A DELEUZIAN ANALYSIS OF REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE POLITICS: RETHINKING THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AFFECT AND IDENTITY

by

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(Under the Direction of Nik Heynen)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines and critiques the prevalence of identity politics discourses in the reproductive justice movement. It is argued that identity politics reproduce logics of essentialism and social power that suppress difference in the interest of social control. The thesis then turns to a consideration the potential value of a Deleuzian ontological theory of the formation of political groups outside regimes of representation. These groups are held together by affects emerging from shared experience, as opposed to a common representation. In addition to arguing for the utility of this political paradigm on conceptual grounds, the thesis also contains descriptions and analyses of empirical evidence for the existence of affect-based social collectivities. It is argued that these collectivities, called "subjectless groups" constitute radical forms of being-in-common with profound significance for our understanding of political activity.

INDEX WORDS: Reproductive justice, identity politics, affect, social movements, Deleuze, subjectivity, power, gender, race, intersectionality

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Reproductive Justice Politics – Openings for a New Approach

"Reproductive justice" is a term developed by activists from various dissenting organizations from within the original women's movement and its subsidiaries, especially the pro-choice or reproductive rights movements. The term reproductive justice is variously defined, but in essence it is a combination of pro-choice positions on reproductive rights with a larger social justice perspective. The social justice enhancement to reproductive rights discourse is intended to give material substance to the rights proposed by the women's movement and pro-choice movements.

For women of color, poor women, immigrant women, and others who occupy social locations that are often marginalized and oppressed in more than one dimension, the notion that reproductive sovereignty or freedom can be achieved by the protection of legal abortion is a fantasy of the privileged. With women who are too poor to support themselves or children in the era of high unemployment, stagnant real wages, and hollowed out welfare and social safety net protections, treating "choice" in and of itself as a guarantor of reproductive freedom is a mockery of true autonomy. The same can be said of immigrant women who are threatened with deportation or detention, and with the possibility of splitting of their families between legal residents, citizens, and undocumented people. In such cases, the notion that abortion rights mean that a woman is free or that she can be free to have or not have her children and to raise them in safety and health is empty. Much the same can be said of women of color, with the long history

of widespread racism against women of color, their children, and their communities more broadly. In such a scenario, there is little freedom afforded by the legal protection of abortion without a concomitant attack on the social structures of oppression and marginalization that make such freedoms hollow in practice.

For all these reasons, and for many more, reproductive justice activists have developed a political framework and movement and a large network of organizations and dedicated and talented organizers. The movement seeks to make freedom substantive for women, their families, and their communities. One interview respondent described her perspective on what such a substantive freedom means for the reproductive justice movement.

> It is a human rights framework. We are speaking to women's human rights and not necessarily that's not something that's been considered. Even in the women's rights movements, it was mostly about gender. But for black women it's about more than gender. For poor women it's more than gender. What reproductive justice does is it allows you to build up a base of support whenever there's a void in advocacy of your community for your needs for your access, having access to your human rights. We are all told we have human rights but they're not actualized. We're promised human rights—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—but it's only actualized for some. We have to ask ourselves why that is. And reproductive justice allows us to peel back the layers, instead of just focusing on one dimension. We're trying to dismantle a structure that keeps us from accessing our human rights.

Thus, the movement has expanded its concerns far beyond the original concerns over abortion rights and the different meanings these rights had for women in different social locations. The movement has expanded into a critical position on domestic violence, LGBTQ rights, immigrants' rights, environmental justice, economic justice, and many other issues. The movement has used the diverse and intersecting perspectives of the many activists who comprise it to deliver critiques of mainstream feminist politics, racial nationalist politics, class politics, and LGBTQ politics and others. For instance, while the women's movement, often dominated by

liberal feminists, has focused strongly on the protection of legal abortion and other goals like increasing the number of women in traditional positions of power, the reproductive justice movement has often occupied a position of supportive dissent on many of these issues.

While reproductive justice activists generally support the goals of liberal feminists, the reproductive justice activists ask what these goals will do for the lives of poor women, LGBTQ women, immigrant, and women of color. They also note that when the government and wider society is hostile to a woman's sexuality and reproductive capacity because she is poor or is she is a racial minority, and when she faces the threat of coerced sterilization or the repossession of her children by the welfare system, the choice to not have children may not be as important as the right to have her children and to have the economic ability to care for them. She might also be more concerned with safe environments, free of violence and toxins, in which to live and raise her children. When these issues are not given sufficient attention, women of color or poor women may feel silenced and marginalized by the wider women's movement. This stance of supportive dissent can also be found in the attitude the reproductive justice movement takes toward other social justice movements, such as environmental or economic justice, when activists believe these other women to be insufficiently concerned with the interests of women, especially women of color, poor women, LGBTQ women, and immigrant women. The reproductive justice movement is especially strong where these interests and identities intersect.

It is precisely the phenomenon of intersecting identities and their capacity for complicating identity-based political paradigms that is at issue in this study. This study takes as its empirical starting point the reproductive justice movement. This is primarily a result of the researcher's familiarity with the movement as well as the rigorous process of differentiation and dissent that permeates the movement. The movement, being made up largely of dissenters and

subalterns from many other social justice and identity politics movements, represents a prime case for the study of dissent in identity politics and its effect in creating alternative political groupings and social futures. This study uses the setting of the reproductive justice movement in order to examine the way that identity-based political paradigms deal with internal dissent. What the study will do, in studying such a phenomenon, is to demonstrate that the deployment of identity-based and representational paradigms for understanding politics reproduces logics of power. Even in the reproductive justice movement, despite its being forged from dissenters and subalterns from other movements, necessarily finds itself making hegemonic moves in order to generate legible, stable political subjects. This happens despite the best efforts of activists to prevent it, to be as rigorously self-critical as possible.

This process should not be considered a failure of the reproductive justice movement. On the contrary, this study takes as its empirical focus activists who are working collectively and with open minds and hearts to create diverse groupings and attempts at overcoming the limits of representational and identity politics. What this study focuses on is the failure of the political ontology that takes representation, identification with a social location or some more essentialist conception of subjectivity, as its foundation. This study looks to understand the ways that identity and representational thinking informs reproductive justice politics, both at the level of movement literature and in the minds of individual activists. More importantly, however, the study focuses on a critique of identity politics for the exclusionary, hegemonic, and even authoritarian politics it engenders. The study makes this critique based on theoretical argument as well as through an examination of the conceptual failure of identity politics and deviation from subjectivities within the lives of individual reproductive justice activists. In the case of these activists, the study seeks to demonstrate that even where identity-based paradigms are

central to the conception of politics and self that the activist employs, the same identity paradigm fails to accommodate the existence of alliances and groupings that are often more affecting, more powerful, and more political effective than the presumed alliances with those who occupy the same social location.

This study will also ask what effect these alternative groupings have in our conception of reproductive justice and of the political itself. I hold that they represent something quite new, transforming our understanding of politics in such a way that we focus on alternative social arrangements. These are radical collectivities that do not ignore or transcend but rather transform and transgress the operations and structures of power. By creating assemblages of power that are unfamiliar and illegible to the lenses of power, we alter the topography of political conflict. In such circumstances and arrangements, it is possible that we can alter the shape of social futures. If social futures are produced by making real and material the desires of a political collectivity, then it is important to ask what kinds of alternative political communities are being formed within the context of more traditional, identity-based politics.

Theorizing the Relationship between Identity Politics and Social Power

An element of the argument of this study is that the contradictions represented throughout the interviews and participant observations, the deviations from the hegemonic position laid out in texts and speeches and training sessions, are in fact indicative of something very important, indeed something central, to the heart of politics. When politics is understood as what we understand from Massey as the collective making of social futures (Massey 2005), it is necessary to understand the process of the emergence of collectivities. That is to say, it is necessary to understand the process by which collectivities emerge and begin acting according to their interests and producing new social arrangements in accordance with their collective desires.

Collectivities, for our purposes here, are groups in which formerly aggregated but otherwise autonomous individuals come to constitute a new community with shared objectives, a collective sense of self, and what is called by Deleuze and Guattari "desiring-production", the impulse to generate new social futures and arrangements as well as contest the boundaries of present ontologies (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 6-9).

These collective agents, these groups, are the chief agents of the changes in political arrangements that constitute political activity. The formation of aggregates of individuals into collectivities is indeed a central political project if we are to understand politics as a collective activity rather than the chaotic interactions of self-interested and atomized individuals. Thus, this project takes as its object of study the formation of such groups and, more specifically, the formation of groups that represent new social arrangements and futures. These groups have not been ideologically explained yet. They have not been rendered legible as mere instances of a general pattern. They have not yet been reduced to iterations of an easily explained political phenomenon. It is precisely because they are not easily explained and because they do not fit into existing ideological patterns that they constitute something worth investigating. They represent a wholly new way of being together in the world, of working in common to change social futures.

It should come as no surprise is people of the same race work together to achieve objectives related to the race as a whole. Scholars and political activists of widely divergent ideological and theoretical stripes in the field of race (Omi and Winant 1994; Cleaver 1992; Ali 1989; Crenshaw 1989, 2008; Gilroy 1993) have long been able to explain such phenomena as members of a group sharing a particular social location in the racial structure of a society working as a group to make claims upon and changed to that racial structure and society.

Likewise, it should not be a surprise when people of the same gender align themselves with one another on the basis of their gender to make a social future that is more equitable for members of their gender. Feminist scholars and activists of various stripes and perspectives have explained to us for decades that all people gendered as women occupy a shared social location within a society and thus have common interests (Mohanty 1991; Millett 2007; MacKinnon 1982; Alcoff 1988; Hill Collins 2000). We should also not be surprised that members of a class, occupying a similar position in relation to the means of production, might work collectively to improve their lives and the lives of those belonging to the same class. Marxists have explained such alliances to us for generations (Smith 1990; Harvey 1999; Jameson 1984).

While it would possible to delineate more alignments and their accompanying structural explanations, it is unnecessary as the point should be clear. There is a tendency to characterize the emergence of groups and collectivities in terms of the theoretical paradigms that explain them as the operations and instances of major structural social systems and conflicts. This should not be considered a criticism of such theories and their analyses of social conflict. On the contrary, when such explanations are possible and justified, such theoretical paradigms are eminently useful. However, what is at issue in this study is when these paradigms break down and fail to explain the emergence of groups that are illegible and subjectless within the conceptual framework of the social theory.

Planning for the Study of Subjectless Groupings

In order to study the political significance of such heterodox groupings it is first necessary to examine the manner in which difference and heterogeneity are treated in the dominant political paradigms generated by social theories such as those described above. In each of the paradigms noted above, the basis for forming a properly political—that is, oriented

toward proper political goals however defined—is the identification with an hypothesized shared social location. Properly political, in this case, is used to refer to organizations, practices, alignments, strategies, and tactics regarded by a paradigm as conducive to the political goals of that paradigm. Thus, for classical Marxist politics, certain tactics, strategies, and alliances—those oriented toward the overthrow of the class system—are considered appropriate, while others, such as race-based politics may not be appropriate, not conducive to the stated goals of the political paradigm. In each case, that identification with one's fellows, those who are "in the same boat" as it were, generates a shared representational figure, a subjectivity. In the case of racial politics, because the members of the race are defined as those sharing a particular social location within the theorized racial structure of society, the people who are so categorized will presumably come to identify with others in the same location and seek common political objectives. The same basic presumption can be applied to all the major theoretical paradigms that focus heavily on representation and identity. Identity—as a member of a race, as a person of a particular gender, as a member of a class—comes to serve as the basis for forming political collectivities to seek common goals. What this study will do is to examine the effect this theoretical presumption and its practical application in terms of concrete political activity, specifically by reproductive justice activists. The significant element of the identity-based paradigm for our purposes here is what chilling effect they might have on the formation of alternative social groupings and arrangements that are considered unlikely within the social theoretic paradigm or, more importantly, undesirable in terms of the presumed political objectives that members of the class—the claimed subjects of the politics—ought to have, according to the expectations of the paradigm.

One theme that will come to occupy a central place in this study's analysis of these paradigms is that, despite the various foci of their representational politics, the ability to theorize social structures and social locations, axes of power and revolutionary alignments, always brings along with it the duty and ability to decide who belongs and who does not. To put it in another vernacular, whenever one theorizes the whole of society and determines the key axis upon which history will play out, one by necessity also reserves, and often deploys, the power to determine who will be the revolutionary subject and who will not. What is more significant is that even backing off some of the more totalizing revolutionary paradigms of the past fails to prevent the exclusionary impulse. Such an impulse is essential to the project of forming representational politics. In order to say that politics is about gender, and that the signifier "women" refers to the collective subject of gendered politics we might call feminist, we have to be able to say who it is that is represented by the signifier "woman." Some people hoping to claim that status will be denied by those who are theorizing the gendered nature of society and the proper axes upon which change can be made. At the same time, many people will be claimed as subjects of that politics and will then be silenced when their own concerns are at variance with the "line" espoused by the theorist or other prominent speaker. The person who purports to speak for women, to espouse the political aims and objectives that women ought to have, may well silence many of those who are claimed as women. This theme will be elaborated upon at much greater depth in Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 4, but what is significant for our purposes here is that it is consistent and intrinsic feature of representational politics, a politics that presumes for itself a natural constituency, to exclude many who would claim it and to silence those whom it claims for itself but who do not espouse the same analysis and objectives.

It is this hegemonizing effect that is taken as a starting point for the examination of heterodox groups in this study. Though it is first necessary to establish that traditional identity paradigms do in fact have the effect of silencing internal dissent and excluding external claims to legitimacy, the next step is to pay attention to the dynamics of the groups that do challenge identity paradigms. These are alliances between people that make little sense within the existing paradigms of representation and politics. They are groupings of people that emerge for any number of reasons, including shared visions for the future, shared experiences of marginalization or oppression without the need for it to be the same or similar oppression, shared laboring political or other endeavors, or simply an affective interpersonal connection. In all these cases, the groupings emerge outside the predicted axes of dominant social paradigms. The groups emerge from affects born of shared experience or shared desire, not from rational determination of a shared social location. This study will take on these groups, primarily in Chapter 4, in order to begin understanding the dynamics by which groups operate outside the predicted paradigms of politics and social power.

These heterodox or illegible groups, groups that do not fit within easy theoretical and structural explanation and perhaps represent something new, that are the subject of this study. Of course, it is not sufficient to merely state what the subject of the study is. I must also explain what is at issue about these groups in this particular study. The study focuses on two aspects of what the new and inexplicable group represents in terms of social theories that explain the formation of collectivities in terms of social structure and shared representations and subjectivities.

Affective Assemblages – Understanding the Mechanism of Politics

This study will turn to the concept, developed most extensively by the French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, of affect as a central mechanism of action for the formation of what I have called heterodox groups. Guattari has termed such groups "subjectless groups" to distinguish them from the traditionally defined groups joined on the basis of a shared subjectivity. Deleuze and Guattari have theorized affect as a force capable of altering the ontological status of existing objects and changing the relations between objects and individuals. Affect makes possible the formation of assemblages out of heterogeneous elements. In the case of this study, the heterogeneous elements are those people, circumstances, and objectives that fail to neatly conform to the hypothesized axes of interests and representations that hegemonic paradigms take as given. When those who do not belong to the theorized subject of a politics make a claim upon that politics, or those who are claimed as subjects of that politics deviate from its dictates and purported concerns, there is a conflict and a crisis within the representational and ideological apparatus of that politics. What is also created is a new possibility of assemblages or groups that create new social possibilities and arrangements. These groups, as we have already seen, are the principle research subject of this study. The importance of affect as a mechanism for the formation of such groups is a key component of the alternative ontology proposed in this study. Put differently, while the critique of identity politics and other representational political systems is the first major component of this study's objectives, the second element is an investigation of other possibilities for conceiving of the political and the formation of properly political collectivities.

Subjectless Groups and Aleatory Communities

In this study, I will propose the appropriateness of a Deleuzian political ontology employing affect as a primary conceptual tool for the construction of subjectless groups. I will make this argument at both a theoretical and empirical level. In Chapter 2, the affect-based Deleuzian theoretical paradigm will be developed as an alternative to identity-based paradigms for political action. The advantages of such a conceptual lexicon will be espoused as an alternative to identity politics that makes significant strides toward avoiding the authoritarianism and exclusivity that I will demonstrate is central the identity politics project. In Chapter 4, evidence from the work of reproductive justice activists struggling with identity politics paradigms and producing new groupings that transgress paradigmatic boundaries and axes of alignment will be presented in favor of the subjectless group hypothesis.

