Studies, Asian Studies, Judaic Studies, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Studies, Cultural Studies.<sup>14</sup> These programs, while in part the outcome of specific political struggles at various sites may have also been institutionalized as (and hence recuperated into) a liberal-pluralist model. This model attempts to recognize, but also contain, various pluralisms by separating them into definable, categorized areas of study, which are then induced (frequently through a discourse of "standards") to look more and more like the university "at large."<sup>15</sup> One means of subverting this liberal containment, however, is by the formation of alliances through and across the complex interrelations which are belied by this neat categorization. In such an effort Women's Studies might attempt to recognize the diversity of areas within its program which must be developed to address women's lives; yet, such efforts alone would merely re-enact pluralist containment in which all that women are is supposedly contained within the boundaries

of Women's Studies. A more effective subversion would also make connections with and provide support for area studies in which women participate, but which are not defined by gender. To fail to do so is to fail to support women who act within, but are not contained by women's studies (which as I will argue below is any "woman"). Thus, the meaning of "women's studies" itself must be destabilized if it is to be constituted as an alliance among different women rather than as simply representative of the dominative "woman."

As this example shows, dependence on the liberal pluralist version of diversity can create extensive problems for possible alliances within feminist movement(s) and among various social movements. The expectation that feminist politics constructs a movement which makes claims on behalf of "women," while various "other" movements address "other" issues like race and class has been particularly problematic. Not surprisingly the expectation that feminist politics could represent all women as a single category led to foundering on the differences within this particular category. With the liberal model of diversity, differences within women, such as those produced through race, class, and sexuality threaten the very possibility of feminist politics, because there is no way to effectively represent "women" as a coherent unit. Thus, liberal diversity produces tremendous resistance to critiques of dominative feminism as racist, classist, and heterosexist for fear that if these critiques are recognized feminist politics will no longer be possible.

Alliance politics cannot be effected through a simple commitment, even a moral commitment, to diversity. The choice for feminist movements is not whether to value unity or diversity. The valuing of unity alone makes the production of diversity itself problematic and leads to a foundering on differences, yet the choice to value diversity does not necessarily challenge the dominative social relations under which diversity is produced, nor does it effectively materialize alliances. For example, the attempt to materialize an alliance by employing a liberal model of diversity produces the infamously problematic liberal categories "women and minorities."<sup>16</sup> This constitution of alliance cannot account for women who are also "minorities," while it leaves white women's "ethnicity" unmarked. The move of specifying white women and racial/ethnic minorities is still inadequate, however, in that it fails to articulate a number of complexities. It subsumes women of color under a racial marking, thereby disarticulating their gender; it reduces "minorities" to a racial/ethnic category which dis-articulates other social differentiations, thus, for example, leaving no space to articulate sexual "minorities"; and it completely elides issues of class. Kobena Mercer succinctly states the problems for a politics based on pluralism: "... we also need to go beyond the mere concatenation of particularism in the all-too-familiar mantra of 'race, class and gender' ... if we are to grasp the conflicts and contradictions that exist *within* and *between* each of these various identities at play in contemporary politics (1994, 273–74,

emphasis in original)." Only by re-articulating diversity and complexity can the dangers of liberal pluralism and diversity management be avoided and the problems of alliance politics worked through. The challenge for feminist movement(s), then, is to analyze the complex social relations which produce diversity and rework, rather than simply reproduce, these relationships.

### Articulating Diversity through Complexity

The complexity of social relations in and through which diversity is produced imply that there are at least four analytically distinct but interrelated sites of diversity. *Diversity among* persons, groups, and categories refers to the differences that make for specificity, that allow for the articulation of a specific identity. Diversity among persons and groups recognizes that there are multiple positions, for example, multiple racial and ethnic identities, thus, undercutting a focus on binary opposition. The complexity which accompanies diversity, however, indicates that specificity about difference is not in and of itself adequate because the specific locating of "difference" cannot fully account for the intersections and interstices of cross-cutting differentiations. Thus, even as these differentiations produce specific identities by creating boundaries among groups, they also produce *diversity within* individuals and communities. "Diversity within" refers to the differences within persons and groups which are created by the complexity of interrelation. Thus, within any specific identity (relationally defined as specific by differentiation among identities) "other" differences within the identity category (whether individual or group) always remain. Not only are there differences within the category of "women," but each woman is many different things, some of which make her different from other "women" and from the categorical definition of "woman." Diversity within implies that, as Teresa de Lauretis has pointed out, any individual "female subject is a site of differences; differences that are not only sexual or only racial, economic, or (sub) cultural, but all of these together, and often enough at odds with one another . . . . [T]hese differences not only constitute each woman's consciousness and subjective limits, but all together define the *female subject of feminism* in its very specificity, its inherent and at least for now irreconcilable contradiction—these differences, then, cannot be again collapsed into a fixed identity, a sameness of all women as Woman, or a representation of Feminism as a coherent and available image" (1986, 14–15, emphasis in original).

