AMERICAN FEMINIST MANIFESTOS AND THE RHETORIC OF WHITENESS

Elliot C. Adams

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2006

Committee:
Ellen Berry, Advisor
Lynda Dixon
Graduate Faculty Representative
John Warren
Sue Carter Wood
ABSTRACT

Ellen Berry, Advisor

Using textual analysis, feminist and cultural theories, this study exposed the rhetorical reproduction of whiteness in language, examining how whiteness suffuses linguistic choices that appear to be unbiased. Throughout, it identified where and how whiteness operates as the motivating force in the social power structure of the United States by using certain feminist manifestos as an example of the rhetorical reproduction and performativity of whiteness. Feminist manifestos were chosen as the particular genre of study because while they do represent progress toward social justice in gendered power relations, they do not always or necessarily advance social justice in terms of race, class, or sexuality. Manifestos by white women were shown to include discursive choices that reinforce whiteness, whereas manifestos by women of color critiqued those choices, reminding white feminists that multiple identity factors always simultaneously affect women’s lives. Manifestos by white feminists were organized roughly chronologically, within the standard feminist divisions of First, Second, and Third Waves; this study problematized that historical construction by emphasizing the ways in which, as another function of whiteness, the designation of waves as incorporating certain time periods has been a white feminist tool for structuring history. To show how women of color have always been aware of the multiplicity of issues oppressing women, this study grouped those manifestos together, highlighting their common arguments against white feminist’s singular call for gender equality. Finally, the objective of this
study was to remind white feminists of their white privilege and to hold them accountable for the ways that such privilege has blinded them to the realities of intersecting oppressions in all women’s lives, not just those of women of color.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No project as large as this one represents solely individual effort, and like every writer, I am much indebted to a large number of people. Prior to entering the American Culture Studies Program at Bowling Green State University, I taught for five years in the New College Program at the University of Alabama, an undergraduate interdisciplinary program where scholarship, community, and camaraderie were equally valued and practiced among students and faculty. I am pleased to number among my friends there Margaret D’Souza, Lori Pittman, Bernie Sloan, Ed Passerini, Bing Blewitt, Jerry Rosenberg, Marysia Galbraith, and all my student advisees, without any of whom I might not have been able to conceive of my own interdisciplinary degree. Ed and Jerry in particular pushed me to clarify what I wanted from a Ph.D. program, and I thank them for extended conversations about the challenges and rewards of a scholarly life.

Since I have been at BGSU, many faculty have, in some way or another, contributed to both this project and to what has been, for me, an unbelievably rich and rewarding doctoral program. These include the amazing women professors with whom I’ve had the opportunity to work: Ellen Berry, Kathy Bradshaw, Sue Carter Wood, Kathy Farber, Jeannie Ludlow, and Lisa (Wolford) Wylam. Other faculty includes Michael Staub, Don McQuarie, Phil Terrie, and John Warren. My committee, comprised of Ellen Berry, Sue Carter Wood, and John Warren, understands that surviving the process is as challenging as generating content, and each has been unfailingly supportive even as they pushed me to work harder than I ever have in my life. One prior member of my committee, Michael Sproule, gave me invaluable guidance before his career took him to another university. The Jeanette C. Sampatacos Scholarships I received during my
second and third years in the program afforded me time to research, read, and write, and I am especially grateful to the American Culture Studies Program for the award of the Non-Service Fellowship for my fourth year.

I am also thankful to the terrific batch of graduate students at York University, Toronto, Ontario, who organized the Program in Social and Political Thought’s Annual conference, which, from April 9-11, 2003, focused exclusively on manifestos. Kate Kaul, Julie Petruzellis, Lyn Thoman, and other participants offered serious critiques and suggestions for an early draft of the rhetorical elements of this document. Participating in this conference, in many ways, helped me to actually conceive of how to begin this writing.

Further, I have been blessed with a large and robust group of loyal friends. Of the four-footed variety, my dog Delilah lived to see me begin this program, and my cat Tinker lived through the success of my preliminary exams. Their successors include Shelby and Ezra the wiggle-dogs, and cats Filbert, Mowgli, Tess, Milo, and Lucy, who in their own ways reminded me to maintain a balance of the important things in life, like romping, snuggling, eating regularly, and taking long walks in all kinds of weather. Human friends Ann Pearson and Kim Colburn have been steadfast friends and cheerleaders; Krista Kiessling and Elizabeth Johnson played key instrumental roles in keeping perspective and raising morale; Robin Gunther and Ana Schuber impressed upon me the importance of community and of belly-laughing; Barbara Trainer and Ron Koltnow have had long-term faith in me; Randy James and Laura Manns-James offered technical support and ice cream runs; Christine Drennen provided intellectual and political balance; Kris Medford kept me in stitches on occasions too numerous to count;
Jen Angel and Jason Kucsma helped me, in their own inimitable way, to understand how scholarship, activism, and integrity all go hand in hand; all of my women coworkers at the Center for Choice proved every day that feminist work is hard, essential, rewarding, soul-satisfying, and life affirming; my mother Jen Coleman expressed continued pride in my work; and my sister Susan Adams was, unfailingly, always just a phone call away. Other friends too numerous to name have contributed in countless invaluable ways.

Moreover, I shall remain forever grateful and indebted to my intrepid writing partner Marilyn Yaquinto, who provided fire, energy, serious critique, and plenty of laughter as we slogged through this process together; the focus of this dissertation is the result of many long intense conversations with her. Much that is strong in this dissertation is due to her scholarly pressure; the weaknesses are mine alone. Marilyn has been both a loyal friend and an amazing writing partner, and no word of thanks will ever sufficiently express my gratitude to her.

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Alice Parker, whose quiet faith, since 1986, in my potential as a feminist scholar led me to my job at New College, which in turn led me to the American Culture Studies Program at BGSU.
When I first began this project, I had a vague sense, a notion, of what whiteness was, but I would have been hard pressed to provide a definition or instances of it. In the intervening three or four years, as my knowledge base has grown and I have become increasingly sensitive not only to the presence of whiteness but also to the subtle ways that it reinforces social structures in the U.S.—at both the macro and micro levels—it suddenly seems that examples of it abound. I would like to share a couple of stories that not only illustrate my own burgeoning awareness of the presence and workings of whiteness but also show the variety of situations in which it presents itself.

In the summer of 2004, I led a workshop at the Allied Media Conference in Bowling Green, Ohio, a conference that brings together anarchists, teachers, producers of indy-media, direct-action activists, street performers, filmmakers, and other kinds of rabble-rousers in the interest of sharing knowledge and information on ways to foster democratic grassroots participation in local, state, and federal politics. My workshop focused on increasing diversity awareness among producers of media: zinesters, radio reporters, grassroots activists, even folks whose primary work and source of income was a mainstream type of job. All of the white folks in the room—and the conference participants were overwhelmingly, though not exclusively, white—were well meaning, open-minded, and concerned about how the whiteness of their products, their perspectives, their angles might be alienating to people of color. They were also a bit stymied about how to change that. We filled the white(!)board with suggestions, most of which ran toward taking individual responsibility for making changes in reporting style, organizing goals, or creating actions to raise public awareness of some of the ways in
which race affected local politics, activities, or public options. No one suggested that they offer their services to other organizations, owned and operated by people of color, already in place, and I am a little embarrassed to admit that I did not think to propose it either.

This incident reminded me, upon later reflection, of a story that teacher and education activist Jonathan Kozol told at a public lecture in Toledo, Ohio, in the fall of 2002: in the 1960s, after a particularly racially-charged event in the town where he lived, feeling the need to make a difference of some kind, he took the bus to the black side of town, found an open church, and approached the pastor, asking, “What can I do to help? What do you need me to do?” Such a simple question, yet it left the power in the hands of the pastor, someone intimately connected with the community, who knew exactly what needed to be done, and who needed intelligent able bodies to it. In this case, Kozol ended up teaching kindergarteners to read over the summer.

More recently, my Public Speaking students at the local community college were practicing various forms of short ceremonial speeches, including tributes, introductions, and eulogies. One student gave a tribute to her best friend, telling her classmates how they had become friends nine years earlier, what was special about her friend, what changes their friendship had undergone over the years, and how they weathered their differences as women. At the end of the speech, my student revealed that her best friend is African American; this student had, earlier in the semester, self-identified as half Mexican, half white. Withholding her friend’s race until the end of the speech had been a calculated move; my student declared that she wanted us to know her friend as a person, separate from her race. One of her classmates, a white man, asked, “what does it say about me that I imagined this best friend as white until I was told otherwise?” He was
clearly disconcerted, not, he said, because he felt he had been intentionally misled, but rather because he became keenly aware, in that moment, of how fully he had absorbed the cultural lessons about race in the U.S. and how powerfully that colored his own assumptions about who could or who was likely to be friends with whom. In other words, following this logic, his classmate, a woman who appeared to be white, would most likely have white friends, which both students agreed was not always the case in real life. Issues such as race, class, or gender (e.g., those typically studied in women’s studies or cultural pluralism classes) were not necessarily the subject of discussion in this particular public speaking class, but I did encourage my students not to shy away from controversial matters in their speeches; thankfully, they did not. Consequently, these feminist issues arose fairly regularly over the course of the semester, as we discussed how students should navigate topics of interest to them without alienating their audience. That the students broached these issues suggests to me that they are significant in their everyday lives, and that having the opportunity to discuss them was helpful to them, even if our discussions raised more questions than they answered, as in the case of assumed whiteness in the description of a friend. Taken together, these instances indicate to me the power of assumptions about race in the U.S., as well as exemplify the centrality of whiteness in the construction of race.

So the question becomes, why have I undertaken this project? I am a well-educated middle-class white woman interested in examining the intersections of feminism, rhetoric, and whiteness. For the bulk of my early academic training, especially but not exclusively in women’s studies, whiteness was the taken-for-granted racial norm against which all else was measured, and it was also the element whose absence I could feel but not articulate. Discovering whiteness studies opened a door for me: it helped me
to feel both as though something crucial had been recognized and also that here at last was some very important work that I needed to do. As I have discovered, although I cannot divest myself of my white skin or the social privilege attendant to it, I can use that relative power in public and pedagogical ways, to help raise others’ awareness of how whiteness functions invisibly in the U.S. and offer suggestions of ways to implement that increased awareness.

As I have also learned, it is essential to remember that ignoring racial/raced ideologies maintains their hegemonic status; they continue to exist in the same form as always, unless they are challenged. Whiteness occurs as the invisible normative component not only of definitions of race but also of language, discourse, frames of reference, and modes of cultural production. In other words, the linguistic choices that any of us makes reflect social position, political affiliation, and personal self-definition as well as unconscious tendencies and mental habits; all of these choices, here in the U.S., are informed by whiteness as unremarked assumption or frame of reference. Furthermore, even though this is now the early twenty-first century, I think that racism and whiteness are still as prevalent as ever; indeed, they may be even more sneaky, such as when they are couched in the language of ‘multicultural awareness.’ However, when white folks decide what it is that people of color need, we impose a white set of standards and values, based on our own needs and experiences, and this imposition may be unconscious, which may make it all the more insidious. This is the lesson of Kozol’s story.

Throughout my research for this dissertation, I have been dismayed by the apparent reluctance of feminists, especially white feminists, to address whiteness and white privilege with the same vengeance that we have attacked sexist issues. Peggy
McIntosh and Marilyn Frye were among the first white feminists who seriously examined their white privilege; however, white feminists have until recently been slow to further theorize whiteness. McIntosh’s well-known essay, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” examines “how advantages of being white are structured into everyday living” (Bush 30), while Frye’s lesser known philosophical treatise, “On Being White: Toward a Feminist Understanding of Race and Race Supremacy,” gently but firmly admonishes white people to consciously disaffiliate with white privilege, based upon the understanding that such disaffiliation requires increased racial awareness and daily acts of will. Since then, there have been a few other feminist studies of whiteness: Ruth Frankenberg’s book *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993) and Chris J. Cuomo and Kim Q. Hall’s edited collection, *Whiteness: Feminist Philosophical Reflections* (1999), for example, represent important strides in the recognition of the social construction of whiteness and how individual white women not only experience but think about the effects of whiteness in their daily lives.

Nevertheless, much work remains.

This makes my study all the more important at this moment. I believe it is time to hold white women, especially but not exclusively white feminists, accountable for the ways in which our rhetorical habits and choices perpetuate whiteness (consciously or not). By bringing scholarly attention (yet again) to feminist concerns, I hope to demonstrate some ways that some manifestos by white women may actually have contributed to the continuation of some of the very ills they aimed to cure—that is, whiteness and its connection to women’s rights in the U.S. My central claim is that feminist manifestos are a performative genre and those written by white women participate in the maintenance of a rhetoric of whiteness at the systemic social level, and
therefore it is time to subvert oppressive social norms that maintain that racial status quo. The performative that I am interested in is the everyday sort that is manifested in the unconscious use of language that perpetuates inequalities, specifically raced and gendered ones. More particularly, I am interested in the ways in which the sedimentation of those language acts constructs and reinforces social actions and attitudes that result in the subordination of women and people of color. Thus, even though I both appear to be and self-identify as white, I cast my lot with the women of color who have always reminded white women that race, class, and sexuality are also important factors in the perception and regulation of groups of people. I can no longer sit by and allow my white privilege to benefit only me; with privilege comes power, and with power, responsibility. If American society is to become more just, more sensitive to the positive force of differences among people, then it is also incumbent upon me to responsibly use the power afforded me as a white person to help create that change. It is a challenge I willingly embrace, and I invite others to join me.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 1
  Whiteness .................................................................................................................................. 5
  Performativity ........................................................................................................................ 15
  Genre and Manifestos ........................................................................................................ 19
  Organization of Dissertation ............................................................................................ 24

CHAPTER 1. FIRST WHITE WAVE MANIFESTOS .................................................................. 29
  Declaration of Sentiments ........................................................................................................... 34
  Man-Made World ...................................................................................................................... 46

CHAPTER 2. SECOND WHITE WAVE MANIFESTOS ......................................................... 57
  SCUM Manifesto ................................................................................................................... 68
  Redstockings Manifesto .......................................................................................................... 79
  The Woman-Identified-Woman ............................................................................................. 86

CHAPTER 3. THIRD WHITE WAVE MANIFESTOS ............................................................ 95
  Third Wave Manifesta ........................................................................................................... 106
  GLAM Manifesto ................................................................................................................ 113
  The Transfeminist Manifesto ............................................................................................... 120

CHAPTER 4. WOMEN OF COLOR MANIFESTOS ............................................................ 129
  Aren’t I A Woman? ................................................................................................................. 132
  A Black Feminist Statement .................................................................................................... 140
  Borderlands/La Frontera ....................................................................................................... 150

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................. 161
INTRODUCTION:
WHITENESS, PERFORMATIVITY, AND GENRE OF MANIFESTOS

The ideology of whiteness becomes actualized and normalized to the point of invisibility by way of language, media culture, and schooling. (Monica Beatriz deMello Patterson)

Part of the “work” of whiteness involves generating norms—that is, making things seem or appear natural and timeless, so that people accept situations, as well as particular ideologies, without ever questioning their socially and politically constructed nature. (Nelson M. Rodriguez)

The illocutionary speech act performs its deed at the moment of the utterance, and yet to the extent that the moment is ritualized, it is never merely a single moment. The “moment” in ritual is a condensed historicity: it exceeds itself in past and future directions, an effect of prior and future invocations that constitute and escape the instance of utterance. (Judith Butler, Excitable Speech)

Whiteness has operated as the invisible normative definitional center not only of race but also of class and gender categories in the United States almost since European explorers and settlers set foot on these shores. Further, as the normative rhetoric of nation building, it was presented by governing and public officials, religious and educational leaders, and in the popular media, as Patterson and Rodriguez indicate above, as natural and normal, and consequently, it became woven into the American social fabric as the unspoken as well as legislated benchmark for American citizenship as well as public activity and everyday social participation. Now that the center has begun to be exposed via whiteness studies, a number of questions arise; this chapter introduces the theoretical areas of whiteness studies and performativity to provide a foundation for this study, which takes up the following inquiries. What is whiteness? How is whiteness constructed in the U.S.? Can whiteness be discovered in certain cultural artifacts, such as feminist manifestos? What characteristics might a genre of manifestos have? What kind of document gets to be included in the genre and what excluded? What cultural work do manifestos do? What makes some of them feminist? Can it be said that they might discursively perform race or whiteness? Does some of their performativity of whiteness
participate in, refute, or work against the perpetuation of white supremacy or white
privilege? I contend that certain feminist manifestos are not only a performative, cultural
genre, but they may also be recognized as a rhetorical site upon which to examine the
discursive construction or critique of whiteness in the U.S.

This study teases out the rhetorical reproduction of whiteness in language,
examining how whiteness suffuses linguistic choices and even definitions that appear to
be unbiased. No language is neutral, as any oppressed person will testify; it always
reflects the point of view and agenda of the dominant social paradigm. In a racist, sexist,
homophobic society, such as currently exists in the United States, language reinforces the
privileges of those with privilege; in other words, just as the victors write history, so do
the dominants choose the linguistic spin of everyday terminology. Throughout this
dissertation, I identify where and how whiteness operates as the motivating force in the
social power structure of the U.S. (e.g., how it functions hegemonically) by using certain
feminist manifestos as an example of the rhetorical reproduction and performativity of
whiteness. I have chosen feminist manifestos as the particular genre of study because
while they do represent progress toward social justice in gendered power relations, they
do not always or necessarily advance equality or social justice in terms of race, class, or
sexuality. The end of this chapter includes a brief outline of the manifestos under
scrutiny.

I shall analyze the manifestos according to the following framework: first, by
acknowledging what they ‘get right’ in feminist terms, that is, how they fulfill their
feminist promise to expose gendered inequality and make proposals for change; second,
by examining the presence of whiteness by showing:
a) how it hides, usually in plain sight, for example, in linguistic or cultural assumptions, in social standards and expectations, or in legal constructs;
b) how it maintains that which it defines; that is, how it co-constitutes the Other in order to preserve its own power and dominance; and
c) how it operates overtly, as in the form of literal, intentional racism.

Not each of these features exists equally among all of the documents, but all do include one or more, which I will indicate at the appropriate places. Contained within this rubric is a certain set of operating assumptions on my part, which have been substantiated by many scholars who appear throughout this project. First, that whiteness is the invisible realm/ theatre/ playing field/ power structure in operation in Western society, which works as the driving force or guiding hand in social construction not only of race but also of other factors of identity such as class, gender, and sexuality. Second, that race (as are all the other factors of identity) is used as a categorical tool of control, one that is carefully defined, regulated, and policed (we have only to look at slavery, lynching, gay bashing, and sexism to find ample proof of the truth of this statement). Third, that racism (as well as sexism, classism, and homo- and transphobia) is a direct effect of the power relations inherent in constructing and defining race, of creating racialized categories and maintaining their status as inferior to normative whiteness. Throughout the study of manifests, I expose the strategic rhetorics that are being performed to (re)produce the power of whiteness; such rhetorics include language/word choice, terminology, code words, linguistic structures, cultural assumptions, laws, and the political decisions and strategies the manifests advocate. Rhetorical language is persuasive language, a mode with an agenda. My central interest in feminist manifests resides in their rhetorical
force and power; as rhetorical documents, manifestos have specific agendas—they assume they will instigate the action they outline or recommend. I believe that it is productive to examine these rhetorical responses as performative acts consistent with modes of social change. Moreover, the rhetorical aspects that I am particularly interested in are the rhetorical strategies by which these feminist manifestos assume and therefore reproduce whiteness, or, conversely as in the case of critiques by feminists of color, how those manifestos interrogate and interrupt whiteness. I am aware that highlighting the element of whiteness might appear to foreground race to the exclusion of the others; however, I do so not for linearity but for clarity. I believe that temporarily emphasizing whiteness will enable a better understanding of some of the ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality are intimately intertwined, within both social construction and individual experience of them. In other words, in the U.S., I believe that all identity factors are inflected by whiteness, as it functions as the invisible regulatory normative center or basis for definition. Perhaps obviously, when discussing manifestos by women of color, I shall explain how those manifestos critique whiteness using a similar set of tools.

In order to demonstrate their usefulness as a rhetorical instrument, this chapter establishes a theoretical foundation of whiteness studies so that this dissertation may examine manifestos’ participation in the discursive construction of whiteness. This is followed by a discussion of the theory of performativity, an aspect of speech act theory that accounts for the ways in which certain speech acts become so socially ritualized as to construct that which they also claim to report. The particular aspect of performativity that interests me here resides in the mundane repetition of certain terminology, of
linguistic structures, strategies, or definitions that reproduce and bolster racial difference and the assumption of white superiority. Next, I suggest some contours of a genre of manifestos, showing how they incorporate features of both literary and rhetorical genres but also transcend those generic categories and form their own performative interdisciplinary, cultural genre. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief description of the contents of the following chapters.

**WHITENESS**

Currently and historically, whiteness represents a privileged position in the U.S., and in order to subvert the dominance of whiteness, it is necessary to account for its presence and its workings. As a way of conceiving racial difference that brings whiteness into scholarly and cultural conversations, the study of whiteness by white scholars is relatively new to the critical scene, even though people and scholars of color have been aware of its presence and influence for centuries. The important contribution of whiteness studies lies in the recognition that whiteness is socially constructed in the same ways that other races are, and that it should therefore be subject to the same critical scrutiny as blackness or brownness have been. As communications scholar Aimee Carrillo Rowe explains, “whiteness studies seek to particularize a racial location that defies both definition and racialization: Whiteness” (Carrillo Rowe 65). Put another way, whiteness studies concentrates “attention upon the socially constructed nature of white identity” (Doane 3). In his essay “Doing Whiteness,” John Warren notes that “most of the literature in ‘whiteness studies’ tends to rest on two essential foundations”; these foundational studies emphasize that “whiteness functions as cultural and social privilege,” and that whiteness is invisible to white subjects (Warren 94). Resting upon
these foundations Warren describes “four permeable, but relatively distinct frames: whiteness as anti-racist practice; reading whiteness in literature, cinema, and scholarship; whiteness as a rhetorical location; and whiteness as a performative accomplishment” (94). In his essay, Warren analyzes whiteness as a performative accomplishment, and I do the same, analyzing feminist manifestos.

But what is whiteness? It is a slippery concept that defies simple definition, because its fundamental normalized assumption of white superiority may produce and reinforce mundane practices, social customs, laws, and linguistic constructions, most of which are so deeply entrenched in U.S. culture as to appear to be natural, normal, and just the way things are. Further, whiteness is not merely the idea of white superiority in all matters but also the ideology that supports, enacts, and reinforces that idea. Sociologist Margaret Anderson reminds us that “whiteness is culturally hegemonic and maintains its hegemony by seeming natural or just not being questioned,” so that “one of the purposes of whiteness studies is to ‘destabilize’ white identity—to expose, examine, and challenge it” (25). It is therefore possible, as various scholars do, to identify its principles, the mechanisms by which it is produced, its effects upon different populations, or the dimensions in which it exists. Moreover, many of these categories overlap or mutually constitute one another, which emphasize the concept’s slipperiness. Nevertheless, numerous scholars offer provisional definitions, based on the idea that, in order to expose

---

1 Various scholars have identified devices by which whiteness is produced: these include the studies of literature, film, laws, and pedagogical and performative practices, as well as analysis of rhetorical location mentioned by Warren, above.
2 Notable examples include Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* and hooks’ “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination,” as well as Jurca’s *White Diaspora* and Warren’s *Performing Purity*.
3 Charles Mills outlines the spheres in which several dimensions of white supremacy exist: the juridico-political sphere, the economic sphere, the cultural sphere, the cognitive-evaluative sphere, the somatic sphere, and the metaphysical sphere (in Doane and Bonilla-Silva, 42-48).
and analyze whiteness, it is necessary to situate it as an essential component among critical discussions of race. These scholars also remember that “racial categories are socially constructed and contextually defined” (Cuomo and Hall 2) and that whiteness has been the invisible normative center around which other races have been constituted. Philosopher Charles Mills cautions that “race is best conceived of not primarily as ideational but as embedded in material structures, sociopolitical institutions, and everyday social practices that so shape the world with which we interact as to constitute an ‘objective’ though socially constructed ‘reality’” (Mills 48; italics mine). While the manifestos under consideration in this dissertation may not quite comprise a sociopolitical institution as such, they certainly operate in the public sphere in such a way as to reinforce other institutions, such as the law, education, or employment, for example. Again, it is important to remember that these institutions have been established to privilege certain members of society while denying those same privileges to others, as feminist scholars have long argued. In keeping with the naturalized, normalized use of whiteness as the measure of racial privilege, many manifestos by white feminists unquestioningly or unconsciously reproduce that same standard, as the following chapters establish.

Exposing whiteness demonstrates the particular ways in which that socially constructed reality has been biased toward white and white-appearing people, as the remaining analytical portion of this dissertation shall reveal. Further, “in the context of the ideology of race,” sociologist Woody Doane accounts for the place and function of white power in such an ideology: “as a position in a specific set of social relationships,” whiteness operates “in the historical role of racial ideologies…to legitimate
dispossession, enslavement, and marginalization” (Doane 9). What results, then, is “a system of social privilege,” with power accruing to people who benefit from whiteness, which includes such dimensions as “identity, self-understanding, social practices, group beliefs, ideology, and a system of domination” (Anderson 25, 28). As a close critical examination of a system of social privilege, whiteness studies is also inherently a political project, one with anti-racist and social justice goals, a project in which “practitioners…hope to force whites to confront issues of race, to make white dominance problematic, and to work toward…‘the abolition of whiteness’” (Doane 6). Having said all of this, I need to clarify that whiteness is not a methodological tool, but rather the result of the sedimentation of historically racialized actions and attitudes that lead to social systems that confer power, privilege, and advantage upon certain members of that society while denying those same privileges to other members. To understand how such privileges accrue to some individuals or exclude others, whiteness studies scholars have begun to analyze not only whiteness as a racialized category but also its particular manifestations in such areas as film, literature, language, and the law, a brief explanation of which follows.

While whiteness has not usually been considered a racial category by white scholars in the way that blackness or brownness have been constructed to be, many recent scholars have begun to problematize and analyze whiteness. They also recognize that part of the difficulty in analyzing whiteness lies in its ubiquity; it is always there and not there, reflecting both privilege and emptiness. In his groundbreaking essay “White,” film theorist Richard Dyer notes that “trying to think about the representation of whiteness as an ethnic category in mainstream film is difficult, partly because white power secures its
dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular” (44). This observation is echoed by scholars in many disciplines. Literary critic Catherine Jurca claims that the “paradox of whiteness is that its very amorphousness as an identity is understood simultaneously to situate its social privilege and to describe an embarrassing cultural and spiritual banality” (17). The concept of whiteness, as communications scholars Philip Wander, Judith Martin, and Thomas Nakayama point out, refers to a “historical systemic structural race-based superiority” in which whiteness can be exposed as an elitist construct wherein poor whites do not really exist (Wander, et als, 15). Ergo, white equals middle class, and significantly, it is also gendered male;⁴ these normative categories typically go unmarked, although, as Dyer notes, “some efforts are now being made to rectify this, to see that the norm too is constructed” (44). He further states that the “property of whiteness, to be everything and nothing, is the source of its representational power… [It is] reproduced by the way that white people colonise the definition of normal” (45). In other words, whiteness as a privileged status has been so pervasive in American culture that it goes unnoticed by those who benefit from its attendant constitutional rights and civil liberties, even though not-white people are keenly aware of the privileges that whiteness confers. Significantly, white feminists profit from ignoring their white privilege as they focus on gendered rather than racialized (or more fully integrated) oppression of women. Legal scholar Angela Harris points out that “in feminist legal theory, as in the dominant culture, it is mostly white, straight, and socioeconomically privileged people who claim to speak for all of us,” basing their claims on an essentialist

⁴ For example, see essays contained in such edited editions as *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism, Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, and *Race and Ideology: Language, Symbolism, and Popular Culture*, to mention two of many such collections.
notion of female experience that fails to account for the ways that race, class, or sexuality also affect women’s experience (Harris 11).

Several literary and cultural theorists have also examined the effects of hegemonic whiteness in popular imagination. Toni Morrison rereads several ‘classic’ American novels, examining how what she calls the “Africanist presence” permeates the American literary imagination and constructs its readers and writers as white, with a white sensibility and set of values and assumptions (6). Implicit in the use of the Africanist presence in literature is its function as a trope in which reside white Americans’ fears, desires, and understanding of freedom and individualism; Morrison’s goal, however, is to “avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers” (90). My project echoes hers in this regard. Valerie Babb and Catherine Jurca, mentioned above, have projects similar to Morrison’s. Babb’s book explores how selected American texts—early maps of Virginia by John Smith, Melville’s *Moby Dick*, and nineteenth century captivity narratives, for example—illuminate the ways in which whiteness exists unnamed in the American cultural discourse otherwise obsessed with race and shows how whiteness is a system of privileges accorded to those with white skin. She also explains how both the term “whiteness” and its social enactment demonstrate the workings of social power to construct white and whiteness in ways that are similar to the social constructedness of other races. Studying such novels as *Babbitt, Mildred Pierce*, and *Native Son*, Jurca explores how white middle class men alienate themselves from urban society by moving to the suburbs and languishing in self-pity; it is their whiteness that enables such social withdrawal, since, as members of the dominant race (as well as sex),
they have the option of opting out of social participation. Additionally, bell hooks’ essay “Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination” examines how, for black folks living in the U.S. since the Middle Passage, whiteness in the black imagination equals terror. Whether the white people were insurance or Bible salesmen, local townspeople covered in white sheets, or customs officials, systemic whiteness made certain that nearly any action the individuals took against black folks would be sanctioned. Continually subjected to such indignities as lynching and strip-searching ensured that, as hooks says, “all black people live with the possibility that they will be terrorized by whiteness” (46). Taken together, these samples—by no means an exhaustive list—provide ample evidence of the existence of whiteness, even to white people.

As may be deduced from the previous examples from whiteness studies, whiteness also arises from the accumulation and sedimentation of specifically performed acts. How exactly is whiteness performed, however? As explained in the following section on performativity, it may be seen that whiteness, like gender, is accomplished through stylized repetition of socially constrained and determined acts and through the illusion of itself as abiding, natural, and coherent. Since it is generally agreed that race is as much a social construction as gender, as Haney Lopez, McIntosh, Berger, and others argue, might we not also ask about the ways in which ritualized repetition of racialized norms produce and stabilize the effects of whiteness? In order to answer this question, it is helpful to clarify some differences between the terms race, racism, and whiteness.

Legal scholar Ian Haney Lopez outlines some of the compelling, constitutive features of race, suggesting that the “process by which racial meanings arise has been
labeled racial formation” (“The Social Construction of Race” 168). He outlines four important facets of the social construction of race:

First, humans rather than abstract social forces produce races. Second, as human constructs, races constitute an integral part of a whole social fabric that includes gender and class relations. Third, the meaning-systems surrounding race change quickly rather than slowly. Finally, races are constructed relationally, against one another, rather than in isolation. (“The Social Construction of Race” 168)

Further, significantly, while “biological race is an illusion…social race…is not” (“The Social Construction of Race” 172). In the U.S, the privileged group has historically been white, and the overriding negative effects of being not white in the U.S. result from racism, which may be defined as “a system of advantage based on race,” in which such advantage confers social power and the right to dominance (Tatum 7). Where advantages accrue to one group, privileges result, and consequently, those who are not members of the advantaged, privileged group become disadvantaged, underprivileged. More importantly, privilege usually remains invisible to those who have it: “whites are taught to think of their lives a morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work which will allow ‘them’ to be more like ‘us’” (McIntosh 110). Further, the group with advantages is usually also the group with or in power, and this power ensures the centrality (albeit invisible) of whiteness in the U.S.