The Deleuzian political ontology allows us to focus on subjectless groups. The theoretical and paradigmatic focus on subjectless groups is a positive intellectual and political good for two key reasons. First, it is necessary to note that such groupings not only exist empirically and thus are deserving of study as alternatives to dominant identity-based alignment. The empirical study of such groupings allows for a progressively more nuanced understanding of alternative and radical political opportunities and possible social futures, and this ought to be considered an intellectual good to be pursued. Furthermore, such a theoretical focus is more modest in its claims than the other paradigms it displaces. While other paradigms offer totalizing analyses of society, in which a person's phenotype or relation to some hypothesize social structure ought to determine his or her sense of self as well as her political objectives, the theoretical paradigm that focuses on subjectless groups formed through affective connections presupposes none of that. No group can be predicted on the basis of someone's identity, or,

indeed, an analyst's assessment of the relevant aspects of someone's identity. This study, by its focus alone, contributes to this wider intellectual project.

The second reason for demonstrating the importance of subjectless groups at a theoretical level is that these groups promise a much wider realm of possibilities for social futures and political engagements. While, on the one hand, identity-based paradigms offer overly structural and deterministic conceptions of the relationship of identity to political priorities and alliances, these same paradigms simultaneously limit their own political efficacy by delimiting the manner in which changes can be expected and pursued and, often, by determining the ends of a politics in advance. The political ontology proposed throughout this study offers no pre-determined ends for a politics. It also refuses to limit the possibilities for how political groups might form. Any politics with sufficient affective capacity to draw people together in sharing their collective energies and labors in order to produce a new social future is a politics that deserves consideration in terms of its value.

Finally, a politics that does not presuppose the validity of the various structures of power and oppression in its own approach to opposing these structures also will not legitimate them. A politics that draws its strength and legitimacy from the existence of the very systems of oppression it opposes is unlikely to represent a radical alternative to these systems. At one level, the "military topography" (Casarino 2002, 120-121) of such conflicts are all too familiar to potential opponents. If the working class is most familiar with the topography of class as its arena of struggle, then it can hardly be expected that the capitalist class is less familiar with the same topography. In terms of feminist politics, the scenario can either be that women as a bloc are to be opposed to men as a class or to the system by which people are gendered and selectively disempowered. In the former case, it is again true that if women are best suited to

fight their battles on the ground of gender, it is unlikely that men or whatever other opponent of women's interests do not know this topography as well as women. If, in the more likely case, what ought to be opposed is the very process by which gender and social power are interlocked in an unfair and oppressive way, the attempt to solidify the subjectivity of woman, whether in the interest of oppressing or creating some kind of a revolutionary subject, seems unlikely to overcome the logic of oppression. This is not a proposal for ignoring structures of power, but for opening up the possibility that alternative social groupings represent new possible social futures that do not simultaneously legitimize the institutions they purport to oppose. At a less esoteric level, these groupings simply offer the possibility of help and alliance from new and unexpected places.

It is the explicit contention of this study—and this is borne out by the assembled evidence—that stories of how identity is formed, practiced, and understood, how politicization occurs, and how collectives are formed are irreducible, infinitely varied, and resist generalization. It is the persistence of common labor and struggle, in spite of such heterogeneity, that calls forth the key theoretical puzzle animating this project. We must produce an account of the forming of collectives where the chain of affinity is beset by mismatches and incommensurable discourses and yet persists. Indeed, we must look toward providing an account of becoming-collective that takes this irreducible difference, this lack of ideological cohesion, not as something to be overcome, but rather as a basis for the forming of new assemblages. Instead of seeing difference as something to be either overcome or papered over in order to produce enough cohesion for strategic victories, this study proposes an alternative ontology of the political group. This ontology focuses itself on the forming of new collectives, new assemblages of heterogeneous elements, through a sharing of affects, irreducible and

unnamable as they may be. Instead of looking for the proper representational schema for producing temporary and strategic agreement, this view proposes that an actual "becoming" occurs, a new ontological figure comes into being, one that may not have an identifiable representational scheme applied to it.

In the context of this project, this means proposing an alternative conceptual structure for the purpose of improving and strengthening the reproductive justice movement. It is my contention that a stronger reproductive justice movement fully embraces the destabilization of identity, the possibility of forming and proliferating unrepresentable beings-in-common. This means that the reproductive justice movement is better and more capable of effecting just social and political outcomes where it embraces the complex, exciting, and radical ways that people can come to form bonds of affinity.

Epistemological Foundations

I am not searching for ascent to a common set of propositions and discourses, but, rather, a collection of a set of experiences, varied and irreducible, that constitute a common critique of the prevalent discursive frames of the relationship of identity and reproductive justice politics. Given this approach, there is little need for large sample sizes to justify an assertion of common ideological perspectives. Instead, this study asserts a common failure of hegemonic discourse and ideology to account for the diverse experiences and perspectives of activists who share a common political perspective and identification with the reproductive justice movement. While this study does propose an alternative philosophical lexicon that I argue is better equipped to understand and celebrate the perspectives study participants have shared with me. In this case, the theoretical alternative proposed here is one attempt by one person to exhort the reproductive

justice movements and other political movements to preach what they practice, to invert a famous phrase.

I do not propose that the members of reproductive justice organizations and other political groups adhere more faithfully or closely to the ideological frames, based on shared identity and common interest, espoused by their respective organizations. Instead, it seems reasonable to ask political groups and students of politics to base their philosophical perspectives on the practices of their members. This general approach to understanding politics is what, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 227) a political pragmatics. Pragmatics, in this case, refers to the field of linguistics that deals with the actual production of language and speech, how one says what one says. Pragmatics deals with the materiality of language rather than signification and representation.

When applied to politics, the pragmatic perspective deals with, and proposes more attention be paid to, the materiality of politics (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 227). This should not be understood as a call for a more modest empiricism, a view of politics that purports to merely describe the concrete interactions of political groups while eschewing any overarching accounts. Thus, a political pragmatics is not political science. Instead, it is a call for a theory of politics that bases itself on an ontology of practice rather than representation. What this would mean in practical research is difficult to ascertain, but this study should be seen as an attempt in this direction. This study does, however, deal more explicitly with the critique of existing ideologies and representational discourses than is ideal for a project about political pragmatics.

Spacing – A Method for Reading

It would not be appropriate or helpful to measure the responses given in an interview to a set of alternative hypotheses or conceptual lexicon, such as that proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, with which the interviewees cannot be expected to have any familiarity. Instead, what empirical fieldwork can offer is a participatory component of an immanent critique. By only interviewing people who ascribe to a particular, fairly narrow and specific, political ideological framework—reproductive justice—we can fairly assume that interviewees will possess a deal of familiarity with the dominant discourses that animate and frame much of the literature and rhetoric. Thus, it is a fair and defensible move to enlist the participation of interview subjects in the deconstructive component of this project. While I consider the argument for the inclusion of an alternative philosophical lexicon and conceptual apparatus a key part of this project, and indeed I will draw on the evidence gathered from the interviews to support the case for such a set of concepts, I have conceived of the interviews and textual analysis as elements of the analysis that lend more to an immanent critique of the identity politics that permeates reproductive justice activism, rhetoric, and discourse. Immanent critique refers to a form of critique from within the terms of a text itself. It is a central element of both Frankfurt School critical theory (Antonio 1981) and of Derridean deconstructionism (Wainwright 2008). In this piece, the Derridean form will be used. In Derrida's usage, immanent critique is a process of reading texts that seeks to open up spaces, gaps, and "aporias" within the terms and logic of the text itself without making appeals to a pre-existing outside standard of logic (Barnes 1996, 88-89; Wainwright 2008). This commitment to opening up a text and critiquing its logic and representation without recourse to a transcendent outside standard separate immanent critique and the forms of critical theory employing it from Kantian critical theory (Antonio 1981).

Because immanent critique begins from within a text's own assumptions and logics, it is appropriate in the context of this study. To critique the paradigms of identity and politics employed by reproductive justice activists and theorists by simply arguing that the paradigms fail to meet externally imposed criteria is to abjure any illusion toward a participatory epistemology, one that acknowledges the value of activists and research subjects themselves as knowledge creators. Certainly, to impose a new political paradigm onto reproductive justice activists without beginning from an understanding of what reproductive justice activists themselves see their language, their ideology, and their paradigm as attempting to accomplish is less scholarship than heavy-handed intellectual imperialism. However, opening up the text, ideologies, and conceptual frameworks of reproductive justice from within their own terms and structures and demonstrating that they fail to meet their own criteria provides a justifiable circumstance for offering an alternative conceptual framework One can only conduct this critique from within the bounds of this discourse. The argument for another way of thinking about the issues at hand and for thinking about political movements differently must fill the space that has been left open by the critique of the currently dominant discursive frames.

This approach, what I am calling mapping assemblages, does not, however, constitute disabusing people of their own politics. Rather than asserting that the participants engage in a type of "false consciousness" or other self-deception, it is instead my contention that there is merely something else that is important, and too often missed, too often silenced, within the process of political activity and discourse. It is the process of slippage from the subject, failure of interpellation, transition, contestation, becoming-other. All these processes constitute the deterritorialization of the stable subject, the confrontation and weakening of ideology, a shifting in the actual ontological mixture that constitutes the particular multiplicity in question. What is

silence, as Derrida would put it, is always *difference* (Derrida 1982, 3-4). It is the project here to use, as much as is possible, participatory and collaborative methodologies, to bring out that difference, to allow it to express itself, and, then, to attempt to map what it is that is produced in the process of spacing, in the process of deterritorialization.

Spacing represents the major approach to reading employed in this project. Based in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida, spacing constitutes an approach to reading texts based on the deconstruction of purported singularities of meaning. In the context of this project, spacing constituted the main form of reading for the slippage, the failure, of identity. Interviews often focused on the spacing of difference. On examining the space between the signifier, the stable identity or ideological framework, the representational referent and the possibilities, the slippages, and the failures of interpellation that make possible alternative webs of meaning, systems of coding, and, indeed, ways of being together in the world, we can see how identity is actually destabilized, reconfigured, negotiated, and how relationships are rendered illegible and unrepresentatable. More specifically, the method of reading that animates this project is used to understand the ways that collective activity, affective connections, and changes in circumstance lead to the destabilization of identity, and, in turn, the formation of new assemblages of collective being.

Joel Wainwright refers to spacing as "a mode of reading that calls into question the spatial-ontological thematization of the objects or elements that define a text or discourse" (Wainwright 2008, 24). Spacing, according to Wainwright, allows for a querying of the power relations and historical-spatial circumstances that have worked to produce a particular discourse, discursive regime, or thematic organization of the world (Wainwright, 24-27). While at some level, this is a quality it shares with Foucault's genealogy, there is a meaningful difference in

how spacing and genealogy are practiced as well as the possibilities for further work inherent in each. Spacing need not be a purely deconstructive affair. It is the explication of the manner in which discourses are held together and how they represent the world. It is also a way of pulling apart these assumptions and links in order to understand the gaps and aporias. However, it is also the opening of space within discursive frameworks. When this space is opened, it leaves the possibility of making the world otherwise, sometimes in a new and non-representational fashion.

The method I propose here, then, is a form of spacing and mapping. It is important to note that, unlike other approaches to spacing and mapping, it attempts to integrate the research participants in the process of deconstructing and re-mapping their own experiences and perspectives. Thus, this is not an ethnography, though "field work", to borrow a term from Wainwright (2008), does play a major part. It does not seek a representative sample of a purported *ethnos* in order to make generalizations about that ethnos. My understanding of the difference between field work and ethnography is that the significant difference is primarily one of intent. Field work may make use of techniques such as interview, participant observation, and other methods characteristic of ethnography but with no toward synthesizing the perspectives into a generalized representation of the nature of an *ethnos*. In the context of this study, there is no desire to write or represent the "nature" of the reproductive justice movement or any person's racialized, gendered, or otherwise socially structured experience. Instead, it is an attempt to gain information for the sake of understanding an activist's perspective in her own terms, so that it might be fairly subjected to immanent critique, and so that some alternative possibilities might come out of it.

Instead, the more participatory form of spacing and mapping employs research subjects themselves in this process. Indeed, it is one of the primary advantages of the theoretical

paradigm being proposed in this piece that it opens itself up to creativity, to change, and to chance. It brings respondents into the process more than would be the case with a methodology that relies more heavily on reading texts. The theory itself does not put forth a single basis upon which people ought to or do engage one another in solidaristic relationships. On the contrary, the theory espoused here merely argues that whatever constitutes a basis for political grouping in a particular instance is, by definition, a sufficient cause for political grouping. In addition to this, however, the theory of political pragmatics disabuses thinking about politics from any conceit of true knowledge, any of the authoritarianism of identity. Thus, in the method of the study, I have opened the possibility of providing information to the participants. I have asked merely that they say what is important, and then I have asked for their participation in deconstructing the ideologies built up and stratified on top of those values.

What is aimed for here is a deconstruction of every type of discursive authoritarianism, of the seizing of hegemony in the name of identity. In order to accomplish this task, I first must demonstrate the hegemonic and authoritarian effects and impulses of the articulation of identity. This is accomplished through a genealogical treatment of various modes of thinking the subject of oppositional politics, and, in turn, considering the exclusionary consequences of such a subject turned into a properly political collectively. In the wake of the critique of identity frameworks, a new ontology is offered, one that allows us to analyze the formation of political movements as emergent processes forming new ways of being together in the world that lack a subjectivity and an ideological worldview to accompany them. In some sense then, the project taken up here is firmly within the mainstream of queer theory and of post-structuralism more generally. However, it attempts to offer something new by providing a provisional ontological account that can provide us with the conceptual tools we need to talk, think, and do politics but without

closing off opportunities for invention, change, and creativity. Thus, perhaps Deleuze's ontology will provide the possibility of a thoroughgoing anti-essentialism, a post-structuralist ethic, without the paralysis and negativity which so often has accompanied such ventures.

Plan of Study

This study is made up of five chapters. The central components of the present chapter consist of, first, a summary of the research itself, including its motivating questions and objectives, and second, a description of the conceptual pragmatics of the study—this is to say, the way it was conceived and executed. The second chapter is a combination of a literature review and a theoretical critique of that existing literature. This chapter contains a genealogical review of major strands of thinking about identity and its relevance to oppositional politics. It then contains a critique of each of these discourses, focusing on the epistemological conceits and political authoritarianisms contained in each mode of thinking about political identity. This chapter concludes with a critique of the notion of identity itself, and, more abstractly, a critique of the very concept of using representation as a solid basis for political action. The latter half of the chapter is focused on developing and expounding a different theoretical model for understanding political activity and relationships of solidarity. It contains a discussion of various models of political group formation, and a critique of each of these. This chapter then moves to an explanation of the significance a Deleuzian ontology of affect, creativity, and action has for thinking about the formation of political groups. This chapter contains the primary theoretical argument of this study—that a move from representation to pragmatics, or the element of action, is necessary both for a better understanding of why people form the groups they do and for escaping the creeping authoritarianism of all appeals to stable identity. The third chapter is a description and defense of the methodology of the study. While the conceptual elements of

developing the study are discussed in the introductory chapter, the more practical elements, including the actual fieldwork methods, are discussed in the methods chapter. The fourth chapter contains the summary and analysis of the results. This will consist of quotations from interviews, selections from text, and observations from the field meant to elucidate key points made in the previous chapters. These quotes and observations are enlisted to demonstrate the discourses of identity that permeate political thought. They are also, however, used to demonstrate the failures of identity frameworks to contain the political relationships and activities of even the very participants who espouse them. This section demonstrates the process by which identity and ideology fail and then open new opportunities. Finally, there is the conclusion. This chapter will place the results and argument within a larger intellectual context. It will also contain a reflection on the conduct of the study. It will discuss what could have been done differently and insights that will be useful for the conduct of further research.

Chapter 2

Literature and Theory

Introduction

The present chapter will focus on two primary tasks. First, it will selectively review the existing literature on the relationship of identity to politics, focusing chiefly on the development of identity politics frameworks and on the progressive process of destabilization of solid identities by dissenting discourses from previously subaltern populations. This section of the argument will consist of descriptions of key identity paradigms, explaining the purported relationship between a subject and its politics. Following the paradigm descriptions, the argument will proceed to critiques of each paradigm. These critiques contain some of my own thoughts in addition to those criticisms and considerations offered by the scholars and activists who have contributed to arguments and debates over the justice and political efficacy of various political identity paradigms. While the course of the progressive critique demonstrates a clear commitment to opening the doors of identity politics to further differentiation by silenced or otherwise disempowered sub-groups, the argument of this study and of the present chapter in particular is that the identity-focused model of generating political collectivities is ultimately a theoretical dead end. The discussion of this point will conclude the first half of the chapter. This broad section of the argument will conclude with a general critique of representation and identity themselves as an ontological basis for politics.