These two sites of diversity—diversity among and diversity within—indicate the ways in which identity and difference, although frequently structured as a binary opposition, are effectively intertwined. The traditional hierarchical binary between identity and difference defines identity in contradistinction to a difference which is outside of and subordinate to identity (as woman is to

man). The relationship between diversity among and within demonstrates, however, that difference remains within, even as it is distinguished from, identity. No individual or group consists of parts which are entirely "the same." Yet, an analysis of diversity cannot rest with the identity/difference pairing. The processes which produce this pair are complex and, thus, they also produce excesses. There are two crucial sites for the excesses of differentiation, sites which are most commonly associated with Jacques Derrida's concept of *différance*. *Différance* is the ground of the possibility of differentiation and also its horizon of meaning. This site is a space of radical heterogeneity which is intertwined with the production of specific differences as the ground and limit of their potential meaning. The confounding factor for any claim to difference is that difference(s) are always accompanied by the excesses of *différance*. The boundaries between self and other, for example, are never completely sealed off or secure; rather "the self will be divided from itself, finding within its identity a trace of its other" (Diprose 1994, 77). Thus, *différance* is also the "excessive remainder," that which resists the simple categorization of binary opposition, that which overflows its boundaries (Grosz 1989, xvii).

When diversity is read for complexity beyond binary opposition, this remainder can also be located in the excesses produced by criss-crossing relations of differentiation. This is a site of *diversity between*, referring to those excessive differences which are lived in the interstices and intersections between axes of differentiation. These gaps are also spaces of possibility and limit. Work in these spaces blurs the boundaries of differentiation, making it more difficult for categories to contain diversity and creating new possibilities for connections between and across "differences." These gaps also express the limits of representation (both linguistic and political), of whose interests and needs can be articulated. The limits can be challenged but they can never be fully removed as the "horizon of meaning" recedes before us. Thus, the limits which create gaps in processes of differentiation—both the interstices between differentiations and those between category and lived experiences—can be challenged by new articulations, but they can never be completely "filled." Nor would it be a politically useful project to try to fill completely such gaps. The limits are also spaces of possibility, spaces which have not already been completely written over (overwritten) by domination. The difficult task of alliance politics is to find ways to challenge these limits while keeping open spaces of possibility.

Alliance politics requires work at all of these sites of diversity. Diversity among persons and groups, the difference which also produces identity, is the form of difference which is most frequently recognized in modern public spheres. This "fit" between the public and differences configured as identities makes for both the appeal and the problems of identity politics. If the diversity within identity categories is not recognized, problems are created for alliances

as the politics of identity fail to articulate the diverse needs and interests of, for example, "women." Focus only on diversity within, however, fails to recognize how social differentiation always creates gaps, interstices of excessive diversity between categories of "difference." The excesses of *différance* and diversity between remain important as the sites of possibility for change. As spaces whose diversity is not determined by the social processes which fix specific differences (even if only momentarily), these sites point to possibilities for responding to diversity "differently." These spaces simultaneously express the limits of social possibility precisely because its diversity cannot be fixed (even if momentarily). Yet, a politics which celebrates *différance* alone, as if the processes which produce identity and difference could simply be averted, is also inadequate. "Sidestepping" the implications of identity and difference through a singular focus on *différance* avoids interrogating the processes which produce identity and difference in particular forms (Diprose 1994, 81).<sup>17</sup> Thus, persons and societies can never fully live *différance*; rather, they live within and between specific difference(s) in conjunction with the possibilities and limits of *différance*.

This conjunction can be articulated through a focus on the spaces in-between—within and between—processes of differentiation. The complexity which accompanies diversity means that women's moral agency and political action take place within and outside of, in and between, categories and structures of "difference." This project recognizes that if multiplicity is not to flip over into new neutrality, objectivity or universalism it must *inhabit* particular positions, while simultaneously moving in the spaces *between* these positions in order to blur the boundaries and divisions.<sup>18</sup> The configuration *in-between* expresses the ways in which action and agency are configured at one and the same time as within and between the boundaries of particular categories and movements: in and between gender and race and class and sexuality, in and between feminist, anti-racist, socialist, anti-homophobic movements, in and between post and modern, in and between gender(s), in and between the category "woman" and women.