It is around this normative centrality of unracialized whiteness that others are racialized. Butler says that the “logic of repudiation [that] installs heterosexual love as the origin and truth of both lesbianism and drag…interprets both practices as symptoms
of thwarted love” (Bodies 128). I assert that, similarly, whiteness has been posited as the invisible normative center—“the origin and truth” of race—which thus interprets racialized Others (namely peoples of color, e.g., Native Americans, African slaves, Japanese Americans, Arab Americans) as symptoms of thwarted humanity, as subhuman, and therefore subject to abjection. This abject position is a direct outgrowth of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking that struggled to define the distinctions between human and non-human, to “question the limits and definition of humanity;” although such philosophers as Locke and Rousseau never used the term ‘white,’ they did not have to, argues Warren Montag (288). This is because “whiteness is itself the human universal that no (other) race realizes. In theory, no (other) race is, or need be, inferior (it is only the contingent and the accidental that make them so). In fact, all (others) are inferior, having fallen short of the universal and therefore of humanity” (Montag 292).

As with gendered bodies, racialized bodies are also always in the process of becoming. Using Butler’s terminology, whiteness may be considered to be “an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time”; in other words, bodies constituted by discourse materialize, and those bodies that are or appear to be white come to occupy that acceptably normative center (Bodies 1). Cultural theorists such as Karen Brodkin and David Roediger, among many others, write about how various immigrant populations, such as Irish, Jews, and Italians, ‘became’ white through changes in social attitude and laws, which exemplifies Haney Lopez’s remark that “meaning-systems surrounding race change quickly.” Therefore, whiteness is not singularly achievable as such but must be constantly redefined, reiterated, regulated. Since the “most pervasive and powerful

paradigm of race in the United States is the Black/White binary,” it comes as no surprise that whiteness is a contingent status, dependent upon continual monitoring and exclusion of those considered to be not white (Perea 345-6).

To have contingent status does not reduce the hegemony of whiteness in the U.S., however. As may be deduced from the numerous examples above, whiteness is everywhere. Historically, the power structure in the U.S. has been white and male; until very recently, only white men held political office and made laws at the local, state, and federal levels. As indicated above, at various times during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people who were Irish, Catholic, or Jewish ‘became’ white through changes in laws, customs, or in response to social pressure. In the process of whitewashing such various ethnic identities, hegemonic whiteness incorporates or erases difference, “to allow ‘them’ to be more like ‘us’,” as McIntosh pointed out. This suggests that the norm of whiteness adapts to serve its own purposes and preserve its own hegemonic status. Further, even those aware of the power of whiteness, such as whiteness scholars and anti-racist activists, must submit to its edicts, including moral codes, value systems, definitions of beauty, relation to time, and language, for example. However, just because normative whiteness incorporates that which it deems necessary to perpetuate itself does not mean that it is unassailable, as the presence of whiteness studies testifies to; norms, too, change with social pressure, and feminist manifestos, engaged in dismantling patriarchy, suggest changes to that long-standing social structure. Likewise, whiteness may also be altered from within; that whiteness studies is still at the stage of critical examination does not preclude or deny possible changes to future definitions of and attitudes toward race.
PERFORMATIVITY

Performativity is the ongoing process of recreating something, a continual repetition of ideologically motivated acts grounded in and developing from particular socio-historical contexts. Theories of performativity attempt to account for some of the specific ways in which ideologies and human bodies intersect, which Judith Butler began in her discussion of performative gender construction, and which John Warren has applied to the discursive construction of whiteness. Although performativity is a dynamic concept, including such topics as gender, bodies, and visual representation on film, my discussion of it is limited to written documents or transcripts of speeches. In order to explain the concept of performativity of whiteness, especially as it appears in certain feminist manifestos, I offer a brief synopsis of Butler’s discussion of performativity, and then attend to the discursive/linguistic aspect of performativity. This provides the foundation for my analysis of the discursive perpetuation or disruption of whiteness as performed by certain American feminist manifestos.

In much of her early writing, Judith Butler advances the notion of gender performativity as a way to account for the construction, maintenance, and subversion of gender identity. Gender, Butler argues, does not arise from an established self or core being but rather from the accumulation and sedimentation of specifically performed acts. She states, “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (“Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”)

---

6 Including her books Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter and such essays as “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”; later, such essays as “Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia” discuss some ways in which racism connects to and determines white responses to black bodies.
hereafter PAGC, 270, italics hers). That is, rather than being a “stable identity,” gender results from a series of continuously performed and socially constrained acts that accumulate over time so that even the actors come to believe their veracity.

She continues, asserting that “mundane” bodily acts and gestures “constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (PAGC 270, italics mine). That gender, as a social construct, must be continuously performed in order to perpetuate itself demonstrates its instability, its illusory nature. In other words, we only know what gender *is* because we continually *do* it (or, failing to do it correctly, are punished for our misdeeds). In other words, gender must always be being performed—it must be ritually repeated—in order to continue being, to manifest its possibilities. Gender needs bodies to believe in it, to make it possible, and to maintain its existence. Gender also uses language as a tool of performativity; it is through language, as well as acts, that bodies and genders are identified as dominant or subordinate, for example. By examining the ways in which gender has been constituted, it becomes possible to imagine other forms, such as race, those constructs might take.

Before doing that, however, it is important to clarify that there are at least two dimensions of performativity, which operate concurrently. One dimension is the linguistic or discursive form, which accounts for the ways in which people are socially constructed and constituted in and through language, and the other is its visual or bodily dimension, which highlights the fact that how bodies are seen is a result of how those bodies are discursively constructed, be that construction gender or race or sexuality. That these two dimensions, discursive and visual, are inseparable and to a certain extent interdependent emphasizes both the constitutive power of language and a certain failure
of that language to fully account for ways in which bodies may exceed the language that constructs them. Butler theorizes both visual and discursive performativity, and while I focus here on the discursive function, an explanation of which follows, I remain keenly aware that the social construction of race relies in large part upon visual determiners of the skin color of real bodies.

**Performativity as/in language/discourse**

Performativity of gender, both discursively and corporeally, includes cultural agreement of acceptable gender constitution, which upholds reproduction of itself (that is, cultural agreement supports reproduction of gender) and of certain acceptable subjectivities that materialize over and through time, through language. Such language, intent (albeit perhaps unconsciously) on a particular topic, becomes discourse, “a means of both producing and organizing meaning within a social context” (Edgar and Sedgwick 117). Furthermore, far from being mere words, discursive construction of bodies has real implications in the lives of real people, and as Butler explains, that constitutive language both sustains and threatens the body: “Language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeding it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence first becomes possible” (*Excitable Speech* 5, italics mine). Similarly, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is interested in those “discussions of linguistic performativity [that] have become a place to reflect on ways in which language really can be said to produce effects: effects of identity, enforcement, seduction, challenge” (*Tendencies* 11, italics hers). The power of language to both constitute and constrain social existence thus clearly indicates the existence of the performative power of discourse. However, as Butler cautions,
To claim that discourse is formative is not to claim that it originates, causes, or exhaustively composes that which it concedes; rather, it is to claim that there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body. In this sense, the linguistic capacity to refer to sexed [or raced] bodies is not denied, but the very meaning of ‘referentiality’ is altered. In philosophical terms, the constative claim is always to some degree performative. (Bodies 10-11, italics mine)

In her book *Excitable Speech*, Butler summarizes and analyzes the two kinds of speech acts or locutions that J. L. Austin declares are performative: illocutionary and perlocutionary. Illocutionary speech acts are those which “produce effects…without any lapse of time” while perlocutionary acts “initiate a set of consequences” in which “the saying and the consequences produced are temporally distinct” (17). These distinctions are significant for her project in that book, because she examines instances, reiteration, and consequences of hate speech on particular segments of society, at the individual, the public, and the state level. Further, Butler contends that people are constituted within the terms of language, and are therefore subject to its various powers, from injurious to accusative, from casual to legal. Regarding the constitutive power of language, she asks, “Is our vulnerability to language a consequence of our being constituted within its terms? If we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and conditions any decision we might make about it” (2). The particular formative power of hate speech is seen in its performative dimension of illocution: hate speech “acts in an illocutionary way, injuring in and through the moment of speech, [thereby] constituting the subject through that injury” (24). Linguistic conditions thus both construct and circumscribe
bodily conditions as well as contribute to discursive performativity, which may be seen in the performative dimensions of feminist manifestos.

Feminist manifestos fight for the possibility of the survival of subordinate groups within dominant American culture, be they white women, women of color, or transgendered folk, even as some of those same manifestos simultaneously perpetuate whiteness. Recall that the beginning of this chapter posed a series of questions, some of which pertain directly to manifestos. Of particular interest to me for this project are such issues as the characteristics that suggest a genre of manifestos, the kind of cultural work manifests perform, the aspects that indicate their work is feminist, and in what ways they perform or interrogate whiteness. To better explain how feminist manifestos provide a rhetorical site upon which to examine the discursive construction (or critique) of whiteness in the U.S., it is helpful to know what constitutes a manifesto, what makes it feminist, and how it performs or interrupts whiteness. The following section traces just such a genre, which will serve to justify and explain the inclusion of the specific documents this dissertation examines.

**GENRE AND MANIFESTOS**

An examination of the topic of manifestos and genre begs many questions, which are complicated by the relative lack of critical attention to manifestos and the fairly small number of very recent writings on genre. Further complications arise when considering certain aspects relative to manifestos, namely feminism, performativity, and whiteness. How, then, to trace a genre of manifestos without either unproductively restricting the category or broadening it so far as dilute it? I start by negatively contrasting manifestos with traditional genre categorizations and then suggest some flexible contours. First,
manifestos do not appear to fit neatly into any of the traditional literary or rhetorical
genres, which could help explain the relative lack of critical attention by either literary
theorists or rhetoricians. Conventional literary genres usually include fiction, poetry,
drama, non-fiction, and essay, while traditional rhetorical categories include exposition,
description, narration, and argument. Of course, both literary and rhetorical categories
admit slippage, overlap, and change across time, and they have lately been recognized by
theorists as “fluid and dynamic” (Freedman and Medway 3). Manifestos do not fit neatly
into either rhetorical or literary genres, although they are decidedly rhetorical in their
persuasive qualities, just as, in their critique of certain extant social aspects, they rank as
nonfiction—indeed, several manifestos under consideration in this study also qualify as
essays or books.\(^7\) Moreover, any discussion of a genre, whether literary, rhetorical,
performative, or cultural, should attend to “assumptions not only about the form but also
about the text’s purposes, it subject matter, its writer, and its expected reader,” which
suggests dynamic participation between text, writer, and audience (itself an ancient
rhetorical understanding) (Devitt, a, 575).

While it may be tempting to assume that the lack of critical attention to
manifestos is because they slip through the cracks of traditionally described literary and
rhetorical genre categories, I believe that they also act as a cultural genre, one that is
interdisciplinary, that functions within and across those literary and rhetorical genres
even as they operate within their own cultural and public space. More to the point, as
mentioned earlier, manifestos are rhetorical in that they are documents with an agenda,
documents that persuasively advance an argument, and they are literary in that they may

\(^{7}\) Notably, Gilman’s *Man-Made World* and Anzaldua’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* are books, while “The
Black Feminist Statement” by the Combahee River Collective, “SCUM” by Valerie Solanas, and Emi
Koyama’s “The Transfeminist Manifesto” may also be classified as essays.
be classified as either nonfiction or fiction, in that they imaginatively explore options that may not (yet) exist in reality, even as they describe circumstances already extant. However, they are also cultural in their overt expression of ideology, their interaction with their communities of origin or audience, and their foregrounding of power relations among members of their communities. More particularly, as cultural vehicles, manifests engage with and critique their contemporary culture; they resist the status quo; they highlight the hegemonic power structure to disrupt its continuation and to broaden the acceptable definition of culture; and they are public documents intending to generate social justice, wherein each manifesto identifies the particular kind of justice it aims to generate. Finally, if they are American feminist manifests, they publicly indict oppressive aspects of American society such as sexism, racism, classism, and homophobia.

As both Lyon and Caws discuss, implicit in a characterization of manifests is the understanding that they are public declarations. Particular attention to the notion of “public” proves helpful in enriching explanation of a genre of manifests. Jurgen Habermas discusses the bourgeois conception of public spheres, and cultural theorist Nancy Fraser performs a feminist re-reading of Habermas’s ideas, in which she traces how ‘private’ (a.k.a. “women’s”) issues may be reconceived as ‘public’ by showing how they are moved to public consciousness. She says,

The idea of “the public sphere” in Habermas’s sense is a conceptual resource that…is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, and

---

8 This is not to say that neither literary nor rhetorical forms do not advance ideologies or practice cultural engagement, because of course they do; however, that ideology is often less the focus of the writing than is the argumentative or creative form and may be embedded within the document. Whereas in manifests the grievance with dominant ideology is plainly stated and is, in fact, the reason for the manifesto’s existence.
hence an institutionalised (sic) arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state. (Fraser 519)

Having a nongovernmental, non-state-supervised public space is essential for grassroots public coalition- and consensus-building. However, one of the problems with Habermas’s bourgeois conception of public spheres, Fraser argues, is that it brackets off difference, wherein participants act as if social inequalities do not exist, when in fact they do: women of all ethnicities and classes as well as men of racialized ethnicities, people of variable or ambiguous sexuality, and lower classes are excluded from full participation in public discourse as Habermas conceived it (Fraser 524). Crucially, “such bracketing usually works to the advantage of dominant groups in society and to the disadvantage of subordinates” (Fraser 525). It is against just such marginalization that feminists struggle, by contesting any dominant view as necessarily the best possible one for everyone in a society. Fraser’s argument for diverse public spheres explains one of the ways in which manifestos function in a public, though not officially legal or governmental, way. A genre of manifestos, then, does not necessarily include “governmental discursive opinion,” laws, policies, or rulings, even though some manifestos may speak directly in the public sphere to laws or policies.

**Manifestos as Rhetorical Tool and Performative Cultural Genre**

If we understand performativity to operate in and function through language, then manifestos, as discursive documents that overtly state change as their goal, are performative of certain ideologies. In my project, the specific ideology is whiteness or the disruption or critique of it. Performativity, as Butler conceives it relative to gender,
argues against proliferating taxonomies and against creating greater numbers of static identity categories; she argues instead for recognizing the sedimented effects of discourse upon bodies and upon ideas, for historical location and context—in Fraser’s terms, for multiple diverse public spheres. Relative to language and discourse, performativity “is already at work in the exercise of political discourse” (Excitable Speech 7); that is, certain speech acts are performative, and feminist manifestos are speech acts that declare their intentions as explicitly as the specific forms of hate speech that Butler explicates in Excitable Speech.

Thus, the performative accomplishment of manifestos is not sex or gender but discourse. In the case of the manifestos under consideration here, they also participate in the performative accomplishment of race at the ideological and social level (they may also participate at the state or legal level, but such is not the focus of my study), at the level of public opinion regarding how members of that public are racialized. As a performative cultural genre, feminist manifestos rupture masculine history; indeed, they exemplify the idea that “the manifesto is a genre that gives the appearance of being at once both word and deed, both threat and incipient action” (Lyon 14). Some manifestos by white feminists perpetuate whiteness by employing the privileges afforded white (or white-appearing) people in the United States, whereas some manifestos by women of color rupture, disrupt, or interrupt the hegemony of whiteness, as the following chapters will explain. It will become possible, then, by the end of this study, to extrapolate a rhetoric of whiteness as it is performed or refuted by American feminist manifestos. In order to extrapolate or expose a rhetoric of whiteness, this study examines the rhetorical and political strategies employed by the manifestos. These strategies include repeated
linguistic patterns that assume whiteness as a social, racial norm: tropes, phrases, terms, and logics; ideological assumptions about property, legal rights, women’s relation to men and other women, women’s “place” in society; in code words, linguistic structures, and historical construction; and feminist re-visions of a more just, equitable society or utopia.

ORGANIZATION OF DISSERTATION

Finally, a note about the conceptual organization of this dissertation. As mentioned above, this study foregrounds whiteness in order to expose its continued presence in American culture and feminist activity. Feminists and feminist historians alike have organized feminist activity into the by-now familiar ‘wave’ pattern; however, as another function of whiteness, the designation of waves as incorporating certain time periods has been a white feminist tool for structuring our history. For example, white women’s suffrage was not shared on the same timetable by black women, especially in the South; likewise, while many white women agitated for abolition of slavery, few gave the same energy to stop or prevent the lynching of black people during Reconstruction. Indeed, currently accepted designations of the First Wave indicate that it lasted seventy-two years, from 1848 to 1920; the Second Wave just under thirty years, from 1963 to roughly 1990 (although the case can convincingly be made that many Second Wave concerns still persist: reliable child care, equal pay, good health care, or increased employment opportunities, for example); and the Third Wave (1992-present) is now adolescent, at fourteen years. In many ways, such wave designations reinforce a white-constructed, white-owned history, one in which those who have been historically powerful in the U.S. have been white, educated, literate, and with access to the history-making machine. I find this problematic, insofar as there have also been momentous
social justice movements by women of color, but these have been marginalized, along with their participants, as insignificant to white America’s vision of itself. Consequently, in my use of these wave designations, I add the modifier ‘white’ to accentuate their biased construction in favor of white women’s achievements, to the dismissal of accomplishments by women of color.

Thus, in my project, I am interested in, as well as dismayed by, the ways in which white feminists have continually ignored or diminished the contributions of women of color to feminist social justice movements, even as these same white feminists purportedly promoted justice and equality for all. In order to more fully highlight the ways in which whiteness and white privilege pervade even the ideologies of those who work for female equality and social justice, I examine two or three manifestos by white women from each white wave time period in chronological order, as outlined below. These chapters are followed by a chapter devoted to the voices of feminists of color who take white feminists to task for emphasizing gendered oppression at the expense and exclusion of race, class, and sexuality. Although my primary focus is upon whiteness and race, the other factors of identity, such as class and sexuality, are inextricably interwoven in people’s lives and lived experiences, so where those factors arise, I will attend to them. Notably, none of the manifestos by white women directly accounts for class, although a couple by women of color do; I am committed to acknowledging the effects of class even though my own work contains minimal analysis thereof. Finally, this dissertation’s conclusion draws together my findings from the intervening chapters and includes my own manifesto against whiteness. As I mentioned in the Preface, I am dedicated to using the privileges that are afforded to me as an educated white feminist to
ensure that others who lack white privilege may nonetheless gain access to social power, may experience social justice, and may discredit race as a form of discrimination and social control. I do this by exposing the ways in which whiteness has been perpetuated by white feminists, and I also add my voice to feminists of color who call for white feminists to acknowledge the social impact of the intersection of identity factors upon individuals, to recognize how that impact constrains and circumscribes an individual’s available choices, and to create a socially just world in which things like race, class, gender, and sexuality are not used to divide people from one another but instead become merely interesting and important features among the many that describe any one person.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1, the First White Wave, examines the Declaration of Sentiments (1848), authored by Mary Ann McClintock, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Martha Coffin Wright, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s book Man-Made World (1911). In these two manifestos, as in all of the others, my task is to identify where and how whiteness operates throughout these feminist manifestos written by white women; moreover, even as each manifesto in this chapter advanced feminist causes related to gendered oppression, they nevertheless failed to overcome the culturally prevalent racist tone in circulation at the time of their composition. Furthermore, insofar as these two manifestos were penned during times of heightened racial tension in the U.S., they also exhibit blatant racism, which appears in such forms as specific terminology as well as in cultural assumptions. It is also important to note that in each of the manifestos under consideration throughout these chapters, the term “woman” is often used unproblematically. Its users frequently assume it to include whiteness, uniformly
diminished privilege relative to white men, middle-class social stature, and heterosexuality. Again, while problematizing such use of the term woman is necessary (and is being done by many contemporary scholars, such as queer and transgendered theorists), such is not my goal here; where useful, though, I shall acknowledge unproblematic recitation.

The next chapter, Chapter 2: Second White Wave, analyzes Valerie Solanas’ SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) Manifesto (1967), the Redstockings Manifesto (February 1969), and The Woman-Identified-Woman statement by the Radicalesbians (1970), which are arranged chronologically to reflect the activists’ increasing sensitivity to nuances within feminist work. Each of these manifestos is a radical document insofar as each espouses the total overthrow of contemporary patriarchal society to form a new social order that emphasizes women’s significance in a functional society.

The Third White Wave, Chapter 3, examines the Third Wave Manifesta (2000), by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, the unidentified collectively-authored GLAM Manifesto (2000), and The Transfeminist Manifesto (2000), By Emi Koyama. These manifestos represent a slight increase in expansion of white feminist awareness to include sexuality, but these feminists still nevertheless ignore race and class. In other words, on the one hand, the writers are well-versed in the issues that First and Second Wave feminists struggled to bring to light; on the other hand, they are still constrained by some deeply ingrained attitudes and assumptions, particularly about whiteness and race, but also about class, gender, and sexuality, and consequently, whiteness continues to be performed through mundane linguistic and political choices.
In Chapter 4: Women of Color, I turn from a focus on white feminists to feminists of color, to re-accentuate how women of color have been marginalized throughout American history and to show how their work has always run parallel, and in some cases, preceded feminist work by white women. Sojourner Truth’s speech commonly called “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851), The Combahee River Collective Statement (1977), and Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* remind white feminists that gender is not the only or necessarily the most important form of oppression women have experienced in American culture. These manifestos exemplify intersectionality, bringing together race, class, and sexuality with gender as factors that constrain the choices women of color may make, even as these same factors, when acknowledged as sources of personal empowerment, enrich the lives of these women.

Chapter 5 is the Conclusion, and in it, I synthesize the points made throughout this dissertation about the ways in which issues of race have consistently been overshadowed by issues of gender, and how whiteness has remained intact as the invisible normative force that informed the choices of language and suggestions for political action contained within these manifestos. Finally, I close the chapter with my own manifesto against whiteness.
CHAPTER 1: FIRST WHITE WAVE MANIFESTOS

“The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.” (Declaration of Sentiments)

“Assuming the Gynaecocentric Theory to be the true one—that the female is the race type, and the male, originally but a sex type, reaching a later equality with the female, and in the human race, becoming her master for a considerable historic period—this book gives a series of studies of the effect upon our human development of this unprecedented dominance of the male, showing it to be by no means an unmixed good. ...When we learn to differentiate between humanity and masculinity we shall give honor where honor is due.” (Charlotte Perkins Gilman)

That time period commonly called the First Wave of feminist movement is generally agreed to have spanned the seventy-two years between 1848, when the Declaration of Sentiments was penned and published, and 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted women the right to vote. Although the goals of the First Wave were eventually narrowed down to suffrage, initially agitators tackled a wide variety of social ills; “participants [of the various women’s movements] attacked the male monopoly of education, professional careers, and culture; married women’s economic and legal dependence; sexual and moral double standards; women’s lack of control over their bodies; the drudgery of housework; low wages; and, not least, women’s exclusion from politics” (LeGates 197). Significantly, as shall be elaborated below, both the Declaration of Sentiments and Man-Made World incorporated all of these points. Because manifestos are cultural documents closely bound to their generative situation, it is important to have a sense of the historical context, which follows; more particular background for each manifesto shall appear in the individual sections. Once the manifestos have been historically situated, I analyze their feminist accomplishments and the whiteness that inheres within those accomplishments.

This chapter situates each manifesto so that its contribution to whiteness is emphasized, by examining the Declaration of Sentiments (1848) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s book Man-Made World (1911), which also exemplifies the ways in which
historical construction benefits white people and emphasizes accomplishments by white people. In each manifesto by white feminists, whiteness is a given; it is the assumed racial norm. As such, therefore, it is invisible to those who benefit from it, and highly visible to those who are marginalized by it. In each case here, as in the manifestos in the following two chapters, normative whiteness never has to defend or explain itself, and consequently, as each manifesto shows, whiteness hides in linguistic assumptions and in social standards and expectations, just as it co-constitutes the Other to preserve its own power and dominance. Furthermore, insofar as these two manifestos were penned during times of heightened racial tension in the U.S., they also exhibit blatant racism, which appears in such forms as specific terminology as well as in cultural assumptions. To contextualize the analysis, what follows is a brief recounting of the historical moment that gave rise to the white women’s feminist movement that has come to be known as the First Wave.

Broadly speaking, cultural conditions that enabled the growth and development of nineteenth century women’s movements existed within the context of successful industrialization and provided social and political opportunities for privileged women to become public actors. Such activity was substantiated by scientific advances, including Darwin’s evolutionary theory, that reinforced the notion of progress toward ever-improving humanity; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, especially, espoused Darwin’s theory and its successor, social Darwinism. Of general acceptance of Darwin’s theory, Linda Newman explains, “social evolutionary discourses in the late nineteenth century treated race as a stable, although not entirely inflexible, biological and cultural entity” (11, emphasis hers). Further, there was a general shift from a farming economy and cottage
industry to an urban industrialized market economy, which opened not only job opportunities but also social prospects for women of relative privilege; such openings, though, engendered their own sets of limitations. Great restrictions upon personal freedoms, such as lack of reliable birth control, diminished social and educational opportunities, and legal non-personhood, fed nineteenth century white women’s resentment of their second-class social status (or third-class, in the case of women of color, where racism combined with sexism to ensure their oppression and erasure from visible public position). Within such a milieu, it becomes easy to understand some ways that “any social protest arises out of a mixture of resentment and sensed opportunity” (Bolt 12).

The social protest movements that arose during the nineteenth century shared “one fundamental purpose…: women must be allowed to set their goals and control their lives” (LeGates 200). Such a simply stated purpose belies the complexity of the movements that included not only the developments listed in my opening paragraph, but also such issues as women’s independent legal status, so that married women might retain their own property upon marriage and single (non-widowed) women would have increased economic independence; improved educational and professional prospects; and within marriage, control of maternity and of sexual relations. Moreover, some women began to have power over literary production by founding literary clubs and becoming authors and journalists themselves, while other women formed social purity organizations, such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement, which made public the connection between male drunkenness and domestic violence. In all of these
activities, social change was sought in the gendered public sphere, so that women could be fully acknowledged for their contributions to public life and not just private home life.

Such attention to improving the gendered divisions in the conditions of women’s lives in nineteenth-century America did not, unfortunately, result in corollary improvement based upon women’s race (or class or sexuality), which reinforced the prevalence of whiteness as a socio-cultural frame of reference. In most of the cases listed in the previous paragraph, it must be acknowledged that it was white women who implemented these reforms, and it was also white women toward whom and for whom transformations were aimed. Importantly, “the refusal of white reformers to address black women’s specific experiences of gender oppression meant that the white woman’s movement would remain mostly white, even when individual women of color were invited to become members of white-dominated women’s groups” (Newman 6, italics mine). This racial divide was apparent in the subject of marriage reform, for example: while middle and upper class white women, whose husbands’ social position and financial successes enabled them to hire or to own household help, wished to be released from the drudgery of housework and childrearing, African American women delighted in being able to form families of their own choosing, to which fold they could return after work each evening. On the other hand, whereas these same middle class white women lobbied for married women to retain economic independence for themselves, working class women of all races had relatively less dependence on their husbands, since their work outside their own home constituted an essential contribution to the maintenance of their own households (LeGates 208). Among such various social changes, racial tension was clearly present, as Aida Hurtado explains:
Racial conflict emerged in the suffrage movement for many reasons, the most important of which was the white women’s privileged relationship to white men. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone were all *familially related* to prominent white men who supported them during their involvement in political work, while Black activists such as Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Ellen Craft were at birth *owned* by white men. (Hurtado 9, italics hers)

Another feminist conflict, also within marriage reform camps, appeared in the choice of whether or not to marry and to have children; this was problematized by feminists’ failure to address men’s relative lack of commitment to participate in childcare and housekeeping duties (LeGates 209). Briefly, then, the mid to late nineteenth century was a time of ever-increasing public activity and visibility for middle class white women; women of color, especially after the Civil War, organized themselves through churches and other charitable organizations, but their work received relatively little attention outside their communities of color, which left white women’s work in the spotlight and reinforced whiteness as the standard for creating and measuring social change.

At this point, a note regarding terminology is required. Readers will undoubtedly note the variation in use between the phrases “woman’s rights” and “women’s rights” in the following sections. White nineteenth century feminist activists envisioned themselves as speaking for all women, so they used the term “woman” as universally applicable and representative; of course, as Sojourner Truth and other activists of color since her have noted, white women’s concerns varied considerably from those of African American women’s. Significantly, “woman” tended to be interpreted and deployed to mean “white woman,” as Hurtado explained above, and as shall be demonstrated below.
Nevertheless, scholars vary in their usage of the terms; some retain the nineteenth century version, whereas others employ the apparently more plural “women.” When discussing the women of Seneca Falls, I shall use “woman’s rights,” for that was their term; for Gilman, I shall use “women’s rights,” because I feel it more accurately reflects her aims. I now turn to the analysis of the two manifestos and their performative contribution to the perpetuation of whiteness as a racial standard in the U.S.

**DECLARATION OF SENTIMENTS**

Authored by Mary Ann McClintock, Lucretia Coffin Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Martha Coffin Wright, the Declaration of Sentiments was presented at the Woman’s Rights Convention held in the Wesleyan Chapel at Seneca Falls, New York, July 19-20, 1848. Composed with the intention of being delivered and heard in public, the Declaration of Sentiments may be considered a pseudo-legal document, one that certainly fulfills Nancy Fraser’s requirements for a document that participates in the public sphere. Manifestos function in a public though not officially legal or governmental way, and a genre of manifestos does not necessarily include “governmental discursive opinion,” laws, policies, or rulings, even though it does seek to effect change at the legal as well as the public level (Fraser 520). In the case of the Declaration of Sentiments, its authors sought not only to change dominant masculinist public opinion regarding woman’s social place, namely the private sphere, but also to challenge the laws that reinforced the prevalence of that opinion and restricted women from owning their own property, from participating in clerical positions, and from keeping their own wages. Indeed, for these four women, as for others who followed, “their development as feminists, as women able to bring politics to bear on the condition of their sex, had as its starting point the experience they shared with other women” (DuBois 23); they used lived
experience as a basis for political action (and, of course, this idea was reproduced in the Second Wave mantra, “the personal is political”). In this way, the Declaration of Sentiments decidedly advances the feminist cause of reducing gendered oppression and inequality.

However, “[a]lthough native-born, white American woman suffragists were limited agents of radical reform because they were elites, they nevertheless encouraged liberal and egalitarian change, developed shrewd strategies to achieve it, and usually made strides as they corrected their mistakes” (Marilley 2). Here, using twentieth-century terminology, Marilley distinguishes between radical reform, which would have completely changed sexist patriarchal society, and liberal reform, which recommends changes within the existing socio-political system (I return to a more extensive discussion of these concepts in the next chapter, on Second White Wave feminism). The four writers of the Declaration of Sentiments made, for their time, a radical move by challenging contemporary legal, religious, and public attitudes toward women, even as their goals today would be considered more liberal than radical, as they wished to include women within pre-existing legal, social, and political categories rather than question the nature of those categories. Crucially, three of the four women who drafted the Declaration were Quakers, who consequently enjoyed greater personal freedoms than non-Quakers in the U.S. at the time. Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann McClintock, and Martha Wright were all members of the Society of Friends, while Elizabeth Cady Stanton was Presbyterian. Because they had the support of their religion and their husbands, Lucretia Mott and Martha Wright were both publicly very active; Mott spoke frequently for the Abolition cause and Wright published satirical stories and letters addressing various social ills
(Penney 74). Nancy A. Hewitt notes, “[r]ejecting claims for separate spheres or female superiority [two other contemporary trains of thought], they [Quakers] argued for women’s natural right to equality” (23). At Quaker meetings, at home, and in their travels, Quaker women shared secular and sacred duties with men: “as traveling ministers or speakers within their home meeting, women held absolutely equal rights with men and were similarly acclaimed or criticized for the theological soundness and clarity of their presentations” (Hewitt 29). Furthermore, “household and farm labor…were shared by household members of all ages and both sexes”; equality at home was supported and reinforced by the egalitarian tenets of Quakerism. However, even though “Stanton and probably the others had attended various reform meetings, only Mrs. Mott had any previous experience as an organizer, delegate, or speaker” (Griffith 51); nevertheless, it was an active time, and “these agrarian Quakers [who resided in and near Seneca Falls] were active before 1848 as advocates of Indian rights, communitarianism, temperance, and abolition,” which surely provided models of public activism for the other three women (Hewitt 23). Public participation by women, standard within the subculture of Quakers, was considered radical feminist activity in the society at large.