The second half of this chapter will propose an alternative ontology of the formation of political collectivities. This ontology is derived primarily from the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze

and Felix Guattari. It will focus primarily on the possibilities for the formation of what Guattari has called subjectless groups (Guattari 1984), groups which emerge as a result of the complementary affects between various people and other social elements. These are groups that are purely pragmatic. That is to say, they are groups that are based in the material action of politics rather than any shared representational program or framework. The argument of this latter section of the chapter will be that such groups provide a superior set of possibilities for the conduct of a liberatory politics when compared to the representational politics, especially identity politics.

Liberal Individualism

If our purpose here is to call into question the too easy formation of collective subjectivities, and if, as is the case, the assertion of these collective subjectivities represents a hegemonic power move, we may ask ourselves what value there is in forging collective identities at all. Put differently, should individuals merely identify themselves as individuals? Is a reproductive justice politics based on collective identities and subjectivities, on the multiple, a misguided effort, masking the essential and common humanity of all people, regardless of race, class, gender, or other social demarcations? A fully individualist view, however, would also state that a politics dedicated to an equal set of rights for all humans ought to eschew a subjectivity that treats race or gender as anything more than an incidental quality possessed by a human.

Kimberle Crenshaw has characterized such a distinction as exemplified by the difference in the statements "I am black" and "I am a person who happens to be black" (Crenshaw 2008). According to Crenshaw,

> I am black" takes the socially imposed identity and empowers it as an anchor of subjectivity; "I am black" becomes not simply a statement of resistance but also a

> positive discourse of self-identification, intimately linked to celebratory statements like the black nationalist "black is beautiful." "I am a person who happens to be black," on the other hand, achieves self-identification by straining for a certain universality (in effect, "I am a first a person") and for a concomitant dismissal of the imposed category ("black") as contingent, circumstantial, nondeterminant. There is truth in both characterizations, of course, but they unction quite differently, depending on the political context. At this point in history, a strong case can be made that the most critical resistance strategy for disempowered groups is to occupy and defend a politics of social location rather than to vacate and destroy it (Crenshaw 2008, 298).

What is not stated by Crenshaw here is that, while there are elements of truth to both statements, the discourses are not solely strategic. There are consequences to the adoption of a discourse, as an entire discursive regime is invoked with the articulation of identity in a particular manner. This should be made abundantly clear by any number of historical examples. The discourse of human universality, of a common humanity fractured by race is a common discourse in Civil Rights Movement politics. One need only look at a canonical text of that movement, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, in which King articulates his vision of a world where his children "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (King 1991, 217-221). Here King is articulating one of the more famous assertions of a common humanity fractured by race. In the context of the 1960s and the struggle against segregation and for basic civil rights in the American South, the appeal to a universal humanity fractured by arbitrary racial discrimination is wise rhetorical move.

In other contexts, articulating a unique and distinctive racial or gender subjectivity is important. For example, in arguing for the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), it is wiser and more effective for proponents of the act to frame their arguments in favor of a distinctive Native American identity with a particular and unique history. In making the argument for this act, the appeal to a universal humanity distorted by race would be

ill-advised strategically. Because Native American graves have been specially targeted by archaeologists (Peason 2000; Fine-Dare, 2002) and because the colonial and imperial American and European states are primarily responsible for the physical decimation and cultural, political, and economic marginalization of Native American populations (Jaimes 2008, 313-316; Smith 2008, 422), an argument is required for the uniqueness of Native American experience and identity and for the appropriateness of having Native tribal councils make decisions about the proper use of the bodies of Native Americans.

Before we write these particular "racial projects" (Omi and Winant 1994) off as mere strategic articulations of identity, we must understand that each has far-reaching consequences. A discourse frames the world, and once the world is so framed the work cannot be undone. We must take seriously the discourse being articulated, and we cannot afford to brush it off as simply a strategic use of rhetoric.

The most significant conceptual failure of liberal individualism for the purposes of our study here is its assertion of common and universal humanity. What is left unclear in this vision is what the attributes of the universal human subject are. The assertion of a universal human subject, distorted and falsely divided by race, gender, class, presumes a set of universal attributes. Yet, given the power-riven nature of society, the existence of both subtle and enduring forms of racism and sexism, the persistence of the heteronormative model of sex and sexuality, and the exploitative process of capitalism, we can only expect that the attributes of "humanity" belong to a model or essential human, and that this essential human constitutes what Ian Haney-Lopez has called the transparent center (Haney-Lopez 2006, 17-18) of the various regimes of power. The theorists I will discuss in the following section have all challenged the

notion of a common or universal humanity. According to these theorists' analyses, the human has all too often and too effectively meant a male, heterosexual, middle class, white human.

The Singular Oppositional Identity

An aspect of this identity formation strategy that participates too readily in the power matrix of subjection is the enforcement of oppositional conformity. This model of producing an identity centers on the need for a unified notion of self to distance from the oppressive other. Alarcon (1991), Alcoff (1988), Spelman (1990) and hooks (1990, 1999, 2000) criticize radical feminists for having engaged in this sort of construction of self. Within this view, if men oppress women as a group, then the most important aspect of the identity of a person who has been gendered as "woman" is that gender categorization (hooks 2000, 68-9). According to this view, this common ground should produce affinity with others experiencing the same oppression.

This model's problems emerge from its failure to account for those do not fit in simple or singular identity categories (Crenshaw 2008). It is in the experience of multiple oppressions that many become silenced or oppressed by "their own" group as much as by the alleged oppressor (hooks 2000, 43-44). Simple oppositional identities, such as "woman" as the subject of feminism or "black" as the subject of black nationalist politics, represent a hegemonic assertion of identity that elides intra-group difference, the effect of which is to construct a group politics that continues or exacerbates the oppression of an element of the oppressed group's own population.

As an example of a powerful description of oppression that nonetheless fails to address the concerns of all those it purports to represent is Kate Millet's 1970 book *Sexual Politics*. The text is notable for its clear-minded and powerful articulation of the systematic nature of the oppression of women. Millett focuses on the development of unequal treatment of women cross-

culturally and trans-historically, arguing that this phenomenon is produced as a result of systematic patriarchy (Millett 2007, 337-9). Millett produces a totalizing theory of patriarchy, a system by which "that half of the population that is female is controlled by that half which is male" and in which "male shall dominate the female, elder male shall dominate the younger" (Millett, 338). According to Millett, this system of oppression is "perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power" (Millett, 338). What is most significant about this theory for our purposes here is the articulation of a stable and unambiguous oppositional subjectivity, woman. While Millett wants to articulate a vision of what a woman is that contrasts with patriarchal and misogynist perspectives, it is nevertheless a view without an appreciation for how race, class, nationality, or sexual orientation alter the experience of gender.

Millett's theory lacks a serious analysis of race or class as regimes of power in their own right. Millett uses racism as a rhetorical corollary to sexism, and is, in turn, relegated to a secondary level of concern. According to Millett, "The function of class or ethnic mores in patriarchy is largely a matter of how overtly displayed or how loudly enunciated the general ethic of masculine supremacy allows itself to become" (Millett 2007, 347). Discussing the relationship of race to gender, Millett states, "Traditionally, the white male has been accustomed to concede the female of his own race, in her capacity as 'his woman,' a higher status than that ascribed to the black male. Yet as white racist ideology is exposed and begins to erode, racism's older protective attitudes toward (white) women also begins to give way. And the priorities of maintaining male supremacy might outweigh even those of white supremacy, sexism may be more endemic in our own society than racism" (Millett 2007, 349). Race, sexual orientation, and

class only play the role of minor, temporary complication for the trans-historical, pervasive, and totalizing process of sexual domination.

The same criticism could easily be made of a race-based politics that pays insufficient attention to the gendered dynamics of racial existence. A striking example of this type of politics is represented by Shahrazad Ali's *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman* (1989). Ali's book is an attempt to empower the Black community and battle racism, and a large part of her project is the recovery of Black masculinity and the Black patriarchal family. Crenshaw also argues that "Ali draws a positive correlation between domestic violence and the liberation of African-Americans" (Crenshaw 2008, 283). Furthermore, "Ali advises the Blackman to hit the Blackwoman in the mouth, '[b]ecause it is from that hole, in the lower part of her face, that all her rebellion culminates into words' [Ali 1989, 76]" (Crenshaw 2008, 303 n.17) and, according to Ali, "if [the Blackwoman] ignores the authority and superiority of the Blackman, there is a penalty. When she crosses this line and becomes viciously insulting it is time for the Blackman to soundly slap her in the mouth" (Ali 1989, 76). While our attention may be drawn to the overt, violent sexism of Ali's perspective, Crenshaw points out a more important consequence of such a view. For Crenshaw, Ali's insistence on the value of the racial nation above any other concern actually contributes to a failure to recognize "domestic violence as yet another form of black-on-black crime" (Crenshaw 2008, 283). Thus, for Crenshaw, insistence on the superior priority of race and the separation of racial oppression from gender oppression contributes to a violence and oppression within the Black community that makes unity and a concerted commitment to ending racism impossible (Crenshaw 2008, 283-4).

Another example of race-based politics that insufficiently accounts for gender in such a way that it systematically contributes to the oppression of women of color is provided by Benita

Roth in her "The Making of the Vanguard Center." In an effort to explain the critical stance of Black feminist politics and theory, Roth recounts the conflict over birth control within the Black nationalist community in the 1960s. According to Roth, "Black feminist challenged Black liberationists' assertion that birth control was 'genocide,' arguing that charges of genocide took away poor Black women's right to control their lives. Black liberationists urged Black women to have children to thwart dominant white society; the racism present in some family-planning groups made this stance viable" (Roth 2000, 563). In this case, Black women's interest in control over their own bodies becomes subordinate to the interest of reproducing the Black nation in larger numbers and spiting white society and its attempts to control and limit the Black population and its power. What is most significant about this perspective is that its vision for Black liberation is predicated on the subjugation of Black women, the subordination of their personal freedom and autonomy to the interests of the "nation." Only where the subject of the politics of racial liberation is assumed to be a man is it possible for the denial of basic control over Black women's bodies to be considered a key component of the struggle for freedom.

This tendency points to a particularly unfortunate consequence of an identity politics perspective that relies too heavily on the stability of a single subject or identity for its political succor. This consequence can perhaps best be described as a kind of perverse gamesmanship, in which variously connected political activists and rhetorical actors jockey with one another for the title of "most oppressed." Such thinking appears to emerge from an ugly convergence of simplistic and static notions of identity and subjectivity, a misplaced belief in the unique "subject" of history and the revolution (Gilroy 1993, 51-53), and a morality that tokenizes the experience of oppression by treating social subordination as equivalent to moral superiority.

Haraway illustrates the issue in a critique of the underlying assumptions of much standpoint epistemology and its implicit adoption of overly static notions of identity, arguing that this attempt at quantifying and ranking oppressions represents an unacceptable form of tokenizing. According to Haraway, "The search for such a 'full' and total position is the search for the fetishized perfect subject of oppositional history, sometimes appearing in feminist theory as the essentialized Third World Woman. Subjugation is not grounds for an ontology; it might be a visual clue" (Haraway 2008, 349). Elizabeth Spelman elaborates on the point, arguing, "If sexism and racism must be seen as interlocking, and not as piled upon each other, serious problems arise for the claim that one of them is more fundamental than the other" (Spelman 2008, 271). The realm of representation is where latent authoritarianism emerges, aimed at producing and maintaining a discursive and ideological hegemony.

At this point in this study, however, what is most significant about this mode of conceptualizing the relationship of identity to politics is the necessarily hegemonic attempt to establish the boundaries of a subjectivity, to claim access to the truth of what it means to be raced or gendered in a particular way. It is to set boundaries on what is possible, what is permissible, in the discussion of identity and subjectivity, and for this reason, this view begins to demonstrate to us what Butler means when she argues that all subjectivities, even corrective or achieved subjectivities, are ultimately engaged in the project of power that is subjection (Butler 1997). I will return to this point in more depth later, but it is a necessary and essential part of this study's overall argument.

What is most immediately significant about this argument is that this hegemonic closing of the boundaries of what identity means and must mean is the basis of the critique of radical feminism and various racial nationalisms by black feminists and others in the 1970s. It is the

failure of the proposed and theorized identity—the sex, the race, the class—to account for the diverse experiences of women of color, LGBTQ people, and, indeed women and men of different races and classes. All of these intersections fracture and destabilize what it might mean to be black, Latina, white, a woman, or a man. All of these intersections make it an exercise in authority, an exercise in subjection, to articulate a politics that ought to be natural or rational for people of a particular identity. They render these identities, and the politics based upon them, in a state of crisis. Our approach here is to cultivate this crisis, to bring it to fruition, and to see what types of collectivities can emerge free of the weight of identity, of the compelling desire for a stable subject of politics.

Early Seeds of Intersectional Theory: Additive Analysis

The final problematic account of identity formation is the strongest, and it is the one I will wrestle with in the material that follows. It is the more sophisticated intersectional account of race, class, gender, and other modern modes or axes of social differentiation. Intersectionality theory, as originally articulated by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) and as elaborated upon by feminist and critical race theorists (Young 1990, 1997; Hill Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1989, 2008), has focused on the overlay and particular articulation of oppressive systems within the lived experience and corporeal singularity of the individual person. Identity can be thought of as forged through the individual's rationalization of their own location within a set of social forces and structures and within a spatial and historical context. Problematizing simple categories of gender, Iris Marion Young describes the formation of identity as "a project that individuals take up in the relation to the collective social structures and histories in which they are situated" (Young 1997, 6). The best theorists of intersectionality are attuned to the mutual construction of race, class, gender, sexuality, and other modern modes of social differentiation

and organization, and of the inherent instability and contingency of these categorizing systems. Less sophisticated analyses treat the "intersecting oppressions" (Hill Collins 2000, 8) as autonomous or internally coherent systems of oppression with their own independent histories and logics that overlay in the life of a particular person.

Before the coining of the term intersectionality by Crenshaw in the late 1980s, accounts of intersecting or multiple and compounding oppressions often treated as unproblematic the subjects and objects of systems like sexism, racism, patriarchy, class exploitation, among others (Lerner 1986; MacKinnon 1982; Phillips 1987; Walby 1989). Angela Davis's *Women, Race, and Class* (1983) falls into this category, and is one of the most sophisticated examples of this kind of work. Indeed, it foreshadows intersectionality theory to a great extent in its treatment of the subject matter, but it nonetheless fails to problematize the very categories in the title. Gender, race, and class are treated as pre-existing and transhistorical categories. In the sections of the book most germane to this study, we are given two very incisive analyses of the reasons black women and white women have different perspectives on sexual violence, birth control, abortion, and other reproductive issues. Davis describes the long history of birth control and other forms of population control being targeted, as if as weapons, at people of color. She recounts the sordid history of Margaret Sanger and the American Birth Control League's racist targeting of black women for sterilization. Similar stories are told for Native American and Puerto Rican women (Davis 1983, 214-219). Davis places these histories in the context of the fall in the white birth rate in the early 20th Century and the ensuing (and today all-too-familiar) hysteria about "race suicide" (Davis 1983, 209) and the need to protect the demographic superiority of whites. Decades afterword, in the midst of the abortion rights movement, women of color—here used as more of a demographic term than a positive identity statement—would

have understood much more clearly the multiple sides of the movement for reproductive rights and freedoms, those that freed women from the burden of unwanted pregnancy, but also the propensity of physicians and policymakers to deprive them of the ability to have children later (Davis 1983, 215; Jennings 1996). Reproductive justice activism today continues to take as its starting point the issues that Davis points out (Silliman et. al. 2004; Roth 2003).

The term "intersectionality" was coined by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in a 1989 law review article, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex." In this article, Crenshaw uses the multiple oppressions experienced by women of color as a critique of anti-discrimination law. According to Crenshaw, "dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis . . .in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex- or class-privileged Blacks; in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class-privileged women." (Crenshaw, 1989). As a response to this problem, Crenshaw proposes intersectionality as a lens for analysis and critique of non-intersectional categories. "Problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytic structure. Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw goes on to call for a rethinking of categories like "women's experience." The category of woman elides differences between women, making identity-based politics into something more like the oppositional sameness model examined above. As Crenshaw puts it, "The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite- that it frequently conflates or ignores intra group differences" (2008, 279). In this strain of

intersectionality thought, legal remedies or reform of the legal order are often sought as responses to the problems Crenshaw began pointing out. Much of this work falls under the headings of governing difference, finding compatibilities between intersectional subjects and the human rights protective framework (Silliman et al 2004; Brush 2002, 2003), or otherwise institutionalizing the intersectional subject.