The spaces in-between are particularly hard to work with because they are sites of multiple and ambiguous meanings.<sup>19</sup> They lack the clarity of precisely delineated sites of identity and the theoretical purity of the fully open sign. They are also sites of (potential) conflict and contradiction as axes of differentiation intersect and cross each other. Thus, the project of working in and between runs certain risks, the risk of *reinforcing* those positions and the risk of losing a place from which to work and speak as one enters the gaps between such places.<sup>20</sup> The spaces in-between are also sites of great possibility, however. They are excellent sites for "making the connections" (Harrison 1985) across differences as the various ways in which people live in and between differences can be recognized. The spaces in-between contribute to possibilities of living

different(ly) by challenging the constraints of particular categories. Thus, complexity not only adds a level of analysis to theories of diversity, it challenges the very meaning of diversity and the meanings ascribed to particular "differences." Commitment to the spaces in-between also points to the possibility of learning how to imagine and work differences differently. Only through imaginative reworkings can we create social spaces where differences need not imply hierarchy and domination.

An alliance politics which works in the spaces in-between, thus, focuses attention and political action on relationships among marginalized, as well as centralized, persons and groups within the context of hierarchical social structures. It allows attention to the ways in which those on the margins challenge and reconfigure the terms of the dominant discourse of difference(s), thus, opening the door to a number of political moves which subvert not only the normative center, but the entire relationship between center and margin, opening the possibility of multiple centers of power, authority, and action. Katie King (1994) provides a useful example of this change in focus by juxtaposing origin stories of second-wave feminism written by white women and that written by Chela Sandoval, which sees white women's organizing as a peripheral concern in relation to historically on-going organizing by women of color.<sup>21</sup> King's juxtaposition graphically presents the possibility of multiple centers of power and action in women's movements whose interrelations are complex by raising the questions: Which center? Which margin?

As King's analysis shows, the margins are themselves centers of complex activity. Complexity comes into play with diversity because these centers are both distinct and interrelated. Perspectives, practices, and traditions shift through movement to various centers of activity (Lugones 1990a, 1990b). Centers also overlap and may conflict and contradict each other, even as they are interlocked in asymmetrical power relations. Thus, relationships among various "differences" do not add up to a single coherent "whole," but rather form a shifting kaleidoscope of complex patterns, not all of which are visible at any single turn. Moreover, differences among marginalized persons and groups have their own margins, the excesses of differentiation found at the intersections and interstices of criss-crossing differentiations. These margins delineate the limits of the possible, but also point to the future which is underdetermined, the possibilities of what might be. The task of both feminist ethics and feminist politics is to ask how we might move into that future.

### **Why the Ethical?**

Why choose the ethical as a site for reworking alliances? Some feminist and lesbian theorists remain concerned that ethics is so deeply implicated in disciplinary practices of control that it can never be useful to feminist or alliance

politics. Marilyn Frye, for example, suggests in reviewing *Lesbian Ethics* that lesbians might do better without an "ethics," because ethics plays into disciplinary ideologies about right action.<sup>22</sup> Norms have been a particular site of feminist concern because they are frequently read as constituting prescriptive codes of action. For instance, in the constructive theory of *Lesbian Ethics*, Sarah Hoagland (1988) focuses on the creation of values rather than norms in order to resist a dominant ethics of control. Elizabeth Grosz and Drucilla Cornell make distinctions between ethics and morality in a similar effort to avoid implication in the problematics of a disciplinary discourse. Cornell reverses the order of feminist ethics, naming her project "ethical feminism," as a further distinguishing mark from the discipline of "ethics." In developing a definition of ethics based on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Elizabeth Grosz states, "Ethics need not imply a moral or normative code, or a series of abstract regulative principles. Rather, it is the working out or negotiation between an other (or others) seen as prior to and pre-given for the subject, or a subject" (1989, xvii).<sup>23</sup> Similarly, for Drucilla Cornell, in contrast to "morality" which is a system of rules or standards by which to justify disapproval of others, the "ethical" indicates, "the aspiration to a non-violent relationship to the Other and to otherness in the widest possible sense" (Benhabib et al. 1995, 78).

These theorists point to important questions about the implication of ethics in discourses of dominating power, but the distinctions which they offer may not be fully effective in resisting this implication. Recent politics has demonstrated, for example, how "values," in conjunction with the term "family," can also be a site of control. Karla F. C. Holloway (1995) points out that a reduction of "values" similar to the reduction of norms to sites of controlling judgment, can occur, where usable values are reduced to marketable "goods" controlled by the logic of exchange in the same way that human beings were marketed under slavery. Moreover, practices of discipline and control can be located in precisely the types of distinctions which these theorists employ, where divisions between ethics and politics or norms and values, can be recuperated into a traditional set of oppositions. In response to Marilyn Frye, Claudia Card (1995) provides a definition of ethics which holds together norms and values, as well as ethics and politics; thus ethics becomes "the study of norms and values, the right and the good, as these enter into or support human well-being, norms that political arrangements can respect (or disregard) and values that politics can promote (or hinder)" (66).