Regarding the historical moment: why 1848? What made that time such a turning point? As DuBois notes,

for many years before 1848, American women had manifested considerable discontent with their lot. They wrote and read domestic novels in which a thin veneer of sentiment overlaid … anger about women’s dependence on undependable men. They attended female academies and formed ladies’ benevolent societies, in which they pursued [a wide] range of interests. (21)
With the development of woman’s rights movements, these disparate societies and sentimental writings “crystallized … into a feminist politics”; “women’s rights leaders raised this discontent to a self-conscious level and channeled it into activities intended to transform women’s position” (DuBois, 21-22). Women’s rights activists became women’s rights leaders, partly through the organization and presentation of conventions, such as the one where the Declaration of Sentiments was originally read; the conventions organized and attended by these four women and their ilk were staged primarily in the northeast and Midwest, where abolition activity had provided a model of collective activity. As Buhle and Buhle point out, “As the antislavery movement had created a public for reformers, the woman’s movement separated and expanded a sector of that following for its own purposes. Conventions put the issues of woman’s rights into the press and before the public eye almost continuously” (89). Furthermore,

The convention was the finest fruit of American democratic optimism. The belief that conversation among a group of powerless individuals could sway events stemmed from the expectation that democracy would inevitably grow to meet new conditions. The notable feature of the conventions was the open platform: no ideas, no man or woman, were barred. In an era when individualism was the ideal, the reformer was the ultimate individual: eccentric, even crankish, but often brilliant and always lively. (Buhle and Buhle 89)

DuBois concurs, adding, “The Seneca Falls Convention was consciously intended to initiate a broader movement for the emancipation of women. For the women who organized the convention, and others like them, the first and greatest task was acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to lead such an enterprise” (23). It is not
insignificant, then, that the Declaration of Sentiments became not only the rallying cry for women’s conventions that followed, but that it also took the form of a manifesto.

Modeled on the Declaration of Independence, “the list of grievances [in the Declaration of Sentiments]…was comprehensive,” anticipating “every demand of nineteenth century feminism” (DuBois 23); what struck me when I first read the Declaration of Sentiments was that, with the sole exception of the elective franchise, contemporary feminists are still struggling to meet the demands set out in 1848. Announcing itself as desiring to fulfill the “duty [of gendered social reform] to throw off such government and to provide new guards from [women’s] future security,” the Declaration of Sentiments is a public document, a written manifesto, read aloud at the Seneca Falls convention, and published in newspapers with the goal of inciting change in mid-nineteenth century American culture. Furthermore, the writers of the Declaration of Sentiments mirrored other agitators in Europe who were exerting grassroots pressure for greater personal freedoms; “in 1848, in England, France, Germany, Austria, and elsewhere, people were taking to the streets, seeking the fulfillment of liberal democratic rights proclaimed in the great documents of the French and American Revolutions” (Schneir 77). Furthermore, 1848 was still sixteen years prior to Emancipation, and so the entire social backdrop in the United States at the time was infused with racism (as the abolitionists knew). Even Quakers, who espoused egalitarian practices and attitudes, were nevertheless constrained by larger racist social attitudes, and thus had limited reach in their struggles for social change. 1848 was also the year that “the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican American War and Mexico lost over 50 percent of its territory to the United States” (Hurtado 38). Thus, in the larger social and political
sphere, the white powers in the United States appropriated land that had belonged for centuries to people of color, which reinforced both the idea and the practice of white privilege and white rights. Against this backdrop, the Declaration of Sentiments was written; as a feminist document, it clearly identifies the ways in which women are considered subhuman in nineteenth-century America and make strong resolutions for improving women’s status. However, for all the important attention it brings to women’s social and legal inequalities, it nevertheless ignores how such inequalities are inflected by race (as well as class and sexuality, which I do not examine here, but the assumptions of which appear all the same).

**Feminist Contributions**

As do all feminist manifestos, the Declaration of Sentiments critiques particular patriarchal aspects of its contemporary culture; in particular, it focuses on women’s disenfranchisement from the public sphere, not only in terms of the right to vote, but also in terms of political, religious, educational, and commercial opportunities. More specifically, the Declaration of Sentiments directly indicts sexist legal, religious, educational, and political practices in operation in the mid-nineteenth century. As indicated in the passage that opens this chapter, the overarching goal of the Declaration of Sentiments was to “let facts [of man’s tyranny over woman] be submitted to a candid world.” The document enumerates a long list of facts, beginning with denial of women’s “inalienable right to the elective franchise,” which reinforces denial of her right to her own earnings and property, her right to obtain a college education, and her opportunity to participate in religious services (Campbell 36). In consequence, these material denials produce emotional and psychological results: the Declaration states, “He [men in power,
‘man’] has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life” (36). Such a clear condemnation of patriarchal privilege indicates that the writers of the Declaration of Sentiments were fully aware of the ways in which social power was distributed, and they would have none of it. They did not want to resist the status quo; they wanted to reframe it altogether, to ensure that women would be social equals with men in all areas. This is the activity which Susan Marilley identifies as radical, and it is, in terms of overcoming legal and social gendered inequality; however, by ignoring the contemporary racial inequalities, the Declaration of Sentiments reinforces the power of whiteness as a social standard just as it reinforces the rights of white women to address those social standards.

Perpetuation of Whiteness

Although no one denies the significance of the Declaration of Sentiments as a mobilizing force of feminist activity, there has been remarkably little scholarly attention to the document itself or its contribution to racial politics. It is widely anthologized, reprinted, and alluded to, but critical analysis of it has been limited to its rhetorical dimensions and its place in American and feminist history. In fact, nearly all of the sources I found discussed at length the meeting of its writers, their struggles to find an appropriate model with which to express their grievances, their reluctance to chair their own convention, the struggles that ensued over whether or not to include the resolution calling for the elective franchise, and the public outcry following its publication in the newspaper. My analysis also attends to the historical location and influence of the Declaration of Sentiments, but I am more interested in the ways in which the cultural
assumptions and suggestions for political change made by the document itself and its authors perpetuate whiteness.

All of the conditions surrounding the composition of the Declaration of Sentiments as well as the document itself represent unquestioned whiteness. Judith Butler (whose social theories rest in large part on Foucault’s) theorizes about the relation between discourse and bodies; discourse is not just talking, conversing, or exchanging friendly letters, but is also the systematized use of language to a specific end, such as the production and regulation of gender, sexuality, or race. Discourse is also politically motivated and politically charged; of course, ‘politically’ refers to uses of power that that maintain hierarchies of privilege. The Declaration of Sentiments participates in several discourses: traditional discourse of American liberty, feminist discourse on women’s liberation and enfranchisement, and most importantly, within, alongside, and even prior to those, the discourse of whiteness. The discourse of whiteness is hard to see, because in the U.S., whiteness both inaugurates and enables privilege, and the women who wrote the Declaration of Sentiments were privileged, by virtue of the fact that they themselves were white and they were married to white men. As Hurtado points out, “[e]ach oppressed group in the U.S. is positioned in a particular and distinct relationship to white men, and each form of subordination is shaped by this relational position” (2); being married to white men gave these four women access to power that women of color did not (and still do not) have.

Abolition and women’s rights were two crucial discourses circulating in the mid-1800s, and the intersection of those brought together Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott. Mott was an avid abolitionist and an accomplished speaker, the result of
her Quaker faith. Cady Stanton met Mott at the 1840 London Anti-Slavery Convention, to which Cady Stanton had accompanied her new husband, Henry Stanton, a leading American abolitionist. At this meeting, “the question of whether the women should even be accepted as delegates preempted the first days of the meeting,” but the women were denied the right to speak on their own behalf or even to sit on the convention floor (Banner 25). Angered by such disregard for women’s input, Cady Stanton resolved to act: “she proposed to Lucretia Mott that they hold a woman’s rights convention as soon as they returned to the United States, and Mott agreed” (Banner 26). However, domestic duties prevented their meeting again for eight years, but when they did, in Seneca Falls, at the home of Mott’s sister Martha Wright, their resolve was rekindled (Banner 39-40; Penney 72; Hare 194-200; Hewitt 32). Not only participating in but exemplifying a discourse of whiteness, the Declaration of Sentiments, through its overt appeals to liberties for women, nevertheless was supported culturally by contemporary activities, directed its liberatory appeals primarily to white people, and left a legacy of racial separation. In each of these aspects, whiteness appears as the socio-cultural frame of reference as well as within linguistic and political choices.

As stated above, the Declaration of Sentiments was modeled on the Declaration of Independence, a form that Wright, Mott, Cady Stanton, and McClintock agreed would best suit their purposes and highlight their grievances. Such a choice of model, however, is telling; I find it particularly interesting that, as active as several of the writers were in abolition activities, they found no model of liberatory writing there. Choosing the Declaration of Independence meant that, intentionally or not, the women who wrote the Declaration of Sentiments firmly aligned themselves with a history and precedent of
whiteness already at work in the United States. If ever whiteness was the result of rhetorical or communicative choice, this was it. Moreover, as Banner notes,

Cady Stanton’s appropriation of the Declaration of Independence was a brilliant propagandistic stroke. She thereby connected her cause to a powerful American symbol of liberty. She adopted the celebrated felicity of expression of Thomas Jefferson, the author of the original document, who was, in his own time, a proponent of human rights—*_at least for white men.* As did many radicals after her, using the 1776 declaration as the basis of their creeds and manifestoes, she astutely placed her movement within the *mainstream of American tradition* and iterated her own loyalty to the revolutionary generation, whom she often identified as “fathers” of the feminists, at least in revolutionary temper [and in race]. Moreover, her manifesto was in tune with the popular, democratic revolutions against monarchical rule which were sweeping European states in 1848. (Banner 41, italics mine)

Although Banner ascribes choice of the Declaration of Independence as the rhetorical model for the Declaration of Sentiments exclusively to Cady Stanton, when by most other accounts it was a mutual decision among the group, what is significant here is the fact that the Declaration of Independence was written by a white man, endorsed by many other white men, and addressed to yet another white man, King George. Even as Mott, Cady Stanton, and the others made a radical move for gender equality in the United States, they also re-entrenched whiteness as the norm for liberatory politics. In this way, “[t]he issues generally associated with first-wave feminism reflect the importance of
property and status *rather than racial struggle* or bare economic survival” (LeGates 201, italics mine).

Most overtly, since white men historically controlled all aspects of nineteenth-century public sphere, from the pulpit to the courtroom, the appeal of the Declaration of Sentiments was to white men who held political office and social power, and who consequently were the most likely to be able to write laws and institute ‘top-down’ change. By proclaiming the “patient sufferance of the women under this [male-centered, male-dominated] government,” the writers decreed that “now is the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled” (Campbell 34). The Declaration of Sentiments insists that the “equal stations” women deserve include the right for women to address “a public audience,” the right “to speak, and teach, as she has an opportunity, in all religious assemblies,” and the right “to promote every righteous cause, by every righteous means” (Campbell 38-39). Additional appeal was made, of course, to American women generally, as its audience and intended beneficiaries; such an appeal was limited, of course, because, at the time, the likelihood of women of color (who were predominantly, but not exclusively, African American) gaining elective franchise or admission to college, seminary, or public office was slim, since those women were still enslaved in the South and received similarly limiting (though not legally sanctioned) treatment in the North. Neglecting to identify race as a socially restrictive factor for women reveals a blindness on the part of the writers of the Declaration of Sentiments; even though Mott and Cady Stanton had been active abolitionists, when it came to writing the manifesto, any concerns they had about racial equality were
overpowered by their concerns for women’s gendered equality, which reveals whiteness as the backdrop for both cultural assumptions and political strategies.

Finally, as a result of advocating particular political strategies, especially (though not necessarily consciously) in the interest of white women, the Declaration of Sentiments left a legacy of racial separation. Although by the 1890s, “the woman’s movement was never entirely segregated, [because] dialogues between white women and women of color took place in public forums” (Newman 6-7), prior to that, white women reformers focused their critique on “patriarchy, an argument they created in the 1840s to validate their own sense of subjection to husbands by comparing their suffering to that of slaves” (Newman 6). On the other hand, “African-American women, dismayed by the exclusionary policies of white organizations, formed their own groups to deal with the effects of poverty and racism on black communities. As Frances Ellen Watkins Harper observed, “The white women go all for sex, letting race occupy a minor position’” (LeGates 200). The same complaint would be made among feminists of color slightly more than one hundred years later, during the Second White Wave. Where whiteness informs cultural assumptions, such as the right to lead religious services or to obtain an education at an accredited university, it also influences advocacy of political strategies, such as lobbying for the elective franchise, the right to keep one’s own property and wages, and the right to practice law or medicine. Because none of these was available to women of color in 1848, the assumption of equality was between white women and white men. Women of color had yet to achieve human status, even though the Declaration of Sentiments purportedly sponsored equal rights for all women. Sixty-one years later,
Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Man-Made World* advanced similar arguments, with similar racist limitations.

**MAN-MADE WORLD**

As earlier First Wave women did, Charlotte Perkins Gilman dedicated her critical attention to the politics of gender. She believed that all humans suffer under a gendered sociopolitical system, one that negatively classifies certain characteristics as feminine and privileges others as masculine. What makes her work radical for its time is that she wanted to shift social attitudes away from the traditional gendered distribution of both physical tasks and emotional attributes toward a more equitable arrangement. Changing social attitudes and arrangements regarding gender inequality was the primary point of many of her lectures and texts, including the books *Women and Economics, Herland,* and *Man-Made World,* as well as lectures, short stories, and poems (an extensive list of which is compiled in Rudd and Gough’s bibliography); she devoted her entire life to this project. In her lecturing and writing career, Gilman addressed a host of social inequalities and was, in many ways, prescient in her notions for reform; however, she routinely expressed racist sentiments and ignored class and sexuality as significant social factors. Her book *Man-Made World* was penned in the middle of that long career.

Serialized in Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s self-published monthly magazine *Forerunner* in 1909, and reprinted in book form in 1911, *Man-Made World, Or Our Androcentric Culture* (hereafter MMW) examines the ways in which entrenched ideas of masculinity and femininity blind people to our human nature. According to Gilman, women’s natural work is motherhood and men’s natural work is fatherhood, “but human work covers all our life outside of these specialities. Every handicraft, every profession, every science, every art, all normal amusements and recreations, all government,
education, religion; the whole living world of human achievement: all this is human” (MMW 25, italics mine). In other words, Gilman believes, except for the variations in male and female reproductive capacities, men and women do not differ very much from one another, and MMW is devoted to explaining the ways that masculine achievements “have been greatly exaggerated and distorted, with disastrous results” (Lane (a) 279).

My admiration for Gilman’s suggestions for radical change is not a blind appreciation, however; I have also always recognized that the kinds of sweeping social changes she advocates would, in all likelihood, continue to exclude already marginalized or disenfranchised members of society, or else they would rely on, as Gary Scharnhorst points out, “a scheme that merely transferred the drudgery of the traditional home to other shoulders, to those of dull-witted brutes and lower-class women, particularly women of color” (71).

In MMW, Gilman tackles the prevailing ideologies of androcentrism and gendered power relations using the Gynaecocentric theory, which is the idea that women are the progenitors of the human race, that women actually preceded men evolutionarily, as indicated in the quote that opened this chapter. Her book, she says, “gives a series of studies of the effect upon our human development of this unprecedented dominance of the male, showing to be by no means an unmixed good” (MMW 6); she believed, and gathered evidence to prove it, that males asserted dominance to overcome their own perceived inferiority to females. That Gilman unquestioningly asserts an image of women that today would be called essentialist is not my argument here; I am more interested in how MMW functions as a feminist manifesto rather than as a sociological study and in the ways that its contents and publication enable unquestioned whiteness.
Although she turns her feminist lens upon gendered social inequity, Gilman nevertheless represents a prevailing attitude of whiteness, one that assumes the superiority of white ideas and white cultural production. Throughout this important feminist social critique runs a wide current of overt racism, expressed in specific coded terminology, and whiteness, apparent in Gilman’s linguistic choices, specific examples, and cultural assumptions. Before turning to MMW’s performance of whiteness, I examine its feminist contributions and goals.

**Feminist Contributions**

In MMW, Gilman focuses upon unfairly distributed gender attributes and proclaims ways to correct those inequities. As is true for the other feminist manifestos contained in this study, MMW’s critique of culture is broad in scope: it addresses the theme of naturalized masculine influence in family structure, language use and production, artistic creation, literature, sports, education, government, politics, industry, and religion and ethics. Devoting a chapter to each of these topics, Gilman argues against the ways that male dominance of these facets of society has thwarted human development and progress in the interest of promoting superior masculinity and inferior femininity. Indeed, she declares, “we have, so far, lived and suffered and died in a man-made world. So general, so unbroken, has been this condition, that to mention it arouses no more remark than the statement of a natural law. We have taken it for granted, since the dawn of civilization, that ‘mankind’ meant men-kind, and the world was theirs” (17-18). Her aim and her feminist goal in MMW is not only to outline the ways in which such restrictions have inhibited human development but also to disrupt their continuation.
As representative examples, I examine Gilman’s critique of man-made families and of the artificial division of education into male and female spheres.

Regarding the family, Gilman asserts, “what man has done to the family, speaking broadly, is to change it from an institution for the best service of the child to one modified to his own service, the vehicle of his comfort, power and pride” (27). She gives examples of various ways in which women are expected to kowtow to men’s expectations of them, ranging from being “deliberately fed with a certain oily seed, to make them fat,” as in the case of certain tribes in “northern Africa” (31) to “staying with her husband in India and sending the children home to be brought up; because India is bad for children” (33) (Gilman’s racism is showing here). However, Gilman believes that women’s primary purpose is motherhood, but when families are distorted to such a degree that the patriarch’s needs overshadow everyone else’s, then “we have magnified the duties of the wife, and minified the duties of the mother” (35). Under such an arrangement, women’s domestic productive industry, which “at its base, is a feminine function,” becomes a degrading economic distinction, one that does not advance humankind (36). Gilman argues for a more equitable arrangement, “a nobler type of family; the union of two, based on love and recognized by law, maintained because of its happiness and use” (43). Such a family, she believes, “will be good for all the parties concerned—man, woman, and child; and promote our general social progress admirably” (43). Gilman wishes to elevate women’s social status within the family by honoring her contributions as a mother and as a partner to her husband, so that the family unit, which Gilman believes exists primarily for the benefit of the child, may provide health, happiness, security, and usefulness for all members. In her attention to raising the
woman’s status in the family, Gilman challenges sexist patriarchal norms that oppress women as second-class citizens, and given that a woman’s best opportunity for physical and economic survival in the early twentieth century lay within a family structure, Gilman is right to advocate equal status among wives and husbands, so that women have a better chance at familial equality. That she does not question the heteronormative nuclear family structure is as much a function of the historical moment as it is an example of how well Gilman herself internalized those social norms.

In addition to critiquing the man-made family, Gilman promotes equal opportunities for women as men in education. An avid proponent of education elsewhere in her writings, and also an extended member of the socially prominent Beecher family, education reformers themselves, Gilman believed wholeheartedly in the personal and social benefits of an educated public. In MMW, she distinguishes the “natural” learning that children gain at their mothers’ knee from more formalized education: she notes, “what we call education as a special social process is what the child is deliberately taught and subjected to; and it is here we may see the same [male] dominant influence so clearly” (145). In the man-made world, sexism in education reigned: “to be a woman was to be ignorant, uneducated; to be wise, educated, was to be a man” (146). While this appears to be obvious, recall that the writers of the Declaration of Sentiments strongly argued for women’s access to colleges and universities; sixty years later, the situation was not much improved, or Gilman would not have devoted a long chapter entirely to the problem of women’s enforced ignorance of larger social issues and their restriction by custom and law to the private sphere. Part of the problem with the current educational system, as Gilman saw it, is that education has been geared, in both curriculum and
attitude, to enhance men’s competitive masculine natures; however, she argues, “education is a human process, and should develop human qualities—not sex qualities [what we would today identify as gender qualities]. Surely our boys are sufficiently masculine, without needing a special education to make them more so” (154). Further, “our educational system is thwarted and hindered … by an overweening masculinization” (155-56). The way to correct this gendered educational imbalance “is the power to recognize our public conditions; to see the relative importance of measures; to learn the processes of constructive citizenship” (157). Gilman would have education enhance human qualities, those which boys and girls, men and women share, such as courage, intelligence, compassion; under such a system, children will grow up to be equitable members of society, and ubiquitous androcentrism (what we now call patriarchy) will give way to equality. In these two examples, family structure and education, Gilman reveals her feminist goals; in each case, she desires for women to have the opportunity and support to fulfill their female potential. Throughout MMW, though, these feminist goals are underpinned by not just whiteness, but by outright racism, as the next section explains.

**Perpetuation of Whiteness**

What makes MMW performative of whiteness is its participation in the cultural acceptance of Gilman’s mundane acts of racism, through her casual remarks and overt citations; whiteness also appears in Gilman’s cultural assumptions. Gilman’s racism is embedded in her language, where such terms as “savages” and “advanced people” are code words that include not only class distinction but also racial markers (71); the ease with which Gilman used such code words indicates just how systemic whiteness is, just
how embedded it is in socially acceptable language use. Throughout MMW, she admonishes white men to ‘humanize’ themselves, to show how including the ‘human’ aspects in society would benefit all; as I shall examine more fully below, all of the named examples of socially appropriate points of reference are white men. Further, she accepts contemporary essentialist sociological categories of caste or class and race, and thus her racism both colors her gender studies and prompts her to marginalize others, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. Either way, whiteness emerges as the acceptable social ideology of race.

Throughout MMW, whiteness pervades; it appears in particular names of individuals, in socially acceptable attitudes, in coded language, and in the assumption of its own inherent correctness, its belief in its superiority. Not every chapter of MMW mentions an example of a specific person; the book is written in broad strokes. However, enough examples appear that it is easy to substantiate my claim that MMW perpetuates whiteness. In Gilman’s case, her commitment to whiteness shows itself by not only naming specific men’s contributions to Western culture but also in the very attitudes toward her topics she assumes to be foundational. She assumes a fairly well educated (or at least well-read) audience, one who would understand all of her references, though she rarely mentions anyone beyond his surname. The names that appear in MMW at regular intervals are Balzac, Stevenson and Kipling, Dickens, Rochefoucauld, “Mr. Barrett Wendell, of Harvard,” and Lester F. Ward (149). That these authors are all male is evident; however, they are also all educated, published white writers, and as such represent the raced and gendered invisible normative center around which sociological and education theories, literary and philosophical endeavors develop. I find it quite
telling that at the time of the publication of MMW Gilman chose not to include any writers or philosophers of color, such as W.E.B. DuBois, George Washington Carver, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells Barnett, or even Sojourner Truth, all of whom were African American contemporaries of hers and of most of the writers Gilman does name. What such omissions point to is Gilman’s consistent attention to the productions of white people to the exclusion of others, even as those others were finally gaining a foothold in public consciousness, as their writings were being widely published and their lectures widely attended by audiences that assuredly included white members.

Not only specific names but also attitudes and cultural assumptions, as they appear in linguistic choices, represent whiteness. In separate sections in MMW, Gilman discusses high art, politics, war, organized sports, and organized religion, institutions whose particulars in the Western world have been dominated by a white European mindset. Space does not permit an extensive catalogue of each of these, so I shall focus on her observations about art. Where Gilman reveals her whiteness appears in small remarks that might be easily overlooked. Applying her progressive view to the history of art, Gilman notes that “early personal decoration consisted largely in direct mutilation of the body, and the hanging upon it, or fastening to it, of decorative objects. This we see among savages still” (71). Of dance as a performing art, she shows how it has become bastardized by its reduction, in women, to a dance of seduction, performed by “the dancing girl. In the frank sensualism of the Orient, this personage is admired and enjoyed on her merits” (81). Should such a dancing girl appear at a “dinner party…clad in a veil and a bracelet” to dance upon tables, nothing less than a “shrill scandal” breaks out (81). Likewise, along with mutilation for bodily adornment, tattooing “is still in
practice among certain classes, even in advanced people” (71). Such terms as “savages,” “frank sensualism of the Orient,” and “advanced people” are codes not only for class, but also for race, in which the white race is understood to be the most civilized, the most advanced; a “savage” is barely more than a beast and consequently subhuman. The implied contrast is with white Westerners, who are civilized and whose “sensualism” is kept firmly in check (this was the Victorian era in England, after all). These terms evoke Gilman’s use of “negative eugenics” that Scharnhorst mentioned at work in *Herland*, where the “lowest types” or “those held unfit are not allowed” to reproduce children; that is, only those races deemed most evolved are “allowed” to increase their numbers (69).

Gilman’s classism as well as her use of whiteness is showing here, but she hides her racism behind her classism. Indeed, as Omi and Winant have so clearly argued, class has historically been closely related to race; the underclass is usually but not exclusively constituted of people of color. Gilman herself recognizes this: she claims that

> Caste distinctions, as have been ably shown by Prof. Lester F. Ward, are relics of race distinction; the subordinate case was once a subordinate race; and while mating, upward, was always forbidden to the subject race; mating, downward, was always practiced by the master race. The elaborate shading of “the color line” in slavery days, from pure black up through mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, quinteroon, griffada, mustafee, mustee, and sang d’or—to white again; was not through white mothers—but white fathers, never too exclusive in their tastes.

Even in slavery, the worst horrors were strictly androcentric. (166-67)

Here, Gilman assumes those horrors of slavery to be only of a sexual nature; however, as John Warren has succinctly stated, whiteness is the result of communicative choices
(class discussion, March 2002), and whatever those white masters said to their black 
slaves to force or entice their sexual compliance, the result was nevertheless children of 
‘mixed blood.’ So when Gilman accepts Ward’s caste distinctions, she also perpetuates 
their racialized nature.

William Dean Howells summed up Gilman’s contributions in the late nineteenth 
and early twentieth century as those of “an optimist reformer,” and indeed, basing her 
ideas on social Darwinism, the main purpose and focus for all of Gilman’s writing was 
social transformation: she advocated change in such areas as dress reform, to release 
women from the constraints of restrictive corsets and weighty petticoats; exercise for 
women; women’s economic equality and independence; and educational opportunities for 
women, to name a few (Rudd and Gough ix-x). Very publicly active and committed to 
spreading her ideas via lectures, poems, her own self-published magazine, and books, 
Gilman maintained “an unwavering belief that things could be changed for the better and 
surprisingly quickly, by dint of individual effort”; her calls to action were aimed at her 
contemporaries, and she genuinely intended them to be immediately enacted (Rudd & 
Gough x). In the final analysis, then, Gilman’s adherence to “certain components of her 
evolutionary reform strategy were shaped by her own racial, ethnic, and class positions,” 
as are everyone’s (Ganobcsik-Williams 21); however thoroughly she may have explained 
her social Darwinism, Gilman failed utterly to be what 21st century scholars would label 
self-reflexive in her theorizing, which resulted in her perpetuating not only some 
reprehensible racist attitudes but also the dominance of whiteness as the normative 
standard for theorizing. Gilman’s failure at self-reflexivity may be a result of how well 
she internalized and reflected the prevailing attitudes about race in the 19th century; in
other words, some of the damage of whiteness is beyond her, embedded in the very language in circulation, but as a social reformer, she is also culpable for using that same language. What she fails to reform, then, are the essentialist, socially acceptable racist and classist attitudes of her time, attitudes that remained encoded in the language she used, the cultural assumptions she espoused through repetition of them, and the social changes that she advocated.

No one is likely to deny the feminist contributions of either the Declaration of Sentiments or *Man-Made World*; in each instance, the manifestos accumulate numerous examples of “repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman.” The Second White Wave’s understanding of patriarchy, based upon its particular oppressive features, began to be defined with the writing of these documents (among many others not examined here). However, the white women of the First White Wave, immersed though they may have been either in abolition work or in maintaining distinction among the races, failed to critically question the impact of their role as *white* women working for social change. Hence they not only continued the legacy of racism already at work in nineteenth century America, they also perpetuated its corollary, whiteness, by not incorporating race (or class or sexuality) in their denunciation of contemporary social ills. This division along racial lines would continue into the Second White Wave, which the next chapter explores.
CHAPTER 2: SECOND WHITE WAVE MANIFESTOS

“Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking female only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex.” (SCUM Manifesto)

“After centuries of individual and preliminary political struggle, women are uniting to achieve their final liberation from male supremacy. Redstockings is dedicated to building this unity and winning our freedom.” (Redstockings)

“What is a lesbian? A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion. … It should first be understood that lesbianism, like male homosexuality, is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy.” (Radicalesbians)

Just as in the First White Wave, where white women’s concerns received the most public attention, the Second Wave is also rife with whiteness. Whiteness is perpetuated not only in the manifestos contained within this chapter, but also in the historical construction of feminist activity by the very fact that historians, activists, and scholars typically designate 1963 as the beginning of the Second Wave of American feminism. This was not only the year of the report issued by the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, but also the publication to widespread acclaim of The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan. Under the chairwomanship of Eleanor Roosevelt, the Presidential Commission’s two-year study revealed in its detailed report “continuing discrimination in employment, disparities in pay between women and men, the lack of social services such as child care, and the legal inequality of women” (Evans, “Women’s Movement,” 66). Simultaneously, Friedan’s book, based on responses to a questionnaire she sent to her Smith College graduating class, identified, for these well educated upper middle class white women, the by-now famous “problem that has no name.” The convergence of these events with white women’s disillusion with the overtly sexist tone women encountered while working in civil rights organizations and New Left political
groups prompted these same women to examine their place in the home, in interpersonal relationships, and in society.

Even though women of color also agitated for changes in domestic or private as well as in public social issues during the 1960s and 70s, as in the First Wave, the bulk of publicly visible feminists interested in overturning patriarchy were relatively privileged middle class white women, so their concerns were often the ones publicly espoused and championed in the media. Whiteness was inherent not only in creation of and participation in various organizations, but also in the language feminists used and in the feminist ideology various groups adopted. Just as First Wave feminists encoded whiteness in the term ‘woman’ and in the casual use of such oblique descriptors as ‘savage’ and ‘Oriental,’ white Second Wave feminists also re-entrenched whiteness in language, by using the language available to them (even as they developed new terminology, such as sexism and patriarchy), the language of dominant culture, which was deeply infused with oppressive racialized values. By insisting on sexism as the most important oppression to conquer, white feminists reified their own central position in creating social change. This is not to suggest that white feminists were unaware of the racial divide, especially since many of them had been quite active in voter registration drives and other civil rights work in the South to improve the status of people of color, especially African Americans. However, when patriarchy and sexism were identified as the prime oppression—the middle class white women’s rallying cry—feminists of color felt alienated, and “this made it difficult for women experiencing other oppressions, such as race or class, to identify with the unfolding women’s movement” (LeGates 358).
Almost from the outset of 1960s feminist activism, there was patent division between women of color and white women: women of color tended to ally with men of color for racial solidarity, while white women separated from white men for gender solidarity. Friction arose between white women and women of color, because white women insisted that sexism was the prime mover of patriarchy, that gender was the original fundamental oppression, while failing to acknowledge that other axes of difference, such as race, class, or sexuality, might have more relevance for other women.9 While a few women of color did join both liberal and radical white women’s organizations, most preferred to devote their energies to the pressing concerns of their own communities. That is, white women’s emphasis on individual rights and autonomy was not shared by many women in communities of color, although a climate for change had been created and developed throughout the twentieth century. In particular, black women who had achieved a measure of social and economic equality during World War II, working in factories and at shipyards, were reluctant to concede that social power either to white men or to white women. From the 1950s forward, as more black families relocated from the rural South to northern urban centers in hopes of sharing the American Dream, black women vigorously organized in their churches and as teachers in schools, to enable women to procure employment aside from private domestic work. In the South, Civil Rights work and then voter registration occupied black women. By the late 1960s, however, black women found their issues “shunted to the side within the predominantly white movement whose universalist claims about the nature of women’s oppression denied the realities of racism” (Evans, *Liberty*, 297). In the Southwest, encouraged by

---

9 By the early 1970s, women’s sexuality would also become a point of contention, after the 1968 Stonewall Inn uprising that led to the gay rights movement.
the successes of black civil rights work, Mexican-Americans began to organize around issues of community importance, such as offering counseling for welfare recipients, building a credit union and a consumer coop, and helping immigrants achieve citizenship (Evans, *Liberty*, 273). However, Chicanas perceived the white women’s movement as “anti-labor, anti-socialist, anti-slum, and anti-immigrant,” and Catholic Chicanas were dismayed by and disgruntled with the radical white women’s movement that centralized abortion as a primary issue (Tobias 19). Furthermore, Native American women “resisted feminist perspectives that emphasized individual choice over communal relations and obligations as contrary to their deepest cultural values” (Evans, *Liberty*, 298). From such activity by women of color, “autonomous [women’s] organizations sprouted, such as the National Black Feminist Organization, formed in 1973, and the Mexican-American Women’s National Association, in 1974” (LeGates 357). However, the Second Wave’s public face was predominantly white, as the following brief historical backdrop explains.