Using Intersectionality to Destabilize Race, Class, and Gender

After early work on compounding and multiple oppressions, such as Davis's, and the attempt by legal scholars like Crenshaw (1989) to "demarginalize" the intersections of the axes of social differentiation (Williams 1991; Weber 2001; Meese 1989), theorists began to actively problematize the categories of identity that Davis had taken as given. In *Black Feminist Thought* (2000), Patricia Hill Collins not only draws out an argument about the multiple oppressions experienced by black women, but also questions what these "intersecting oppression" do to the constitution and validity of each axis of oppression as an analytic category. In Hill Collins's work, "woman" is no longer treated as a stable analytic category. Instead, the interactions of womanhood with different racial, sexual, and class axes radically alters what it means to be a woman. Thus, Hill Collins's work should be thought of as fundamentally intersectional. It is where class, race, and gender meet in the individual experience of a person who is classed, raced, and gendered in particular socio-historical ways that gives information about the individual's standpoint and identity (Hill Collins 2000, 8-12). For Hill Collins, it is not sufficient to merely examine how the experience of sexism, racism, or classism has differentially affected people divide along those axes. Instead, for Hill Collins and other intersectionality theorists like Iris Marion Young, it is necessary to justify the analytic groupings of people along race, class, and gender lines (Hill Collins 2000; Young 1997; Barrett 1987).

Iris Marion Young's work (1990a, 1990b, 1997) best exemplifies this tendency in intersectionality theorizing. In Young's work, gender as a category of analysis and woman as a category of difference or being is specifically problematized (Young 1997, 12-37) but nonetheless defended as a legitimate social collectivity. Young's explicitly intersectional work goes far in treating categories of difference as fluid and multiple, but still rooted in particular structures and histories. Young argues for an understanding of "woman" as a serial category. Drawing on Sartre, Young states that a serial is a social collectivity in which autonomous individuals relate to one another only in their mutual connection to a material object or resource (Young 1997, 24-5). The group, by contrast, is a self-conscious organization of people around common interests and experiences. Serial activity produces what Sartre calls "counter-finalities" or outcomes that are counter to the purposes of some and pursuant to the purposes of others, but all as a result of a set of autonomous individuals acting on attaining the same goal. Young argues that woman exists as a social category in such a way. Coming into being as a group, however, is a process of collective identification with the interrelatedness of experiences and of a shared set of disadvantages (Young 1997).

Under Young's Sartrean categorization then, we should understand the formation of political groupings centered on identity as a process of coming to consciousness or as what social movements scholars call "politicization" (Krauss 1998; Marchand 2000; Molyneux 1985). Here, people move from their passive relationship to their own bodies and broader social regulatory systems like the law, the welfare system, and the labor markets toward a recognition of the ways that these systems have attached meanings to their bodies and their minds. In the case of a reproductive justice organization, women of color undergoing the process of politicization or the coming to group consciousness would recognize the ways that their bodies have been raced and

gendered in ways that are similar to other people. This would entail moving away from an individualistic consciousness in which the woman only relates to the state, to employers, to banks, and to doctors in ways that are relations between autonomous individuals. If the state removes a woman's children from her by force, it *must* be because she has been an objectively bad parent, or if her doctor encourages sterilization, it *must* be because sterilization is medically necessary or a sound decision to make. An intersectional analysis and a group consciousness, however, shows that similar things happen to other people who are similarly raced, gendered, and classed by discernible social processes producing these differences.

Reproductive justice literature produced thus far has primarily begun from the intersectionality approaches discussed above. Hooton's work (2005) on expanding the reproductive rights regime to include and accommodate an inclusion of Latinas is an excellent example of this tendency. Hooton describes the particular experiences in reproductive repression and population control that have been experienced by Latinas, recounts the importance of realizing that Latinas face problems (such as immigration restrictions and language barriers) that make it impossible or unwise to treat Latinas as naturally within a category—women of color---with a single set of problems. Black women and Latinas face many of the same problems, but there are many that are not shared between the two (Hooton 2005; Gutierrez 1999; Wright 2006; Arnold 1990; Lievesley 2006). Native American women must face a long history of forced sterilization by the Indian Health Service (Lawrence 2000) as well as a history of national assimilationist politics and a genocidal offensive against their very existence as a people. Furthermore, Native mothers are confronted with life on reservations, isolated in spaces of high unemployment, crime, and other problems of social isolation and decay. Alternatively, outside of the reservations traditional lifeways have little social support, and so the choice is between

isolation and assimilation. Their status as the being-who-we-are-not or primary "other" in the construction of the American national self is an experience and a component of consciousness that is mostly unshared with other women of color, making their amalgamation into a new single identity unacceptable (Silliman et al. 2004; Garcia Bedolla 2007).

The Dismantling of Individualism and the Critique of Intersectionality

These intersectional analyses should draw our attention to several of the possible directions in which intersectional critiques can push us. In one scenario, women of color is adopted as a new single identity, eliding difference and substituting "women of color's experience" for the now-discarded essentialisms of "women's experience" or "Black experience." This undoes the very purpose of intersectional study and perpetuates the marginalization of now-smaller groups within the larger women of color group. In another scenario, particular gender-race-class configurations could be treated as fundamentally separated and incommensurable, making commonalities and cross-difference organizing near impossible to come by. In this case, alliance or coalitional politics are impossible and we eventually collapse into liberal individualism, as everyone's identity is the confluence and assemblage of multiple voice and intersecting privileges or oppressions. Indeed, as Zack (2005, 8) argues, it is only through "commonalities" of experience as women that we can begin to speak about what is different among women.

While intersectionality has displaced this false stability of subjectivity, it has failed to destabilize and eschew the structuralist logical thinking that gives rise to the very imprecision and blanket-like pronouncements that intersectionality seeks to combat. Intersectionality theory looks to racial oppression and says that it is impossible to know what the effect of racism will be on a person without also knowing their gender and what effect sexism will have on the way

racism works. It thus destabilizes both race and gender, but it fails to see that it is the compulsion to look for the subject and for the structural logic of power. Racism and gender are better understood as a complex interlocking assemblages of bodies, power, history, geography, and other determinants that work together to produce a irreducible assemblage. This is different from looking for a structural logic and then qualifying this logic by reference to others. At the limit, we are left with a unique set of intersections, a unique individual that then undermines the very anti-individualist ethic from which identity politics emerged. Intersectionality's chief tension, and its chief failure, is its anti-essentialist impulse and its simultaneous rejection of individualism.

In this theoretical paradigm, the subject is the hypostatic union of various modes of differentiation intersecting in a single body, forming an irreducible whole. While I appreciate the destabilization of categories inherent in this paradigm, as well as its necessarily coalitional attitude toward all politics (see Crenshaw 2008), I still argue that it privileges the individual person, and can indeed collapse back into liberal individualism, by insisting the racism, sexism, and other modes of power and social differentiation are modulated into something that cannot be translated across individual subjectivities. I would argue, by contrast, that individuals are not, in fact, indivisible and that multiple identities, such as one's race, class, gender, etc. constitute resources to be differentially mobilized in different contexts. Further, these differentially mobilized identities are not worked out through syllogistic hierarchies (woman of color is coalitional group including black woman; I am a black woman; therefore, I am a woman of color and care about women of color's issues), but rather through often unstated bonds of affect and functionality that make solidarity and identification an after-effect of collective political practice,

or, perhaps more correctly, as a key component of the ever-changing and self-revolutionizing assemblage of politics.

Another criticism of both more traditional forms of identity politics, relying as they do on the formation of new, stable subjects as they simultaneously critique the universal subject of liberal humanism, and of intersectional politics is that they rely too readily on a structural reading of power systems. Race-based identity politics presume that race is a stable system of power that works to produce racialized subjects along a differential axis of power. Gender-based identity politics focuses on a similarly mechanistic and structural understanding of power systems. This should not be read as an unsympathetic or rejectionist criticism of these political forms or the analytics that attempt to demonstrate systematic patterns of inequality and oppression. However, it is more compelling and less mechanical to see all of these systems of inequality, structures of power as interconnected assemblages that have come to occupy the stability and self-reproducing capacity of strata.

Ultimately, the problem with intersectionality's ontological privileging of the individual is that it participates too readily in the power regimes that characterize modern social control, the very social control that has resulted in the extreme forms of bio-violence we discern in the reproductive oppressions women of color experience. Individuality, within the word itself, indicates the person or individual, the particular corporeality, is the primary of unit of social organization and control. Identity then arises in the rationalization of multiple voicings and discourses into a single coherent ego. The notion of the internally ordered rational subject is widely critiqued in "postmodernist" literature and dismissed as either opportunities for emancipatory politics the loss of which should be lamented (Jameson 1984; Harvey 1989) or as modernist rationalist fantasies forced upon an anarchic and complex world in an attempt to gain

legibility (Foucault 1985; Jardine 1985; Owens 1985; Poovey 1988; Weedon 1987; Scott 1988). At a micropolitical level, the rationalization of multiple voicings into a singular identity is a reproduction of the logic of power that requires that black women be dissolved into either women's or black groups. It is a reproduction of the necessary hegemony of representational thinking. The argument being developed here hopes to eschew such enclosing impulses by elaborating an ontology of indeterminacy, change, and openness.

The critique of intersectionality as an analytic lens should begin with Foucault's critique of the citizen-subject and of subjection (1983) and in his call for "deindividualization" (1985). Foucault exhorts us to "not demand of politics that it restore the 'rights' of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. *The individual is a product of power*. What is needed is to 'deindividualize' by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals but a constant generator of deindividualization" (Foucault 1985 xiii, my emphasis). We should understand Foucault as directing us toward forming new forms of self-reference that exist outside the power matrix of subjectivity, to deterritorializing power's locus of operation. The focus on the individual as the ontological corpus onto which multiple modes of oppression are inscribed in the production of subjectivity or as the locus for multiple axes of differentiation imbricates intersectional politics in the power matrix. Foucault, by contrast, would call for us to reject our individuality, even when it is fully formed "in the round" through an intersectional analysis. Following this Foucauldian line of inquiry, even if the law or the state could respond effectively to the intersectional oppressions experienced by women of color, it would not constitute a radical reworking of the modern political regime, but rather a reterritorialization of power's operation, an improvement of the efficacy of power. Nancy Fraser echoes Foucault on the ability of

modern, capillary power to transform resistive discourses into the further amplification of power. "Modern power . . . continually augments and increases its own force in the course of its exercise. It does this not by negating opposing forces but rather by utilizing them, by taking them up as transfer points within its own circuitry" (Fraser 1989, 24). Fraser separates herself from Foucault, however, in calling for the development of "normative criteria for distinguishing acceptable from unacceptable forms of power" (Fraser 1989, 33).

A final component of this critique is actually based on a significant problem within the most anti-essentialist identity frameworks for understanding the political subject. While various expressions of the anti-essentialist move in identity politics (Sandoval 2000; Spivak 1993, 2004); Young 1997) take up boldly Foucault's argument that the formation of a subjectivity is ultimately always an engagement in the process of subjection, that it is necessary to ruthlessly question the ontological status of the individual and any identity that might come with it, these frameworks do not sufficiently open the possibility for new forms of post-subjective ways of being to occur. Through the common labor, the shared experience that brings activists into the borderlands of their own consciousness and renders them foreign to themselves, a new ontological figure is formed, one that has no subjectivity, no representational figure. What is ultimately most problematic about all identity-based frameworks, including those based on differential consciousness (Sandoval 2000), "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1993, 3-6; 2004, 214), or intersectional subject grouping (Young 1997), is the extent of their reliance on the extant over the possible. The model of alignment, of forming alternative social collectivities, is insufficiently attuned to the possibility of unnameable new beings-in-common.

Toward a Non-Representational Ontology of Political Collectivities

While we have discussed various modes of approaching the subject thought be a particular politics, our true focus here is on the collective. This is because politics is ultimately about the collective building of social futures. Since the social organizations and future conditions of the world will have to be lived in collectively, it is only proper to keep our analytic focus on the collective building components of political activity. Thus, with every theory, taking as its starting point its anthropology, its conception of its subject, there is always a concomitant collectivity. We must keep in mind the collective-forming component of every political framework. Only then can we begin to determine the relationship between subject formation and the often hidden authoritarianisms of political thought.

The preceding conceptions of the political are not meant to be taken as an exhaustive or even representative list of various theories of the nature and expanse of the political. On the contrary, these ideas of the political are a very narrow, if influential, subset of the variety of political thought. Nonetheless, in contrast to these and other dominant paradigms, a theory and a conception of the political, and of political collectivities, must be developed that opens the way for the innumerable interactions and collective formations that make up the capacity to act to change and form the future. However, we are still unclear on what difference there may be between the mere formation of political constituencies, their coming to identify as a collective self, and the collective acting in the world that I am advocating here. As we will come to see, it is through the conceptual lens provided to us by Deleuze and Guattari, of machinic assemblage and affective becoming-other, that we can see that the collectivities that come into being are not merely coming to see shared social locations, feeling sympathy or care, or being indoctrinated into the collective body. They is an actual assemblage of being collective that comes into being,

an assemblage of acting, regardless of subjects, signifiers, standpoints, or classes. This is not to say that the individual dissolves into the crowd, but that the individual becomes multiple through his or her binding to the pack or the multitude. While an identity politics relies on presumed essentialisms and structural determinants of identity and social location in order to contest and redefine these subjectivities, making them sources of power and solidarity rather than determinants of worthlessness or powerlessness, such a politics also leads us toward a stability of subjectivity based on the same power dynamics as the oppressive system that first produced that designation. That is to say, these are based directly on the negation of their former self, and they struggle against oppressive power structures using the very conceptual tools provided by those power structures. On this subject it is worth quoting Cesare Casarino at length. Here he is discussing class and body of labor, but I contend that the same lessons can be extended to other modalities of power and political subjectivities formed around those power regimes.

> The collective subjectivity of the body of living labor . . . is not a shared *Weltanschauung*, or what used to be called class consciousness, but rather a shared potential for the overcoming of capital . . . that cannot be adequately expressed in terms of class. This is not to say that the body of labor cannot constitute a class; it is rather to assert that it is not qua class – and not even as an oppositional and struggling class – that such a body is necessarily dangerous to capital, as the latter, during at least the past two centuries, has given ample evidence that it actually *needs* both such a constitution of class as well as the realities of class struggle in order to function, to modernize itself, and to continuously overcome its last limits. In overcoming the very concept of class, and in forging altogether different ways of being-in-common which would completely bypass the dialectical logic of struggle, the body of labor may become dangerous and indeed fatal to capital. Inevitably, what sprouts on the bloody fields of class war after each battle is a more advanced and efficient form of capital, and that is so because the military topography of such fields is well known to capital – for the fields of class war constitute capital's own territory. Other fields and other wars are needed for the body of labor to make itself unrecognizable to capital by not appearing in the familiar form of class and by not acting in the ways capital expects that which created to act (Casarino 2002, 120-121).

Thus, though a major contribution of identity politics is its destabilization of the notion of a universal human subject with some preceding essence (choice, freedom, rationality, etc.) that is merely modified, indeed masked by difference, identity politics is nonetheless based on the reaffirmation the topographies of race, gender, sexual identity, nation. As one consequence of this cognitive dissonance, though identity politics argues that difference constitutes the key to the political subjectivities of those who are differentially placed in various positions within power hierarchies, such a politics presumes too much the stability of its natural community, and, indeed, according to Audre Lorde these politics reproduce the power logics of the systems of oppression they seek to oppose by universalizing their natural community and quashing difference within (Lorde 1984). By extending the notion of anti-essentialism indefinitely, the natural community, the subjective anchor of the group, would begin to unravel and dissolve. To solve this problem, Casarino suggests we look to emergent forms of what he calls being-in-common. Such forms of being together in the world, of making new subjectivities that are do not presume a homogeneity at any level, but rather a mutual becoming-other in the context of a practice. Casarino identifies these forms as unsayable communities, as forms of being together in the world in ways that are unintelligible the dominant modes of coding, the prevailing discursive regimes of power (Casarino 2002).

Judith Butler notes that a representational politics produces what it claims merely to represent. It produces the subjective regime while claiming to only raise visibility for an oppressed subject. Discussing the constituent subject of feminist politics, woman, Butler argues much of what I have argued here regarding the necessarily exclusionary and repressive aspect of articulating a stable subject of politics.

> My suggestion is that the presumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism is effectively undermined by the constraints of the representational discourse in which it functions. Indeed, the premature insistence on a stable subject of feminism, understood as a seamless category of women, inevitably generates multiple refusals to accept the category. These domains of exclusion reveal the coercive and regulatory consequences of that construction, even when the construction has been elaborated for emancipatory purposes. Indeed, the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from "woman" whom feminism claims to represent suggest the necessary limits of identity politics. The suggestion that feminism can seek wider representation for a subject that it itself constructs has the ironic consequence that feminist goals risk failure by refusing to take account of the constitutive powers of their own representative claims. This problem is not ameliorated through an appeal to the category of women for merely "strategic" purposes, for strategies always have meanings that exceed the purposes for which they are intended. In this case, exclusion itself might qualify as such an unintended yet consequential meaning. By conforming to a requirement of representational politics that feminism articulate a stable subject, feminism thus opens itself to charges of gross misrepresentation (Butler 1990, 4-5).