Card's definition recognizes an interdependence between binary pairs—norms/values, right/good, ethics/politics—which delineate fields of debate in both feminist and ethical theory.<sup>24</sup> The divisions which create these pairs—norms/values, right/good, ethics/politics—are often instituted to control diversity. This control is accomplished by recognizing one member of the pair as



an appropriate site of diversity, while the other is ascribed a necessary unity which can contain that diversity. So, for example, the division in ethical theory between norms (as the site of a theory of the right) and values (as concerned with the production of the good life) frequently locates values or the concerns of the good life as an appropriate site of moral diversity and even disagreement, while the principles of justice, or the right, form a unitary framework which contains this disagreement. If feminist ethics is to become a site which can articulate both diversity and complexity, however, a methodology which challenges these divisions must be developed.

In order for feminist ethics and politics to subvert this type of containment, norms, values, the relationship between the two, and the power relations within which they operate must be fully investigated and reworked. Analysis of norms in conjunction with values is useful because it allows for analysis of the networks of power relations which both constrain and enable agency. Norms need not be read as prescriptive principles which direct the "correct" action, in order to acknowledge the potential for normative discourse to participate in disciplinary power. I will argue that norms constitute the social matrix which forms the context for action. Norms form the social matrix which structures moral possibilities. Values are social "goods" which are produced by human activity within the context of that matrix. Norms and values are, thus, intertwined (rather than opposed).

If values are goods which are necessary to the possibility of life, as well as goods which make life meaningful, then the "human well-being" alluded to in Card's definition entails various types of "values" or "goods." If values are diverse, then the question of the good life is complicated because there is no single life form which is coherently "good." The good life for one, may not be good for another, and the relationship between "one" and the "other" can structure the question of "good" or "not." Thus, values are not inherent in objects, but are established relationally in and through processes of differentiation. Rosalyn Diprose succinctly illustrates this point through the Foucauldian example of, "[a] managerial space [that] accrues more value (and less surveillance) not because of any inherent value but because of its relation to and difference from the space of manual labor" (1994, 33). Values are not static because as relational positionings shift values may also shift, but these relational positionings and the values available to particular persons and groups in and through these positionings are inscribed by and inscribe power.

Normative matrices create the possibilities and limits for potential shifts in relational positioning and values. Norms give shape to, materialize bodies, including social bodies, thereby materializing relationships in such a way as to differentially value particular bodies. For example, Judith Butler describes the operation of the category of "sex" as a norm which is also, "part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory

force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls" (1993, 1).<sup>25</sup> Thus, the production of bodies takes place through highly regulated practices which are "the forcible reiteration" of ideal constructs or norms. Butler argues that reiteration is a sign that the materialization of norms is never complete—bodies cannot fully comply with norms, and bodies also exceed normative regulation. Just as norms form the social matrices of relational positioning and values, normative enactments also make values. Sarah Hoagland points out how moral agency when enacted makes value. That which is enacted through the iteration of a particular norm is thereby produced as a value. Different re-iterations of norms also make different values.

Given that norms materialize and are materialized by persons and communities, they produce both particular "I"s and particular "we"s. Every person is born into an on-going normative context, the enactment of which literally makes that person. Thus, a given person or community only becomes a person or community through normative enactment. Yet, locating the person in the midst of, rather than prior to, social enactment does not mean that there is no possibility for agency. Just as with processes of social differentiation, there are always gaps, slippages, and excesses produced through the processes of enactment. These gaps open possibilities for resistance to dominating power, possibilities for acting "differently." Normative matrices can be organized in a number of ways, not all of which necessarily further domination and no one of which is necessarily the (singular) path to liberation. Social movements (meaning movements of "different" enactments) create and extend possibilities for changing the shape of a normative matrix.

Because norms are produced out of social activity—are the result of a "material chain of signification," of repeated, but shifting iterations—norms will vary across the locations and communities in which they are produced. Moreover, because these sites of action are both distinct and interrelated, norms also demonstrate the type of complexity demonstrated by social differentiations. The social matrix of norms refers to the interrelated sets of regulatory ideals such as "race" and "class," which, in addition to "sex," materialize bodies and communities (and to which Butler alludes in the footnote to this section). Thus, rather than providing a singular, unitary, or coherent framework to regulate variations in value, norms, along with values, are themselves diverse and complex. These diverse and complex norms and values are interrelated through "moral economies" which intertwine social relations and normative discourse, thus, forming the relations of production for both social differentiations and the normative discourses which materialize those "differences." Each moral economy represents a normative matrix which by defining normative activities also produces normative persons and communities. Moral economies, thus, interrelate moral agency and social differentiations like race,

class, sexual identity, and gender. These various economies are overlapping, and therefore, they exert pressure on each other, creating contradictions for moral action. This same interaction among economies, however, also forms possible sites for "freedom," for the construction of agency. By working at sites of intersection of these various economies it is possible to displace normative iterations, to enact norms "differently" and hence to resist or subvert the workings of a particular economy.