As indicated in my Introduction, feminist historians have used the ‘wave’ terminology to account for peaks in feminist activity in the U.S. and also to acknowledge that even the ebb tides are not static or quiet times. The Second White Wave of feminism is generally agreed to have lasted from the early 1960s through the early 1990s; its end time has been related to the coming of age of daughters of Second Wave feminists, young women who called themselves the Third Wave. The forty years between the 1920 zenith of First White Wave achievement—woman suffrage—and the early 1960s included feminist work on a wide range of concerns. As in the early years of the First Wave, feminists continued to work in a variety of diverse areas at both national and local levels. In fact, women remained involved in the National Woman’s Party (a later, militant arm of
the suffrage movement) as well as establishing new organizations, such as the Women’s Bureau in the Department of Labor, the YWCA, and the Women’s Department of the United Auto Workers (Evans 62). Other political activity between 1920 and the late 1950s emphasized social reform work, aimed at supporting laws to protect children, improving pre- and post-natal care for mothers, increasing social hygiene, education, government efficiency, and women’s living costs, and focusing on women’s conditions in industry, on anti-lynching legislation, and on “the repression of vice” (Tobias 31). From this solid and diverse activist base through the first half of the twentieth century, women’s participation in 1960s social movements grew. Women participated in a large variety of social justice movements, including anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, the Black Power movement, gay rights activities, environmental and Native American concerns, as well as other leftist counterculture groups such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (Tobias 37; LeGates 332). It is important to note that women’s rights were not always the primary reason that women joined these various organizations. Several of them, such as the UAW, had class-based interests, whereas SDS and SNCC overtly agitated for change in America’s political landscape; still others, such as the National Black Feminist Organization and the Mexican-American Women’s Association, highlighted ethnic and cultural concerns, even as they addressed gendered feminist issues. As the decade of the 1960s wore on, feminist activity intensified, coalescing into what would come to be called the Second Wave of feminism. Throughout this social upheaval, however, racial tensions ran high. Just as post-Civil War First Wave activists splintered over such issues as suffrage, temperance, and lynching, white Second Wave feminists disagreed about the
best course of action toward improving social justice, and by mid-decade, they had broken into two broad directions, commonly designated liberal and radical feminism.

Whereas feminist action in the early 1960s grew out of women’s participation in voter registration drives and civil rights work in the South, responses to the Presidential Commission on Status of Women, and the development of women’s caucuses on campuses, by the mid-1960s, feminists aligned themselves with organizations or causes that came to be described as liberal or radical. Briefly, liberal feminists, sometimes called “equal rights” feminists (Tong 2; LeGates 346), believed that change could best be made by reforming the sociopolitical system, from working within existing legal and political venues to “make the rules of the game fair and … to make certain that none of the runners in the race for society’s goods and services is systematically disadvantaged” (Tong 2). Broadly, liberal feminists focused on women’s similarities to men rather than on their gendered differences, and one key foundational tenet of liberal feminism was that women were discriminated against, not oppressed. Thus the key work of those seeking gender justice was to eliminate that discrimination to ensure women’s equal rights with men. A number of liberal organizations were formed, including the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) in 1967, and in 1968, the National Association for Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL); several associations for specific constituencies of women of color were organized during the 1970s, such as the North American Indian Women’s Association in 1970, the National Black Feminist Organization in 1973, MANA, the Mexican-American Women’s National Association in 1974, the Organization of Pan-Asian Women in 1976, and in 1977, the National Association of Cuban-American Women (LeGates 357). This
brief listing of national women’s organizations itself reflects whiteness in the Wave designation, since two of the three 1960s organizations were co-founded by Betty Friedan, by then a very prominent white woman; NWRO was founded by Johnnie Tillman, an African American woman; the various organizations formed by and for women of color did not appear until 1970 and later.

If liberal feminism constitutes what is now understood to be the enduring mainstream representation of Second Wave feminism, then radical feminists are the riptide. In contrast to liberal feminists’ desire to work within established social, legal, educational, and occupational systems, radical feminists, whose principles grew out of the idealism of the New Left, believed that women were oppressed by patriarchal social structures, so they “stressed revolutionary socioeconomic and cultural changes” in order to liberate women from that oppression (Berkeley 52). These radicals were younger than their liberal counterparts, but shared other similarities: “Most were educated, white, and middle-class, products of postwar affluence, the consumer culture, and 1960s counterculture” (LeGates 351). It was the 1967 New Left event, the National Conference for New Politics, at which Shulamith Firestone was silenced by pats on the head and sexually suggestive remarks that prompted her to declare that the women were “starting our own movement” (LeGates 353-54). In some ways, this event parallels the silencing of women’s voices at the 1840 Anti-Slavery Society meeting in London, the event which prompted young Elizabeth Cady Stanton to approach Lucretia Mott about starting a women’s movement of their own when they returned to the United States. However, Firestone’s declaration signaled a break not only from leftist men, but also from the Marxist ideology that “insisted on economic class as the main form of oppression”
(LeGates 357); this may have begun the exclusive focus on gendered oppression that would occupy white feminists for the next several years. And while Betty Friedan identified “the problem that had no name,” Kate Millet’s writing on sex, gender, and separatism named it: patriarchy, or rule of the fathers (Berkeley 60). Identifying patriarchy, or sexism, as the primary oppression, rather than class (a la Marxism) or race, gave radical women a distinct, specific cause to rally around, in much the same way that suffrage became the primary focus for highly visible First Wave feminists. Moreover, as in the liberal camp, the radical women’s liberation movement spawned numerous small, highly visible—albeit short-lived—organizations, such as Redstockings, WITCH (Women’s International Conspiracy from Hell), Cell 16, and New York Radical Women. Even among radical feminists, though, there was disagreement over whether taking direct action or creating consciousness-raising groups was the more effective tool for lifting the oppression of patriarchy (Berkeley 44). Generally, though, radicals focused on women’s differences from men and wanted to liberate women from what they understood to be the oppressive control of male-dominated or patriarchal culture.

By the late 1960s and early 70s, radical issues being advanced included removal of anti-abortion laws and increasing availability of birth control options, equal pay and decent, affordable day care, elimination of sex discrimination/harassment in the workplace, and identification of domestic violence, leading to an upsurge in women’s self-defense knowledge. Feminist work during the 1970s and 80s included developing anti-rape legislation, discussing the oppressive potential of pornography, and increasing

---

10 Marilyn Frye calls attention to the focus of that title, saying, “That book locates the problem in women…. A book about the problem would have to be a book about men, not about women” (Politics of Reality 42, italics hers).
11 Such division echoes the activism/academics argument commonly made in women’s studies departments.
public awareness of sexual assault and domestic violence issues. College campuses saw the development of women’s studies courses, focusing on history and literature, and as a result women’s studies programs were organized. Gloria Steinem founded Ms. magazine in 1972, and the feminist movement infiltrated the mainstream. By the mid-70s, radical feminism was eclipsed by liberal and cultural feminism (as Alice Echols and Rosemarie Tong separately explain), and by the later 1980s, Evans describes increased pressure on women to return to traditional roles and to focus on domesticity and consumption as leading to the wider social perception of reduced feminist activity (Evans, *Liberty*, 309). However, let us back up a step.

For feminists both radical and liberal, 1967 was a busy year: the NOW Bill of Rights for Women was published; the National Conference for New Politics, mentioned above, was held and became a pivotal moment for radical feminists; Valerie Solanas wrote and hand-distributed her SCUM Manifesto. The liberal National Organization for Women (NOW) was organized in 1966, and its 1967 Bill of Rights for Women included the goal “to secure for women the same rights that men have” (Tong 24). Crucially, for historic continuity, NOW’s Bill of Rights for Women closely resembles the Declaration of Sentiments in both form and language, though I cannot verify whether the similarity was intentional in the way that the Declaration of Sentiments was overtly modeled after the Declaration of Independence; nevertheless, it may thus be appropriately designated a manifesto. Indeed, it desires social changes similar to the Declaration of Sentiments, such as equal access to education and fair employment, and it adds a call for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and for women’s reproductive freedom of choice. Using
legal terminology, the arrangement of its enumerated points resembles that of the United States’ Bill of Rights.

However, I do not analyze NOW’s Bill of Rights for Women because its goals indicate a desire to change patriarchal hegemony from within—the liberal aim—whereas manifests by radical white women aspire to entirely revamp various personal, social, political, and/or legal opportunities for women in the U.S. In other words, their objective is to eradicate the patriarchal system rather than aim for women’s equality within the system; the way they see it, as long as the current system remains intact, there will always be plenty of opportunity to justify women’s second or third class status. However, radicals hope that by altering the constitution of U.S. society—getting at its genetic structure, as it were—women would no longer be subject to the longstanding legal and social forces against them. These radical manifestos are hopeful, too; the utopia (critics say dystopia) they envision empowers women to be full participants in a society that acknowledges and champions women’s inherent worth. 12 It is less a commentary on the brevity of the radical arm’s life than a testimony to the ability of the larger social system to appropriate and incorporate radical demands that radicals’ rallying cry for essential social changes for women—such as increased access to reliable birth control, abortion on demand, and less restrictive divorce laws—were not relegated to the dustbin of history but brought into the mainstream by such organizations as NOW and NARAL. Indeed, it is likely that women of liberal organizations probably agreed with the ideas but not the means of radical women, and so were willing to take up the cause. Without diminishing the ongoing significance of liberal feminist work, I believe that radical feminism’s

12 Again, I am aware of the essentialist overtones of this remark, but it is reflective of activists’ goals at the time.
demands, however extreme they may have seemed at the time, or even now, expanded the scope of liberatory possibilities. For this reason, in this chapter I have chosen to include only radical feminist manifestos, which argue against women’s oppression, even though they are problematic regarding issues of race and whiteness.

During the heyday of radical feminism (roughly 1967-1975), both individuals and groups wrote numerous manifestos. This chapter analyzes some of both: Valerie Solanas’ SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) Manifesto, the Redstockings Manifesto, and The Woman-Identified-Woman statement by the Radicalesbians, which are arranged chronologically to reflect the activists’ increasing sensitivity to nuances within feminist work. SCUM (1967) outlines a plan for complete overthrow of “the money-work system” and the government as well as elimination of the male sex (Crow 204). In a moderately less absolute tone, Redstockings (February 1969) identifies “male supremacy as the oldest, most basic form of domination” and advocates a democratic society in which women may achieve their fullest political potential (Crow 224). Radicalesbians’ 1970 response to NOW/ “Lavender Menace” defines lesbianism, interrogates essentialist, heterosexist definitions of women, and demands “a revolution [for women]…to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression” (Crow 237). All of these manifestos were written by white women, so although the changes they advocate to overturn patriarchal oppression of women are crucial, whiteness is evident in cultural allusions and references, in the overriding attention to gendered oppression and sexism to the exclusion of other axes of difference, and in the unquestioned assumed privilege underpinning the production of the documents.
In plain language and in direct opposition to liberal feminist goals, SCUM bluntly states its radical position: “What will liberate women, therefore, from male control is the total elimination of the money-work system, not the attainment of economic equality with men within it” (Crow 204, emphasis mine). This invective follows from the opening sentence of the manifesto, which audaciously declares: “Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation, and destroy the male sex” (Crow 201). These lines remain as brazenly cheeky today as they were when Valerie Solanas wrote them in 1967.

A Jewish woman from New Jersey, Solanas suffered childhood sexual abuse from her father, left home when she was 15, and when she was in college, had her first lesbian experience and was forced by poverty to prostitute herself to earn money (Baer 48). After graduating from college and spending a year in graduate study of psychology, Solanas moved to New York City to write. In 1966, Valerie met Andy Warhol and his entourage, and she requested he produce her play *Up Your Ass*. While waiting hopefully for Warhol to produce her play (he never did), Solanas signed a contract for a novel with Maurice Girodias, the notorious French publisher of pornographic literature. Though she never produced the novel, Solanas did write her SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) Manifesto, in which she argued that the male is an imperfect female and should be eliminated, and which is still in print. SCUM has a rich publication history, and Claire Dederer offers this concise chronology:

Furthermore, “In 1970, excerpts from Solanas’s work appeared in Sisterhood is Powerful, an influential anthology published by Random House [and edited by Robin Morgan]. Within a few years, the Manifesto was translated into several languages; by 1994, it had become available on the Internet” (McLemee A17). Such continuous publication suggests that SCUM still strikes a chord with many readers.

**Feminist Work**

As a feminist cultural vehicle, SCUM advocates nothing less than total overthrow of patriarchal society. Following the thesis that males are “incomplete females … emotional cripples … [and unable] to relate and to feel compassion,” SCUM identifies the many ways in which “the male … has made of the world a shitpile” (Crow 201-202). The male, SCUM claims, is responsible for a host of problems, including war, money, marriage and prostitution, work, fatherhood and mental illness, prevention of privacy, isolation, suburbs, prevention of community, authority and government, morality based on sex, prevention of friendship, boredom, distrust, ugliness, hate and violence, disease
and death, among others. Under sections bearing titles listed above, the manifesto elaborates the ills resulting from male domination; additionally, each section builds cumulatively from the previous one, stressing the interconnectedness of these problems. Throughout, SCUM argues that the root cause of the aforementioned social evils (characterized by other feminists as functions of patriarchy) stems from the male’s refusal to accept his inferior status, so that he must create all of these things in an attempt to overcome his inadequacy; the argument is remarkably complex, well constructed, and convincingly written.

What SCUM desires is to create a utopia in which all societal functions and species reproduction are automated, money and government are eliminated, and men eventually just die off. The mode by which SCUM aims to achieve this is “unwork” by the “fuck-up force”: for example,

SCUM salesgirls will not charge for merchandise; … SCUM will forcibly relieve bus drivers, cab drivers, and subway token sellers of their jobs and run buses and cabs and dispense free tokens to the public; … SCUM will couple-bust—barge into mixed (male-female) couples, wherever they are, and bust them up, [and finally,] SCUM will kill all men who are not in the Men’s Auxiliary of SCUM.

(Crow 218)

Solanas justifies these activities by explaining,

Dropping out is not the answer; fucking up is. Most women are already dropped out; they were never in. Dropping out gives control to those few who don’t drop out; dropping out is exactly what the establishment leaders want; it plays into the hands of the enemy; it strengthens the system instead of undermining it, since it is
based entirely on the non-participation, passivity, apathy and non-involvement of the mass of women. Dropping out, however, is an excellent policy for men and SCUM will enthusiastically encourage it. (Crow 219)

Solanas’s use of the term “dropping out” is evocative of 1960s psychedelic guru Timothy Leary’s suggestion that people “turn on, tune in, and drop out” of mainstream society; Leary invokes privilege (especially the white male variety), because only those who are already ‘in’ mainstream society may opt out. Noting that most women are “already dropped out” implicitly critiques this social power structure; thus, Solanas’s argument that dropping out actually reinforces the system is tenable. The worst thing that women can do, therefore, is to continue to be manipulated by a system that encourages their passivity, politeness, and niceness; members of SCUM, as implied above, are aggressive, “selfish,” driven, and determined (Crow 220).

While it is true that the language in SCUM is often base or obscene, evoking strong responses, it nevertheless cogently and insistently argues its case. However, concentrating, as several scholars do, on Solanas’s troubled past not only diminishes her intelligence but also pathologizes her and makes it easy to dismiss SCUM as lunatic ravings. But separate the manifesto from the obvious impossibility of her conclusion—eliminating men and thereby patriarchy—and what emerges is a highly energetic, convincing, if extreme, revision of patriarchal society, a new vision of a woman-centered world. Unlike Gilman’s peaceable novel *Herland* or even the equitable human world she envisions in *Man-Made World*, SCUM is antagonistic, combative, full of raging kineticism—at least until the new world order is achieved. This new world order would

---

13 Moore suggests that, “The thing is, you either happen to think this is a work of unadulterated genius, or you dismiss it as the ravings of a loony psycho-bitch, not understanding that this is exactly what makes it so compelling and so charged with insight” (48).
likely not be unproblematic, though, being conceived as it was by a white woman in a culture infused with whiteness.

**Perpetuation of Whiteness**

Solanas exposes whiteness in 1960s America: throughout the catalogue of ills she claims males are responsible for, Solanas repeatedly invokes common particulars of her contemporary culture, ranging from Freud to the prevailing power structure to images of the ‘suburbs’ and the ‘rugged individualist’ (*a la* the overarching American myth), which are indicators of whiteness within mainstream American culture, and which appear in Solanas’ language choices, cultural recitations, and political strategies. Moreover, whiteness in SCUM’s scheme appears in its heralding of an all-female world: according to SCUM, once all men are eliminated, there will be an ideal society of “groovy women” who don’t need or want men. This all-woman society is predicated on the explicit separation of women from men, which was white feminists’ goal, but not necessarily that of feminists of color, especially those for whom community goals are more important than individual ones or when racial solidarity enhances social opportunities. As stated earlier, radical white feminists’ exclusive emphasis on gendered oppression limited or even denied opportunities to discuss racial or class oppression, and SCUM fits squarely into the gender-focus camp.

Although SCUM imagines a freshly revised, female-centered society, it never accounts for race or class in that utopia. While it is tempting to imagine that racism and classism might go the way of patriarchy in that exciting new world, it is nevertheless important to question whether SCUM-inspired white women, previously inculcated in a sexist, racist, classist culture, would instigate a social overthrow that results in an undoing
of this training. In other words, what would prevent them from replicating a racial hierarchy similar to the one already in place, *a la* whiteness? Would these groovy post-patriarchy white women account for the more community-based needs expressed by the likes of Native American women, African American women, and Latinas, or would they just import their own experience as the standard of social construction? How might white women’s “thrill seeking” include or exclude women of color? Indeed, how would the issues of race, class, or sexuality be addressed? SCUM never directly accounts for race or class, nor does it offer a blueprint for the daily operation of a fully female society once all the men are removed, but since it is soaked in whiteness, as I shall elaborate below, I speculate that its utopia would still be peopled and administered by white women.

Given the length of SCUM, it comes as no surprise that it is rife with racist references as well as allusions to patriarchal whiteness. Similar to Gilman, Solanas’s language choices betray the prevalence of whiteness; whereas Gilman’s whiteness appeared in contemporary popular code words, SCUM’s whiteness is betrayed by both numerous cultural references and what Butler calls a “white racist episteme,” which is “a historically self-renewing practice of reading [in this case, of contemporary American cultural conditions] which, when left uninterrupted, tends to extend its hegemonic force” (Butler, *Reader*, 211). While I am not indicting Solanas as a white racist (there is no specific evidence to prove such a claim, as there is with Gilman), the fact remains that white racism permeated all aspects of 1960s America, even as Civil Rights workers strove to change it, and consequently, Solanas used the language available to her at the time, which was the language of dominant culture, as had been advanced by white male lawmakers, educators, religious officials, and other cultural standard-bearers for the

---

14 SCUM fills twenty-one pages in Crow’s anthology.
previous three hundred years. Her recitation of cultural markers included racist definitions, even as she strove to overturn patriarchy. Citations in SCUM range from encoded terminology to problems with suburban life to particular examples of socially powerful positions.

Casual, everyday use of deceptively simple terms such as ‘subhuman animal’ and ‘apes’ reminds white people that to resist that diminished status requires constant vigilance, constant reinforcement of white supremacy and white privilege, in much the same way that SCUM claims males must resist being discovered to be inferior to females. Drawing on the terminology used to justify enslavement of Africans (which is eerily parallel to some of Gilman’s linguistic choices), SCUM suggests a parallel source for males’ drive to dominate females: “Every male’s deep-seated, secret, most hideous fear is the fear of being discovered to be not a female, but a male, a subhuman animal” (Crow 214). In both American history and American cultural consciousness, it is but a small step from “subhuman” to African American slave, and given the force with which white folks defend their whiteness, it is not surprising that, according to SCUM, males—also inculcated in a sexist, racist, classist society—would fear being equated with the very group of people whose humanity some of their ancestors had denied. Equating Africans with animals by depriving them of their humanity enabled slave traders and slave owners to treat them worse, even, than animals; innumerable accounts exist cataloguing the inhumane conditions under which slaves were transported to North America and, once here, expected to live, work, and reproduce. Unfortunately for contemporary males, however, SCUM reminds them that they are still “trapped in a twilight zone halfway between humans and apes” (Crow 201); one is left to wonder whether women of color
also occupy this liminal space. SCUM elides this distinction and in doing so, leaves the cultural assumption of white superiority in place.

SCUM’s convincing logic also justifies an entire section labeled “Prejudice (Racial, Ethnic, Religious, Etc.),” which itself reinforces the potential equation of males with animals. In its entirety, it succinctly states, “The male needs scapegoats onto whom he can project his failings and inadequacies and upon whom he can vent his frustration at not being female” (Crow 209). In the U.S., people of color have been scapegoats for whites’ worst fears about themselves. Further, the male who has been vigilantly upholding prejudicial binaries in which all of the occupants of the ‘not me’ side are those whose race, ethnicity, and religion differ from his, has historically been a white male. Where racism is defined as “a system of advantage based on race,” that system invents and maintains advantage for white people by designating people of color as scapegoats to represent lesser beings, parallel to the ‘subhumans’ mentioned above (Tatum 7).

Numerous allusions to Freud’s theories of sexuality sprinkled throughout the manifesto support Solanas’s argument that the male should be eliminated as well as indicate a white cultural frame of reference. Testifying not only to her education, such allusions also indicate the prevalence of Freudian theory in popular culture. Because Freud may be the Great White Father of the twentieth century, his authoritative theories are taken seriously and generate pervading influence throughout European and American culture. What is significant about Solanas’s references to Freud is that he was a white man, a very influential one in terms of twentieth-century social thought. Consequently, because of the power associated with white men, especially in the U.S., his theories have

---

15 This is not to discount the numerous feminist critiques of Freudian theory, but to acknowledge the extent of his cultural permeation.
become standard, and whiteness inheres in referencing him, since with some notable exceptions, such as Frederick Douglass and W.E.B DuBois, very few theories advanced by scholars, writers, doctors, or lawmakers of color have filtered into mainstream consciousness with such a force and enduring power as those advanced by Freud. Therefore, SCUM’s Freudian allusions indicate a standard of social thought that gains its power by virtue of its being promulgated by a white theorist, even though the allusions themselves do not include specific references to race or whiteness.

Another form of whiteness appears in SCUM’s discussion of suburbia, that nuclear family utopian ideal that exploded in the years immediately following World War II. SCUM contends that another evil perpetrated by the male is that “he moves her out to the suburbs, a collection of self-absorbed couples and their kids,” where “he created a ‘society’ based on the family—a male-female couple and their kids (the excuse for the family’s existence), who live virtually on top of one another” (Crow 207). Here, whiteness is invoked, since federal regulations put in place after World War II during the massive suburbanization of the U.S. ensured that the suburbs began as and would remain havens for white families. While SCUM indicts the male for the creation and maintenance of suburbs as creating oppressive family structure arrangements, it nevertheless fails to account for the racial dimension of suburbia, where white privilege was made possible through federal housing regulations. And, as Aida Hurtado points out, “[u]ltimately, white privilege depends on its members not betraying the unspoken, nonconscious power dynamics socialized in the intimacy of their families…. Power solidarity is also socialized through feelings of belonging [to the privileged mainstream]” (Hurtado 149, 152).
The idea that “the ‘suburban ideal’ described a model of white middle-class community as well as of private domestic life” remains quite powerful, conjuring up images of the preternaturally happy families and immaculate homes of Donna Reed and June Cleaver, who were, of course, as pristine as white can be (Jurca 5). However, just as the injunction “go West, young man” was typically made to nineteenth-century white men seeking their fortune, the twentieth-century population that moved to the suburbs was also typically white, and people moved with such speed and in such numbers that the term “white flight” was coined to account for the rapid emptying-out of once thriving urban centers. As Karen Brodkin notes, the original “Levittown” suburbs were occupied by returning war veterans and their families, who were able to afford these small homes via FHA and VA low-interest, long-term loans. However, “the FHA believed in racial segregation…publicly and actively promot[ing] restrictive covenants” prohibiting sale to African Americans. Indeed, “with the federal government behind them, virtually all developers refused to sell to African Americans” and “the result of these policies was that African Americans were totally shut out of the suburban boom.” To add insult to injury, “segregation kept them out of the suburbs, and redlining made sure they could not buy or repair their homes in the neighborhoods where they were allowed to live. The FHA practiced systematic redlining,” which was “an elaborate neighborhood rating system” that value-ranked neighborhoods, reserving the highest value for white neighborhoods and leaving the lowest value for “racially nonwhite or mixed and working-class neighborhoods” (Brodkin 25-29). Under such a system, African Americans could not obtain bank loans for home improvement or purchase, nor could they take advantage of
the burgeoning opportunities to join the middle class that became available during the flush times of the late 1940s and 1950s.

Just as suburbia was created by a legal system that favored white residents to the exclusion of others, that same legal system is underpinned in the U.S. by a white male power structure. This power structure extends from law and government to include other social institutions as education, housing opportunities, and even religion. When SCUM indicts male power, it simultaneously invokes whiteness, since white men have typically had the power “to define everyone in terms of his or her function or use, assigning to himself, of course, the most important functions—doctor, president, scientist—thereby providing himself with an identity” (Crow 206, italics mine). Further, “being necessarily competitive and, by nature, unable to co-operate, the male feels a need for external guidance and control. So he created authorities—priests, experts, bosses, leaders, etc.—and government…he sees to it that all authorities are male [and, of course, white]” (Crow 209, italics mine). Note that each of those identified occupations are positions historically held by white men, although with the exception of president (of the U.S.), the other positions have begun to be occupied by people other than white men.

To understand the significance of SCUM’s citation of some standard professional occupations as inherently white, it is helpful to imagine a society in which the power structure is not white. Maurice Berger quotes Kerry Michaels’ realization of the importance of whether the power structure is white or black:

In New York, if you’re the only white person on the subway, you’re still not a minority, because the power structure around you is white. In the Nairobi airport, I realized how different it was to have the power reside in a different race. It was
the black men who were holding the guns. The government they served was black…. Everyone who controlled my fate was black. (Berger 16)

While the U.S. is not (yet) the police state that Kenya was when Michaels made her trip, the evidence of a white power structure occurs in language use, in housing and educational opportunities, in theories adapted into mainstream thought, even in available occupations. Basically, in the U.S., everyone who controls our fate is white, and although there is only one tiny section devoted to racialized difference, SCUM is nevertheless fully infused with whiteness, because in 1967, it could not avoid or circumvent whiteness in its social references.

As a cultural document, SCUM participates in and even provides impetus for the rising tide of radical feminism of the late 1960s. As Echols reminds us, “in the wake of the shooting [of Andy Warhol], SCUM was finally published and it became obligatory reading for radical feminists”; indeed, Roxanne Dunbar of the West Coast radical group Cell 16 declared that “Solanas’s polemic was ‘the essence of feminism,’” and at their first organizational meeting, they reportedly read SCUM “as their first order of business” (Echols 105, 158). Although the primary purpose of the SCUM Manifesto is to roundly and thoroughly critique male-dominated society in order to envision a female-only utopia, that utopia is not likely to overcome the attitudes and privileges afforded by whiteness its new inhabitants will probably bring with them.

**REDSTOCKINGS MANIFESTO**

Co-founded in February 1969 by Shulamith Firestone and Ellen Willis, Redstockings was one of three groups that splintered off from the earlier group, New York Radical Women. Other initial members included Ros Baxandall, Minda Bikman,
Corinne Coleman, Sheila Cronan, Linda Feldman, Carol Hanisch, Karla Jay, Pam Kearon, Barbara Leon, Patricia Mainardi, Barbara Mehrhof, Irene Peslikis, Kathie Sarachild, and Alix Kates Shulman (Echols 379-85). According to Karla Jay, each of the three splinter groups developed its own identity and goals: The Feminists “stood for [women’s] unrestricted choice” in abortion rights, birth control, and sexual experience, while WITCH (Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) sponsored actions that “took the form of humorous and imaginative ‘zaps’—colorful and well-orchestrated public and political protests that always attracted the media” (Jay 40, 37). On the other hand, Redstockings “had a more intellectual bent” (Jay 43); the name of group was chosen “to represent a synthesis of two traditions: that of the earlier feminist theoreticians and writers who were insultingly called ‘Bluestockings’ in the 19th century, and the militant political tradition of radicals—the red of [Marxist] revolution” (Echols 140). Kathie Sarachild, Carol Hanisch, and others wrote the manifesto, which was “carved from the same literature and philosophy that had influenced leftist men” (Jay 43). However, unlike the negative sexist experiences many women had suffered in the male-run leftist groups, “Redstockings put women first” (Jay 43).

During its eighteen-month tenure, this group organized the first feminist consciousness-raising (CR) sessions, in which members would share stories of their lives to glean “a sense of commonality with other women” (Jay 53). During the initial meetings, members of the various CR groups analyzed the manifesto, and once that was completed, they investigated other topics, such as how they had been raised, “pros and cons of being single or married,” and how they “felt about [their] bodies” and “strategies for keeping them safe from men” (Jay 54). In many ways, “Redstockings left its mark on
the movement. It popularized consciousness-raising, invented the speak-out, and radicalized thousands of women by distributing movement literature—at first free of charge” (Echols 153). Moreover, “Redstockings continued to function until the fall of 1970. But the battles over separatism, consciousness-raising, elitism, and expansion wore people down” (Echols 152-53). For its contributions to feminist work during uproarious late 1960s, Redstockings remains a significant group; however, as with other radical and liberal groups, it both suffered from and perpetuated perspectives of unexamined white privilege. What follows examines both of these aspects more closely.

**Feminist Contributions**

In its manifesto, Redstockings identifies particular elements of American culture as sexist and consequently oppressive to women. These include male dominated power structures and social institutions, the implications of which became ever clearer to the members throughout Redstockings’ CR sessions. Notably, throughout the manifesto, the language used is broad and general; there are no specific examples given to explain or elaborate the points. While this may be perceived as a weakness of the manifesto (in that it elides differences among women or that it assumes all women’s experiences are similar), it nevertheless testifies to the broad scope of feminist change Redstockings hoped to create. What becomes abundantly clear by the end of the manifesto is the fact that they desired nothing less than a complete overhaul of American society so that women would receive their just rewards and benefits as valuable members of that society. Indeed, as the final line states, “[t]his time we are going all the way” (Crow 225). In order to ‘go all the way,’ Redstockings indicts patriarchal power, social control, and the
physical violence used to maintain that social control; they believe that once women have
access to social power, social change is inevitable.

Just as Solanas had argued in SCUM and Gilman explained in *Man-Made World,*
the Redstockings Manifesto asserts that “All power structures throughout history have
been male dominated and male oriented. Men have controlled all political, economic and
cultural institutions and backed up this control with physical force” (Crow 223). Making
such a declaration is a radical move, insofar as it identifies not only the mechanisms of
social control but also the means by which such mechanisms are reinforced. Moreover,
the manifesto contends, “*All men* receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits
from male supremacy. *All men* have oppressed women” (Crow 223, italics in original).
Even though the manifesto adopts an absolutist tone here, it nevertheless clarifies the
social division of power, privilege, and advantage that benefits men and leaves women at
a disadvantage. As such, it reflects intentional feminist work, which must be done in
order to help women overcome patriarchal oppression; as the following section on
whiteness explains, however, the use of such absolute terminology both essentializes and
erases differences between women, notably in terms of race, class, and sexuality.