As Butler points out, there is little or no agreement on what constitutes the subject of these politics. Is there a common bond that underlies the experience of oppression all women feel, an essentialist position, or is it only through the common experience of gendered oppression that women have a bond (Butler 1990, 4)? We might push this further by noting that the levels and types of oppression, and the positions with oppressive apparatuses, are far different depending on the race, nationality, class, sexual orientation, of women. Reproductive justice organizations, such as those discussed in this study, struggle with this problem, as they find their constituent population within that moment of refusal discussed by Butler. The constituency of reproductive justice politics emerges in the moment where a group of people claimed by feminism as "women" refuses that appellation—not by refusing the name "women" but by refusing the presumed meanings, struggles, and political objectives attached to it—and attempts to reconstitute a politics of emancipation that does not marginalize them. The ironic consequence is that there is a push, called for by the representational field of power, language,

for this community of collective refusal to reconstitute itself as a new stable subject, perhaps as "women of color." I have previously reviewed the consequences of such an articulation, as the exclusionary consequences of articulating woman of color as the political subject of reproductive justice politics is no less likely to find itself in misrepresentation and exclusion. Such a step away from an unmodified feminism or reproductive rights politics merely pushes the same repressive and ironic contradiction down the road temporarily.

A more significant blow against the white privilege, male privilege, and middle class privilege, among others, that riddle progressive and radical political organization and practice is struck in the moment of refusal itself. Prior to the re-articulation of a subject, the re-entry into the field of power, there is a moment of openness, in which representational frames are called into question and detached from their material base. The kinds of communities that are possible here are fleeting, certainly, as the creep of subjection is inevitable. According to Butler, "The juridical structures of language and politics constitute the contemporary field of power; hence, there is no position outside this field, but only a critical genealogy of its own legitimating practices" (Butler 1990, 5). For Butler, "the task is to formulate within this constituted frame a critique of the categories of identity that contemporary juridical structures engender, naturalize, and immobilize" (Butler 1990, 5).

This task is precisely the one I take up here, but it seems that, while it is impossible to take up a subject position outside the representational field of power, it is nonetheless possible to discover and elaborate upon the moments of crisis and refusal of that regime of power. By shifting our sense of what a political community is, and by encouraging those kinds of communities that represent alternatives to the present field of power, we do something that is quite radical. The formation of a subject and the process of subjection, the rendering of people

and events as legible and manipulable within the prevailing field of power, are two sides of the same process. Thus, it is in the moments of the crisis of subjective regimes that new possibilities, what Guattari calls "subjectless groups" (Guattari 1984) and what Deleuze calls "crowned anarchy" (Deleuze 1994) are formed. In the chapters to follow, I will elaborate more fully the alternative ontology being proposed, one that avoids the unexamined essentialisms and fetishizations of the subject that haunt the views reviewed here. In this chapter, however, I have constructed a genealogical critique of variously effective representational frameworks for constructing an oppositional subject, the subject of a radical politics. I have taken up the task suggested by Judith Butler, a genealogical critique of existing frameworks, undermining their foundations and revealing the processes of power immanent and hidden in their construction. To that point, I have considered the failures, the authoritarianisms, and essentialisms contained within seemingly opposite views, liberal individualism and collectivist identity politics. I have also demonstrated the implicit individualisms and essentialisms inherent within the frameworks emerging from the refusal of both liberalism and unitary forms of identity politics. The most notable of these views is intersectionality theory.

Finally, I have argued for a critique of subjectivity and subject-focused political paradigms in general, on the basis that the formation of a subject is always already mirrored in its engagement with the field of power by the process of subjection and the reproduction of oppressive and exploitative power relations. Butler's insights also point to the issue of misrepresentation, as an attempt at forming a coherent and stable constituent subject of a politics leaves those who produce that subject in a position of hegemony over those whom they claim, but who do not easily fit within the proposed parameters. It is in the moment where slippage or refusal happens, where the framework is put into crisis, that new possibilities emerge. This

process and the potential it unleashes is what I will turn to in the following chapters. The process of refusal, of crisis, will form a central part of the empirical component of this study. The argument produced here will course through the process of conversational interviews designed to invite participants to take part in a collective effort to deconstruct their claimed subjectivities and identities and to discuss their moments of representational crisis.

It is important, however, that we not remain in a state of pure negation. It is necessary to provide some account, some analytic, some conceptual apparatus, that will allow us to explain the formation of groups that defy, transgress, and render illegible the ideological and representational systems of ordering that we have critiqued here. Deleuze and Guattari offer us a conceptual lexicon that is capable of being adapted for the purposes that call our attention here. In response to the failings of identity politics, including intersectionality theory, an ontology that focuses on openness and the possibility of forming collectives through means aside from representational correspondence. Deleuzian concepts like becoming-other, emergent consistency between bodies (not just human) allow us to both eschew essentialism and simultaneously to overcome the syllogistic pretensions that haunt intersectionality theory. The plane of consistency, immanent within the strata in which we are enmeshed (race, class, gender, other subjective regimes of power) allows us to form new assemblages that, while carrying with them the discursive and material consequences of race, gender, class and other power dynamics, nonetheless allows all dynamics to converge without assuming an essential connection. There needs be no essential relationship based either on a homogeneous consciousness, shared social location, objective class position, or any other structural determinant of shared rational interests or experiences. Instead, it is collective action in the world, micropolitical struggles, what Guattari has called "subjectless action" (Guattari 1984, 135), that forms the new political

assemblages. An assemblage, as Deleuze and Guattari say, is a desiring machine, an amalgamation of heterogeneous elements desiring its own reproduction. Thus, it is through the collective raising of desire to the level of a substantive, made possible through collective action, that being-in-common happens.

In order to understand the ways that non-identititarian subject groups can be formed out of contexts that affirm the relevance of identity, and of race, gender, class and other modern modalities of power, we should look to work that has sought to both re-examine the ways that political groupings are formed and sustained, on the one hand, and to resituate these discussions within a newer conception of the political, on the other hand. This newer conception of the political places politics within a series of larger ontological questions. The questions aim at understanding the relation of the political to the larger milieus of the physical and biological. I will return to this issue, addressing its merits and complexities, more fully below. For now I will turn to a discussion of the theories of political bonding and the formation of subjectivities that do not presume universal rational human subjects bonding on the basis of shared economic or political – the political here is often simply treated as an outgrowth of economic thinking; political ideas are reduced to economic preferences – objectives, as is the case in much mainstream political science and social movement theory. In this sense, such a politics mirrors the anti-humanist critiques of identity politics. However, unlike identity politics, this politics also jettisons the notion of rational community based on shared identity, pre-existing subjectivity (which we can think of, following Casarino, as something like class consciousness or "black consciousness"), or shared social location (to borrow the terminology of standpoint theory, a quintessential epistemology of identity politics). Instead, such a politics proposes affects and intensities as the media through which political bonds are formed.

Deleuze, Guattari, and Massumi, among others, have argued that affects have come to play an increasingly important role in modern economies and politics. As Massumi has put it, in describing both the importance of affect as a key concept for modern political interaction and the problems with trying to discuss the role of affect in social formations where language seems incapable of indicating how non-rational, sharings of intensities constitute the grounds upon which political groups form.

> There seems to be a growing feeling with media, literary, and art theory that affect is central to an understanding of our information- and image-based late capitalist culture, in which so-called master narratives are perceived to have foundered. Fredric Jameson notwithstanding, belief has waned for many, but not affect. If anything, our condition is characterized by a surfeit of it. The problem is that there is no cultural-theoretical vocabulary specific to affect. Our entire vocabulary has derived from theories of signification that are still wedded to structure even across irreconcilable difference (the divorce proceedings of poststructuralism: terminable or interminable?). In the absence of an asignifying philosophy of affect, it is all too easy for received psychological categories to slip back in, undoing the considerable deconstructive work effectively carried out by poststructuralism (Massumi 2002, 27).

Thus, it is important to realize that rational determinations of political affinity based on a shared identity, social location, or other location within hypothesized power structures are not sufficient or necessary bases for future political formations. Instead, if we take our cues from Deleuze and Guattari we find that all formations, all assemblages, physical and social, political and emotional, form through the temporary coincidence of intensities and speeds. For Deleuze and Guattari, an assemblage is a functional collection of heterogeneous elements. That is to say, an assemblage is machinic; it moves, functions, and affects. It is helpful to take seriously Deleuze and Guattari's description of assemblages as machinic. The machine is made up of heterogeneous elements moving together at complementary speeds. The elements of the machine only come to have meaning in the context of one another. Thus, they are components

what Deluze and Guattari call a "qualitative multiplicity", that is, a multiplicity (a substance that is in its nature plural) that is unique in its composition of elements. An addition would constitute a change in the elemental nature of the multiplicity itself (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 4-12). All these elements of the machinic assemblage should be extended to our thinking about political groups. A political group is made up of the affective interrelations that emerge from within a practice and set of relations that are functional in producing social futures. This functionality should be understood as the unpredictable product of the machinic assemblage, not as the pre-existing intent of the members of the group. This is the key difference between this theoretical (and in this case political) machine and a concrete, actual machine. The actual machine is created by a person to serve a particular function, while the machinic assemblage emerges from multifarious and contradictory interactions, intensities, and speeds. It emerges spontaneously from the encounter of various elements within the indeterminate chaos of the universe, and it produces results that are unpredictable to any of its elements.

To put this in slightly less esoteric terms, a political group understood as an assemblage is a simultaneity of affective relations, a mutual becoming-other—and, hence, a becoming-collective—produced through the crucible of social and environmental relations. To be even less esoteric, a political assemblage can form when through the affective (not solely emotional, or passionate, or rational, or libidinal, but all these simultaneously) relations between individuals and social processes coincide. It is a somaticism, a corporeality of political bonding, a theory of bonds that finds the basis for political subjectivities in within the larger physics of flows espoused by theorists of the radical indeterminacy of the universe. Through the affective intensities that reverberate within, against, and through the materiality of bodies (including minds), the subjectivities that emerge as the centers of political assemblages are based on the

complex relations of affinity and interrelation, on becoming-other and being-in-common, rather than rational relations to political conflicts. As such a conception of the political subject indicates, however, we must look to a conception of the political that is firmly entrenched within a physics, a theory of the interrelations and interactions of nature. This is to ontologize the political, no longer leaving it to the realm of a purely human activity, a contest for power within the context of states, spanning elections and revolutionary and civil wars. The political subject emerges through a process that is not unlike the processes that emerge within nature, making the symbiotic relationships of evolutionary biology and the fundamental indeterminacy of future processes that characterizes process-oriented, quantum-based theoretical physics.

All of this may sound very good, but so far we have been unacceptably vague about what an affect is. Are affects the same as feelings? Are we merely saying here that a political group works better when it there are feelings of unity, affinity, care, and even love between the members of that group than would be the case in a group brought together only by a shared rational interest? If so, this seems rather commonplace and hardly worth writing about. However, as we can see from the preceding discussion about the machinic assemblages of politics it is not the case that an affect is only a feeling. According to Massumi, affect does not "denote a personal feeling. *L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. L'affection (Spinoza's affectio) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include 'mental' or ideal bodies)" (Massumi 1987, xvi). Elsewhere, Deleuze and Guattari have defined affect as "not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that

throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 240). We should again not confuse affects with feelings of care, such as the feelings personal feelings between members of a family (Deleuze and Guattari, 246). Instead, affects belong to the pack. They belong to a multiplicity defined by its movement, its power, and its heterogeneity. Affects are capacities to act in the world, to affect and the openness to being affected. Again, Deleuze and Guattari contrast affects with feelings. "Affect is the active discharge of emotion, the counterattack, whereas feeling is an always displaced, retarded, resisting emotion" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 400). Here, affect comes to be synomymous with the power to affect and be affected, and feeling, by contrast, is the rejection, the displacement of desire. Affect is desire made productive.

How does this relate back to the machinic assemblage of a political group? Why is affect so important here? It is because the group cannot come together on the basis of rational argumentation or interest alone. On the contrary, it is only when affects and intensities, the abilities of the various components of the group (and this reaches well beyond their human members to include the general pragmatics of being together in the world, to the milieu in which they come together and act) align and become complementary that we can see a becoming-pack or becoming-multitude, to fashion a term from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as well as Hardt and Negri (2000). These speeds and affects emerge from their own strata and are produced within their own machinic assemblages, and yet they can come to converge and reassemble on the "plane of consistency" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 258). The group is an assemblage in itself, an assemblage of desires, those desires that make one act in the world.

What we begin to see is that becoming-other, becoming-collectivity, comes not from imitation, identification, or experiencing feelings of sympathy (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 258).

What we see is that affects are the prepersonal powers that might come to flow through individuals in such a way that they might become complementary and give rise to a becoming-collectivity of all the members and social preconditions of the group. Thus, when we say that affects are necessary, in fact fundamental, to the formation of a radical political collectivity, we are saying that all the historical and material circumstances that make any becoming-collective possible must come to function through an assemblage that is held together, made consistent, by the complementary speeds and affects between the members (these need not be equal between all members and we should not expect this). Instead, we see people becoming collective through their collective action in the world, their desiring futures. Affect is the cement of bonds, and shared labor, shared struggle, is the generator of the affects with which we are most concerned here. Essentially, we are and have been concerned with a political ontology that takes the ethic of solidarity as its chief value. It is the value of the very becoming-collective that we are pursuing here.

Subjectless Groups – Thinking the (Non) Subject of Politics

As becomes clear in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, a primary political objective is still the formation of groups (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Guattari 1984), and yet these groups are not the subject groups of Sartre or, indeed, the groups based on a shared representational subjectivity as we have seen so far in identity politics. Indeed, to talk in terms of subjects is actually a mere matter of convenience. Deleuze and Guattari are emphatic in their rejection of the subject as a basis for a politics (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 168-173). However, for convenience we can talk about the formation of an actionable political assemblage as the formation of a group that is the subject of its politics. That is to say, the formation of a group, a collectivity, that produces by its own being and its own action and interaction with the whole

milieu of the social field, constitutes a political subject in that it makes the collective contribution of forces and affects to the making of new social futures synonymous with the multiplicity that undertakes these activities.

What is most important for breaking away from the limitations of representational thought is that these collectivities do not exist because of their relation to a third object, an objective or shared problem, or a shared social location *a la* standpoint theorists. They also do not exist to accomplish an objective or a project, though they may come to have such an agenda or project in mind. As we have seen from our discussion of the swerve of the *clinamen* (Althusser 2006) and the indeterminacy of the social field, defining politics, and indeed political formations, only by what their purported or sought end, is to remove the very materiality and indeed the politics from politics. It is to separate politics from its origins in the radical indeterminacy and irreversibility of the universe. Instead, we see that political groupings exist in and for themselves. They are machinic assemblages, held together by affects, speeds, intensities, and, indeed, affective devotion to concepts.

What we are talking about is the wealth of possibilities inherent in the forming of "subjectless groups," to borrow a term from Felix Guattari (1984). Subjectless groups are collectivities that emerge from and yet defy the logics of representational matrices. They are groups, in the Sartrean sense, in that they share not only a social location, a set of objective circumstances, but also a process of collectively becoming-agent. There is a functionality to becoming a group. Functionality should not be understood as conforming to the completion or operation of a pre-set objective. Instead, functionality here means something close to agency. It is taking part actively in the political processes in question. In the case of this study, the functionality distinguishing a group from a serial, defined here as an aggregate of people sharing

an objective circumstance of some kind, is that the interactions between people or between existing groups, produce new groupings. These new groupings will exhibit new affective relationships, webs of connection, and bonds of solidarity in ways and forms that are unexpected or that put existing ideological and representational frameworks in crisis. The functionality of a machinic assemblage of politics is in the capacity of such a grouping to produce new possibilities, to intervene productively in the world.