The recognition that both norms and values are sites of diversity and complexity, that norms do not form a singular framework which guides interaction among diverse and complex persons and groups, but are rather themselves participants in this diversity and complexity is perhaps the most important contribution which the study of ethics can make to the practice of alliance politics. Learning to work with, rather than contain, diversity and its accompanying complexity is the task of alliances. Reworking how agency is possible in the midst of diversity and complexity, as well as how agency is both empowered and constrained within normative social matrices, is the contribution which ethical theory can make to this task.

The primary criticism of understanding both norms and values as diverse and complex is framed in terms of the problem of moral relativism.<sup>26</sup> Relativism is configured as a problem for ethics because it leaves moral agents without an ultimate decision-making procedure for choosing among diverse ethics. The problem of relativism as it has been constructed in ethical theory has also been constructed as a problem for alliance politics. In the context of alliances relativism raises the question, Can we develop a feminist politics without an ultimate decision-making procedure for deciding among various visions of feminism? I will suggest, however, that the construction of relativism as a "problem" misses an alternative reading of the term. Relativism is not necessarily a situation of criterialess indeterminism, but rather can be seen as a situation in which diverse persons and groups, their norms and values, are *related* to each other in complex ways. The question for ethical theory and alliance politics, then, is not how to decide among these diverse normative visions, but rather how to understand and enact these various and complicated relationships. How, for example, are various universal claims made from different specific perspectives related to each other? How is a particular social matrix structured? How does power operate within and across it? How can we work within this context? Who can we work with?

### **Agency and Alliance**

Placing agency in the context of relationalism challenges modern assumptions that moral agency is located in a self-contained autonomous individual who acts under conditions of freedom. In this traditional understanding

agency is located on the side of freedom in an opposition between freedom and determinism. The modern view of self-contained agency has been criticized from a number of perspectives, however. For example, Katie Cannon (1988) in *Black Womanist Ethics* locates womanist agency in a tradition of community struggle, and Sarah Hoagland (1988), contrasting her view with the traditional view of the autonomous self, articulates agency as "autokoeny," as the actions of self in community.<sup>27</sup> Cannon and Hoagland similarly challenge the conception that placing agency within normative matrices of social power relations leaves only a socially *determined* subject.<sup>28</sup> Agency need not be read as completely determined if located within power relations. Katie Cannon demonstrates that the assumption that autonomy in the form of free choice is necessary to moral agency reinforces relations of domination by constructing the dominated as without the freedom of agency and, hence, without morality. Cannon goes on to demonstrate that the assumptions of agency and virtue which focus on free choice and self-control are the values of a capitalist system which reinforces the domination of Black women by constructing them as "either amoral or immoral" (2). For Cannon, alternatively, moral agency is Black women's ability to survive and creatively contribute to the struggle for human wholeness and integrity even in the context of oppression. Similarly, Sarah Hoagland (1988) contends that agency is the creation of value through the choices made in action. In claiming that choice occurs even under oppression, Hoagland emphasizes that agents do not have to control a situation in order to act. Hoagland argues that traditional philosophical assumptions of agency, where autonomy, or control of the self, is understood to be the mark of agency, contribute to a dominative ethics. The assumption that moral agents must be in control serves and structures domination by constructing dominant "selves" as if they are in control, despite dependence on the labor of others and constructing "others" as out of control and, hence, in need of domination "for their own good." Thus, as both Katie Cannon and Sarah Hoagland point out, moral agency is not the exercise of choice under conditions of total "freedom," nor the activity of a subject who is formed prior to the operation of power. Rather, it is in the midst of power relations that agency is undertaken.

If power is part of the context of social activity, a context which both enables and constrains, empowers and determines action, then ethics is no longer faced with an impossible opposition between determinism and agency. Moreover, the self need not be prior to the social context or even activity in order to recognize agency. Rather the self is both empowered through social subjectivity—an individual cannot be a self except through the social—and is at the same time subjected or limited by the possibilities of the social. Agency is built precisely through the actions of subjects working in relationships, actions which in turn produce, maintain, and reproduce subjects and relationships.

This activity is moral labor. In Hoagland's terms, it is the action which produces values (and norms).