Further, Redstockings locates power not just in individuals but also in institutions,
because “[a]ttempts have been made to shift the burden of responsibility from men to
institutions or to women themselves” (Crow 223). However, as the manifesto explains,
“Institutions alone do not oppress; they are merely *tools* of the oppressor. To blame
institutions implies that men and women are equally victimized, obscures the fact that
men benefit from the subordination of women, and gives men the excuse that they are
forced to be oppressors” (Crow 224, italics mine). Here, the manifesto makes the
connection between individual actions and choices and the social framework within which such actions and choices may be made, which in turn reinforces the socially-expected performance and regulation of gender roles.

The most important contribution to feminist work that Redstockings makes is the development of consciousness raising techniques and strategies. They view their “chief task at present . . . to develop female class consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all our institutions. Consciousness raising is . . . the only method by which we can ensure that our program for liberation is based on the concrete realities of our lives” (Crow 224). Basing the program for social change on the development of ‘female class consciousness’ validates women’s experiences under patriarchy; it acknowledges women’s agency and grants women their own voice to express themselves. While this may seem commonplace in the twenty-first century, forty years ago it was radical; women’s experiences, both individually and as a group, were routinely dismissed as silly, irrelevant, or inconsequential, and women’s voices were silenced not only in such flippant ways at Shulamith Firestone endured but also by larger social institutions such as the law and education, which were tailored to men’s needs. Closer examination of these institutions reveals not only their inherent sexism but also their endemic racism; unfortunately, because Redstockings focused exclusively upon sexism and patriarchal oppression, they missed an opportunity to also reduce racism and the social influence of whiteness.

**Perpetuation of Whiteness**

Although the Redstockings Manifesto radically challenges male domination of women and social institutions, it disregards the significance of how race (and class and
sexuality) operates within patriarchy. Whiteness thus appears in linguistic choices based upon cultural expectations and in the political strategies the manifesto advocates. The manifesto plainly declares, “Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor” (Crow 223). This assertion is supported elsewhere, when they say, “We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy” (223). While these statements contain basic truths, it is debatable—as feminists of color do, in Chapter 4—whether male supremacy is the cause or source of the other forms of exploitation and oppression or whether it exists in concert with them. To make such an assertion assumes that all women experience oppression equally, regardless of factors such as race, class, or sexuality; further, it assumes that all men have the power to oppress equally, but of course, people of color in the 1960s were well aware that white men held the most social power and consequently, they had the greatest opportunity to use or express it. Nevertheless, white privilege gives a great many more white women, especially those of the middle and upper classes, higher social status and greater access to social privileges than women of color might enjoy. This was as true in the 1960s as it was in the 1840s. Moreover, especially as “sex objects, breeders, domestic servants, and cheap labor,” women of color experience even greater oppression than white women due to not being connected to white men, as Hurtado pointed out earlier. This white privilege blinded the white feminists in Redstockings to the ways in which race meant that women of color experienced sexism differently from white women, based on their oppression as women
of color; that is, women of color have historically been identified racially first, and then as women, as demonstrated in the structure of descriptive phrases such as ‘black woman’ or ‘Indian woman.’ As Alice Echols explains, “both consciousness-raising and the pro-woman line assumed that women’s experiences and interests were uniform … they seriously underestimated the class and racial differences among women…. The vast majority of working-class and third-world women were not ‘turned on’ by their feminism” (153). By not understanding or acknowledging that women’s experiences were anything but ‘uniform,’ Redstockings further oppresses women of color and reinforces whiteness in its essentializing tendencies. These tendencies appear in numerous examples throughout the manifesto, reinforcing the performative aspects of whiteness as it appears in their cultural assumptions regarding women’s experience. At one point, Redstockings proclaims, “We call on all our sisters to unite with us in struggle” (225); the thinking was, “If all men were their oppressors, all women were automatically assumed to be their allies, or sisters” (Echols 148).

Finally, Redstockings advocates a political strategy that depends upon individual, personal action rather than upon collective uprising or collaborative work across race and class lines. They declare, “We repudiate all economic, racial, educational or status privileges that divide us from other women. We are determined to recognize and eliminate any prejudices we may hold against other women” (224). The problem with this is that, in failing to acknowledge the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality, even though they allude to them, they fail to unite women, but rather continue to maintain divisions along all of the lines they attempt to erase. Naming privileges is an important early step to dismantling the power that keeps them in place, but to expect that
individual renunciation will generate wholesale social change fails to account not only for the institutions that work to keep those privileges in place but also ignores the ways in which individuals variously experience the effects of those institutions. In this case, the very idea of individual repudiation is underpinned by white privilege—that is, denial of what one has is a function of privilege; those who have not have nothing to give up. As Echols states,

Redstockings assumed that their ‘common oppression’ [as women] united women more than class or race divided them…. Redstockings’ analysis suggested that a multi-class and multi-racial movement could be achieved if white, middle-class women would simply renounce their privileges and altruistically identify with women who were less privileged than they. It was a nice fantasy, but… it did not materialize. (145)

Thus, Redstockings’ development of consciousness raising tactics reinforced the strong connection between personal experience and political action, leading to the Second White Wave mantra that “the personal is political.” What they were unable to achieve, however, was a nuanced perception of the ways in which women’s personal experiences varied depending upon her race, her class, and her sexuality. In assuming that all women’s experience was uniform across gender, Redstockings perpetuated whiteness.

THE WOMAN-IDENTIFIED-WOMAN

Radicalesbians made their official debut on May 1, 1970, as an angry response to the homophobia that its members Rita Mae Brown, Cynthia Funk, March Hoffman, Lois Hart, Karla Jay, and Ellen Bedoz, women from New York and Washington, D.C., had identified in meetings with Redstockings, The Feminists, and other New York radical
groups as an increasing component of many feminist organizational and consciousness raising meetings. Fed up with having lesbian issues be ignored at meetings and actions, Cynthia Funk had charged several panel members at an earlier Boston meeting to “look at the oppression right here in this room. You women on the panel have used your heterosexual privilege to silence the topic of love—especially love between women, which would seem to me to be critical to the movement,” and after that, she and the others became more organized around the issue of lesbianism within feminism (Echols 214). Rita Mae Brown, founding member of Radicalesbians, both “played a key role in formulating the collective’s widely circulating position paper on the relationship between lesbianism and feminism” (Berkeley 116) and also organized the Lavender Menace event, so named because Betty Friedan had supposedly called Rita Mae Brown and other lesbian members of NOW a “lavender menace” (Jay 137). The event was intended to disrupt the opening night of the second Congress to Unite Women, held in New York; forty women, who were joined by many more once the floor opened, took over the stage and “talked about what it was like to be a lesbian in a heterosexist culture” (Echols 215). Written before the event, the Radicalesbian position paper, entitled “The Woman-Identified-Woman,” was “distributed to women in the audience” at that gathering (Berkeley, 50);\(^{16}\) they “decided to use the term ‘woman-identified’ because they hoped it would prove less threatening to heterosexual women” who felt alienated by the term lesbian (Echols 215; Jay 141). However, “what made ['The Woman-Identified-Woman'] so significant was that it redefined lesbianism as the quintessential act of political solidarity with other women” (Echols 217); while other feminist writing had assumed

\(^{16}\) It also “originally appeared in *Rat* and *Come Out* and was published in pamphlet form in 1972 by Gay Flames, a group of male homosexuals active in New York’s Gay Liberation Front” (Schneir 161).
this, Radicalesbians foregrounded woman-centered political solidarity as essential to true feminist activism, and the manifesto form provided an appropriate vehicle to explain the Radicalesbians’ argument.

**Feminist Contributions**

Whereas the Redstockings Manifesto identifies male supremacy as “the oldest, most basic form of domination” (Crow 223), and the SCUM Manifesto advocates eliminating the male of the species altogether, The Woman-Identified-Woman paper defines who a lesbian is, calls for women to relate more equally to women without defining themselves relative to men, and declares that “[t]ogether we must find, reinforce and validate our authentic selves” (Crow 236). As do SCUM and Redstockings, Woman-Identified-Woman promotes separatism from men; moreover, it calls for lesbianism as the political action of feminism, the absolute statement of feminist/female solidarity, partly because lesbians’ “sexuality was believed to be an extension of their feminism” (Echols 239). As a manifesto, its oppositional stance challenges the heterosexual framework in which women have been socialized, and one of its goals is to dismantle heteronormative expectations for women, indicating, in its discussion of grievances, the ways in which “lesbianism…is a category of behavior possible only in a sexist society characterized by rigid sex roles and dominated by male supremacy” (Crow 233). In form and structure, it resembles SCUM and the Combahee River Collective statement, in that it is a position paper, written as a discursive argument, rather than in the more epigrammatic style of Redstockings.

If there was scant critical attention paid to SCUM and to Redstockings, it is almost nonexistent for Radicalesbians’ “Woman-Identified-Woman” position paper.
Scattered references to the paper appear in Berkeley, and Echols and Schneir discuss its origins, briefly outlined above. However, it has never been subject to close critical scrutiny for any reason, be it feminism, sexuality, or racial politics; this may be due in part to the reasons Lyon outlined regarding manifestos: they read like deceptively simple, straightforward, obvious documents, with nothing hidden or implied. However, despite clearly arguing for recognition of the significance of lesbianism as both a personal and a political position (which begins to designate ‘feminism’ as more plural than earlier feminists had imagined), The Woman-Identified-Woman fails to account for the racialized dimension of white privilege that, in many ways, enables its existence in the first place. In other words, just as white feminists had begun to advocate separatism from men, white lesbian feminists offered a corollary separatism from heterosexual feminists. In neither case, however, did they question how their white privilege made such separatism possible, although such separations seemed reasonable, given the logic of gender difference they had been espousing. Therefore, I suggest that, just as with the SCUM and Redstockings Manifestos, The Woman-Identified-Woman is also steeped in unexamined white privilege and that whiteness may be found lurking in the various ideological assumptions about social, political, and personal positions of women relative not only to men but also of white women relative to women of color, especially African American women.

**Perpetuation of Whiteness**

While The Woman-Identified-Woman correctly identifies the “rigid sex roles” in a society “dominated by male supremacy,” it also assumes that those sex roles exert the same pressures on all women, and that therefore all women will benefit from separatism
from men. However, whiteness underlies that assumption, because again, this manifesto ignores the necessity of racial and class solidarity needed by women of color to gain public and legal equality. Most particularly, ideological assumptions in The Woman-Identified-Woman appear as they consider women’s relation to men, women’s power relative to men, and unquestioned parallels between such relativity to men and the institution of slavery.

Throughout the document, The Woman-Identified-Woman places women in relation to men, correctly critiquing the patriarchal system that designates women as subservient to men, as necessarily men’s helpmates, and as incomplete without men. Such a sexist system uses homophobia to ensure that women keep to their designated roles by labeling as lesbian any woman who refutes or refuses those roles. Echoing the similar multiple examples in SCUM, Radicalesbians declare, “By virtue of having been brought up in a male society, we have internalized the male culture’s definition of ourselves. That definition views us as relative beings who exist not for ourselves, but for the servicing, maintenance and comfort of men” (Crow 235). Where a woman is one who properly and appropriately fulfills her roles, then by definition, “a lesbian is not considered a ‘real woman’”; furthermore, “in this sexist society, for a woman to be independent means she can’t be a woman—she must be a dyke” (Crow 234, italics in original). The unspoken ideology of whiteness inheres here, because while a white lesbian still has the racial ‘superiority’ conferred upon her as white, women of color, lesbian or straight, are racially denigrated—women of color are rarely considered ‘real women’ either.

17 Twenty-two years later, Suzanne Pharr’s book Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism, extends this argument, including economics (a.k.a. capitalism) as the driving force that keeps all oppressions in place.
Whiteness is further evident in their emphasis on women’s individualized sense of agency, when they assert that, “Only women can give each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men” (Crow 236). Again, white women ignore the privilege accompanying their racial status when they focus on gender, because, as indicated earlier in this chapter, generally speaking, women of color identify themselves with and by their race, in addition to their gendered and classed identities.

Additionally, white women’s relation to men affords them vicarious power not available to black women. Radicalesbians point out that, “[w]hile all women are dehumanized as sex objects, as the objects of men they are given certain compensations: identification with his power, his ego, his status, his protection (from other males), feeling like a ‘real woman,’ finding social acceptance by adhering to her role, etc” (Crow 234). This statement exposes the relative difference in power between white women and women of color, especially black women, who in 1970 did not have “identification with [the] power” of the most powerful men in U.S. society, white men, nor with a social structure that devalues people of color and (over)values white people. Furthermore, the concept of “a real woman” harks back to the late 19th century, to the cult of domesticity, the enforcement of ‘separate spheres,’ and the widely distributed image of white middle-class gentility, none of which was available to women of color recently released from slavery or recently immigrated from Europe or Asia. Indeed, for a woman of color to “find social acceptance [in mainstream society] by adhering to her role,” she would have to remain invisible, doing the work that middle class white women did not want or have to do, or felt was beneath their station.
Radicalesbians remain optimistic, though. Once women “find, reinforce, and validate [their] authentic selves,” they assert, “[w]ith that real self, with that consciousness, we begin a revolution to end the imposition of all coercive identifications, and to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression” (Crow 236-37). Problems still remain, though, because for white lesbian feminists to suggest that there is such an entity as an “authentic self,” a self emanating from within and existing separate from social pressures, norms, or ideals, ignores what women of color already knew. Namely, first, all external social categories exert pressure on everyone in society, even though the effects or outcomes may vary, and second, that each of those pressures (what Redstockings and Radicalesbians identified as sexism, but also including racism, classism, heterosexism and homophobia, among others) operates simultaneously and continuously, as the members of the Combahee River Collective explain in their manifesto, following. Due to the intersectionality of oppressions, a white woman cannot extricate herself from a sexist system and also remain unaffected by the other factors at work. To imagine that one could do this is a function of privilege, predicated upon a certain amount of racial and economic freedom. Besides, SCUM has not yet overthrown the work/money system. Furthermore, black women did not necessarily share white feminists’ goal of achieving “maximum autonomy”; rather, their energies during the 1960s and early 1970s were directed toward voting rights and better employment and educational opportunities for African Americans. Out on the west coast, concerns for Asian-, Mexican-, and Native American women included organized labor, health care, and decent, affordable housing and food. While women of color undoubtedly recognized “the imposition of all coercive identifications,” especially those that had kept them racially oppressed, other goals took
precedence over the white feminists’ goal “to achieve maximum autonomy in human expression.”

Finally, whiteness appears in one of the more insidious remarks in the entire Radicalesbian paper: “In exchange for our psychic servicing and for performing society’s non-profit making functions, the man confers on us just one thing: the slave status which makes us legitimate in the eyes of the society in which we live” (Crow 235, italics mine). While it may be true that white women have felt both physically and/or emotionally enshackled by their roles, whiteness is evident in white women’s appropriation of an exaggerated status of oppression, for they have never been officially owned in the ways that African slaves were bought and sold to be owned by slave holders in the U.S. Most slaves were black, and so to say, in the late 20th century, that women are equal to slaves is to appropriate an entire economic and social structure in support of the argument against sexism and homophobia. True, until recently, married white women retained little personal power, as the Declaration of Sentiments indicated, but they nevertheless had access to and benefited from white male power, which was not true for black women. Radicalesbians justify their use of the term ‘slave’ by acknowledging “that we are the property of some man whose name we bear,” but which is a relationship based on birth or marriage, not literal economic exchange (Crow 236). A woman may come to feel debased or dehumanized in her role as a wife and mother, but public accolades accrue to her in that role so long as she ‘performs it well.’ The best a slave could hope for was escaping the lash, surviving the physical and psychic hardship meted out by the system of slavery enacted by slave owners and traders.
Thus, while The Woman-Identified-Woman begins the process of expanding feminism to include an examination of sexuality in addition to gender, it nevertheless fails to account for the ways in which race differently affects women and their access to social power and acceptability. By assuming that all women benefit from their behavioral relation to men, they neglect to notice that women’s race is also a component of the social equation. Such oversight gained the attention of many women of color, whose manifestos appear in Chapter 4.

Each of the manifestos in this chapter, SCUM, Redstockings, and the Woman-Identified-Woman, makes important contributions to feminist work and feminist consciousness, as it identifies particular aspects of patriarchy and male supremacy, followed by an explanation of the negative effects that women experience under such a social system. Unfortunately, in each case, the manifestos fall short of making truly radical social change, since they fail to acknowledge that the power of sexism is reinforced by the powers of racism, classism, and (with the exception of Radicalesbians) heterosexism. Whiteness retains its cultural hegemony through the performative reiteration of deeply entrenched attitudes and assumptions about women and women’s experiences. One might hope that the manifestos written by women of the Third White Wave of feminism would reflect a change in attitude toward racial understanding and the prevalence of whiteness in twenty-first century America, given the previous forty years of feminist activity; regrettably, this proves to be a false hope, as the following chapter explains.
CHAPTER 3: THIRD WHITE WAVE MANIFESTOS

“When in the course of thirty years of uninterrupted feminism, it becomes evident that a single generation can only go so far, it behooves the next generation to pick up the reins and articulate the plot that will move their cause forward. The first two waves of feminism had clear political goals that involved holding the government accountable to its citizens, the majority of whom were getting an unequal deal. In order to have a government that responds to the Third Wave, rather than a society by the few for the few, we need a similar declaration of our sentiments. We need a Manifesta.” (Third Wave Manifesta)

“The key to successful GLAM practice is knowing exactly what you’re doing, why you’re doing it, what the desired effect is, and how to achieve it. ... Try to understand the relationship of your desire to the tools available to you. Try to understand what’s expected of you, and how you don’t meet that expectation. ... Knowing exactly what you’re doing who you want to be is the difference between merely appearing glamorous in a way that leaves you open to objectification, and being GLAM and actively beautiful.” (GLAM Manifesto)

“Every time a group of women previously silenced begins to speak out, other feminists are challenged to rethink their idea of who they represent and what they stand for. Although this process sometimes leads to a painful realization of our own biases and internalized oppressions as feminists, it eventually benefits the movement by widening our perspectives and constituencies. It is with this understanding that we declare that the time has come for trans women to opening take part in feminist revolution, further expanding the movement.” (The Transfeminist Manifesto)

Whereas First White Wave women struggled to be accepted as legally and politically human, and Second White Wave women fought to additionally reduce restrictions on women’s rights and opportunities, women of the Third Wave have grown up in a climate informed by Second Wave feminist activity and goals as part of their life, even if neither they nor their mothers (biological or chronological) actually participated in activism. Third Wave feminists have continued to produce critiques of patriarchal American culture, as did their feminist predecessors. However, the manifestos contained within this chapter occupy an interesting cultural position: on the one hand, the writers are well-versed in the issues that First and Second Wave feminists struggled to bring to light; on the other hand, they are still constrained by some deeply ingrained attitudes and assumptions, particularly about whiteness and race, but also about class, gender, and sexuality. Indeed, as Amber Kinser points out, “many women now arrive in their 20s and
30s having always taken as a given their equal rights. Many of them have grown up with a vocabulary for talking about sexism, reproductive rights, sexual autonomy, fair treatment, lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender issues, workplace equity, global awareness and intersections of race, class, and gender” (134). However, as feminists such as Sojourner Truth, Barbara Smith, and Gloria Anzaldua indicate in the next chapter, and as I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, having the vocabulary does not necessarily indicate sensitivity to feminist issues, willingness to work to keep or advance those issues, or to seek new ways to improve the lives of women and other marginalized peoples. Consequently, some Third Wave women (and men) may take previous feminist accomplishments for granted, never having known otherwise. As earlier manifestos demonstrated, these hard-won victories identified by Kinser are not uniformly available to all women; while it is true that many gendered obstacles have been reduced, forms of discrimination based on race, class, sexuality, and even gender continue to inform social ideology as well as to influence personal and interpersonal choices. This chapter examines three manifestos and the ways in which they rhetorically reproduce whiteness; notably, none of them refutes or even substantively engages with race or whiteness. The three manifestos are Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards’ Third Wave Manifesta (2000); the GLAM Manifesto (2000), by the GLAM Dyke Rescue Unit; and The Transfeminist Manifesto (2000), by Emi Koyama. I analyze how each of these documents navigates the complexities of contemporary culture, focusing, as in the previous chapters, especially on the political and socio-cultural influence and evidence of whiteness. More particularly, I am interested in the ways that these manifestos continue to rhetorically reproduce whiteness, especially in the face of increased social racial,
ethnic, and cultural awareness; because of this raised awareness at the larger social level, whiteness has become even more insidious, less easy to spot as in the overt racism of earlier eras. However, it still exists in full force in such things as linguistic choices, cultural assumptions, and political strategies, as my analysis shows.

Once again, it is crucial to remember that ignoring racial/raced ideologies maintains their hegemonic status; they continue to exist in the same form as always, unless they are challenged. Whiteness occurs as the invisible normative component not only of language but also of modes of cultural production. In other words, the linguistic choices made in the three manifestos in this chapter continue to reflect social position, political affiliation, and personal self-definition as well as unconscious tendencies and mental habits, all of which are informed by whiteness as unremarked assumption or frame of reference. I think that racism and whiteness are still as prevalent as ever in the Third White Wave, though they may be even more sneaky, even with all the discussion of ‘multicultural awareness’ and lip service paid to an interest in race, as Lakshmi Chaudry points out. Speaking in reference to the FX reality television show “Black.White.” she declares, “at the heart of this imperative to ‘act white’ lies a deeply racist and essentialist view of people of color” because “acting ‘white’ is not an option but an essential survival skill for any person of color in America” (39, italics mine). She also says:

As a woman of color, I find that theorizing race as a performance offers several benefits. One, it helps us recognize the fact that we all “act” our racial and ethnic identities, be it [sic] black, white, Chinese, Native American or, in my case, Indian. Two, it reveals how people of color are forced to perform their identities in particular
ways to meet the requirements of a racist culture—and in doing so, points to the way that racism shapes the most intimate parts of our selves. (Chaudry 39, italics mine)

Furthermore, she indicates:

The freedom to perform our identity gives us the power to define its meaning.
But that freedom cannot be achieved by simply changing individual behavior or attitudes, which are merely symptoms of a greater social disease that afflicts our culture, its traditions and structures. Resisting this institutional pressure to perform distorted versions of ourselves [e.g., stereotypes put in place by racist ideology and maintained by both that ideology and the power of whiteness] has to be a collective struggle waged in courtrooms, schools, workplaces and in the media. It is only then that we can be both equal and different, together. (Chaudry 40)

Just as earlier feminists delineated the constraints on women’s gendered behavior, Third Wave feminists continue to struggle for increased freedoms of expression, as the manifestos testify. However, until all of the constraints are identified and attacked through “collective struggle,” it will be a long time until “we can be both equal and different.” Third Wave feminists, despite their unique appreciation of feminist historical legacy, still have work to do to overcome the parallel legacy of whiteness and racism.

Generally, the Third Wave movement is agreed to have begun in 1992, with the publication of Rebecca Walker’s essay, “Becoming the Third Wave,” in Ms. Magazine (Dicker and Piepmeier 10). Notably, Rebecca Walker is both a literal and a figurative daughter of the Second Wave—her mother is Alice Walker; also notably, unlike the white figures championed as the genesis of the previous two waves, Rebecca Walker
represents the multi-ethnic heritage that would become part of the rallying cry of Third Wave feminism (her mother is African American, her father is a white Jewish man). Walker’s essay was published in a climate informed by the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings; the beginnings of do-it-yourself (DIY) culture, in which self-published zines—small, underground writings—began to flourish and thrive; the publication of other such feminist social criticisms as Susan Faludi’s Backlash and Naomi Wolf’s The Beauty Myth (both in 1991); and the rise in the punk music scene. In 1992, “Walker, Amy Richards, and others, including some men, started the Third Wave Foundation, the only organization devoted to feminists between the ages of fifteen and thirty” (Dicker and Piepmeier 11). In 1995, Walker edited a collection of essays entitled To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism, and that same year, Barbara Findlen’s collection Listen Up! Voices from the Next Feminist Generation came out. Clearly, a collective consciousness was being and continues to be developed among young feminists. Indeed, with the benefit of over one hundred and fifty years of concerted feminist activity to draw from, the Third Wave may appear to be more self-reflexively theoretical than its predecessors; it does not have “to start over from scratch,” as Sheila Tobias remarked about the work Second Wave feminists needed to do (xiii).

As the nineties gave way to the new millennium, increasing theoretical attention has been paid to Third Wave activity. Notably, scholars who theorize about the Third Wave highlight how much attention contemporary feminists pay to difference: among sexualities, especially, but also in race/ethnicity and cultural opportunity (see especially articles by Mann and Huffman; Lotz; Meredith; Drake; and Shugart, Waggoner, and Hallstein). Indeed, many of the writers included in the anthologies Colonize This! Young
Women of Color on Today’s Feminism and The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism do just this, demonstrating that sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism still operate powerfully in the lives of people not privileged enough to be members of Audre Lorde’s mythical norm: white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, and male (Lorde 116). There is also a general agreement that third wavers embrace broader definitions of sexuality, the power of personal self-definition and the assertion of individuality, and are embedded in popular culture (Soward and Renegar discuss this in detail in their article “Reconceptualizing Rhetorical Activism in Contemporary Feminist Contexts”). Further, Third Wave feminists address or point to the complexities of 21st century life (Meredith; Baumgardner and Richards); assert that the Third Wave celebrates contradictions (Shugart, Waggoner, and Hallstein; Mann and Huffman) and favors fluidity (Mann and Huffman); and is engaged in a discussion of discourse versus materiality (Mann and Huffman; Alfonso and Trigilio). Such theorizing has resulted in even more collections of essays in which writers examine the real-life effects of difference as they experience them personally. For example, Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, editors of Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century, state that one of the Third Wave’s goals is “its insistence on women’s diversity” (10), and that what “this generation needs is a politicized, activist feminism that is grounded in the material realities and the cultural productions of life in the twenty-first century” (5). Their call for action encourages “a feminism that utilizes the new technologies of the Internet, the playful world of fashion, and the more clear-cut activism of protest marches, a feminism that can engage with issues as diverse as women’s sweatshop labor in global factories and violence against women expressed in popular
music” (5); such a feminism falls right in line with a definition of activism that connects the personal to the political, that draws connections between individual action and social consequence, between personal choice and social constraint.

It is just such a form of activism that many older writers and feminists fear does not exist among Third Wave feminists. Indeed, they and I see a tension between the vocabulary of social justice and gender equality, on the one hand, and some of Third Wave feminists’ reactions of life in the 21st century, on the other. On the one hand, such collections of essays as To Be Real, Listen Up, Catching a Wave, Colonize This!, and The Fire This Time add up to an impressive collection of stories that exemplify the adage “the personal is political”; that is, the personal experiences of these younger writers are real, and they do mirror the struggles of other marginalized peoples, just as the stories shared in Second White Wave consciousness raising groups exposed lived experiences that those women were unaware they shared. On the other hand, the focus in these newer essays seems to weigh heavily on the personal and not as much on the political, in the sense that ‘political’ has come to mean the intent to create social change and work toward social justice. In other words, while the acts these various writers suggest may be politically informed and motivated, they nevertheless often sound more self-serving than not, given the relative lack of complex analysis of the outcomes of some of the choices they espouse. My analysis of the manifestos addresses this issue more closely and particularly. Given this apparent inward or self-ward focus, I understand why members of the Third Wave might be considered frivolous and self-centered by both older feminists and non-feminists alike, even though many critical and theoretical essays do exist (such as those collected in Colonize This! and The Fire This Time, as well as those I
indicated earlier), as well as countless examples of cultural products and services ranging from zines to independent media affiliations and organizations to grassroots peace, counter-recruitment, and anti-sweatshop labor organizing.

However, while it is probably true that “third wave feminism’s political activism on behalf of women’s rights is shaped by—and responds to—a world of global capitalism and information technology, postmodernism and postcolonialism, and environmental degradation” (Dicker and Piepmeier, 10), it is also true that, at least as represented in the manifestos contained in this chapter, Third Wave feminists continue to focus heavily on gender to the exclusion of other historically oppressive factors. Even though they broaden feminist inquiry of gender to include sexuality, they still also ignore or give short shrift to issues of race and class, except nominally. Dicker and Piepmeier’s book *Catching a Wave* does contain a couple of essays that reveal the intersections of race/ethnicity, cultural production, and feminism, but their format is primarily analytical rather than manifesto, and they are written by women of color (they are: “Third World, Third Wave Feminism(s): The Evolution of Arab American Feminism,” by Susan Muaddi Darraj, and “Do the Ladies Run This…? Some Thoughts on Hip-Hip Feminism,” by Gwendolyn D. Pough). Once again, women of color must remind white feminists of the plurality of real-world feminism. A couple of the manifestos contained in this chapter confirm that they realize the significance of race and class, but none interrogates or dismantles them, much less offers any sustained analysis of their implications for the lives of women in the 21st century. Baumgardner and Richards’ “Manifesta” agitates for political and historical awareness of feminist activity and increased visibility for lesbian and bisexual women, but with the exception of mentioning the need for “the classics of
radical feminism, womanism, *mujeristas*, women’s liberation, and all our roots to remain in print” (279), they make no overt acknowledgement of the source or even implications of such terms as ‘womanism’ or ‘*mujeristas*.’ Such appropriation of terminology is problematic, as I explain below. In “The Transfeminist Manifesto,” Koyama acknowledges in an afterward how trans women can become allies of women of color, but neither the Manifesta nor the GLAM Dyke Rescue Unit shifts attention from gendered oppression to include awareness of race or class. Again, I return to these points in the analysis of each specific manifesto.

In fact, none of the manifestos I have found foregrounds race or class at all, which I find rather amazing, not to mention alarming. Amazing, because it was such a crucial issue for both the First and Second Waves: in the First Wave, abolitionists emphasized the racial divide, and much of the energy and driving force for Second Wave feminism grew out of Civil Rights activities, even though in both of those cases, agendas that favored white, usually middle class women became the most popular. Alarming, because to fail to realize that race and class are both axes of identity that still operate strongly in both cultural ideology and in the material conditions of people’s lives suggests, as some of my (white) students almost believe, that those issues have been ‘solved,’ or that they were problems in the past, but are no longer worthy of concern or attention. The racial privilege—the unacknowledged power of whiteness—that enables such a mindset is still

---

18 This is not to say that race-conscious writings do not exist, because they do; *Colonize This!* contains writings exclusively by women of color, and many essays in other third wave collections analyze exigencies caused by race in the 21st century. However, none of those pieces of writing presents itself as a manifesto, an explicit call for change from the status quo. What is needed, clearly, is a contemporary manifesto against racism, exposing whiteness, and exploring new ways to be anti-racist. This, of course, needs to operate intersectionally, accounting as well for the other mutual cultural influences of class, gender, and sexuality, even as it emphasizes how the power of whiteness informs the definitions, the standards, and the policing of boundaries of how anyone may perform race, gender, or sexuality. See my manifesto in Chapter 6.
firmly in place. This is not to say that continued close attention to gendered forms of
discrimination is not important or necessary—it is—but just because Third Wavers are
comfortable being “multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-issued” (Dicker and Piepmeier,
16) does not let them off the hook of carefully examining those multiplicities and the
social and political implications for themselves and those who follow them. In other
words, when young white feminists fail to scrutinize the privilege of their comfort, they
also fail to understand and interrogate why such tolerance of multiple or horizontal sets of
belonging are still only aspirations and not realities for non-whites; by not exiting or even
questioning their racial comfort zone, young white feminists help maintain the power of
whiteness. Unfortunately, while Third Wave feminists are indeed taking a very active
part in cultural production as well as critique, their manifestos do not yet indicate a solid
shift toward awareness of their own white privilege.