The other basic structural component of the concept of the subjectless group is obviously the question of what is means to be subjectless. In the previous chapter, I discussed the problems with various subjectivities and regimes of subjection, as well as problems with treating the subject as the center of political formations, but I have not given sufficient thought to what it might mean to be without a subject of politics. In this chapter, I have provided many of the conceptual tools, and an ontological framework, for thinking about a subjectless politics, but it is nonetheless important to elaborate upon what a subjectless group means in terms of content. To have a group with no subject means that the group, bearing all the features of coherence and functionality described above, lacks any representational figure or ideological system through which it codes the world and the people who come together to produce it. It is not that a subjectless group is an aggregate of self-interested individuals, binding themselves together for mutual interest. Instead, the subjectless group is a group that is formed out of the crucible of practice, out of encounter, connection, and common labor, a trait it shares with the contractual view, but which comes, in the course of its constitution, to form a new, emergent assemblage. The being-collective in the assemblage alters the ontological status of the parts of which it is made without overcoding them, without replacing extant codes and representative frameworks

with new ones, but nonetheless altering the meanings of the existing codes, representations, and ideological structures.

Put differently, we can say that the ideological accounts of the world, the representational matrices, are simultaneously products of power and producers of power, and the type of grouping we are describing here, by its very constitution, comes to challenge the ideological system or representational framework's conception of what a proper alliance, a proper bond, and a properly political community ought to be. This is, in itself, not revolutionary. The claims of refusal by any community that has been oppressed, marginalized, or exploited by a larger group that claims the community in question also constitute the same moment, the same formation of a group that challenges the subjective and representational matrices proposed by the formerly hegemonic group. What most often will happen, if the group hopes to reproduce and sustain itself, it will fall into the trap of identity; it will form a subjectivity to represent itself, and in that process, will reproduce the logic of exclusion, as well as the very logic of power that produced the original moment of refusal. However, what interests us here is the freedom, indeterminacy, and possibility opened up in the moment of refusal itself, before it slips back into the representation. In that moment, new possibilities for being collective are opened up. These moments constitute lines of flight, openings to new and better social and political worlds, that we cannot afford to ignore.

It is one of the two chief tasks of the empirical component of this study to examine the kinds of collectivities that are, at least provisionally and partially, formed in the moments of crisis and refusal of representational frameworks. The representational frameworks to be discussed will be both foisted upon the people with whom I spoke, as well as, and indeed, for our purposes here, more importantly, those representations our activist subjects have embraced and

have claimed as essential loci for their subjectivities. I will examine the moment of refusal, especially as it is connected to the formation of new connections and new groups that are incommensurable with the representational and ideological systems in which the participants places herself. These moments, these flashes of unnameable being-in-common, unrepresentable conviviality, are subjectless groups.

Before we reach the empirical analysis, however, it is important to consider what kind of examples I might look to from the literature upon which I have drawn. According to theorists contributing to the theoretical paradigm being constructed here, what are the types of subjectless groups formed in such a politics, and what is their relationship to the more conventional forms of politics that we might recognize as political parties, social movements, and community activist organizations? Casarino gives us an illuminating example of what he sees as a potential community—something that, it seems, becomes indistinguishable from a properly political collectivity, now having banished agendas, intentionality, political self-awareness, and, indeed, a representational locus as the prerequisite conditions for distinguishing a political group from a "serial," in the Sartrean parlance. For Casarino, this kind of community can be found in the example of homosexual love amidst sailors in the works of Herman Melville. He especially points toward the love that emerges between Queequeg and Ishmael aboard the Pequod in Melville's epic *Moby Dick*. For Casarino, it is from within the bowels (in the context of the ship this word takes on added significance) of capitalist social relations that the form of love, the form of being-in-common, exemplified by Queequeg and Ishmael comes into being (Casarino 2002, 153). However, the most important aspect of this form of being-in-common is its emergence within and simultaneous unintelligibility according to the parameters of capitalist social relations. It is a form of love for which Melville has no words. He only ever refers to it

obliquely, sometimes as an innuendo-laden warning to his intrepid but civilized readers about the sins of "Gomorrah" that "yet survive" within the hull of a ship (Casarino 2002, 37), where men are trapped together in tight spaces for extended periods of time. Casarino is at pains to point out, however, that he never specifically refers to what it is he is talking about, and indeed hems and haws (as innuendo is meant to do) between gesturing (and winking) toward something the reader knows and what the author cannot deign to say aloud. This is one aspect of the unsayability of the form of being-in-common that grows between Queequeq and Ishmael, the expression of (literally) unspeakable horror at the forms of community that can emerge out of the crucible of a set of social relations and yet are unintelligible, or illegible, to those social relations' codes for conduct and representation.

However, Casarino also points out that Melville sometimes refers to the feeling growing between Queequeg and Ishmael in terms that do not so readily reek of rank homophobia (though this may be an inappropriate term given what Casarino is arguing – that homosexuality, at this time and in Melville's vocabulary and consciousness is an unintelligible and unnamable form of love and interconnectedness) (Casarino 2002, 145). Melville also sometimes refers to the relations and affective, both physical and emotional, bonds between Queequeg and Ishmael in much less descriptive way, as shared looks, as feelings of great care between the two men, and as one of the men silently climbing into bed with the other (152-3). Little commentary is given to these scenes, and this, again, is precisely what Casarino wants to seize on. He argues that it is the very fact that Melville, whose texts are not short on verbiage, limits himself to suggestiveness and terse, unexplained description that constitutes the very kind of unsayability that constitutes a radical alternative to the present.

Clearly, we can begin to see that one of the potentially disturbing consequences of such a view of politics is that the politics we end up with is almost never the same as the politics we set out to achieve. Obviously, for many, such indeterminacy, such unpredictability constitutes a grounds for profound discouragement in the realm of politics. It suddenly becomes impossible to think of our politics as the inexorable or strategic movement towards a progressive future. To do politics becomes reduced to an ethical engagement with the world armed only with the hope of shaping the outcomes of the future. It is a politics with no guarantees

These conclusions, and the acceptance of the contingent, aleatory nature of political activity, and the idealist impossibility of a revolutionary-utopian politics in the classical sense does not mean that revolutionary or progressive politics must be banished from our minds or hearts. It does mean that the subjugation of the here and now for the benefit of the hypothetical future must end, and that the notion of schemes to make concrete the idealized future, the suppression of means to ends, must be jettisoned completely from our minds. We must act only on the hope that we do well, and indeed, we must act cautiously, soberly. A world with no guarantees is a world in which the ethic to do no harm must constantly haunt our every endeavor. However, the profound immiseration of the masses of humans across the planet, as well as the inexorable slide toward the rendering unlivable of the planet as a whole, force us into the ethical imperative to do something, to intervene with hope. We should not take the lack of guarantees or future utopias as an excuse to retreat into cynicism or conservatism.

Thus, the questions remains, what are the forms, practices, and spaces that we look to in our search for emancipatory (for the time being) politics? What we must aim for, what we must celebrate and cultivate, is new and unintelligible, revolutionary-in-themselves forms of being-in-common. What will these be? It seems to miss the point to ask for specific examples, as these

forms cannot be predicted, ahead of time. We can only say that there is no model. Only the encounter itself, the intervention and the swerve, can tell what futures politics holds. What we will attempt, however, is an engagement with the world of real-world phenomena in order to perhaps gain some insight into the forms of political being-in-common that are possible in the moments of crisis and refusal. The chapters to follow will shift away from theoretical meditation and argument and will attempt to apply the insights gained here to understanding real interactions between activists, especially when those interactions produce a crisis in the very subjectivities upon which activists and organizations pin their political legitimacy.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

When determining the nature of the methodology of this study—and, indeed, of any study—we must understand several things about the nature of the project itself. It is necessary to consider the demands of the research questions, considering the methods and techniques most appropriate to answer these questions. It is also necessary to consider the ethical and political questions raised by the conduct of the particular study in question and using the methods under consideration. Third, we must consider the interplay of the methodology with the type of argument being made and the theoretical perspectives being employed. To this end, it is also necessary to think about methodology in terms of the overall intent and approach of the project. The methods, while fundamentally utilitarian, cannot be treated solely as functional means to some particular end, in this case, the answering of the research questions. The methods chosen must also be in keeping with the spirit of the project. To put each of these interests in harmony with one another is a very difficult task, and I will use much of this chapter to explain my attempts, and, indeed, my failures, to accomplish all these tasks and put them in conjunction with one another.

While many of the broader epistemological issues raised by this study, concerning its general purpose and the conceptualization of what I am calling the methods of spacing and mapping have been addressed in the introductory chapter of this study, the focus of this chapter will be the actual conduct of this study. It will contain two major sections. The first main section

of this chapter contains a description of the fieldwork methods themselves. The bulk of this section will concentrate on the primary research method employed, semi-structured interviews. I will describe the structure of the interviews and include a brief discussion of the thinking that contributed to the development of the particular interview format. Participant observation will be described in the next section. This section will largely be comprised of a defense of the appropriateness and value of the participant observations included in the study. Finally, textual analysis will be discussed, including a summary of the type of materials studied as well as a discussion of the purpose this work is intended to play in the research process.

The second section of this chapter, by contrast, will narrow its focus to an analysis of power dynamics, privacy issues, and quandaries encountered in the construction and execution of the methodology. The role of social power in research is considered more fully than in the introductory chapter. The discussion addresses the responsibility of the researcher for acknowledging that power, as well as attempting to undermine, alter, or at least ameliorate the effects of the unequal power dynamics inherent in research. This section of the chapter addresses the manner in which social power actually manifested itself in the research process, as well as discussing the attempts made to address and undermine it. This section primarily concerns itself with the issues of researcher positionality and the conduct of progressive research. Specific hopes and failures regarding the application of progressive principles in the way in which this research was conducted will be discussed in this section. The discussion of privacy issues primarily entails a brief description of the protocols undertaken to protect the identities of the study respondents, including a discussion of how these protocols affect the presentation of the results.

Fieldwork Methods

The fieldwork activities that comprised the empirical element of this study are:

- Seventeen semi-structured interviews with women and men active in self-described reproductive justice organizations. These women were affiliated with various organizations, including the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, SPARK Reproductive Justice Now, the Feminist Women's Health Center, and Planned Parenthood. While twenty respondents were originally sought, time constraints and other logistical hurdles made it necessary to lower the threshold of respondents. However, because the interpretive interview process was not designed to produce statistical generalities or content saturation, the analysis contained in the study is not harmed by the failure to obtain the desired population size.
- Participant observations at reproductive justice activities, including training and discussion workshops, lobbying sessions, public rallies, and a national conference of reproductive justice activists.
- Textual analysis. This includes studying the published literature produced by SisterSong, SPARK, and other associated reproductive justice organizations. The materials are primarily newspapers, issue briefs, activist handbooks, and literature distributed at conferences, rallies, or other events. In all cases, the literature analyzed in the results section is "movement literature", meant primarily to provide guidance or analysis for activists, information and summaries of issues for uninitiated participants at rallies and other mass events, or exhortations calling for engagement or action around issues.

Interviews

Interviews provide the opportunity to elicit from activists themselves their perspectives on the need for differing conceptions of identity, standing, justice, and other concepts that require explanation and which lend themselves to interpretation. Attempting to seek out the perspectives of women of color on these topics can be seen as an attempt to give empirical primacy to the voice and experiences of women of color, rather than having a researcher articulate a particular standpoint or "exemplary narrative" *for* women of color (Butler 1990, 1993). Indeed the central problematic of this study is that the attempt to articulate or produce a single, coherent standpoint that can be characterized as *the* standpoint of a particular race, gender, or class is an exercises in authoritarianism of the kind that intersectional analysis is meant to upset (Naples 2003; Devault 1999). Thus, the structure of the interview is meant to elicit the participants' own definitions of their identity, the relevance, if any, of their identity to their politics, and the worldview that emerges from their sense of self.

Interviews were conducted in a highly conversational style. The advantage of this approach was three-pronged. First, this allows for feedback in interpretation, or something of an empirical check. Second, this produced a process in which the respondent is made an agent of the interview rather than an object of interpretation. Third, this approach exemplified an attempt to mitigate the unequal power relations that permeate the research process. Because the power relations ultimately privilege the status of the researcher, as it is the researcher who initiates the process, controls it, it is necessary to make attempts at providing opportunities for the respondent to intervene actively to redirect the process.

The interviews could best be described as semi-structured, in that there was a general plan for their conduct and a basic set of questions to be asked. However, there was no hard or

defined interview guide with a set of specific questions that needed to be answered in each interview. Questions were open-ended and structured to provide opportunities for follow-up, thereby allowing the interview process to operate more as a conversation in which knowledge is produced and enhanced cooperatively (Maguire 1987). This is in contrast to the practice of trying to force out choices from pre-given sets of answers with which the interview participant may or may not identify or agree. Instead, the way that the processes of spacing and mapping unfold is to allow the respondent to provide the content that will be spaced, critiqued, and deconstructed by asking a series of open-ended biographical questions. The critique is accomplished by asking the respondent to then question and deconstruct her own experiences and to examine the ways in which ideological suturing has occurred through the marginalization of particular relationships or events in the conceptual, representational schema that is developed in the opening section of the interview.

Interviews began with by providing the interviewee an opportunity to determine the basic parameters of relevant information for the rest of the interview. The interviewer asked the interviewee to discuss her background and current activist work. The interviewee was asked how she came to be involved with her current activist projects, how she developed her perspective on politics, and what experiences in her life have played an important role in leading her toward the current activities in which she participates. Part of the advantage here is that the respondent is put in the position of determining for herself what is most relevant in her experience. She is asked to define her own identity and to elaborate her own worldview about the connections, if any, between identity, ideology, and politics. Interviewees were asked to discuss what if any role their conception of their identity plays in their politics. These points of

discussion allow for the interviewee to provide a conceptual landscape, the terrain of content from which the critical, interrogative component of the interview can proceed.

Participants were recruited through a modified form of snowball sampling. Many interviewees were recruited during participant observations. During the scheduling process preceding the interview or in the immediate aftermath, participants were asked if they would consider forwarding the research participant solicitation to other members of their respective organizations or to any other activist colleagues.

I do not claim the interview population of seventeen to be a statistically representative sample of the views and perspectives of reproductive justice activists. It is, instead, an interpretive report of conversations and discussions that I have had with various reproductive justice activists about their conception of identity, its relationship to their politics, and its penchant for instability. I also elected not to employ coding software or other methods for assessing saturation or agreement. Because the process itself, the chain of thought, the moment of representational crisis and refusal, constitutes the empirical text in which I was interested, there is little value to assessing the level of agreement between interviewees or, likewise, the adoption of certain discourses by interviewees. The interview itself was constructed in such a way as to allow the interview participant to fill in the subject matter, to set the content terrain for herself, and, thus, no standard set of questions were asked, nor was there any expected or standard set of discourses in which I was interested. To look for generality or saturation in a context in which the goal is specifically to allow for vastly different notions of identity to develop and then to critique even these discourses is to miss the point entirely. The goal is to demonstrate a common crisis within the narrative of a prominent political theory and to provide empirical content to contribute to a debate about the meaning of that crisis.

The primary reason for the reliance on interviews is to allow for the richness of personal experience and the ability to take a critical stance toward dominant discourses and bring out things I believe are underappreciated or unnoticed in our lives and politics. At this level, the use of interviews is simply utilitarian and scientific. These would allow me to gain the information I sought more effectively than any other method at my disposal. However, the other reason is less scientific and more motivated by ethical concerns. As I have said, interviews, more than any other method, restrict my ability to overcode and interpret the statements of respondents. Furthermore, this method allows for greater intensity of encounter, and of sharing perspectives between people. The possibility for intersubjectivity and affective bonds to emerge between myself and research participants is far greater in interviews than in participant observations.

Participant Observations

Participant observations allow for the opportunity to witness two types of interactions. First, there are active events that contribute to the formation of an identity discourse. Such events include speeches and marches, signs articulating a particular perspective on an issue. In all these cases, an effort is being made to establish a hegemonic discourse about the particular issue in question. While efforts may be made to prevent domination of a particular viewpoint or to promote the sharing of viewpoints among equals, logocentric communication, including the bulk of intentional politics, conversation, and writing constitute a hegemonic discursive intervention into social activity. Thus, we see the attempt to articulate identity and its proper relationship to politics in the context of intentional political activities such as marches, speeches, didactic training sessions, and even in the context of discussion groups and workshops. Participating in these observations with the analytic of the study in mind provides valuable

insight into the practice of forming identities and attempting to enforce them for political discipline.

A second type of interaction that is witnessed via participant observations is the transgression of the boundaries produced by the first. It is through the events, the collective activities, even if they are didactic in nature, that bonds between people are struck that render irrelevant the very identity discourses being actively produced in the context of the training session, the march, the rally, the demonstration. It is through these moments of collective labor, of collective being, that new hybrids emerge, subjectivities without subjects and without identities. The documentation of these moments is invaluable for making the argument of this study.