Because agency is produced in relationships, rather than found at the moment of individual freedom from relationships, it can only be articulated through complexity. There is never a fully coherent moment of enacting the free and sovereign will, and thus, the moment of agency is always implicated in complicating social relations. This implication in complexity creates an "ethics of ambiguity" (Beauvoir 1972, Hoagland 1988, 204–205), meaning that ethics must be undertaken under ambiguous conditions which challenge the singularity of right action—i.e., which challenge the claim that there is one right action and that any action can be singularly right. Thus, we cannot decide on a given act because it is wholly good and we know it to be so; rather, as Gayatri Spivak suggests, responsibility is "the risk of decision in the face of undecidability." Ethics, then, is faced with the task of contributing to critique and decision, despite this ultimate undecidability and despite the continuing presence of ethical impurity. The question of agency under conditions of domination (or of any type of power relation) is how action can negotiate, resist, subvert, and change these power relations.

An ethics or politics which focuses on complexity reconfigures understandings of bases of social movement, reversing the order of solidarity and identity to make solidarity primary. If even individual persons are constituted through differences within themselves, then any form of moral and/or political agency—whether by an "individual" or a "movement"—is undertaken in and through solidarity across differences. Alliances are not the outcome of connections across pre-determined units of "difference," but are the constitutive subject matter of activity located within diverse and complex social relations. The subject of agency is, thus, a net-work of connections and contestations. The task of alliance politics, then, is how to work with differences so that they are mobilized to challenge dominating power relations. Mobility is important so that differences are not reified, so that persons are not trapped in their differences. This mobilization opens the door to the creation of new movements in which the meanings of both "identities" and "differences" shift. Drucilla Cornell (1993) has suggested that what women hold "in common" occurs through "difference." What is held in common is the set of social relations among women which make them different. Cornell concludes, "this 'in common through difference' is precisely what must be understood through cultural work if there is to be anything like a true solidarity between women" (193).

Moving diversity and complexity to the center of analysis, thus, implies that agency is itself constituted as alliance. Agency is alliance, and alliance produces agency. Working alliances then are moral and political enactments

which produce agency and solidarity. We work in and through alliances by undertaking this moral and political labor, and in so doing, we produce ourselves as allies.

### Theories at Work

The major theoretical sources for my work are derived from those areas of theory production most closely tied to social movements. In making these theories central, I am interested in crossing and re-crossing the boundary commonly invoked between theory and practice. The theories developed in this text not only keep practice in mind, they develop out of various types of practices, including my own participation in social movements, particularly antiracist, feminist, and queer movements. My analysis is also obviously influenced by contemporary theories which have been variously labeled postmodern, post-structuralist, and/or deconstruction, theories which are themselves quite diverse and complex. My interest is not to engage the arguments which have emerged around and over these theories *per se*, arguments often constructed through oppositions (between modernism and postmodernism; essentialism and constructionism; agency and determinism). Rather I explore the complexities which these oppositions tend to elide by reworking ethical concepts—particularly agency, norms, values, and tradition—in light of some of these theoretical insights.<sup>29</sup>

I hold the ambiguities among various resources of theory and practice together by using a methodology which works through historical examples. My goal is not to (re) produce history so much as it is to meet the excellent work done by historians of U.S. women's history with questions of ethical analysis.<sup>30</sup> Demonstrating both morality and theory at work, each chapter considers moral speaking and acting in a specific moment of U.S. history and social movement. These examples not only ground the theoretical insights, but they show the process of producing moral knowledge, claims, norms, and values through the work of building relationships and movements, the process of moral labor. This type of boundary-crossing methodology reflects my own (inter)disciplinary location in women's studies and religious studies (each of which is itself an interdisciplinary field of study) and my specific training in an interdisciplinary program called "ethics and society." Feminist ethics frequently encourages a context-based construction of ethical theory, and the study of ethics within the field of religious studies is distinctive in that it focuses on practicing communities. For many of my colleagues these communities are faith communities, whereas for me they are social movements. Thus, my text is not a traditional religious ethics, in that while I do take religious expression and action seriously—I do not, for example, leave aside the faith perspective

of self-avowedly religious public actors or ignore the importance of religion in analyzing Katie Cannon's *Black Womanist Ethics*—I do not place my constructive work within a religious or theological context. Rather, I see these constructive efforts as contributions to on-going feminist movement.