This chapter examines three manifestos using the same rubric as for the First and
Second Waves, namely, to indicate first, how they fulfill their feminist promise to expose
gendered inequality and make proposals for change; second, by examining the presence
of whiteness by showing how it hides, usually in plain sight, for example, in linguistic or
cultural assumptions, in social standards and expectations; and how it maintains that
which it defines. The manifestos are, as named above, the Third Wave Manifesta (2000),
the GLAM Manifesto (2000), and The Transfeminist Manifesto (2000). Manifesta
appears in a book by the same title, authored by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy
Richards; GLAM, published collectively, exists on the Internet; and Emi Koyama’s
Transfeminist Manifesto is included in the Catching a Wave collection. Each of these
manifestos addresses socio-cultural aspects of twenty-first century life, and it is their
focus on cultural production or awareness rather than laws, politics, or other social justice activities that substantively separates them from the topics of First and Second Wave manifestos. Certainly many of those earlier documents included references to aspects of culture (such references are unavoidable), but in general, their overall goals included social change at the overarching level of critique of patriarchy, whereas the focus in these three Third Wave manifestos is more overtly on personal responsibility rather than public accountability, although an understanding of the need for social change is not absent in these documents.

What’s important for Third Wavers in these manifestos? For Baumgardner and Richards’ Manifesta and for part of Koyama’s Transfeminist Manifesto, informed political action at both the personal and social levels; for the Transfeminist Manifesto and the GLAM Manifesto, self-definition that stretches the socially determined boundaries of gender and sexuality. With the notable exception of Baumgardner and Richards, the manifestos included here celebrate individuality, individual response to cultural expectations, and (again) the power of self-definition. Significantly, none of these acknowledges that self-definition is a function of privilege, and in the case of these manifestos, specifically, white privilege, as the analysis below explains.

While each of these manifestos performs important feminist work, none of them yet reflects a race-conscious attitude. Whiteness appears in each of these manifestos primarily in the form of a white frame of reference and set of assumptions, rather than in overt racist comments or language. At worst, the racism is passive, unconscious. As feminist documents, they stretch previous understandings of feminist concerns by reminding us that gender is inexorably bound up with sexuality, although neither of those
categories is fixed or determined; that sex is as much a constructed category as gender is; and that while our gains as women have been remarkable, there remains much work to do. In all cases, however, the focus is primarily or exclusively on gender (and sometimes sexuality); none of the manifestos questions the larger social structure underpinned by whiteness. Baumgartner and Richards’ Manifesta emphasizes lesbians and bisexual women in their sixth point, but in none of their thirteen points is race mentioned or even alluded to. The GLAM Manifesto references a very large number of white scholars, actors, musicians, and writers, without ever acknowledging that they are white. Further, the definition of glam(orous) that it advances draws heavily on 1930s and ‘40s film stars, who were white and who also worked in an industry that was owned and operated almost exclusively by white movie moguls and studios. The Transfeminist Manifesto, in failing to fully explicate the ways that violence against trans women varies across race, assumes that the oppression trans women of color experience happens first in the arena of sexuality, when in reality, race is usually the first point of discrimination. So, these manifestos do advance feminism on the gender front, by stretching feminism to include not only differences among women but also to advocate being consciously playful about one’s appearance. However, they make no advances toward dismantling the internal, invisible power of whiteness as cultural and scholarly norm. I now turn to the manifestos to explain this more fully.

THIRD WAVE MANIFESTA

Having met in 1993 at the offices of Ms. magazine, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, in 1997, “decided to collaborate on a book about our generation of feminism” (xix). They write in their preface, “It was created to fill a gap in the lives of
young women, like me [Amy], who yearn for a connection to feminism” (xxvii). The goal of the book, as Amy explains, was to do a combination of “Feminist Activism 101” and something “more cultural and critical,” since “a book with both these components was exactly what had been missing from our reading” (xxviii). The manifesto is embedded deep within their book, which presents a history of women’s activism for women’s rights, a timeline of U.S. feminist activity, and throughout, explanation of and justification for continued feminist activism. The purpose of the manifesto is to “give a similar declaration of sentiments” to a “government that responds to the Third Wave, rather than a society by the few for the few” (278). What initially struck me about Manifesta was its similarity, in terms of issues, to the Declaration of Sentiments; that is, with the exception of women’s having achieved the right to vote, many of Baumgardner and Richards’ points echo those of in the earlier manifesto. However, unfortunately, their updated suggestions still rely on a fairly simplified essentialist view of women’s experiences.

**Feminist contributions**

Without question, *Manifesta* is an important book; Baumgardner and Richards’ goal to inspire young feminists to understand their feminist history and to take action against any of the various extant injustices is well-founded and well argued. The issues they address in the thirteen points of their manifesto specifically include raising young feminists’ political and historical awareness; ensuring women the choice to have children or not; making reproductive rights possible for all women, including lesbians; eliminating double standards in sex and sexual health for women and men; increasing the visibility and social power of lesbians and bisexual women; providing equal access to health care
for everyone, regardless of class or gender; ensuring that women who wish to may join
the military; improving adolescent rights; creating workplace and overall social equality;
and, finally, pushing for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to ensure that there is a
constitutional basis for equality in the U.S. While acting on each of these points would
indeed improve the quality and equality of U.S. society, it is also important to recognize
that their suggestions need to be adapted to account for different levels of oppression in
different communities’ issues, be they race, class, gender, or sexuality. Manifesta
focuses heavily on gender, but does not really address race or its co-constituent
whiteness.

**Perpetuation of Whiteness**

As with the Declaration of Sentiments, their avowed predecessor, Manifesta
incorporates a white frame of reference without appearing to be aware of it. Whiteness
appears throughout the manifesto, in linguistic choices, in cultural assumptions, and in
the political strategies they advocate. As indicated above, whiteness in linguistic choices
appears not only in the problematic appropriation of such terms as womanism and
*mujeristas*, in their call for “the classics of radical feminism, womanism, *mujeristas*,
women’s liberation, and all our roots to remain in print” (279), but also in the very title of
the book and the manifesto. Even though Alice Walker introduced the term ‘womanism’
in her 1983 book *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, it is not a term that has enjoyed
popular use among white feminists in the intervening twenty years. Thus, those
unfamiliar with the term and its definition as she advanced it would also miss the allusion
not only to Walker’s work, but to all the work by feminists of color, particularly African
American feminists. Similarly, *mujeristas* is a term lifted from Latina theology; *mujer*
means ‘mother,’ and *mujerista* means choosing to emphasize one’s faith-based mothering capabilities. Ada Maria Asisi-Diaz further explains,

> a *mujerista* is one who struggles to liberate herself, who is consecrated by God as proclaimer of the hope of her people. A *mujerista* is one who knows how to be faithful to the task of making justice and peace flourish, who opts for God’s cause and the law of love… *Mujerista* theology encompasses the way grass-roots Hispanic women understand the divine and grapple with questions of ultimate meaning in their daily lives. (560)

If ‘womanist’ is not widely known among white feminists, *mujerista* is likely even more cryptic. Some readers of Manifesta, glossing quickly over unknown terminology, may confuse it with Anzaldua’s term *mestiza* (which concept, as shown in the following chapter, emphasizes fluidity, hybridity, and multiplicity rather than restrictive duality), but as can be seen from Asisi-Diaz’s definition, the two terms have very different meanings.

Finally, the most overt linguistic appropriation appears in the title of the book and the manifesto: Baumgardner and Richards replace the final ‘o’ in the term ‘manifesto’ with an ‘a,’ as if English were a language with gendered nouns. Apparently, this tactic follows the Spanish tradition of indicating whether the subject is feminine or masculine, as in the use of Latina/o or Chicana/o to designate one’s ethnic heritage, or even the diminutive *mija/o*, a term of endearment. But English does not indicate gender that way; typically, gender appears in pronouns (i.e., him, her, it, and their corresponding possessive forms) or in the definition or meaning of a term itself, such a woman, man, girl, boy. And nowhere in the book do the authors justify their new spelling of the
ancient term. I grant that English is a living, changing language—recent additions include, for example, the verb “to google,” derived from the popular Internet search engine; ‘manifesta’ may become a similar addition, but that has not yet happened in either popular or scholarly discourse. I do not mean to appear to be stodgy about language: it is a vital entity that should adapt to changing times, technologies, globalizing influences, and plain old playfulness. However, in a scholarly text, authors should be accountable to their sources as well as to their readers. One privilege of whiteness apparently means never having to justify your actions or choices.

While it is not necessarily Baumgardner and Richards’ job to define womanism and mujerista, neglecting to make any overt acknowledgement of the source or even implications of such terms is problematic, because they assume perhaps a broader base of knowledge than many feminists, especially monolingual ones, may have. It is one thing for someone like Gloria Anzaldúa not to translate from the Spanish: her strategy is to create a space of discomfort within which gringos would be forced to acknowledge their privileging of the English language to the exclusion of others and how such practice silences others. For such white feminists as Baumgardner and Richards, however, to appropriate key terms from feminists of color without contextualizing those terms, or to justify their change in spelling of an old term, exactly exemplifies such silencing and performatively reaffirms whiteness’s role in linguistic selection.

Not only does whiteness inform language choices, it also influences Manifesta’s cultural assumptions, in this case, in specific notions of a primary basic feminist goal, equality, both in the workplace and in society at large. Item eleven of Manifesta reads:
To make the workplace responsive to an individual’s wants, needs, and talents. This includes valuing (monetarily) stat-at-home parents, aiding employees who want to spend more time with family and continue to work, equalizing pay for jobs of comparable worth, enacting a minimum wage that would bring a full-time worker with two children over the poverty line, and providing employee benefits for freelance and part-time workers. (280)

Ideally, a living wage, flextime, and benefits for freelance and part-time workers and stay-at-home parents means workplace equality; to balance one’s need for work with one’s family and free time is undeniably an important and crucial goal, especially for lower-wage workers and for single-parent households (which remain predominantly female-headed, putting women at a continued likelihood for poverty). However, gendered and raced factors continue to aggravate reaching real equality in the workplace; as numerous studies by the National Committee on Pay Equity prove, even if they're equal in value, women's jobs pay less; discrimination is intangible, but it's there; and not all jobs are open to women (http://www.pay-equity.org/info-top10.html, 5/3/06).

In other words, “For every woman, the wage gap is different. The wage gap is affected by many factors, including a woman's race, age, education, occupation, and geographic region. African American women earn 63 cents on the dollar and Hispanic women 54 cents compared to white males, who face no discrimination” (National Committee on Pay Equity, http://www.pay-equity.org/info-choices.html, 5/3/06). In terms of take-home pay, this means that, “Of full-time workers, black women's median weekly earnings ($429) were only 64% of the earnings of white men ($669) in the year 2000, and according to the Census Bureau, in 2000, the median full-time earnings for Hispanic
women were $20,527, only 52% of the median earnings of white men ($37,339)” (National Committee on Pay Equity, http://www.pay-equity.org/info-racebrief.html, 5/3/06). As long as work is valued according to white male standards, women of all races will fall short, due to gendered discrimination, and that gendered discrimination is compounded by racism. When Manifesta neglects to address that the overall workplace power structure is dominated by and determined by white men and white male standards, those standards remain in place, unchallenged.

Similar race blindness appears in item twelve of Manifesta, which calls more broadly for political action to gain overall social equality. This is the place where issues of race, class, and sexuality should be added to the assumption of gendered equality: they say that we need “to acknowledge that, although feminists may have disparate values, we share the same goal of equality, and of supporting one another in our efforts to gain the power to make our own choices” (280). On the one hand, this sounds positive, as it demonstrates awareness of difference and that standards and principles vary among women (as Mann and Huffman, Lotz, Meredith, Drake, and Shugart, Waggoner, and Hallstein all testify in their articles). On the other hand, though, it ignores or erases not only the social/ economic/ religious/ political/ personal distances between different women, but also the various definitions of “equality” that may operate or circulate within any given group, be it ethnic, political, familial, or otherwise social. It is important to question the standard of equality: by what or whose measure shall people be declared or declare themselves equal? Answering this question points to those “disparate values,” because, as has been seen in Second Wave activity, the right to express oneself individually directly contradicts the emphasis on group cohesion crucial to the collectivist
social structure of some Native American or Chicana/o peoples, for example. Even though contemporary society includes such technological advances as the Internet and such influences as global capitalism and trade, access to and benefits from these things vary widely across cultures/peoples within the U.S., as shown above relative to the Riot Grrrls. Therefore, once again, retaining the right to define or determine what counts as ‘equal’ inherently invokes whiteness, wherein the larger social power structure remains intact toward which all members of American society are expected to strive.

Generally speaking, then, the Manifesta emphasizes important goals toward which feminists should continue to strive, goals such as constitutionally protected equal rights, reproductive rights and choices for all women regardless of class or sexuality, and equal access to necessary health care. However, as also in the case of the following two manifestos, Manifesta is guilty of what Beverly Daniel Tatum identifies as passive or unintentional racism, which “accepts as appropriate the omissions of people of color,” their experiences, perspectives, and contributions (11). That is, not only does Manifesta include passive racism, but also engages in the more racist linguistic appropriation of terms and concepts such as womanism and mujerista.

GLAM MANIFESTO

Of the three manifestos in this chapter, the GLAM Manifesto may be the most reflective of a Third Wave sensibility regarding creative use of technology: originally published in the online journal Rhizomes (at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue1/ glam/ GLAM_Manifesto.html), it exists in cyberspace in html format, complete with active links to navigate within the document and to other sites on the Internet. Written by the GLAM Dyke Rescue Unit (hereafter GDRU), it also exemplifies customary feminist
collective action; no authors are identified. They do signify themselves, however, by a pink cross on the home page; this symbol combines the well-known Red Cross rescue agency symbol with the same color pink of the triangles used by Nazi soldiers to identify homosexual prisoners in the German concentration camps during World War II. This represents another instance of appropriation; just as ‘queer’ has become a rallying cry for many self-identified queer folks and African Americans routinely call one another by the N-word, GLAM visually aligns itself with the 1980s and 1990s AIDS activist movement, which itself had reappropriated the pink triangle as its symbol of visibility and power (their slogan, which appeared as white letters superimposed over a pink triangle in a black field, read “silence = death”).

The Manifesto is divided into three parts: the Nature of GLAM, the life of the GLAM revolutionary, and an appendix. Like Manifesta, the Nature of GLAM (located at http://www.rhizomes.net/issue1/glam/natureofglam.html) lists thirteen points, “in which the qualities that make up GLAM are defined and explicated, for the purposes of identifying GLAM in yourself and others.” These points refer primarily to power and gender, especially as it relates to sexuality, and they emphasize GLAM’s availability to “those who want it,” so that they may be “subversive,” “sexy,” and “queer,” but “not an imitation.” GLAM itself “appropriates from the oppressor,” “is self-conscious, never inadvertent,” “uses Things, but is not about consumption,” and “can be organized but never institutionalized.” Most importantly, GLAM “is for everyday use,” but “only for those who will work for it.” In other words, GLAM represents an intentional set of choices about self-presentation, drawing from and revising both popular culture and gendered social expectations, like the Riot Grrrls. The second section, “The Life of the
GLAM Revolutionary,” provides “an outline of exemplary GLAM personages, props, costumes, activities, environments, and events” (http://www.rhizomes.net/issue 1 glam/revolutionary.html). Pages entitled “who,” “what,” and “how” list notable glamorous individuals, with links that briefly describe what qualifies each person as GLAM, what sorts of costumes and props a GLAM wannabe might draw from, and tips on how “to understand the relationship of your desire to the tools available to you,” in order to be aware of what “being GLAM and actively beautiful” means to you (http://www.rhizomes.net/issue 1 glam/how.html). Finally, the Appendix contains pages listing GLAM films, magazines and webzines (with corresponding links to their homepages), books, both fiction and “not fiction,” and visual artists.

Much commends the GLAM Manifesto: it emphasizes active engagement with and conscious questioning of the cultural reproduction of the self, it advocates a healthy disregard for rigid gender and sex-role categories, and it contains a large base of resources for GLAM-wannabes to mine. However, in its exclusive attention to disrupting gendered categories and behaviors, it neglects other socially important categories that affect someone’s ability to access their GLAM potential. That is, nearly all of the GLAM role models are white, as are most of the authors and artists included in the Appendix. The message here, whether GDRU intended it or not, is that white standards of beauty, scholarship, and art continue to prevail; left unexamined, they reinforce whiteness.

Feminist work

The GLAM manifesto does many good things in terms of feminism, both traditional and the more contemporary Third Wave movement. It highlights the intersection of gender, sexuality, and power; it encourages individuals to make personal
choices (“GLAM appropriates from the oppressor”); it claims to “break the limitations” of gender by creating possibilities for those personal choices; it is playful, both lighthearted and serious (as demonstrated by the inclusion of heady cultural theorists such as Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Judith Halberstam, and Sue-Ellen Case alongside more well-known popular writers such as Truman Capote, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Dorothy Parker chronicled in the appendix); and, as mentioned above, it uses the Internet rather than print as its mode of address.

Throughout, the GLAM Manifesto intentionally foregrounds gender and sexuality, two important axes of identity. All of the role models listed on the “who” page reject gendered constraints; for example, as two actresses who refused to be constrained by restrictive gendered expectations, “Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich …both had more power over the images made of them than anyone thought they should, and used it to ensure that they remained individuals, free to play with gender as they pleased and constantly impossible to categorize” (http://www.rhizomes.net/issue1/glam/gretamarlene.htm). Likewise, James Bond and Mata Hari have “Good clothes, guns and secrets. Isn't the lifestyle appeal obvious? They transform their identities in order to get power, are exceptionally good at deception, and they are perfectly comfortable with the performative act of shooting someone in the head” (http://www.rhizomes.net/issue1/ glam/jamesbondmatahari.html). By offering gender and sexuality categories as places to play, the manifesto overtly celebrates subversive uses of power to destabilize dominant heteronormative understandings of those categories. It reminds readers that sex and gender categories are constructed empowers people to change those very constructions, and by extension, change the opportunities for personal expression. GLAM also
advocates “calculating your desired effect, message, or transformation,” but such calculation is with the goal of being GLAM and beautiful, which has the effect of emphasizing the structured or constructed nature of beauty (an important activity, to highlight the construction of a standard).

However, even as GLAM promotes playing with these categories, it simultaneously fails to question the nature of gendered categories or standards of beauty and attractiveness that such notions as feminine and masculine imply. This is problematic, because while some of the suggested role models are transgressive in one or more ways, the boundaries that they cross are the standard divides between the categories of masculine and feminine characteristics. For example, both Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo worked in a film industry managed entirely by white men, and by working to control their image and output, they became personally empowered; however, what is less clear is whether their presence as empowered actresses influenced any change in the managerial structure of that film industry. Likewise, unless one happens to be “in her Majesty’s secret service,” it is unlikely that someone who becomes “perfectly comfortable with the performative act of shooting someone in the head,” like James Bond did, will end up anywhere but jail (though one assumes that GDRU means this metaphorically rather than literally). Thus, the “everyday practice of GLAM” is essentially about individual actions or choices, rather than about questioning the categories and their systemic power, or about making any organized attempts to subvert or even redefine those categories. In making personal choices, “GLAM requires that rather than hideing [sic] your deviance, you flaunt it” (http://www.rhizomes.net/issue1/ glam/how.html); however, this very declaration leaves in place the notions of what
particular features constitute standard or normative and deviant, without examining the very real consequences for being ‘deviant’ in American culture: issues of safety, sanity, employment or educational opportunities, for instance. Thus, while it could be argued that by playing with sexuality and gender categories, one automatically redefines them, which GLAM strongly encourages, such play may have limited effectiveness in the larger social sphere. Part of what limits GLAM, also, is its insistence on attention to gender categories, to the exclusion of race and class.

**Perpetuation of Whiteness**

As mentioned before, the political strategies that GLAM advocates revolve around making personal choices about appearance and presentation, but the set from which those choices may be drawn is limited to predominantly white cultural figures. The cultural assumptions that inform the political strategies rest upon white standards of beauty: nine of fourteen men and twenty-two of twenty-eight women identified in the “who” section of “The Life of the GLAM Revolutionary” are white; not all are U.S. American, but all are American popular culture icons, easily recognizable to the majority of the American public. Indeed, what counts as glam(orous) has been defined by these white icons and images of musicians, film stars dating from the 1930s forward, sex workers, authors, political activists, even imaginary figures (such as Xena, warrior princess). Whiteness operates as a tool of cultural power in the points of reference included in GLAM: white standards of beauty, films, magazines, and authors.

Since GLAM invokes the importance of appearance, it is necessary to examine white standards of beauty as exemplified in the manifesto. Blondeness is much reproduced: Garbo, Dietrich, Grace Kelly, Courtney Love, Madonna, Lauren Bacall,
Catherine Deneuve, David Bowie, Andy Warhol, and even Dennis Rodman are listed. Even the GLAM logo, which looks like a 1950s housewife, is a white woman with blonde hair (one assumes, since the logo is reproduced in black and white; however, the hair is white but for its outline, which could easily be interpreted as blonde). Physical fitness is exemplified most overtly by Madonna, but Tina Turner, Dennis Rodman, RuPaul, and even Jodi Foster flaunt fit bodies. Womanliness and curviness is celebrated by Sophia Loren, Lauren Bacall, Elizabeth Taylor, Catherine Deneuve, and Annie Sprinkle; notably, none of these women carries any ‘extra’ weight. All of the people mentioned here, as well as others such as Susie Bright and Susan Sarandon, have flawless skin and regular features (i.e., no overtly big noses or weak or double chins). Although all of these people undoubtedly reflect a certain style standard of beauty, GLAM fails to account for racialized components of beauty; indeed, it celebrates a bygone era of glamorousness, one that admittedly relied heavily upon cosmetics and other beauty products such as hair dye. What all of this suggests is that only white standards of beauty are acceptable to mimic or adapt, which could be problematic for people of color, whose hair texture and style, skin tone, body shape, or facial features do not necessarily conform to that glamorous standard. This further marginalizes particular forms of beauty that are revered around the world, such as dreadlocks, scarification, ritual tattoos, and so on.

In addition to emphasizing appearance based upon white standards of beauty, whiteness exists in references to cultural artifacts, such as films, magazines, and books. Of the thirty-five films identified as glam, none features a leading actor of color, although many include people of color in supporting roles. Of the seven zines and magazines listed (with their corresponding links), only *HUES* (*Hear Us Emerging Sisters*, which
ceased publication after the March/April 1999 issue due to insufficient funds ([http://www.hues.net/](http://www.hues.net/)) emphasizes issues of women of color; the other magazines are *BUST, Riot Grrrl, Hip Mama, FaT GiRL, Genders,* and *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body, and Culture* (links to the last two are inactive). Of the thirty authors listed, Francesca Lia Block, Erica Lopez, Maria Lugones, and Michele Aina Barale are not white. The overall message contained in this accounting of authors, film stars, musicians, and magazine producers is that what is white is what sets cultural standards, as Chaudry noted in the Preface.

Finally, then, although GLAM provides multiple tools with which to create a glamorous self-makeover, it does not celebrate or even insist upon the “multi-racial, multi-ethnic, or multi-issued” aspects of Third Wave feminism that Dicker and Piepmeier assert is essential at this time. Its emphasis on the intersection of gender, sexuality, and power reminds readers of basic feminist tenets, but in failing to include race and class as well, GLAM reinforces white standards of beauty and white frames of reference in both popular and scholarly cultural production.

**THE TRANSFEMINIST MANIFESTO**

Unlike the previous two manifestos, Emi Koyama’s Transfeminist Manifesto challenges gender-only discrimination as has been advanced and advocated by earlier feminists. Koyama re-links sexuality with gender while simultaneously problematizing standard sex/gender categories, reminding readers of the importance of intersectionality; in this regard, she aligns her sexual politics with the work of other gender theorists such as Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, and Kate Bornstein. The manifesto defines “trans” as “an inclusive term encompassing a wide range of gender norm violations that involve
some discontinuity between the sex a person is assigned at birth and her or his gender identity and expression” (244). Koyama identifies the principles of transfeminism as a movement within feminism; these principles include the right to self-definition of identity (which places transfeminism firmly in Third Wave thinking); the right to make sole decisions about our own bodies, rather than succumbing to the edicts of either the medical community or to political or religious authorities; to address issues of bodily safety, especially as related to transwomen’s ability to “‘pass’ as ‘normal’ women” (246); the right to decide the form of self-expression of gender identity, rather than being expected to conform to gendered norms; and the right to challenge social, political, religious, medical, or educational institutions that “limit the range of choices available” to transwomen (247).

The purpose of transfeminism, as Koyama conceives it, “is not about taking over existing feminist institutions” but rather to “extend and advance feminism as a whole through our own liberation and coalition work with all others” (245). Creating alliances based on similarities across difference is at the heart of coalition politics (bell hooks discusses the need for coalition-building in many of her writings); transfeminism “embodies feminist coalition politics in which women from different backgrounds stand up for each other, because if we do not stand for each other, nobody will” (245). As I demonstrate below, however, the “different backgrounds” Koyama implies include those of visible gender and sexuality markers; other factors such as race or class are ignored throughout the manifesto until a postscript at the end, which functions as a form of passive cultural racism, in which experiences and perspectives of people of color are glossed over as insignificant or are appropriated by hegemonic whiteness as more
universal than they really are. Thus, the Transfeminist Manifesto both stretches more traditionally-conceived definitions of feminism as related primarily to gender, forcing feminists to become self-reflexive about internalized biases, and also reinforces a fragmented approach to reducing oppressions, by ignoring how gender and sexuality are also inflected by race and class.

Feminist contributions

Positive feminist aspects appear throughout the Transfeminist Manifesto. As indicated above, it directly attacks the male/female, masculine/feminine sex and gender binaries; transfeminism strongly affirms “that sex and gender are both socially constructed; furthermore, the distinction between sex and gender is artificially drawn as a matter of convenience” (249). By questioning and critiquing the constructed nature of biological sex categories as well as gender categories, it emphasizes fluidity, multiplicity, and performativity (though it does not necessarily use those terms). Directing attention to the need for self-definition and expression using whatever tools are best for the job enhances autonomy and empowerment, as transactivists know (see, for example, Felicity Haynes and Tarquam McKenna; Judith Halberstam; Leslie Feinberg).

Moreover, the manifesto closely examines some real-life consequences for trans women, including male privilege, violence, economic hardship, and reduction in reproductive choices. The Transfeminist Manifesto is written from the male-to-female perspective (as it says, “the phrase ‘trans women’ is used to refer to those individuals who identify, present, or live more or less as women despite their sex assignment at birth” (245)), which necessitates addressing the question of male privilege, since some feminists have argued that trans women, having been born male, experienced male
privilege throughout their lives. The manifesto argues for understanding the dynamic relationship that intersecting oppressions produce within a person: there is an “interaction between male privilege and being trans” (248), and in the case of male-to-female trans women, gender deviance trumps male privilege, which aligns with the ways in which non-trans women are oppressed under sexism.

As a result of being trans, trans women, who are “often more visible than gays,” are “targeted for being queer” by homophobic people, and consequently, in addition to suffering heteronormative pressure for people who appear to be men to be masculine, trans women experience considerable physical and emotional violence to their persons and their psyches (253). In a strongly positive political move, the Transfeminist Manifesto argues that it is essential to address this violence, just as feminists have traditionally addressed violence against non-trans women: regarding existing organizations that provide services to women who are victims of violence, “we should join them” (254). What trans women have to offer other trans women includes such services as “crisis counselors and case managers,” “trans-specific workshops,” “self-defense courses for trans women,” and “address[ing] the issue of economic violence,” the poverty of which results from unemployment due to homo/transphobia and “the prohibitively high cost of transitioning” (254). Raising awareness of specific transphobic consequences increases the opportunities for services to be directed toward those who require them; it should have a corollary effect of increasing sensitivity to trans-specific issues.

A third area in which trans women experience discrimination is that of access to hormones, as many of these “are similar in origin and chemical composition to what non-
trans women take for birth control, emergency contraception, and hormone replacement therapy” (255). Just as non-trans women should have access to these hormonal treatments, along with abortion and sterilization options, trans women should be able to procure hormonal treatments and sex reassignment surgeries in a safe, legal environment, because transsexuality “is not an illness or a disorder, but is as much a part of the wide spectrum of ordinary human experience as pregnancy” (which feminists such as Adrienne Rich and Nancy Chodorow have revealed to have been a pathologized condition under masculinist medical models) (256). Forcing trans women to seek black market or overseas treatments parallels non-trans women’s seeking unsafe, illegal abortions: the outcome of both situations is more likely than not to be negative, if not deadly.

Transfeminism provides a necessary extra dimension to traditional feminism, needed because it expands narrow, gender-based understanding of oppression to include sexuality and transsexuality. As the manifesto points out, trans women’s “existence is seen as problematic only when there is a rigid gender hierarchy”; Koyama’s hope is that “transfeminism will transform the scope of feminism into a more inclusive vision of the world” (257). This would be even more likely to happen if transfeminism, as laid out in the manifesto, more fully incorporated issues of race and class in its feminist cultural critique.

Perpetuation of Whiteness

As with the previous manifestos, within its gender (and in this case, sex and sexuality) critique, the Transfeminist Manifesto incorporates cultural assumptions that reinforce whiteness or draw from a white frame of reference. Koyama is not unaware of the significance of white privilege and its benefits, which is an improvement over the
other manifestos included in this chapter. However, in its exclusive focus upon sexism and gender discrimination, this manifesto does not give more than passing attention to white privilege (or even mention class privilege). In fact, nowhere, until the postscript, is the issue of white privilege woven into the analysis. There, Koyama admits that the manifesto focuses mainly on the intersection of sexism and the oppression against trans people, yet it fails to address how these issues intersect with other social injustices. […] it] fails to address how trans women can become allies with women of color. Again, I hesitated to move the focus away from sexism at the time I wrote this manifesto, as I feared other (non-trans) feminists’ criticisms. Now I agree with the notion that any feminist theory that fails to account for racism, classism, ableism, etc., operating among women is incomplete. I concede that this manifesto is incomplete. (258)

While it is positive that Koyama admits to being aware of omitting racism, classism, and ableism, knowing that such factors operate in the world whether we attend to them or not (and in fact, our social structure is set up exactly so that we do not have to attend to them, as McIntosh so eloquently argued) and continuing to ignore them keeps them in hegemonic circulation. Such oversight is not one of mere politeness to be addressed in a postscript; it actually compounds racist harm by granting the idea of white superiority to be inherent in a racist system. Prior to the postscript, however, Koyama admits to being aware of white privilege.

In the section on male privilege, mentioned above, Koyama calls for trans women to have “the courage to acknowledge the ways in which trans women may have benefited from male privilege”; she goes on to draw a parallel between male privilege and white
privilege, saying that male-to-female transsexuals should acknowledge the ways in which their male privilege—however unevenly they may have benefited from it—confers advantages, “just as those of us who are white should address the benefits of white privilege” (248-9). However, no further analysis of how white privilege benefits white transgendered or transsexual folks follows this remark. Left unanalyzed, this becomes a missed opportunity for the Transfeminist Manifesto to acknowledge that the relative privilege of whiteness may offer a cushion of physical safety or economic benefit that might mitigate some of the oppressiveness of the very forms of oppression discussed earlier, such as access to health care, reproductive choices, or economic hardship. I do not mean to suggest that white privilege erases or forecloses the presence of other forms of oppression, but rather that, in a social system that privileges white skin or white-appearing features, racism ensures that those with darker skin automatically experience compounded disadvantages.

In addition to operating from a white frame of reference, the Transfeminist Manifesto strongly advocates several political strategies, which range from making personal choices to participating in social service organizations. Whiteness still inheres in these political actions, however, As indicated above, Koyama believes that it is crucial that trans women join existing organizations that employ serve women’s needs, by becoming “crisis counselors and case managers” who will help to “fund trans-specific workshops…develop self-defense courses,” and work to make space for trans women in domestic violence shelters (254). This is undeniably a necessary move; however, these coalition politics most overtly address gender discrimination. But what about issues besides gender? Koyama acknowledges in the aforementioned postscript that “trans
women can become allies with women of color,” and that, moreover, such alliances will not necessarily fragment feminism, but rather will broaden its reach to aid marginalized peoples (258). This is laudable, but the phrasing suggests that there are not trans women of color, which is, of course, untrue. In fact, photographer Loren Cameron’s photographs testify to the racial diversity of trans folk who are not just white. However, Koyama fails to think overtly about what’s at stake for trans people of color who are marginalized not only on the basis of gender and sexuality but also in terms of race. That is, race usually trumps trans gender because a transgendered person of color is usually perceived first as a person of color/race, prompting them to have to stress or foreground their gender or sexuality agenda. In other words, she operates as if gender and sexuality were not also racially inflected. Once again, this is an example of passive or unintentional racism, which “accepts as appropriate the omissions of people of color,” their experiences, perspectives, and contributions to any social discussion (Tatum 11).