Textual Analysis

Textual analysis provides an important counterpoint to the varied, dynamic, and shifting perspectives collected in the interviews. Writing is necessarily an exercise in hegemony. When one voice is frozen in writing, it becomes self-contained, authoritative. In the case of movement literature, the analytic goal of my reading is to develop an understanding of the authoritative voices, the exhortations to singular perspective, that make up the ideological terrain through which the dynamic and conflicted voices featured in the interviews make their way. I have drawn on the field of critical discourse analysis as the basis for my analytic reading technique. Critical discourse analysis is a method of reading that focuses simultaneously on two main tasks. First, it consists of identifying key discourses that hold together the logical narrative of the text. It seeks, through identification of key narratives and themes, to understand the overall ideological structure of a text (Devault 1999; Fairclough and Holes 1995; Wodak and Meyer 2001). Second, critical discourse analysis modifies the preceding reading with a special

emphasis and attention paid to the operation of social power both in the text itself and in the reading (Van Dijk 1993; Naples 2003; Lazar 2005). I have also drawn on rhetorical criticism for understanding the ways in gender and social power are woven into texts and arguments (Foss 1996). In contrast to the over-arching epistemological-methodological stance of spacing and immanent critique, the use of critical discourse analysis serves as a technique for reading texts. It is thus one technique for the practice of the larger project of immanent critique.

The use of archival research is necessary for understanding the ways that the discourse and representational politics of women of color has been articulated in the face of reproductive repression. It is also necessary to contextualize the development of reproductive justice politics and the production of a "woman of color" subjectivity as a response to real problems. Thus, I have not treated movement literature as merely propaganda to be disturbed, but as powerful artifacts explaining the oppression of women of color through the developing lens of reproductive justice politics. It would be unwise and short-sighted to ask reproductive justice activists to explain their perspectives on the confluence of identity and politics, and to deconstruct these views, without understanding of the ideological and social context in which the particular views of these activists emerged and were first crystallized.

Comparing and contrasting the published materials of the organization with the personal stories and perspectives gleaned from the interviews will provide perhaps the most important insight into the ways that the organization articulates "women of color" as a political subjectivity and identity category and the ways that individual women working within the organization understand their own subjectivity and relationship to the national organization, to their own local organization, and to other members of national associations. In the case of this study, the textual materials used to generate a sense of the ideological background in which activists exist and

develop their own perspectives included the newsletter publications of SisterSong, SPARK, the Committee on Women, Population, and the Environment, INCITE!, and other groups. Activist handbooks and issue briefs were analyzed as well for a sense of the competing discursive frameworks of identity and its relationship to politics contained in each. Finally, flyers, advertisements for events, brochures about issues and events, and even posters and speeches at events constituted valuable material for textual analysis.

Practical and Epistemological Issues with Qualitative Research

It is clear that, at some level, the methodology included here is a qualitative methodology of a rather conventional variety. The demands of the research questions generate such a methodological approach for the purely pragmatic reason that these techniques and methods are best suited to answer the research questions. However, I do have political, ethical, and epistemological commitments beyond the purely utilitarian. In the following section, I will discuss these commitments and the ways in which I have tried—and, unfortunately, sometimes failed—to address them and integrate them into the conduct of research. I will also address some of the critiques of qualitative research from feminist and post-colonial perspectives and discuss how I attempted to take these critiques seriously and mitigate the effects of social power in the conduct of this study.

The methodology of this study is characterized by a number of processes, including asking questions, recording statements and interactions, observing, and evaluating the information being gleaned. These are all characteristic elements of a qualitative methodology, such as ethnography. In the case of this study, however, I contend that the qualitative methodology employed is not primarily an ethnography, but a qualitative and empirical intervention into a set of theoretical questions.

The study's methodology is more a process of spacing and mapping, a method of reading diverse texts ranging from briefing books to interviews, in order to map out a set of social relations and political processes that are present but currently underappreciated. It is also a tentative and provisional process. I attempt to engage interview participants in critiques of their own experiences and to begin making an argument for alternative forms of community and networks of political connection. However, the critique is initiated from my own interests and through my own intervention, even as I attempt to enlist the respondent in the process. I am limited by the respondent's own level of participation, by the content she produces, but the direction and intent, as well as the primary interpretive perspective come from me. It is thus not a fully collective or participatory process, even as I might have liked it to be. It is also a perspective that is partial, rooted in my own experience.

Perhaps more accurately, the empirical content of the fieldwork elements of this study are artifacts of a process of intersubjective consciousness. Full intersubjectivity between myself and interview respondents was never achieved, and indeed I have doubts about the possibility of such a total melding of minds, but it would be incorrect to characterize the empirical analysis of this study as solely a product of my own subjective experience and perspective. Instead, it is a product of my subjectivity interacting in a critical and dynamic but always limited way with the subjectivities of others, being tempered and affected by these interactions, and producing partial but hardly subjective views on complex phenomena. The process of mapping alternative social arrangements is similarly partial and provisional, but it would be unfair to characterize it as conjecture emanating from my own subjectivity, projecting my opinions and views onto others. It indeed begins with my own developing views but then is affected, altered, and reshaped by the encounter with the experiences of others.

I have tried to conceive of the methodology of this project keeping in mind that in the process of empirical fieldwork, we can only access the consciousnesses and perspectives of others in limited and indirect ways, and we can only interpret the information we receive through analytic lenses that, however self-critical, are rooted and generated from within our own experience. Thus, perspective is always limited, and must be acknowledged as such. I have also attempted to keep in mind that the process of writing about someone else's experiences is a social act, and it is interconnected with the whole regime of social power. To write someone's experience is to represent that person and to engage in the political project of knowledge production, and this can never be free of social power. It must instead attempt to acknowledge the operation of negative forms of social power and mitigate its effects. If possible, it may even be possible to engage in a progressive or liberatory political act in the process of knowledge production. Third, I have attempted to keep in mind that the methodology is not purely utilitarian or functional. It should not only attempt to answer the questions but to engage in the spirit of the argument, to exemplify in practice the type of process that is theorized. It is for these reasons that I have attempted to do what I can to temper the utilitarian decision to conduct a qualitative project with other considerations, such as modesty, justice, and equity.

Social Power and Progressive Research

The reason for the change in intent, from conventional ethnography to something more open-ended and partial in perspective, is my appreciation for the feminist and post-colonial (Mohanty 1991; Spivak 2004; Wainwright 2008) critiques of conventional forms of ethnography as a colonizing form of knowledge production. Trauger and Fluri describe what Haraway refers to as the "god trick" (Haraway 2008) in the following terms: "The god trick is an epistemology that uses the social location of the researcher (that being external to and allegedly above the

researched) to evaluate and determine what will become accepted knowledge" (Trauger and Fluri, forthcoming). This process, the tendency for the researcher's perspective to become knowledge while the researched's perspective merely contributes to that knowledge, is a hard tendency to overcome.

Trauger and Fluri point toward various attempts by researchers to overcome the god trick by turning to approaches such as participatory methodologies. They describe these methodologies as moving "beyond a simple statement of positionality or a desire to build intersubjective social relations to handing over the entire knowledge production process to the research, and allowing the research participants to identity what counts as legitimate knowledge" (Trauger and Fluri, forthcoming). This type of research presents a particularly enthusiastic embrace of the call for research to be more than a utilitarian tool for the answering of questions according to the researcher's own standards (and the standards of others in the academic community). However, as Trauger and Fluri demonstrate, the methods associated with participatory research are not without limits and they are incapable in and of themselves of overcoming the position of social power and privilege occupied by researchers in relation to the researched.

In this research, I have attempted, as much as was possible, to take seriously the critiques of qualitative methodologies and ethnography and to open up the process to feedback and critique from the respondents. It is for this reason that I have concentrated my fieldwork on one-on-one interviews and have limited the questions I asked to two, open-ended and thematic questions. I have also attempted to engage in a conversational interview, speaking to the respondent about my interpretations of their statements as they were occurring. This was meant to allow both feedback about the accuracy of my interpretations, as well as to generate

opportunities for intersubjectivity. By sharing my mind and perspective as the respondents also shares hers, we share a glimpse into each other's subjectivity that is not possible with traditional methodological approaches.

Perhaps what is most important is that we always attempt to avoid reification of the researcher's subjectivity and perspective. While methods developed in the field of feminist participatory research, can perhaps point a way forward to a general approach to methodology that is more just, equitable, and collective, it seems that it should be possible to mitigate the colonizing effect of the god trick by frankly acknowledging the researcher's partiality and positionality, as well as the areas where the research process becomes collective and where it fails to do so. It should be possible to generate moments, glimpses, of intersubjectivity in the process of research, though the manner in which these will be reported and analyzed will be limited by the perspective of the researcher. Haraway has described the intent with which we ought to approach research as trying to acknowledge that the act of knowing is always a partial act from a partial perspective, but that the engagement with others allows for the possibility to see and know alongside another, sharing the process and perhaps generating a space in which we can share a view, without trying to occupy the positionality of the other (Haraway 2008).

In the process of this research, I have attempted to modify the techniques and mitigate the effects of power and privilege where possible. However, I do not claim to have transcended them. I also make no claim to have engaged in any meaningful way in participatory research methodologies in the conduct of this study. I do claim, however, that the methodology described in this chapter represents an earnest attempt to mitigate the effects of power and privilege, to open up the processes of recording and evaluation to criticism and feedback from respondents, and to generate opportunities for building intersubjectivity and aleatory forms of community

between myself and the research participants. These attempts are in addition to my commitment to a methodology that enables me to obtain the empirical information necessary to answer my research questions, as well as one that puts the ethical conduct of research and the safety and confidentiality of participants ahead of any other concerns.

The research methodology represents a suturing and a binding together, the attempted formation of a hybrid, of many perspectives. For my own part, my perspective is a mixture of attempts at objectivity, intersubjectivity, and subjectivity. I would venture that the single voice of the text is in fact a particular coalescence of multiple perspectives that are pulled together into a singular as a response to the demands of writing. While I have attempted to include block quotes where possible to convey the context and flow of the respondents' statements, I have also ultimately privileged my perspective. No quote is included without some analytics commentary, and indeed the choice about what section of a respondent's statements to use and how to interpret is mine alone. However, it is also clear that my own voice is not singular. I am not a stable, unchanging "author" who objectively (or, for that matter, subjectively, as decisions were not made capriciously or without regard to the standards of scholarship or the demands and expectations of respondents and readers) determines what is relevant and analyzes without personal or partial perspective. However, the attempt to be able to do such a thing, to maintain a distanced and critical stance, is one of the influences and voices in my own head who permeates this work.

My questions were not developed, nor was my theoretical paradigm produced, with the assistance or direction of the people I studied, but it was inspired by my own readings of my interactions with them. Thus, it is unquestionably a partial perspective and is not a participatory project. My own voice and contribution is an admixture of perspectives. The finished product of

the thesis is really only an artifact of a set of movements and developments that happen within and without me. Indeed, the "I" whose name is on this piece is also an artifact of such movements and changes. It is a matter of convenience. In the matter of a particular perspective, a stable positionality, or a particular epistemological stance, the thesis and my voice within it are an artifact of a simultaneity or multiple developing trajectories. It is simultaneously objective, subjective, and intersubjective. It is also none of these.

While the critique of objectivity as a "god trick" and an attempted view from nowhere holds firm, and I take it very seriously, I nonetheless believe we can attempt a partial objectivity, an embodied critical stance. Indeed, in Haraway's piece in which she calls objectivity a "god trick" she does not simply advocate a subjective turn. She advocates a more humble attempt at critical perspective, an embodied, placed, and partial view. This is a greater objectivity, according to Haraway (2008). This argument by Haraway indicates that while we are in good company and on solid ground in dismissing claims to objectivity as a god trick, we must nonetheless resist the attempt to fetishize our own view, to treat subjective experience as the end point of epistemology. In this piece, I have attempted to integrate this view into my own writing and into the empirical field work process, asking interview respondents to join me in this process of self-reflection and critique. My understanding of Haraway's criticism of the god trick is that we must strive for a critical stance that is open and partial, that admits its subjective origins even as it tries to overcome them in its own way.

Positionality and Affective Encounters

Prior to the beginning of research, it was extremely important to make a concerted and serious reckoning with the issue of my positionality, as a researcher and as a person. My status as a young, white man occupying the relatively privileged class position of university researcher

often places me in a position of power in relation to those whom I am interested in studying. I necessarily engage in the representation of people's experiences and ideas through the conduct of this research. It was thus incumbent upon me as an ethical researcher and an ally to take every consideration I possible in order to ameliorate the exercise of unequal power dynamics. It is not possible to *eliminate* the power dynamic of researcher-researched, nor is it possible for me to wish away my positionality (indeed, it might be considered a mark of privilege that one could blithely consider such a thing). However, it is possible to acknowledge the partiality and "situatedness" (Haraway 2008) of any knowledge I (along with those I have interviewed and observed) produce, to acknowledge my positionality, and to continually engage reflexively with both persistent and emergent power dynamics during the conduct of research to make certain that I do not abuse the power dynamics in which I find myself privileged. All research must be understood as "contextual, relational, embodied, and politicized" (Sultana 2007).

I would also emphasize, however, that while an acknowledgement of my positionality, my own reading of my various social locations and my subjective expectation of others' readings of me, is important to understanding the way in which the research methodology was constructed and executed, it is not in keeping with the critical spirit of this project to leave the issue there. Indeed, I would emphasize that positionalities are never stable, social locations are certainly real, but they are components of assemblages that can be reconfigured and reprioritized in different ways. The argument of this study, that humans engaged in politics form subjectless groups that transgress axes of social power and transform them, does not claim to destroy those axes or to render them meaningless. On the contrary, it is not a transcendent process, with people "overcoming" their prior subjectivities, a process that in reality would likely take the form of

hegemonic forces within a bloc or group are able to articulate a discourse that elides difference in favor of unity and calls this transcendence.

The process I describe is rather an immanent process in which differences and heterogeneity are completely maintained but are reassembled into a new configuration in which they do not pose a barrier to continued political production. If differences begin to fray the affects necessary for such a group to exist, then the group ceases to exist. Even if actors within the group are able to save the group in name through articulation of a representational hegemony, the original affective assemblage has been overcoded with new levels of stratification and has been hardened into something quite unlike what it originally was. In addition, the argument of this paper is that one can transform one's positionality without denying it, forming new assemblages that do not disregard race, class, gender, and representational signifiers and axes of social power, but transition them into something rather different.

In the context of this piece's methodology, then, I have the task of both acknowledging the role my social location and positionality plays while simultaneously recognizing that through the work of the research I am likely to be affected and changed by my interactions with those I studied. They will also be affected and changed by their interactions with me. It is epistemologically impossible to see an alternative in which I might engage with people in a critical, examining manner and not cause changes in both the research subjects and myself.

I was also affected by the course of our discussions and by my engagement in the politics of reproductive justice. My criticism of identity politics and my proposal of an analytic quite different in the course of this project emerged from my encounters with the arguments of Deleuze and Guattari, which I found compelling, but more importantly, from my encounters with the women I had set out to study. The research had originally been geared toward an analysis of

the way discursive frameworks, specifically "empty signifiers" (Laclau 1996) are employed in the construction of political collectivities and in the harmonizing of incommensurable discourses. Much of this interest is still evident in the sections of the argument and the fieldwork that report deployments of identity discourses in strategic ways designed to produce a hegemonic narrative about a political conflict. However, as I spent time both with new texts and with the activists and organizers in the reproductive justice movement, I became more interested in the affects and non-representational groupings I saw emerging between others and myself and between activists of different ideological stripes and identity groups. I began to think that a project oriented more toward rethinking our theories of how political solidarity comes to be would perhaps be more informative, interesting, and provocative than a project focused on the discursive uses of identity. Such a project also called for a more intensive and intersubjective engagement with the activists whom I studied than would have been the case with a study of the way identity is strategically built and deployed.

Choosing a Methodology – Hopes and Failures

While the project was already underway using a rather conventional qualitative methodology, I hoped I could tweak this process somewhat in order to find ways to feature the knowledge production of research participants in more direct form and to temper the larger work with it. When determining the methodology of this study, I attempted to work from a set of basic principles placed in descending order of importance. The methodology required needs to meet our most basic requirement for methods: do they allow us to meet our ends? In the case of a research method, then, we must first and foremost find ways of intervening that allow us to find the information we seek, to answer the questions we pose. In the case of this study, we must be able to discern misalignments, if they exist, of personal experience with larger identity-based

social frameworks. We must also be able to find evidence, if it exists, of affective bonds emerging that challenge the very representational frameworks activists and their organizations purport to espouse. Such a methodological requirement is utilitarian and must be foremost in our mind, as it is logically prior to any other considerations, no matter how important they may be. We might ask what good it would do to construct a methodology that meets many other requirements and goals (justice, equity, participation, etc.) but would not allow us to answer our questions?