Throughout this text, I develop a methodology which holds together ethics and politics, because the division between the two frequently works to provide a problematic containment of diversity and flattening of complexity. In some theories ethics is the site of unity (for example, the unity of point of view) which allows for the diversity of political disagreement. Alternatively, ethics is located as the site of private value formation, specifically so as to allow diversity in the private sphere, while politics is the public site of overarching and unified principles of justice and equal treatment (meaning similarity). Ethics in this sense is seen as individual, while politics is social. Thus, individual diversity is supposed to be protected (but is also contained) by relegation to the private sphere of the ethical. This division can contribute to domination as the concerns of particular groups of persons are also contained within and relegated to the privacy of ethics. For example, Ada María Isasi-Díaz argues in *En la Lucha, In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology, A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology* that the individual/social division between ethics and politics is untenable in *mujerista* thought, which always understands ethics as social ethics:

This follows from the centrality of community in our culture and from the fact that *mujeristas* denounce the split between the personal and the political as a false dichotomy used often to oppress Hispanic Women. (1993, 5)

Joan C. Tronto (1993) (herself a political theorist) argues that it is crucial for feminism to challenge the boundary between ethics and politics. Tronto outlines the ways in which boundary crossings between the ethical and the political are traditionally viewed as problems. Political considerations brought into the context of the moral can be seen as tainting moral considerations with practical concerns that obscure the ideal nature of morality. Conversely, moral concerns in the political realm may be seen as irrelevant distractions from or as idealistic interventions in the pragmatic business of politics. Taking women's public activities seriously, however, necessitates questioning these boundaries, because women's concerns have been traditionally relegated to the realm of the private and the ethical. For the women in the abolition movement whose activities I consider in chapter I, speaking in public is itself a violation of the boundary between public and private, even as it allowed them to bring moral concerns to bear on political issues. Tronto concludes that "the boundary between morality and politics works not only to protect morality from corruption, but also renders morality relatively powerless to change political events"

(152), and that "the separation of morality and politics keeps us from noticing how profoundly our political conceptions constrain our sense of morality and vice versa" (172).

An analysis which crosses the boundaries between ethics and politics can enrich moral theory. If the normative is the iterative materialization of power relations, then it is always already implicated in the political insofar as the political is concerned with social power. Ethics is intertwined with politics precisely because the conjunction of the two articulates the embodiment of power relations. As both Chandra Mohanty (1994) and Martha Minow (1990) point out, rethinking "difference," or rethinking how norms and values "work," is most effective when placed in the context of histories of social action and institution.<sup>31</sup> Investigation of moral claims which are politically enacted in social movements demonstrates the implications of ethical theories, while it also articulates the moral theories and assumptions which inform social movement and political action. Thus, the intertwining of ethical and political analysis may allow for a re-evaluation of the workings of contemporary democracies.

The book shifts back and forth between ethics and politics while always placing both in the context of social movements. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a reading of interrelations among diverse and complex moral actors through an analysis of shifting moral economies. In the first chapter I investigate the workings of moral economies by analyzing women's claim making from various sites in relation to nineteenth-century abolition movements. The analysis shows how the Grimké sisters, Catharine Beecher, and Sojourner Truth differently articulate women's moral stances toward abolition and toward the meaning of "women's morality." This chapter illustrates complexity in relation to diversity by showing how shifting among the different perspectives also shifts understandings of relationships which make up the whole and, thus, challenges the limits of difference. This chapter also raises the initial questions about the conjunction and disjunction of movements operating under the signs of "race" and "gender." By placing these various claims in relation to each other it is possible to understand not only their difference(s), but how they constitute each other. Through this analysis women's moral activities are shown to produce and simultaneously to subvert the moral economies within which they work.

The second chapter takes up questions of intersection and interstice by investigating social movements of the 1970s. This chapter asks why and how it is that U.S. social movements so frequently cannot sustain alliances, but rather take on the same type of singularity exhibited by the U.S. public sphere. Why, for example, do movements tend to operate under singular signs of "race," "gender," "sexuality," or "class" when this configuration makes alliance politics so difficult? This singularity points to an "economy of the same" which operates in the U.S. public sphere to contain social movements within the public



sphere, by positioning diverse movements for change as threatening to the unity of the public; it also works within social movements, so that movements assume that their claims must be based on some unity.<sup>32</sup> As a result, through inducement and enforcement, counter-public social movements too often end up as replicas of the very public sphere which they are trying to change.

Chapters 3 and 4 provide an analysis of how to work with diversity and complexity by recognizing multiple forms of social differentiation and its accompanying complexities in the spaces in-between differences. The third chapter investigates diverse possibilities for ethics by relationally reading texts from the mid-late 1980s, specifically Katie Cannon's *Black Womanist Ethics* and Sarah Lucia Hoagland's *Lesbian Ethics*. Each of these texts provides important new possibilities for moral claim making and response, inventing and extending moral traditions. This relational reading demonstrates the limits as well as the possibilities of working with diversity among and within persons and groups, thus, laying the ground for articulating the spaces in-between differences. The fourth chapter asks how to work with diverse moral possibilities in the context of contemporary publics, reading right-wing claims on and about the "general" public in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer claims on and about this same public. This chapter shows how both right-wing and queer publicity can reproduce the public problems of chapter 2—racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class dominance—if the differences of chapter 3 and their correlative complexities are marginalized in action. The chapter also shows how such reproductions can be challenged by making diversity and complexity constitutive of public activities through work in the spaces in-between differences. The conclusion then reworks the relationships between universalism and moral relativism in order to suggest new possibilities for working alliances.