Just as with the Third Wave Manifesta and the GLAM Manifesto, the Transfeminist Manifesto exhorts readers to challenge the sexist status quo as it exists in social institutions and personal expression. Also like them, it offers specific suggestions for ways to create a less patriarchally oppressive society. However, it fails to advance racial awareness and reduce the negative effects of whiteness and white privilege, and in fact, it actually compounds the effects by acknowledging that racism and white privilege exist but ignoring the particular ways in which whiteness affects trans women.

What has become apparent to me is that whiteness is still alive and well in the Third White Wave, at least as far as feminist manifestos are concerned. I had been hoping to discover that racial consciousness and whiteness awareness would have
increased over the last forty years of concerted feminist activity, especially since women
of color have been more publicly visible as social activists than they were able to be
during the First Wave. It has been disappointing to learn, however, that, although the
vocabulary of awareness has seeped into popular usage, that awareness is not yet
reflected in attitudes or assumptions that appear in frames of reference, cultural
production, or political strategies for social change that honor anything but whiteness. In
other words, even though women of color have been agitating against oppression and for
social justice as long as white women, their arguments including race, class, and sexuality
with gender have been largely ignored in favor of white feminists’ long-standing
insistence upon sexism, male dominance, and patriarchy as the primary oppressive social
force. As the women of color in the next chapter argue, though, it is not possible to
separate one oppression from the others; all operate simultaneously, in concert with one
another, in a matrix of intersectionality that affects all women, not just women of color.
CHAPTER 4: WOMEN OF COLOR MANIFESTOS
Sojourner Truth, Combahee River Collective, Gloria Anzaldúa

“Sojourner over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages or over mud puddles or gives me any best place, and aren’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and aren’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man (when I could get it), and bear the lash as well—and aren’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen them almost all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard—and aren’t I a woman?” (Sojourner Truth, Frances Gage’s version)

“I want to say a few words about this matter. I am a woman’s rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and reaped and husked and chopped and mowed, and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal. I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now. As for intellect, all I can say is, if woman have a pint, and man a quart—why can’t she have her little pint full? You need not be afraid to give us our rights for fear we will take too much—for we can’t take more than our pint’ll hold. (Sojourner Truth, printed in the Anti-Slavery Bugle, June 21, 1851)

“The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives.” (The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement”)

Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche. (Gloria Anzaldúa)

To this point, I have been arguing that white feminists have tended to focus largely upon reducing or eliminating the gendered oppression of women to the exclusion of other forms, especially race, but also class and sexuality. Their justification for this course of action has rested upon the belief that male supremacy, patriarchy, is the primary oppression from which all others stem; recall, for example, how explicitly Redstockings stated it: “Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy” (Crow 223). Viewed this way, there is a certain logic to white feminists’ action: eliminate male supremacy, and the other oppressions would naturally disappear. However, due to white privilege, white feminists were, have been, and continue to be, if not unaware of, then certainly insensitive to the negative pressures
exerted by racism upon women of color and their feminist work and goals. In other words, white feminists’ single-pronged approach to imagining social justice has been ineffective in creating social change that benefits women of color, which means that, for as long as white feminists have been agitating for change, women of color have had to remind white feminists of the plurality of real-world oppression and the need for a feminism that accounts for that plurality. Unfortunately, many white feminists have been slow to acknowledge the effects of interlocking oppressions, even upon themselves. Further, until feminists of color point out what white feminists elide or ignore, normative whiteness never has to defend or explain itself, and consequently, just as feminist manifestos expose a masculinist construction of history, so do manifestos by women of color expose the ways in which manifestos by white women rhetorically reproduce whiteness. Which brings me to this chapter on manifestos by women of color.

In my Introduction, I mentioned that this dissertation would focus upon whiteness to highlight the ways in which it operates visibly, as in overt racism, and invisibly, as in performative forms such as cultural assumptions of white superiority and everyday discourse emanating from white frames or points of reference. I have also indicated throughout that part of what makes whiteness so insidious a social force is how it tends to remain invisible to those who have white privilege. Whiteness and the social power it confers has always been visible to people of color, however, and the manifestos contained within this chapter not only take white feminists to task for ignoring their white privilege, but also explain in very particular ways how the intersection of oppressive forces negatively impacts the lives, experiences, and opportunities available to women of color. In order of presentation, this chapter’s manifestos are Sojourner Truth’s speech
commonly called “Ain’t I a Woman?” (1851), A Black Feminist Statement by the Combahee River (1977), and Gloria Anzaldúa’s book *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). Reminding her listeners that whiteness inheres in everyday language, Truth’s speech refuses to accept the prevalent contemporary understanding of the term ‘woman’ by exhorting her audience to acknowledge her, a black woman, former slave, as also a woman. The Combahee River Collective Statement critiques white feminists’ exclusive focus on gender to the exclusion of race, class, and sexuality, and it also stresses distinctions between historical narratives produced by whites and by African Americans. Finally, Anzaldúa’s book not only explodes the black/white binary that has dominated feminist thinking since the First Wave, it also challenges white feminists to look beyond our English-only, Western-European/Anglo cultural traditions to acknowledge that other forms of knowledge can and do inform other ways of being, privilege other perspectives, and enhance different/differing points of view.

In terms of analytical structure, this chapter varies slightly from the previous ones. Whereas my goal there was to highlight the presence of whiteness contained within the manifestos, here, I examine the ways in which these manifestos themselves critique and interrupt whiteness. Because each manifesto assesses whiteness differently, as indicated just above, each of my sections reflects the particular project of that individual manifesto. Additionally, each section introduces the writer(s) and contextualizes the historical moment of the manifesto, as in earlier chapters. In all cases, however, it should be understood that I acknowledge not only the right of these feminists of color to critique white feminists’ blindness to their privileges, but I also agree with those critiques.
AREN’T I A WOMAN?

Sojourner Truth was born a slave in upstate New York, the “second youngest of twelve or thirteen children,” and she spent the first several years of her life being sold from one family to another, finally landing at “John I. Dumont’s New Paltz farm” (Washington xiv-xv). In the fall of 1826, she walked away from Dumont’s farm and spent the following year under the protection of Isaac Van Wagenen; on July 4, 1827, she was legally freed, as were all slaves in New York State (Mabee xiii). At age forty-six, in 1843, Truth changed her name from Isabella because she felt “called by the Lord to travel up and down the land testifying to the sins against her people”; she became a traveling itinerant preacher, something that was not uncommon for African American women at the time (Schneir 93). By the time of her famous speech, delivered at the Woman’s Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, on May 28-29, 1851, Truth had only been speaking publicly “for women’s rights and against slavery” for a few months, since the fall of 1850; however, once started, she became a well-traveled speaker, highly visible on the convention circuit and would speak on topics ranging from suffrage to temperance, for women’s rights and against capital punishment (Mabee xiv-xvi). The historical moment for Truth’s speech was the same as that for the Declaration of Sentiments; indeed, this heyday for woman’s rights and anti-slavery conventions, as Buhle and Buhle have discussed, would last until the outbreak of the Civil War. To demonstrate how Truth’s speech critiques whiteness, my analysis focuses on, first, how she refuses to accept definitions of womanhood based on the contemporary public’s standard for white women, and second, the ways that its publication and reprinting represent publishing practices based upon assumptions of the privilege of whiteness. Regarding Truth’s famous speech: as I discuss in greater detail below, the version that most people are
aware of and familiar with is the one recorded by Frances Gage, who presided at the Akron women’s rights convention, and it is this version that I analyze. I have included a roughly parallel excerpt from the version printed in the abolitionist newspaper, the Anti-Slavery Bugle, where Truth kept headquarters in the early 1850s.

**Critique of Whiteness**

As a cultural document and manifesto, Truth’s speech confronts the white hegemonic power structure, which reinforces, through law and custom, white privilege; further, it is a public action designed to incite changes in attitude and understanding of what was meant by the term ‘woman.’ In its popular use in the nineteenth century, as explained in Chapter 1, the term ‘woman’ included and reinforced whiteness. The widely reprinted version of Truth’s speech disrupts the mid-nineteenth century definition of womanhood, which was, of course, based on upper middle class white women, women who were married to socially influential, educated men, and through whom they themselves could become educated and publicly visible, as Hurtado and Newman have argued.

The commonly accepted definition of woman suggested that an ideal woman was dainty, demure, nurturing, patient, kind, pure, and devoted to husband, family, homemaking, and church. Such a definition would become codified shortly after Truth’s speech in poems and articles that sought to exalt women’s status as “an angel in the house.”

Nevertheless, participants at women’s rights conventions challenged this definition throughout the Northeast and Midwest during the years leading up to the Civil

---

19 The phrase "Angel in the House" comes from the title of an immensely popular poem by Coventry Patmore, in which he holds his angel-wife up as a model for all women. The poem "The Angel in the House" was originally published in 1854.
War; not all women accepted or embraced the ideal of the angel in the house, and nor could they, as the very definition, which rested primarily on the concept of purity, automatically excluded any woman who was not white. As noted in Chapter 1, the 1848 Declaration of Sentiments outlined specific injustices diminishing female public status, including women’s legal and civil status as a non-person; legal restriction from voting, property ownership, and individual retention of wages; and exclusion from participation in church services and from university settings. In all of the instances outlined in the Declaration of Sentiments, the referent ‘woman’ was white, since women of color, specifically black women, had not yet achieved full human status in the eyes of the law. Further, in 1851, when Sojourner Truth gave her famous speech, each of the institutions identified in the Declaration of Sentiments was governed by white men, so the power structure was white, and the power of whiteness was at work. Moreover, the aforementioned conventions tended to be organized and attended primarily by white people, additionally reinforcing the social power of whiteness. Also, history reminds us that at this time, Southern blacks lived under slavery, and the lives of Northern African Americans were typically not too much better, given the prevailing attitude that black folks were subhuman. However, as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and Zora Neale Hurston point out in their various writings, the term “black folks” tend to equal men, which means that black women were often considered even less human; they were mules. It is against just such a widely accepted attitude—one that reduced black women to animals and denied their status as human—that Sojourner Truth railed.

Arguing against the implied whiteness in the term ‘woman,’ in her speech, Truth declares, “That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and
lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles or gives me any best place, and aren’t I a woman?” (Campbell 100, italics mine). Truth acknowledges the privilege of whiteness that defines ‘woman’ as someone whose social stature is such that she rides in carriages rather than walks, that her clothes, shoes, and even herself must be kept pristine, and that she deserves “the best place.” Black women at the time, however, usually did not have access to the luxuries of carriage rides, fine clothes, or access to the pedestal or even the decent housing and working conditions that “the best place” implies, but as Truth rightfully points out, the lack of such social privileges did not make her any less of a woman. She continues: “Look at me! Look at my arm! I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and aren’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man (when I could get it), and bear the lash as well—and aren’t I a woman?” (100). Truth rejects the implication that someone who performs manual labor can only be a man. Rather, she acknowledges that women are just as capable of hard work as men, but hard work does not make her any less of a woman, with any smaller appetite or less physical strength or fortitude. That it was typically black women who performed the difficult, tedious, or backbreaking tasks enabled many upper middle class white women to focus on the completed tasks and reap the rewards the black women’s labor and not on the physical and emotional damage the women who performed the tasks had to endure.

Another function of whiteness and racism is to reduce African American slave women not only to hardworking mules but also to broodmares, animals kept for the purpose of bearing offspring who can increase the profit of their owners when they are
sold. Truth reminds her listeners that, contrary to what is expected about animals, black mothers love their children as much as white mothers: “I have borne thirteen children and seen them almost all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard—and aren’t I a woman?” (Campbell 100). Indeed, as Margaret Washington explains in her editor’s introduction to the Narrative of Sojourner Truth, “[f]emale slaves’ economic productivity was measured in terms of reproduction as much as labor output. Their womanliness was considered an open sexual invitation to white men, and if white women objected, fault was placed with black women” (xxx). However, Truth reminds her audience that there are many ways to define “woman” and the more inclusive the definition, the better. A woman is not only (that white) woman who bears children, wears fine dresses, and deserves reverence, but also a woman (of color) who engages in manual labor, enjoys eating well, and expresses strong emotions. Touring and speaking during the early part of that time designated as First Wave feminism, Sojourner Truth cautioned her listeners (and today’s readers) to remember that women of color, particularly African Americans, though denied access to most public social institutions, nevertheless held strong beliefs about themselves, their abilities, and their womanhood that contradicted dominant culture’s definition of them as subhuman, as mere animals subjected to lives of hard labor and childbearing. In this way, Truth’s speech interrupts the rhetorical reproduction of whiteness implicit in her contemporaries’ understanding of the concept ‘woman.’

In addition to the content of Truth’s speech, whiteness as a cultural practice appears in publication politics; in other words, in nearly all of the places where Truth’s speech is reprinted, Gage’s account prevails. Places where her speech was reprinted
following Frances Gage’s recollection of 1863, twelve years after Truth delivered it, include *Women’s Rights in the United States: A Documentary History* (Langley and Fox 88-89), *Man Cannot Speak for Her, Volume II* (Campbell 99-102), *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings* (Schneir 93-95), and *The Color of Privilege* (Hurtado 10). A quick Internet search for Truth’s speech reveals upwards of 2,390 results, both references to or reproductions of the speech itself; significantly, all of the reprints on these websites were Gage’s version. Even in the few places where contemporaneous accounts are included, editors still defer to Gage’s version as the one that has had the most impact. As the anonymous writer on one website states, “There is debate about the accuracy of this [Gage’s] account because Gage did not record the account until 1863 and her record differs somewhat from newspaper accounts of 1851. However it is Gage's report that endures and it is clear that, whatever the exact words, ‘Ain't I a Woman?’ made a great impact at the Convention and has become a classic expression of women’s rights” ([http://afgen.com/sojourner1.html](http://afgen.com/sojourner1.html)). Carlton Mabee points out that “twenty-seven descriptions of it [were] published soon after it occurred” (69) and the one in the Salem, OH, newspaper, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, is generally accepted to be the most accurate version, even though it is not widely known about or reprinted now, 150 years later; this version is included in the appendix to the 1993 edition of her autobiography, *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*. The *Anti-Slavery Bugle* was established in 1845 by Abbey Kelly and other members of the Western Anti-slavery Society; Marius R. Robinson, editor of the newspaper at the time, printed a version of Truth’s speech a month after she gave it.

I believe that the continued reprinting of Gage’s report, rather than the likely more accurate contemporaneous newspaper accounts, performs whiteness as historical
construct—indeed, Gage’s version outperforms Sojourner Truth’s original speech. Furthermore, scholars’ citation of Gage’s version as the authorized one reinvests it with the weight of a canonical text, which compounds the performativity of literary and social whiteness. Such unquestioned reproduction and re-citation signifies the taken-for-granted privilege that permits, even champions, the right of someone to manipulate the words of another, especially if that other person is a member of a disadvantaged group.

Clearly, Gage’s version, with its editorial asides, stylized language, and poetic repetition of the key phrase by which the speech is known, makes for good copy; that is, students of history may find it easy to remember Truth’s speech because of those rhetorical features enforced by Gage. However, as Campbell points out, Gage’s version took liberties with Truth’s dialect; Campbell says, “Because Truth grew up speaking Dutch in upstate New York and had no contact with Southerners, white or Afro-American [sic], until her teens, it is unlikely that, although illiterate, she spoke with a substandard Southern dialect, in which the speech was recorded by Mrs. Gage” (99). Gage, who was herself “a writer of both poetry and fiction” at the time of the 1851 Convention, may not have found anything wrong with her rendition of Truth’s speech patterns (Mabee 69). However, the fact that the speech was rendered in various dialect versions suggests that the predominantly white writers felt no guilt or compunction at using a creative transcription approach in rendering Truth’s words. In other words, by representing African American speech as “substandard,” as Campbell notes, white writers and editors silently reinforced the notion of a standard—a.k.a., white, British—English form as the one most likely to be taken seriously.
In her speech, Truth inserts into contemporary ideology an inclusive, non-racist definition of women, one which included women of color. However, while Truth problematizes the raced definition of woman, she leaves intact the gendered aspect of it. That is, as she employs the term, ‘woman’ is not only one who eats, labors, and rides in carriages, she is also one who bears children, is a mother, subtly implying that to be fully woman, one must also have given birth. Of course, during the mid-nineteenth century, as the Declaration of Sentiments made clear, single, non-widowed women were essentially non-persons; thus, in many ways, Truth was only echoing the dominant culture’s attitude regarding motherhood. Further, Truth’s speech indicts the institution of slavery’s abuses against women slaves, using personal testimony; she had to “bear the lash,” endure hunger, and watch as “almost all [of her children were] sold off into slavery.” In asking, “If woman have a pint and man a quart—why can’t she have her little pint full?” Truth demonstrates that women have been denied even their “pint” full of rights (Mabee 81). While it appears that she would settle for that pint, which seems to suggest a diminished sense of womanhood (woman’s pint vs. man’s quart), actually, Truth’s own behavior rejects that, because she was an actively public woman, speaking at many churches and conventions, where she enforced her own visibility and forced others to acknowledge her. In his inauguration speech of 1994, Nelson Mandela declared that when we release ourselves from our own fears, we provide an example of how others may do the same. Likewise, Truth’s speech serves as a reminder that anyone ought to be able to speak for herself and to be an example of how others may speak for themselves; she argues for women’s rights, regardless of the woman’s race. Consequently, she argues against not
only racism but also sexism, and in doing so, her speech not only advocates intersectionality, it also cautions against coded language that reproduces whiteness.

**A BLACK FEMINIST STATEMENT**

In feminism’s First Wave, Sojourner Truth was an active spokeswoman for abolition of slavery and especially for black women’s rights, traveling throughout the Northeast and Midwest speaking, sermonizing, and agitating. She was not the only black woman to campaign for black women’s rights, but she was among the earliest and is likely one of the best known. The Second Wave, too, had no shortage of active black women in the Northeast as well as in the South; notable women include Shirley Chisolm, Barbara Jordon, Florynce Kennedy, Fannie Lou Hamer, Angela Davis, Tony Cade Bambara, and Audre Lorde, to name a few, whose work included local and federal politics, politically-charged writing, and college teaching. As the white radical feminist movement began to wind down, and as women of color became increasingly frustrated that their specific racial, class, and sexuality concerns continued to be ignored by the white women’s movement, “in 1973 Black feminists, primarily located in New York, felt the necessity of forming a separate Black feminist group. This became the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO)” (Hull, Scott, and Smith 14). Beginning in August 1973, some of “the issues that NBFO was concerned with were welfare, domestic workers, reproductive freedom, unwed mothers, the media, drug addition, prison, the arts, the black lesbian, and rape” (Schneir 172). Although a number of these issues likely overlapped with white feminists’ concerns, others, such as black women as domestic workers, black women’s sexuality, and black people in prison, were more pressing to them as black women in America.
The Combahee River Collective formed in 1974 as a Boston branch of NBFO; their “name was inspired by a river in South Carolina where Harriet Tubman had mounted a military campaign during the Civil War to free 750 slaves” (Guy-Sheftall 231). In 1977, after white radical Second Wave feminist activity had ebbed, Collective members Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazier composed “A Black Feminist Statement,” now commonly identified as The Combahee River Collective Statement (hereafter CRC). Part of what makes CRC significant is the social and political climate in which it was composed. During the 1970s, Boston experienced a great deal of racial tension, due in part to the school busing program, where, “under court order, black students were bussed to white schools and whites to black schools as a way of redressing segregated education” (Breines 1111). Also, just as white lesbian feminists, such as Radicalesbians, had to gather strength to confront heterosexism in the white women’s movement, black lesbians had even more difficulties to overcome in organizing, because “they had no role models” and “many heterosexual black women did not want to work with open lesbians,” for fear of further alienation from black men and the black community (Breines 1111, 1113). Since the majority of CRC’s members were lesbian, their manifesto reflected their own lived experience, and each of them had a vested interest in creating the kind of society they envisioned and would begin to establish through concentrated effort and various activities, outlined below. CRC was written because, as its authors explain,

our politics initially sprang from the shared belief that Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to someone else’s but because of our need as human persons for autonomy, [and because] no other
ostensibly progressive movement has ever considered our specific oppression a priority or worked seriously for the ending of that oppression. (Hull, et als, 15, italics mine)

CRC members felt that not only was it time to elaborate how the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality had been used to oppress black women in a singular way, but also to take charge of “ending that oppression.” Their statement both highlights and attempts to overturn the social power of whiteness as the normative measure of social change. While Sojourner Truth’s speech was quite short, CRC is a lengthier (though not as long as SCUM), detailed, and historical treatise, offering a statement of their beliefs, an acknowledgment of problems in organizing black feminists, and an outline of black feminist issues and projects. As did Truth’s speech, CRC critiques white definitions of women’s experiences, and further, it directly addresses white feminists’ failure to acknowledge some of the differences between the goals of black feminists and white feminists. As it does all this, CRC foregrounds black women’s experiences and black feminist theory, which it was also helping to articulate.

The Statement identifies the factors important to black feminists that racism and the privilege of whiteness inhibit white feminists from seeing. These factors include the necessity of black feminists to work for their own autonomy as human beings in the United States, a rejection of “pedestals [and] queenhood,” freedom of sexual choice and expression, inclusion of lesbians and progressive Black men in feminist work, advocacy of socialism over capitalism, and reinforcement of the particulars of that feminist adage, the personal is political (Hull, et als 13-17). As this list suggests, CRC embraces the “multilayered texture of Black women’s lives” and advocates careful attention to the
various layers (Hull, et als 17); it asserts that race, class, gender, and sexuality are always visibly and inextricably at work for (or against) black women. The following section elaborates more fully CRC’s definition of community, intersectionality, and the untenable expectations of whiteness for black lesbian feminists.

**Critique of Whiteness**

The CRC Statement differs from Second Wave manifestos written by white feminists in some significant ways. These differences are, first, whereas the other Second Wave manifestos suggested utopian visions or the necessity of ideological shifts toward equality, CRC envisions a practical and concrete approach to developing an inclusive community, offering examples of liberatory work that has been done, such as developing black feminist theory, as well as suggestions for further social change that incorporate the particular needs and talents of black women. Second, CRC emphasizes how acknowledging the intersection of oppressions is essential to feminist work. Finally, and most importantly for my project, it disrupts the assumed whiteness that had been prevalent throughout Second Wave feminist activity by placing acknowledgement of white privilege squarely on the shoulders of white feminists.

While SCUM envisions a woman-only utopia inhabited by liberated groovy women, and Redstockings and Radicalesbians critically address the ideological manifestations of patriarchy upon women both in general and in particular, CRC includes both concrete information and eminently practical suggestions for activist work. The world they envision is a community where members work for an inclusive society; the ideology that honors and appreciates black women’s work underpins all of their proposals. Also, not only do their propositions include such activities that anyone may
participate in beginning immediately, if the activity or action does not yet exist, CRC provides a useful, practical grounding to start with. The community work they imagine includes

workplace organizing at a factory that employs Third World\textsuperscript{20} women or picketing a hospital that is cutting back on already inadequate health care to a Third World community, or setting up a rape crisis center in a Black neighborhood. Organizing around welfare or daycare concerns might also be a focus. Issues and projects that collective members have actually worked on are sterilization abuse, abortion rights, battered women, rape, and health care [as well as] many workshops on Black feminism on college campuses, at women’s conferences, and most recently for high school women. (Hull, et als 21)

Here, CRC points out not only detailed ways to educate others about the specific contributions that black women may make to community building on a larger scale, but they also show the places where their needs overlap with all other women’s, as in reproductive rights, domestic violence issues, and health care.

As explained throughout Chapter 2, one primary goal of 1960s and 1970s white feminist work was elimination of sexist oppression of women and public reclamation of women’s inherent value and worth. While this is unquestionably an important goal, it focuses on sexism only, on eradicating gendered inequalities; additionally, it essentializes women’s experience by assuming that all women suffer equally under a sexist system. However, inequities due to race, class, sexuality, age, physical ability, or even religious affiliation affect how women are able to move through and work in society. In contrast to the monocular anti-sexist vision of white feminism, CRC states,

\textsuperscript{20}“Third World” was the term commonly applied to and used by women of color during the 1970s.
we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the
fractionalization that white women who are separatists demand. Our situation as
Black people necessitates that we have solidarity *around the fact of race*, which white
women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is in their negative
solidarity as racial oppressors. (Hull, et als 16, italics mine)

By refusing to accept a white feminist separatist position regarding men and patriarchal society, CRC reveals how divisive a factor race can be or not be; in other words, for black women, race is a point of connection, an element of cohesion and shared pride, something essential to survival. While white women may endure gendered oppression, they nevertheless experience racial dominance in the U.S., a privilege denied black women. CRC advocates connection, not division, not only across race, but also gender.

Likewise, CRC believes that differences in sexuality deserve community respect and inclusion. While white lesbian separatists of the early 1970s removed themselves from heterosexual feminist groups and work, as the Radicalesbians’ Lavender Menace actions exemplified, CRC recognizes that lesbian separatism “is not a viable political analysis or strategy for us. It leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly Black men, women, and children”; further, it “completely denies any but the sexual sources of women’s oppression, negating the facts of class and race” (Hull, et als 17). CRC members refuse to adopt the separatist position advocated by white lesbian separatists, who may be oppressed as lesbians but who nevertheless have white privilege, which enables them the opportunity for temporary or permanent withdrawal from dominant, heterosexist society. These black lesbians, already marginalized on the basis
of race and gender, felt they would not benefit from further segregation based on sexuality.

Here again, CRC stresses the importance of not only acknowledging but also honoring a multidimensional community, one that embraces all its members in all their diversity. They know that further division along lines of race, gender, and sexuality results in an increasingly marginalized status, from which subjugation is even more difficult to overcome and from which ultimately only a very few benefit. Finally, then, CRC’s redefinition of community is not based only on eradication of sexist oppression, but on recognition of the multifaceted nature of (especially black) women’s lives, including race and sexuality with gender. Their definition advocates a community that is inclusive not only in definition, but also in action. That action may include lesbians working at an abortion clinic, men educating themselves about ways to stop rape, or white women working to eliminate their racist beliefs; whatever the work, as long as it is focused on changes that honor and respect individual differences, more people rather than fewer will benefit.

Second, in the firm, unflinching tone and explanatory, descriptive, direct style that characterizes manifestos, CRC explains how white women’s racism has ignored or negated black women’s existence and experiences. The manifesto’s oppositional stance to white feminists’ ignoring/ignorance of black women’s issues is apparent at several places in the document, some more overt than others. In writing “The Black Feminist Statement,” CRC members have begun to publicly address racism in the white women’s movement. As Black feminists, we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort
white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and Black history and culture. *Eliminating racism in the white women’s movement is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue.* (Hull, et al.)

Notably, this simple and direct passage appears very nearly at the end of the manifesto; the previous sections focus specifically upon their sociopolitical beliefs, challenges inherent in group formation, and the social justice issues CRC has taken up. Placing their own issues and concerns first before turning to challenges within the larger feminist movement structurally reinforces their commitment to foreground the needs and problems of Black women in general and Black lesbians in particular. They are motivated to hold white feminists accountable for their racism because, again, that racism invalidates black women’s experiences and perspectives, and also, as they indicate, “[w]e realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation is us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters, and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work” (Hull, et al.).

Another example of feeling ignored by the white feminist movement is evidenced when they say, upon forming the CRC group, “[t]he overwhelming feeling that we had is that after years and years we had finally found each other” (Hull, et al.). To “find [one] another” “after years and years” suggests that each member had felt alone, unsupported, and decidedly in the minority, if she had been working with white feminists. Consequently, the personal reward, sense of solidarity, and community that arose as the members coalesced into a collective reflected a sense of belonging, of validation, and of
support that they had not felt in other places. While this development of a black women’s community does not directly indict white women’s racism, it does imply whiteness’s presence as a force that has divided black women off from one another, from solidarity with black men, and even from coalition with white feminists on issues of common concern.

The third way that CRC differs from the Second Wave manifestos by white feminists appears in its conscious disruption of seamless whiteness. Whereas white feminists had assumed that eradicating patriarchy would eradicate other oppressions, women of color understood that it would not work that way. As mentioned earlier, because “[n]o one before has ever examined the multilayered texture of Black women’s lives” (Hull, et als 17), it became necessary for black women to perform that examination themselves. Therefore, CRC declares that its members “are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that major systems of oppression are interlocking” (Hull, et als 13, italics mine). What CRC identifies in 1977 as ‘interlocking oppressions’ has come twenty-five years later to be called intersectionality. In not only understanding but also explicitly outlining this intersection of oppressions, CRC reminds readers, especially white feminists, that women’s differences in terms of race, class, and sexuality result in different social, political, and personal responses to them and to their situation. In other words, by making explicit various forms of systemic oppression, they expose the whiteness inherent in white feminists’ limited conception of social problems and possible solutions to those problems. This exposure is easier to understand when they say, “we also often find it
difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously” (Hull, et als 16).

Finally, CRC directly critiques the whiteness inherent in the social justice solutions advanced by the previous white feminist manifestos. I do not mean to imply that the women of CRC were speaking directly to the other manifestos written by white women of the Second Wave (there is no evidence of that, exactly), but rather that, in writing the Black Feminist Statement, they exposed how dangerous whiteness and expressions of its ideology can be. CRC explains how white women’s racism has negated or ignored black women’s existence: they point out that feminism, as it has been defined and publicized by white feminists, is “very threatening to the majority of Black people because it calls into question some of the most basic assumptions about our existence, i.e., that gender should be a determinant of power relationships” (Hull, et als 18-19). As explained above, gender is not the only factor at work in anyone’s life, especially a black woman’s; race and class also deeply affect “Black women’s psyches” (Hull, et als 18). Since black women do not have race or class or gender privilege to draw upon for personal strength or social power, they must (at this point in time, 1977) nevertheless garner enough strength to become a supportive community for one another, so that they will be able to work for greater social justice. After all, as they point out, “if Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression” (Hull, et als 18). A worthy goal, indeed.

Whereas in her speech Sojourner Truth wished to enlarge the definition of woman to include black women, CRC envisions a world where black women’s existence is
acknowledged and validated, and black women’s work is recognized for its substantive contributions toward a better society, which will of necessity occur as black women become free from racial oppression. In the society CRC imagines, people’s differences are acknowledged and honored, rather than used to reinforce systems of oppression in order to maintain a certain social hierarchy. CRC also exposes, by example, the damage that single-minded, gender-focused white feminist activity does to people of color, and also therefore exposes the whiteness intrinsic to the attitudes held and solutions proposed by white feminists. Another attack on that single-pronged approach by white feminists is launched by Gloria Anzaldua, a Chicana lesbian feminist from Texas.

**BORDERLANDS/LA FRONTERA**

Ten years after the publication of the Black Feminist Statement by the Combahee River Collective, and during a relative ebb in white feminist activity, Gloria Anzaldua published her book *Borderlands/La Frontera*. As a counterpoint to white feminists’ exclusive focus on gender discrimination, and to explode the black/white binary that had dominated feminist thinking and activism since the First Wave, Anzaldua proposes the development and acceptance of a *mestiza* consciousness. This *mestiza* consciousness incorporates many ways of knowing, admitting such perspectives as ethnicity, geographic and political situation, sexuality, and spirituality. As she explains,

The new mestiza…has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good[,] the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else…. The work of *mestiza* consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and
through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. (102)

Such an expanded consciousness directly confronts the privileged status of hegemonic whiteness, and with the publication of *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Anzaldúa opens a space for multiplicity, which, I believe, contributes conceptually if not directly to the development of a “multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-issued” Third Wave feminist consciousness (Dicker and Piepmeier, 16). As Moncef notes about the mestiza consciousness, Anzaldúa’s most significant contribution to the question of (re)valuation [of the self] revolves around the assumption that a theory of multiplicity and cross-fertilization is inseparable from the *concrete embodiment* of these two forces in the self.

Intersection in the consciousness of the mestiza, the idea and fact of indefinite plurality are inscribed in the multilingual play through which she transforms the word into an expression of her hybrid bio-ethnic makeup. (48, italics in original)

Put another way, a *mestiza* consciousness is “that which refuses fixed dichotomous structures and their implications for matters of (self) representation” (Licona, 104).

Because Anzaldúa’s *mestiza* consciousness “works not merely to emphasize a binary, but to multiply its terms and poles” (Barnard 42), it also exemplifies a “dynamic ‘new mythos’ capable of breaking down dualistic hegemonic paradigms,” especially those of gender, race, and sexuality, but also acceptable forms of knowledge and (self) representation (Aigner-Varoz 47). Anzaldúa’s emphasis on fluidity, hybridity, and
multiplicity directly confront the ways that whiteness insists upon a monolithic or singular or hierarchical view of the world.

The *mestiza* consciousness “challenges expert knowledge and spaces of the official by engaging in the unofficial sharing of information. Specifically, it legitimates and validates *lived experience* as valid and valuable” (Licona 122, italics mine). This last is not to say that white feminism had ignored lived experience, but rather that due to the legitimizing power of whiteness, certain experiences had become more valid than others. During the First Wave, after the Civil War, for example, earning (white) women’s suffrage overshadowed the need, for example, to end lynching of black folks, although newspaperwoman Ida B. Wells Barnett argued consistently and insistently that lynching be made illegal. During the earlier part of the Second Wave, as has been noted, the experiences of white, well educated, upper middle class housewives became the benchmark for addressing the problem that had no name, even as black women were agitating for equal civil rights, voting rights, and integrated buses and lunch counters. In other words, the issues of women of color had been deemed by white society to be issues of race, not of gender, and as such, not yet worthy of white women’s attention. Gloria Anzaldúa refused to accept such an attitude, just as Sojourner Truth refused the narrow definition of womanhood and CRC refused to adopt white feminists’ monolithic anti-sexist approach.

**Critique of Whiteness**

Published in 1987, *Borderlands/ La Frontera* exists chronologically during the latter end of the Second Wave, but actually operates in a liminal space between the earlier, more visible activities of white feminists of the Second Wave and the younger
feminists who would become the Third Wave. It also operates in that liminal space outside the black/white racial binary that has dominated American thinking since its beginning. As Anzaldúa’s book makes clear, and as the Combahee River Collective also discussed, white Second Wave feminists rarely acknowledged the needs of women of color, especially women who were not African American. In many ways, Anzaldúa’s work intentionally increases awareness of other American populations of color, thus reminding white feminists of the border between white Americans and Mexicans, Chicanas, Indians, and Latinas, even as it transgresses those borders through its format. As I try to do justice to the dense richness that is Anzaldúa’s book, this analysis focuses on a couple of the many ways that Borderlands/ La Frontera disrupts hegemonic whiteness in writing, language use, and feminist consciousness. Specifically, after a brief discussion of her explosion of genres and conventional literary structure, I examine more closely her employment of various languages as a disruption of the hegemony of the English language, representative of whiteness, in the U.S.

Like Gilman’s Man-Made World, Borderlands/ La Frontera is a book, rather than a pamphlet or mimeographed handout, albeit one that defies simple or single categorization. Whereas MMW systematically examined and critiqued various aspects of what is now identified as patriarchal oppression of women, Borderlands/ La Frontera explodes multiple traditional genre categories by integrating several—history, historiography, myth, personal narrative, poetry—while employing several theoretical modes simultaneously as well—critical as well as celebratory feminism, Chicana lesbian theory, cultural theory, and what is now identified as queer theory. What might be dismissed in traditional critical and theoretical modes as indecisiveness, lack of focus, or
even theory tourism, *Borderlands/ La Frontera* shows to be the fully incorporated richness of living on the border, between, across, and within Mexican, Indian, and Anglo cultures and lesbian sexuality.

In its structure, *Borderlands/ La Frontera* explodes traditional expectations for a book. Whereas MMW consists of fourteen chapters, each tackling a single aspect of patriarchal society, *Borderlands/ La Frontera* contains two distinct but interrelated and interdependent sections. The first half of the book includes seven prose chapters which were initially intended as an introduction to the poems of the second half, but which Anzaldua realized needed fuller expression and elaboration (Reuman 3). The second half includes six sections of poems, followed by an interview with Gloria Anzaldua reprinted from Karen Ikas, *Chicana Ways: Close Encounters with Ten Chicana Writers.*

Anzaldua’s prose sections encompass a history of the U.S. conquest of Northern Mexico; a feminist rewriting of the stories of maligned Mexican female deities; an explanation and exploration of the *Coatlicue* state, a spiritual state that precedes entrance into the political awareness of Mestiza Consciousness, which is provisionally defined in the final section as a “subject-in-process” (Lloyd 8-10). The poetry section “reenacts dramatically the process of coming into (mestiza) consciousness and the practice of the *mestiza* way” (Salvidar-Hull, 10). In many ways, *Borderlands/ La Frontera* is a transgressive text, challenging not just the gendered status quo exposed by white feminists, but also conventional academic ways of thinking about race, class, sexuality, and what are considered appropriate scholarly academic topics.

While the Combahee River Collective Statement is decidedly explanatory in its style, *Borderlands/La Frontera* interweaves multiple generic and linguistic forms: myths,
stories, poems, and histories; various levels of diction in English; several varieties or dialects of Spanish; and scholarly as well as colloquial writing. Anzaldua uses such inclusive language to broaden the territory of and remove the borders between feminist activity and feminist consciousness. Part of the point of her book is to make evident the connection between language and cognition; that is, she reminds us that what we can comprehend is in part determined by the language we have. This new language or new consciousness (discussed in greater detail below) legitimates forms of knowledge and ways of knowing that have been historically delegitimized in what she identifies as Anglo culture, and the outcome, the book itself, forms a uniquely American feminist theory that harks not to Anglo-European roots but to older, indigenous sources. In other words, the book challenges white feminists to look beyond our English-only, Western-European/Anglo cultural traditions to acknowledge that other forms of knowledge inform other ways of being, privilege other perspectives, and enhance different/differing points of view. Her goal is to create what Adela Licona calls a “third space” that disrupts the black/white binary that had dominated visible feminist activity in the U.S. since the nineteenth century; her purpose is to show how limited and limiting such dichotomous thinking can be.

In addition to interweaving multiple genres, *Borderlands/ La Frontera* incorporates multiple languages and linguistic tactics, the effect of which is to intentionally disrupt the reader’s comfort. Throughout the book, Anzaldua slides among English and various forms of Spanish, and as the most concentrated example, the chapter entitled “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” metaphorically and literally critiques the dominant binary systems of race, language, and sexuality at work in the U.S., expanding
and substantiating the CRC claim of multilayered lives. Here, Anzaldua catalogues some of the many languages spoken by Chicanos living on the U.S./Mexico border; these are: “Standard English, Working class and slang English, Standard Spanish, Standard Mexican Spanish, North Mexican Spanish dialect, Chicano Spanish (which has regional variations in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California), Tex-Mex, and Pachuco (called calo)” (77). Although fluent in all eight of these, Anzaldua claims the last five (from Standard Mexican Spanish to pachuco) as her “home” languages, those she speaks with family and close friends. It is probably not too much of a stretch to imagine that she incorporates words and phrases from all five varieties of Spanish throughout the book, but I would need a translator to know for sure. It is a function (and, I think, a failure) of my public school education that the “foreign languages” I was counseled to learn were French and German, languages not coincidentally spoken by people that North Americans consider to be white; consequently, I am unable to distinguish among any of the various forms of Spanish Anzaldua uses.

However, my alienation from her language is a minor discomfort compared to the injury to Anzaldua’s sense of identity as it is wrapped up in her language. She says, “So, if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (81, italics mine). That identity is threatened in many ways, some of which cause physical harm or pain. Anzaldua describes getting “caught speaking Spanish at recess—that was good for three licks on the knuckles with a sharp ruler” (75). Anzaldua suffered the imposition of the English language, the language of dominant white culture. Standard English is a white standard, and far from being mere words, the
expectation of certain discursive constructions has real implications in the lives of real people. As Butler explains, constitutive language both maintains and threatens the body: “Language sustains the body not by bringing it into being or feeding it in a literal way; rather, it is by being interpellated within the terms of language that a certain social existence first becomes possible” (Excitable Speech, 5, italics mine). The power of language to both constitute and constrain social existence thus clearly indicates the existence of the performative power of discourse. In Anzaldua’s case (and many others like her), the expectation is that speakers of Spanish should accommodate English speakers, not vice versa. However, she refuses to be silenced, declaring firmly, “I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white…. I will overcome the tradition of silence” (81). Rightfully proud of the multiplicity of identities that she can claim, Anzaldua makes it possible for others to claim their own voice(s); breaking through the black/white racial binary, she also transgresses linguistic binaries and disrupts the apparent impermeability of borders. As Anzaldua uses and explains it, the language of the Borderlands is strategic, empowering, and transgressive. It explores and exemplifies the ways we have to construct our own consciousness, to find freedom in a new language. Her use of this new (to English-only speaking white folks) language legitimates forms of knowledge and ways of being that have been historically delegitimized.

Finally, in a move that echoes CRC’s call for white women to acknowledge how their racism actually harms people of color, toward the end of the last chapter of the prose section of the Borderlands/ La Frontera, Anzaldua addresses white American society.
She demands that whites admit to the injustices they have perpetrated upon Mexicans, Indians, and Chicanos. She says,

We need you to accept the fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you looked upon us as less than human, that you stole our lands, our personhood, our self-respect. We need you to make public restitution: to say that, to compensate for your own sense of defectiveness, you strive for power over us, you erase our history and our experience because it makes you feel guilty—you’d rather forget your brutish acts…. Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your soul. (107-108)

There is nothing gentle or moderate in Anzaldua’s tone; this call for white people to admit their guilt in oppressing Mexican people is simple, direct, and explicit, and her stipulations for amends are specific. In this brief paragraph, Anzaldua sums up all the negative consequences that not only Mexicans/Chicanos, but other people of color as well, have suffered at the hands of white conquerors. For white people to ignore this call is an act of dismissive arrogance, an act that perpetuates the historical reinforcement of whiteness and white supremacy.

As a manifesto, Borderlands/ La Frontera achieves the same standards as all of the previously examined texts: it challenges the status quo through its oppositional stance, its insistent, straightforward tone, its writing style, and its engagement with the public sphere. The aggregation of its contents, however, leads to an inherent critique of whiteness, not only by specifically taking white feminists, theories, and history-making to
task, but also by foregrounding a Chicana/mestiza consciousness, perspective, and set of
goals, which by their very nature challenge the ideology of whiteness, which has a
tendency to privilege white history and points of view. In a firm tone, with conviction
and straightforwardness, and by turns celebratory of Chicana history and critical of
whiteness, Borderlands/ La Frontera’s oppositional stance emerges in its refusal to
accept uncritically an Anglo-centric history, feminism, and geography; it rejects
univocality; and it insists that the silencing/erasing of lesbians of color cease. Anzaldua’s
writing highlights the inextricability of race and sexuality from gender and class, even as
it reminds us that static identity categories usually do more harm than good.

Borderlands/ La Frontera further challenges status quo by broadening cultural awareness
of conventionally accepted feminist activity from the Northeast and Midwest to the
Southwest, an area not usually taken into consideration (probably due to its high Native
and Mexican American populations as well as its distance from the East Coast, in whose
metropolitan centers white feminist activity had dominated); and by disrupting the
black/white racial binary that has characterized First and Second Wave feminist and civil
rights work. Further, it resists not only an English-only policy of writing but also
English/Spanish language binaries, through its use of several dialects of Spanish, most of
which Anzaldua does not translate for the reader. “By deconstructing the image of a
monolithic self and destabilizing the boundaries between body/soul, inner/outer, and
other dichotomous terms, Anzaldua challenges readers to examine their self-conceptions
and redefine their own borders” (Keating (c) 87). The cumulative effect, which Anzaldua
identifies as the mestiza consciousness, creates and opens space for feminist theoretical
and experiential multiplicity that signifies a shift, an enrichment in feminist
consciousness: refusing to let any aspects of her identity be silenced, she argues against
gendered oppression, but keeps it linked to other aspects of existence, especially
ethnicity, sexuality, class, and language.

Taken together, then, these three manifestos by women of color not only
convincingly argue against individual and collective rhetorical acts of whiteness by white
feminists, they also refute a white structuring of history by highlighting specific ways in
which the material conditions of the lives of women of color differ from those of white
women. Whereas white women have historically depended upon white privilege to
strengthen their argument for women’s rights and women’s equality with men, women of
color have been racially oppressed and therefore have been denied equal access to the
public sphere. White privilege has also blinded white women to the often crucial need
for racial or ethnic solidarity with men that women of color depend upon to survive in a
white-dominated society. If we are to achieve a just, equitable, free society in the U.S.,
then it is incumbent upon white feminists to acknowledge the particular ways that white
privilege currently and historically sets us off from women of color. Once we have done
that—have defined ‘woman’ as a multi-talented, multi-faceted human; have
acknowledged that racism is an issue that originates with us and will be perpetuated by us
until we stop it; have admitted to the past injustices that enable current privilege—then
we can move forward, in coalition and solidarity with women of all colors (men, too) to
create a society that honors and celebrates difference, instead of using it to keep people
divided from one another.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, I have made a case for the linguistic, discursive performativity of whiteness, using as examples its reproduction in manifestos by white American feminists. This case has been founded upon the supposition that language is a powerful tool that both reflects and generates ideology, which in this instance has been the assumed superiority of and right to dominance by white people in the U.S., e.g., whiteness. While such an ideology has commonly been identified, expressed, and experienced as racism, the other side of the coin, so to speak, has been whiteness, the invisible normative center at the Western definition of race. My case has been bolstered by a certain set of operating assumptions about race and whiteness, which have been substantiated by many scholars who appear throughout both this project and within the field of whiteness studies. These assumptions are, to recap, first, that whiteness is the invisible realm and power structure in operation in Western society, which works as the driving force or guiding hand in social construction not only of race but also of other factors of identity such as class, gender, and sexuality. Second, that race has been used (along with all the other factors of identity) as a categorical tool of control, one that is carefully defined, regulated, and policed across time, throughout the U.S. And third, that racism (as well as sexism, classism, and homophobia) is a direct effect of the power relations inherent in constructing and defining race, of creating racialized categories and maintaining their status as inferior to normative whiteness.

One of the ways that power relations are constructed and maintained is through language and discourse, which is “a means of both producing and organizing meaning within a social context” (Edgar and Sedgwick, 117). When racism or whiteness is
continually reproduced discursively, linguistic performativity occurs, be it spoken or written or both. Moreover, whiteness requires performative repetition of its ideological assumptions to assure its continued social hegemony in the U.S.; in other words, maintenance of hegemonic whiteness is an anxious process—it always needs to be reiterated, much the same way that gender needs to be continually re-enacted. Far from being mere words, discursive construction of specific ideologies, such as racism or sexism or whiteness, has real—and often socially derogatory, emotionally harmful, or physically dangerous—implications in and effects upon the lives of real people, as all of the feminists throughout this study have demonstrated. The American feminist manifestos contained in this study participate in various discourses, most particularly anti-sexist feminism, but also discourses about race and sexuality. For white feminists, whiteness is the unconsciously assumed and usually unacknowledged racial norm, and feminists of color must continually remind white feminists of the privileges attendant to their being white.

My analysis has focused upon the unconscious rhetorical reproduction of whiteness by white feminists, and I have chosen American feminist manifestos as the particular genre of study, because while they represent progress toward social justice in gendered power relations, they do not always or necessarily advance equality or social justice in terms of race, class, or sexuality. I have analyzed the manifestos by white feminists to show their feminist intentions, by explaining the particular vision they espouse to fulfill their feminist promise to expose gendered inequality and make proposals for change. Then, I have exposed the presence of whiteness by showing how it lurks in linguistic and cultural assumptions, in social standards and expectations, or in
legal constructs; how it maintains that which it defines, through repetition of its inherent supremacist ideology; and how it operates overtly, as in the form of literal, intentional racism. Following my analysis of manifestos by white feminists is a chapter in which manifestos by women of color explain repeatedly and specifically the harm that unclaimed, unexamined whiteness causes to individuals and communities of color. This harm ranges from being legally ignored as human, as in the case of black slaves and former slaves, to having a multi-faceted identity and life be erased or subsumed under white feminists’ gender-only approach to overturning the patriarchy. But where and how do these manifestos by white feminists contribute to a rhetoric of whiteness? And what can white feminists learn from feminists of color about how to overcome the oppressiveness of white privilege? To address these questions, I will review the major components of discursive whiteness as they have appeared throughout this study. This will be followed by a section considering areas of future research that I see as developing from and reinforcing this work. Finally, I end with my own manifesto against whiteness.

Since the First White Wave of feminism, whiteness has inhered in, particularly, such linguistic constructions as code words or encoded definitions, social standards, cultural critiques, and suggestions for political action or political change. All of the manifestos contained in this study reflect or reject whiteness at least two or more of these categories. Sojourner Truth reminded her audience that the very term ‘woman’ was encoded with whiteness, assuming, as it did, gentility, social privilege, and the right to “all the best places.” Her contemporaries failed to understand that it was those very advantages that enabled them to call for changes in legal, religious, and public opportunities for women; that is, since black women were not considered human, their
access to openings in various social institutions was limited if not outright denied. Charlotte Perkins Gilman perpetuated whiteness using such terms as “Oriental” and “savage,” which contrast with “civilized,” which white Americans and Europeans believed themselves to be; by definition, then, if one is “uncivilized,” one is not white, and therefore has no access to white privileges. By the Second White Wave, when racial awareness took center stage during the 1960s, white feminists retreated from race, preferring to focus their attention on gendered oppression. The term “woman” was once again encoded with whiteness, as women of color struggled (often with minimal success in the larger picture) to make their concerns with race, class, and sexuality receive the same attention in the public sphere as white feminists’ advocacy of gender equity. Even into the Third White Wave, whiteness is encoded in cultural assumptions about what constitutes, for example, a glamorous lifestyle; the GLAM Manifesto advocates creating a postmodern pastiche of self-identifying factors. The people, theories, and motifs listed on the website as options to draw from are overwhelmingly representative of or represented by white people.

Not only code words but also social standards advocated in the manifestos by white feminists perpetuate whiteness. The new societies envisioned by the women of Seneca Falls and by Gilman were based upon the assumption of women as human, which during that time also meant white, usually heterosexual, and likely middle class—in other words, women whose social profile more likely resembled themselves, at least generally. While the Declaration of Sentiments lobbied for women’s admission to such public, male-dominated institutions as colleges and universities, churches and the pulpit, and the legal profession, Gilman wanted members of society to acknowledge the ways in which
women’s admission to the public sphere would balance the widely accepted, male dominated, gendered distribution of human emotional and intellectual characteristics. Moreover, the examples of high social and moral standards Gilman references are all white men, which reflect her own bias toward whiteness. In each of these cases, the standards toward which the writers aspired had long been established to favor white men, since neither black men nor any women had typically occupied the positions the writers described (notably, of course, there were exceptions: Sojourner Truth was a preacher, albeit an itinerant one; Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois were well-educated men; Ida B. Wells-Barnett was not only a journalist, she owned and published her own newspaper—until her anti-lynching sentiments so angered the white folks of Memphis that she was forced to flee the country). The societies envisioned by Second Wave white feminists heralded women as strong, intelligent, socially capable, and dismissive of men. However, women of color expressed great reluctance to separate from men, as they needed coalition with men for racial strength and solidarity against pervasive racism and whiteness. And Third White Wave feminists appear, for the most part, to be more focused on achieving personal goals or creating personal change than on creating the multi-ethnic coalitions that women of color have long advocated.

Suggestions for political action or political change constitute another area of unquestioned whiteness for white feminists. Most of the aforementioned social standards toward which white feminists wished to move are reflective of a politics that privileges people already operating within dominant institutions. For example, as long as white men’s work is culturally the most valued, as the Third Wave Manifesta implies, rates of pay will be compared to white men’s earnings. Likewise, even though Koyama’s
Transfeminist Manifesto argues for broader acceptance of expression of sexuality, it still ignores the particular ways in which sexuality is trumped by race when one is out in public. In the Second White Wave, Redstockings advocates a political strategy that depends upon individual, personal action rather than upon collective uprising or collaborative work across race and class lines. As members of the Combahee River Collective point out, however, women of color felt more empowered to generate social change when working together, pooling their energy and resources to improve the lot of themselves within their community, rather than isolating themselves from men or from white women.

Taken together, these manifestos by white feminists demonstrate some of the challenges of creating social justice. On the one hand, the feminist task of overthrowing the patriarchy so that other oppressions such as racism or homophobia will also be eliminated seems logical. On the other hand, what such a single-focused approach fails to account for is the ways in which axes of identity such as race, class, and sexuality are inextricably entwined with gender, and as such, must also be accounted for in striving for social change. While not all factors work simultaneously or are distributed evenly among all members of a society, all are nevertheless always present. Moreover, not only the content of the manifestos themselves, but also their publication participates in a structuring of history that emphasizes whiteness. Recall that Frances Gage’s version of Sojourner Truth’s speech is the one that is repeatedly reprinted and referenced, and that the Third Wave Manifesta harks back to the Declaration of Sentiments (which itself was styled after the Declaration of Independence) as its model. Moreover, the historical construction of ‘waves’ of feminist activity accentuates accomplishments by and
predominantly in favor of white women: the First White Wave spans the time framed by
the Declaration of Sentiments and the passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave white
women the right to vote. The Second White Wave began with the publication of Betty
Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* and the findings of the Presidential Commission on the
Status of Women, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt. Although Rebecca Walker is widely
credited with identifying the beginning of the Third Wave, a significant portion of
publications and activism continues to be led by white women. The accumulated
problematics of both history and whiteness have generated for me a set of questions,
beyond the scope of this project, but which deserve further attention. Rather than
elaborate extensively upon them, however, I list them below.

**Areas for future research:**

- If manifestos are a performative genre, what else do they perform, besides race?
  Could this be a continuation of genre work? If so, how?

- Rethinking of ‘wave’ construction of history in women’s studies and history. A
crucial study for another time should examine public activity and social
contributions of Asian American women, African American women, Native
American women, and Latinas to U.S. public policy, social change, and social
justice.

**What are some teaching implications for this research?**

- Rethinking of genre theory to account for crossing/ transcending of boundaries
  (literary, rhetorical genres)

- Rethinking of ‘wave’ construction of history in women’s studies and history

- Rethinking of notions of feminist activism
• Rethinking of ideas about ‘acceptable’ constructions of history

What are some social implications of this research?

• I want to encourage, entreat, exhort white feminists to educate themselves on the histories, projects, goals, successes and failures of women of color in U.S. social justice activity.

• I hold white feminists accountable in which our racial privilege has blinded us to varying contributions by and different needs and experiences of women of color to U.S. feminism; it is long past time for us to share the wealth of our power, our access to the folks with the ultimate power here in the United States, privileged white men.

• A new view of history should develop (and is in the process of being developed, actually) that accounts for continued refusal of white scholars to acknowledge activities and contributions of people of color in the U.S. Such a history would not be divided by the same events or landmarks as have been recorded and repeated. Howard Zinn’s A People’s History of the United States goes a long way toward creating view of history not necessarily dependent upon a white-dominant perspective, as does James Loewen’s Lies My Teacher Told Me. Still, a real revolution would perhaps lead to the disruption of the current practice of history as a discipline; this new construction of history would always include synchronic and diachronic sociocultural context in the study of literature, of scientific discovery, of scholarly research on communication patterns, and so on. (Wait, doesn’t cultural studies do this already?)
• How does accounting for the performativity of a genre disrupt the concept of genre categories (which have recently been acknowledged to be more fluid than we used to want to admit), be they literary, rhetorical, cultural, gendered, racial, and so on? Without reducing everything to theatrics, how does performativity complexify (or simplify) such genre designations? Is everything performative?

And now I return to one of the goals of this dissertation, which is to expose a rhetoric of whiteness. Realizing that the analysis performed in this project is just the beginning of understanding the rhetorical reproduction of whiteness, I remind my readers of the preponderance of evidence gathered from the manifestos. What follows is a more general, theoretical conceptualization of the components of such a rhetoric.

The accumulation and sedimentation of rhetorical choices supporting white superiority, as I as well as the feminists of color included here have indicated, results in an ideology of whiteness, and when the rhetorical choices opt repeatedly—whether intentional or not—in favor of whiteness, a rhetoric of whiteness may be discovered.

What, then, is a rhetoric of whiteness? Just as the performance of whiteness masquerades as normal, the rhetoric of whiteness hides in plain sight, like Poe’s Purloined Letter. It is a socio-political, cultural, linguistic arena in which the privileged status of whiteness is unquestioned, unexamined, and taken for granted by those whom it serves, even though those whom it excludes are keenly aware of its existence and its harmful aspects. It is so common, so commonplace, so ubiquitous, that most white people are unaware of it; some may be oblivious to it, even as they benefit from its presence. It whitewashes categories of race, class, gender, and even sexuality, by permeating the very words used to explain or define such social constructions. Acting as the invisible normative center around
which all discussions of race revolve, it maintains its own power by appearing to be the natural point of reference. It helps through repetition to delineate and delimit categories of inclusion and exclusion. It is performative, in that every iteration and reiteration of the code words, the assumptions, the unquestioned social constructs of power and difference repeat, reinforce, reify its existence. It infuses all of our everyday language, hiding in code words, linguistic structures, cultural assumptions, laws, political decisions, and the like. It informs all of the rhetorical choices speakers make, but most of those choices are unconscious, having been pre-established by the cultural context into which any speaker is born, as Butler has convincingly argued. It relies on continual unconscious repetition of its norms, a reliance which many users of American English readily and easily supply. Others, however, see whiteness in stark relief and struggle to unseat it from its position as central racial power. Those distanced from the privileges of whiteness recognize that all the subtleties of whiteness have consequences, be they intentional or not, designed or happenstance.

One ongoing concern as I thought critically about the larger implications of a project such as this one has been the question of whether my work re-centers whiteness as a crucial element of the social power structure or whether this project endeavors to de-center it. In other words, do I reify the concept by placing it under scrutiny, or does the fact that I have tried to heighten the tension surrounding whiteness enable a positive feminist cultural critique of it? I have aimed for the latter in each case, but other questions remain. Is there a way out of whiteness? Can it be dismantled? While I cannot answer these questions definitively, I can add my voice to those who believe that social justice in terms of race is not only possible but also a worthy political as well as
personal goal. Ian Haney Lopez calls for whites to “dismantle the edifice of Whiteness because this mythological construct stands at the vortex of racial inequality in America” (“Law” 632). In this spirit, I offer a manifesto against whiteness.²¹

Whereas, it is by now fully recognized that race is a social construction, and that in the West, whiteness is also therefore a social construction, which has operated as the invisible normative center at all definitions of race; and

Whereas, it is also fully recognized that all social constructions inherently include power relations, so that those in power keep for themselves the right and power to name, define, police, regulate, and delimit social categories such as race; and

Whereas, it is also recognized that the social construct of race does not exist as a separate marker of identity but rather acts within a matrix of other factors, such as class, gender, and sexuality; and

Whereas, it is understood that these multiple factors are all always fully operational influences upon social interactions, decisions, and opportunities, although not always evenly or uniformly; and

Whereas, it is known that the power structure in the U.S. is based legally, socially, and customarily upon whiteness; and

Whereas, whiteness as a hegemonic social, political, and legal force has been shown to cause distinct harm, physically and emotionally, literally and figuratively, to peoples of color;

²¹ Many thanks to my colleagues in my summer 2003 Performance Theories class for the initial suggestion that I construct my own manifesto against whiteness, especially Professor Lisa Wylam and Maria DeRose.
Therefore, I advance the following resolutions for the dismantling of whiteness and its attendant powers and privileges, and make suggestions to use to move us toward a society in which we might be different but equal, in which our differences generate interest and respect rather than fear, promote coalition-building and cultural sharing instead of factionalism and appropriation, provide opportunities for education, knowledge sharing, and cooperation, deepen our connections as human beings who must all share this one planet, and offer cause for celebration in the joy of being human in all our variety.

1. I challenge white people to become aware of our own white privilege and the ways in which this offers us the ‘unearned advantages’ that McIntosh taught us. This accounting of white privilege may vary slightly from one individual to another, depending upon the other factors of class, gender, and sexuality, as well as such things as skin tone, education, geographic region, and social and political affiliation.

2. Once we have become aware of our own relative privilege, even as we recognize that privilege is a status of perpetual negotiation, depending upon the situation (but it is not ever without power, insofar as, at least for now, white standards remain at the core of contemporary definitions of everything), then it will be time to use that power to benefit others less privileged. This comes with the understanding that we do not get to decide how others will use their power, but that those who have historically been disempowered have the right to expect the historically powerful to accommodate their needs.
3. We should also understand, via Foucault, that power circulates and operates among willing participants, and the more people have power to share, the greater individual empowerment becomes possible. More empowered individuals should lead to a more empowered public (see number 8, below, for a positive effect of this individual empowerment).

4. We may also draw from Marxist ideals, such as ‘power to the people,’ in which multiple voices and perspectives are empowered to speak, be heard, and acknowledged as valid. Such tenets should be revamped as necessary to accommodate the particulars of a specific locale or group.

5. We need to develop a critical understanding of the actual ways in which rhetorical choices enable the discursive performativity of whiteness, and begin to make choices that empower others, rather than disempower them (we may take for examples the social rejection of widespread common use of the N word and the queer subcultural reclamation of such terms as ‘dyke’ and ‘queer’).

6. We need to account for the other mutual cultural influences of class, gender, and sexuality, in order to emphasize how the power of whiteness has historically informed the definitions, the standards, and the policing of boundaries of how anyone may perform race, gender, or sexuality.

7. As a corollary, we need to understand that the intersection of various identity factors does not always operate smoothly, uniformly, or evenly, even for a single individual, and so we should be aware of the context in which we make our actions and respond to others.
8. Each of these suggestions should also be imbued with the understanding that although social institutions are by nature larger than individuals, it is through concerted cooperative effort by individuals working in coalition with one another that these institutions may be changed to benefit all members of society, not just a privileged few.
WORKS CITED


-----. (b) “Integrating Rhetorical and Literary Theories of Genre.” *College English* 62.6 (2000): 696-718.


[http://www.rhizomes.net/issue1/glam/GLAM_Manifesto.html](http://www.rhizomes.net/issue1/glam/GLAM_Manifesto.html)


Grillo, Trina and Stephanie M. Wildman. “Obscuring the Importance of Race: The Implication of Making Comparisons Between Racism and Sexism (or Other – Isms).” In Delgado and Stefancic, 648-656.


----- (b) “White by Law.” In Delgado and Stefancic, 626-634.


Harris, Angela P. “Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory.” In Wing, 11-18.


Hull, Gloria T., Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave.* New York: The Feminist Press, 1982.


Knight, Denise D. “On Editing Gilman’s Diaries.” In Golden and Zangrando, 53-64.


-----. (b) “What My Therapist, My Daughter, and Charlotte Taught Me While I was Writing the Biography of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.” In Golden and Zangrando, 27-34.

-----. (c) “Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Rights of Women: Her Legacy for the 1990s.” In Rudd and Gough, 3-15.


Patterson, Monica Beatriz Demello. “America’s Racial Unconscious: The Invisibility of Whiteness.” In Kincheloe, et als. 103-122.


Patterson, Monica Beatriz deMello. “America’s Racial Unconscious: The Invisibility of Whiteness.” In Kincheloe, et als. 103-121.


Perea, Juan F. “The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race.” In Delgado and Stefancic, 344-353.


------. “Introduction.” In Rudd and Gough, ix-xx.


Valverde, Mariana. “Racism and Anti-Racism in Feminist Teaching and Research.” In Backhouse and Flaherty, 160-64.