### **Working Alliances**

Alliance politics has proven so difficult for feminist movement because the methodology for forming effective alliances is not self-evident. A commitment to diversity does not, in and of itself, materialize alliance. The case studies in this book show that, historically, feminist movements, working in and among various U.S. economies of differentiation, have worked both to recognize and to consolidate diversity. As chapter 1 shows, insofar as first-wave feminist movement was tied to the struggle for abolition, feminism worked to address issues of race, as well as gender, and to form alliances across racial divisions among women. The complexity of interrelation among economies of differentiation does not allow for women activists to take up coherent positions which simply represent women's diversity, however. Rather, each of the protagonists in chapter 1 must negotiate a set of contradictions. When these

negotiations are effective they challenge the liberal pluralist approach to diversity as "units" of difference dis-articulated from complexity. This liberal pluralist model is, however, the dominant structure of articulating diversity in the U.S. Given that it produces a form of diversity that devolves into singularity, economies of differentiation along the lines of "gender," "race," "class," "sexuality," are themselves structured into the dominant "economy of the same," and social movements tend to structure themselves as "the same"—the same as the dominant public, the same as each other, and internally the same (based on commonality or identity). Thus, diversity repeatedly becomes singularity, and movements for social change simply reiterate the public.

The assertion of diversity is also insufficient to alliance formation in that it engages the ambivalence of the term "alliance" itself. Alliances assume the existence of separate, autonomous movements which might come together to form an "alliance"; but, alliances also require the subversion of the autonomy upon which they depend. As the case studies show, attempts to form alliances by first establishing autonomous movement and then forming alliances will tend to fail because the basis of alliance—the complex interrelation among issues and movements—has been undercut by the assertion of autonomy. The case study of 1970s women's movements in chapter 2 shows how a women's liberation movement based on autonomy from left political and civil rights movements desired, but could not effectively form, alliances. In the move to autonomy, the diversity of women's activism devolved into a predominantly white, heterosexual, and middle-class feminism because implication in interrelation, which is also implication in complexity, was lost. Diversity is once again dis-articulated from complexity, and efforts to form alliances will not work.

If complexity is engaged with diversity, however, the ambivalence between autonomy and alliance can be (re)constructed as ambi-valences, sites of multiple activity and possibility. This reconstruction can take place, in part, by shifting the priority of autonomy and alliance to make alliance primary. To do away with the tension between autonomy and alliance altogether by working only in alliance would suggest the possibility and need for a "super-movement" that could coherently contain all issues, all resistances to domination. Such a move would, however, undermine complexity, just as does the assertion of single-issue movements. Work in the complex space in-between autonomy and alliance would be lost. The likely effect of attempts to create such all-encompassing movement is that autonomy would begin to reassert itself, just as 1970s feminist movement did in relation to a left politics that claimed to cohesively articulate all issues from a single base. Complexity can be engaged through work at the intersections of social movement. The type of articulations at the intersections undertaken by the texts read in chapter 3 work to connect issues across economies of differentiation. As these texts articulate

new norms from these sites they also materialize new possibilities for social movements to be constructed out of diversity and complexity. Yet, even articulations at the intersections can produce their own margins, indicating the ongoing need for work. The possibilities for alliances between womanist and lesbian ethics which were created, in part, by the writing of these texts is a space that can be articulated in various ways, including as an interstice. Chapter 4's study of right-wing moves to overwrite the space between "race" and "sexuality" demonstrates that working in alliances also requires reworking the U.S. public sphere, such that it can sustain a complex, rather than a liberal, pluralism. Complex pluralism demands a public sphere which can bring together diverse persons, groups, and movements not in an overarching framework that contains all diversity within its singular frame, but rather through a network of publics held together by the connections between and among them.

Overall, the case studies show that alliance formation is not simply the effect of particular activities in social movement. Rather, to form alliances that work, movements must proceed from diversity and complexity, making alliance primary to movement. Working in alliances, thus, shifts the base of social movement such that movement itself must change. Alliance formation is never a completed project; neither is democratic contestation. The work of producing new norms that can materialize diverse relationships in all of their complexity remains constitutive of on-going moral and political life.