The second element of the methodology that is called for by the research questions is the element of ethics. Superior to any other concerns when choosing a particular methodological approach over another, assuming the methodologies are relevant to answering the questions at hand, must be our ethical obligations to our subjects. Ethics at this level begin from the basic conviction that once I as the researcher have begun to intervene in the world in order to enlist others in my inquiries I have the responsibility to ensure that no harm comes to the participant as a result of her participation in the study. Thus, the basis for research ethics must first be a negative proposition, the conviction not to do harm. In this study, I have attempted to avoid doing any harm by protecting the confidentiality of the activists with whom I spoke, by ensuring their trust is well placed. I have also attempted to avoid overdetermining responses by limiting my questions, only asking open-ended questions and similarly open-ended follow-ups. I attempted to only set specific limits on what respondents might answer or say during questions that served the exclusive purpose of clarification of a prior point or statement.

Only after we have taken this charge seriously can we seriously begin thinking about the ways in which a methodology can be mobilized and recalibrated in such a way as constitute a political progressive project in its own right. One manner in which this by destabilizing power

relations, making research a more socially just activity, or using the process of research to enlist the participants – and to allow participants to enlist the researcher – in projects that meet their needs more directly than the products of either the researcher's intellectual interests or the demands of academic production.

In this study, I allowed the first two levels of methodological consideration to crowd out and stifle a full engagement with the third. This happened in spite of promising events and turns in the fieldwork process that could have made for a more robust uptake of a more public methodology. There were a number of reasons for this. First and foremost, the demands and disciplining factors of academic production do not lend themselves well to the production of such projects. It is my contention that the demands of producing a master's thesis lend themselves to this project even more poorly than do other forms of academic production. The shortened time frame in which the empirical research must be accomplished overlaps to a large extent with the time in which the literature must be read and the theoretical paradigm and argument developed. This leads to a scenario in which it is common for the argument to change during the course of the research to a degree that is seriously problematic.

Another problem encountered during the conduct of this research was the failure to build intersubjectivity with all the participants. I cannot provide a general account of the reasons for the success or failure of every attempt to build intersubjectivity between myself and research participants, as well as with those who did not ultimately agree to participate. While certain levels of mistrust and lack of affinity likely resulted from structural factors, such as different racial and cultural backgrounds, and different genders, there were other issues that hampered the effort to generate intersubjectivity. One of these issues was a lack of alignment between my own interests and skills and the research-related needs of the organizations with whom I worked.

Another issue was the general ineffectiveness of the snowball sampling method I employed to garner research subjects. The method relied too heavily on open solicitations sent through email lists. While I had originally relied on the organizational structures of certain groups to put me in contact with participants, unexpected leadership and staff changes in certain of the organizations caused a rupture in this conduit for the recruitment of research participants that I was unable to repair during the short timeframe of the fieldwork.

The failure to manage to form a truly participatory process of research is a result of several factors. First, the disciplinary demands of academic production made for an inopportune environment for this project. This is not true of all academic production, but it is true of the truncated timeline characteristic of thesis writing. The initial project had already been initiated when the greater sets of questions began to percolate and the ability to develop a methodology that accords to a greater extent with the theoretical move toward subjectless groups was simply not possible in the timeframe I had. Another reason for this failure, and it is at least partially a result of the first reason, is the failure to build intersubjectivity with research participants. While intersubjectivity did emerge, and affects sprang up, between certain research participants and myself, I did not allow the lack of intersubjectivity or rapport to prevent me from attempting to collect information and analyze it. Where I had reason to believe that there was mistrust or apprehension on the part of a respondent I have tried to lessen the analytic weight I placed on their perspective, not because they might disagree with me, but because my failure to generate intersubjective perspective greatly raises the risk of misinterpretation and misrepresentation. I have also attempted to place greater evidentiary and analytical importance on interviews than on participant observations and textual analyses, because these allowed for greater feedback on interpretation from respondents and a greater level of affinity and intersubjectivity to emerge.

I avoided thinking of my research in activist terms simply because I am not convinced of the value of research as an activity that lends itself well to explicit political changes. Furthermore, in early conversations with various reproductive justice activists in which I asked them what kind of research they were interested in seeing, it became clear that my particular skills and approach are not especially well suited to the demands of organizing or the expectations of practical politics. While I had set out to do some critical inquiry on an issue of theory with an engagement with empirics, my interests and my skills are not suited to quantitative opinion polls, sociological diagnoses of economic or social problems, or prescriptions for public policy solutions. Perhaps this is an indictment of political and social theory as a whole, or it could be a simple division of labor, with people having different talents and interests each attempting to contribute in their own way. Given this, I was presented with a choice. I could take a more active and assertive role in forming my research questions and using methods that are more conventional and qualitative in collecting information necessary to answer those questions. Alternatively, I could simply move on and attempt to engage the same theoretical issues with a different empirical milieu, abandoning my own interest in reproductive justice politics. Another alternative would be to abandon the theoretical engagement altogether, attempting to develop skills that lent themselves more readily to opinion polling and social science, and hoping to contribute in another way at another time. I chose the first of these.

Moreover, it seemed rather clear to me that the activists I met hardly needed my assistance in organizing them or pushing them toward some particular goal. I hoped to use my theoretical intervention to contribute to a rethinking on the way in which we understand the relations between people that constitute the basis for political activity. However, this is necessarily a rather abstract topic and has little direct utility for the day-to-day practice of

politics. My contribution to the political projects and to the lives of those who contributed their thoughts and their time to the research has been rather separate from any attempt to somehow integrate the actual research project I was conducting with a concomitant political project. However, I have contributed my labor and my support. I have stood at rallies and protests, listened at conferences, gone to training sessions, and lobbied legislators on behalf of the issues I supported, often right alongside those who contributed their thoughts to this study. However, I served as only one actor in a larger collective agency, and my leadership in trying to direct or organize these experienced activists would have been unnecessary, presumptuous, arrogant, and intrusive.

Confidentiality Issues

A key methodological consideration of this study concerns issues of confidentiality and the privacy of research participants. I have taken pains to effectively code the information and statements of all participants who desire to have their identities and personal information protected. In addition to maintaining required protocols for the protection of the identities of respondents, the sensitivity of the information conveyed by participants and the method of recruitment made even more important the diligent execution and maintenance of procedures for the protection of participant privacy. Because participants were, for the most part, recruited through a combination of open email lists and listserv solicitations complemented by forwarding of solicitations to potentially interested parties by those who had received the initial solicitation, the forwarding of solicitations presented a potential problem for the protection of respondent privacy. Although not everyone who forwarded a solicitation took part in the study, it might nonetheless be assumed by those who received forwarded solicitations that the acquaintance from whom they received the solicitation was a participant in the study.

Because of the potential breach of confidentiality associated with snowball sampling method of recruitment it was necessary to take additional measures in the writing of the results and analysis to avoid making indirect identification of participants possible. It has been necessary to make additional measures to obscure the identities of participants where their statements are discussed or featured in the results and analysis section in order to ensure that fellow participants and non-participants who may have received forwarded solicitations would not be able to deduce a participant's identity based on the quotes and information included here.

Given these concerns and conditions, protecting research participants' identities requires more than merely assigning pseudonyms. Rather, indirect identifiers, such as a participant's race, age, location, or organizational affiliation, have only been included where they are directly relevant to the statements being analyzed. For this reason, it will be uncommon in the reporting of results to find descriptive profiles of participants accompanying quotes. Even where quotes are taken from the same respondent, but are included in different sections and regarding different topics, I have not noted that the quotes come from the same person unless it is directly relevant to the issue at hand. All these precautions are attempts to prevent any unintentional disclosure of confidential information. I have constructed these protections according to the dictum that, even if a reader guessed that an acquaintance had taken part in the study, the reader would not be able to link their acquaintance's identity with any information unless the reader already knew that information about the respondent beforehand. Additionally, even if a clever or inquisitive reader were able to link a quote with the identity of an acquaintance, having already known the information contained in the quote, the reader would still not be able to link any later quotes with the identity of the same respondent, as the quotes themselves have not been explicitly linked except where expressly necessary to convey the point at issue.

Details about the lives of participants have been concealed and identities have been in order to make certain that, even if a fellow participant might be able to guess that an acquaintance had taken part in the study, it would be extremely difficult to match the statements included in the synthesized project with a particular person's identity. This level of discretion and dedication to confidentiality were especially important given the profound level of trust and candor with which research participants approached the interview process. Participants readily, and without direct solicitation, revealed very personal and sensitive information about themselves and their experiences during the interview process. Making certain that such trust and confidence is well rewarded constitutes the most serious and compelling of obligations for this study.

In the reporting of the results, this approach to confidentiality has resulted in a certain fracturing of the stories and statements of the people who contributed to this study. It is unfortunately not possible to include whole stories with matching descriptions of the people who told them. Instead, it has been necessary to include stories and parts of stories somewhat disconnected from their broader contexts and from the people who told them. This occasionally results in something of a composite effect in the representation of the research participants. It was not my intention to dissolve research participants' views into a series of composite characters; nor was it my intention to overcode information in order to provide a coherent narrative. Wherever possible, such techniques have been avoided. Nonetheless, where there was a risk of unintentional identification I have consistently erred on the side of caution and the protection of confidentiality.

Chapter 4

Results and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter reports and discusses various interventional tests of the validity of the critique offered in the chapter on theory. The empirical components of this study, more than just providing some depth and nuance to the abstract propositions and arguments made in the chapter on theory, provide a way to engage real, existing humans in the process of testing the validity of the original hypothesis of solidarity framing reproductive justice activities. As has been argued in previous sections of this study, every political movement develops a particular hegemonic hypothesis for the nature of solidarity. Such a hypothesis is implied if not always explicitly stated. In every case, a group begins to develop an argument about the nature of forming a political collectivity, a grouping in which dispersed individuals are moved to form larger collectivities capable of effecting social change.

As has been argued in the theory chapter of this study, the primary argument for the nature of solidarity in the reproductive justice movement has been one focusing on solidarity between people who belong to the same identity category. This chapter will contain corroborating evidence for this claim by analyzing a number of textual documents and speeches made by on behalf of the organizations on which this study is focused. In these cases, the organizational, hegemonic viewpoint is one that paradoxically proclaims the fluidity of identity, as well as condemns the use of identity categories to silence internal minorities and to create new subalterns, while simultaneously arguing that affinity in politics ought to be primarily based on

shared identities. The manner in which this seeming paradox is resolved is through the deployment of intersectionality theory. However, as was argued in Chapter 2, intersectionality theory fails to resolve the contradictions it takes on because it continues to rely on representation and shared locations as the natural axes upon which political affinity should grow. Even where the attempt is explicit to acknowledge and unleash the panoply of difference within a group, allowing all people within the group to live out their multiple identities, the hybridity and ontological instability of any particular identity is nonetheless denied, though in favor of many intersecting identities rather than any singular identity. Thus, while intersectionality may allow a person to articulate how being a person of color affects what it means to be a woman, and vice versa, it does not allow one to truly contest the boundaries of what each of those terms mean in and of themselves, rather than simply in relation to one another. Because it tries to modulate identity and make its expression relational, we may think of intersectionality as something of a weak identity paradigm, as opposed to strong identity paradigms like Afro-centrism or radical feminism that hold a single and unchanging identity as central to their political objectives. We should not forget, however, that intersectionality is an identity-based paradigm nonetheless. It thus carries with it the implicit assumption that identity categories like race and gender have in them something essential and real. Paul Gilroy described this tendency in intersectionality and standpoint theory as a form of silently smuggling in essentialism through the back door (Gilroy 1993, 52)

Central to my concerns here, the intersectionality response to the problems and contradictions of identity politics fails for another reason. The intersectionality perspective fails to account for alternative and unpredictable assemblages of political and social affinity. While intersectionality improves laudably on other identity politics paradigms, scholars using the

paradigm fail to account for what should be, in addition to the aforementioned authoritarianism of identity, the central objection to identity politics: namely, that it does not account for alternative forms of political collective formation. In using the intersectionality paradigm, scholars fail to think outside the paradigmatic assumption that people who are similarly raced, gendered, or classed will have affinity for each other in such a way that they might become an agent of collective desiring. Why this should be the case over and above the other reasons that people find affinity with one another and come to work collectively to alter social futures is unclear. Indeed, it is rarely argued. Instead, it is treated as a presumption, the same presumption that is at heart of the hegemonic identity politics with which we began. We still assume that there is a natural politics for a subjectivity and that, conversely, a politics can claim as its subjects even those who do not ascribe to its goals and objectives. Finally, the intersectional paradigm, failing as it does to focus on non-representational, affective, and non-rationalistic modes of building community, fails to consider with enough seriousness the impact such affective communities can have in the political battlefield.

The contention that motivates the present study is that such communities can have an important role in altering the topography upon which political conflicts are played out. The setting of politics being changed, it is possible for new openings and strategies for the construction of social futures to likewise come into being. It is the contention of this study that new ways of being together in the world are in and of themselves alterations of social arrangement worthy of political and intellectual attention. The reproductive justice groups and activists employing the intersectionality paradigm are, as will be seen in the course of the present chapter, facilitating the growth of non-identitarian political communities through the generating of affective bonds between diverse people. The shared political labor of reproductive justice

activism is the catalyst for the emergence of these bonds and communities. However, the continual focus of reproductive justice groups and activists on identity politics, even when modified by intersectionality theory, fails to take advantage of the opportunities afford by these new subjectless groupings. What this study will try to demonstrate in the present chapter is the persistent emergence of such groups within the reproductive justice movement, as well as the importance of understanding affect as the key mechanism in their creation.

The empirical elements of this study, then, are meant to do two things. First, they provide a way to test the validity of the identity framework's hypotheses for the nature of solidarity, thereby empirically engaging with the same critique developed throughout the theoretical components of the study. Second, the empirics provide provisional evidence in favor of an alternative theory of solidarity. Put differently, the information contained herein provides some ability to choose between two theoretical constructs describing the nature of the political and the formulation of proper political collectivities and networks of solidarity. One of these is a theory that says that people align primarily based on shared identities, or upon rationally determined and shared social locations, to use the terminology of standpoint theorists such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Chandra Mohanty (1991), and Sandra Harding (1991). The other theoretical paradigms is one that places identity in the background, as an artifact of ideology and the sedimentation of previous political commitments and alignments, and instead foregrounds affective connection as the primary mechanism of the formation of political communities.

While this chapter is, in part, a reflection of the theoretical argument already made in previous chapters of this study, it is also simultaneously a more conventional results and analysis chapter. It reports the results of a series of empirical interventions meant to test, as much as possible, the validity of this study's critique of identity-based paradigms of political activity and

collectivity formation. While a purely scientific, controlled study of the phenomena under consideration here is impossible, the empirical interventions described and analyzed in this chapter make this study more scientific and grounded than a purely philosophical or theoretical treatise. The interventions described in the chapter on methodology and reported here are not "tests" in a conventional sense, but they do provide an opportunity to subject empirical phenomena to the analysis developed in the chapter on theory and thereby open up new information about those empirics as well as the strength of the new theoretical paradigm. They serve as open-ended experiments meant to give depth to claims about the ontology of the political, the failure of identity-based paradigms to provide a liberatory political framework, and the importance of affective assemblages and encounters in building effective political collectivities, groups that are capable of generating alternative social futures.

Chapter Structure and Plan

This chapter is divided somewhat differently than a more conventional results chapter would be. It does not contain a description of various interventions, a report or summary of the data generated by these interventions, and then a discussion of the significance of the results in terms of their support or refutation of the hypothesis. That is not to say this chapter contains none of these elements—on the contrary, it contains all of them. It is only the structure and organization that are different. Because the empirical activities comprising this study generated massive amounts of information, it would be both impossible and imprudent to attempt to simply report raw or even analyzed data in the aggregate with hopes toward manipulating it and drawing a conclusion. It is also the case, of course, that it is also impossible and unwise to treat open-ended interview responses and other qualitative and textual empirical information as so much interchangeable data to be manipulated, analyzed, and summarized. Because it would be

impossible to record nuanced perspectives on the complex issues raised by the theoretical component of this study with quantitative procedures such as surveys, the study has focused on empirical methods that offer a great deal more nuance, interpretive power, and agency by the research participants. A significant drawback to this approach, aside from its incompatibility with hypothesis-driven science, is its tendency to produce large amounts of information which must be sifted and represented in a fashion more complex and fraught with complications than would be ideal.

Perhaps the most difficult element of constructing this chapter was finding a way to integrate the varied discussions that made up the interviews. Because a key component of the interview was allowing the respondent to set the parameters of content the topics of discussion ranged widely between different circumstances, conflicts, and sets of concerns. This creates special problems for reporting the salient points from each interview, as it is necessary to discuss the actual content of what was said, but the relationship of that discussion to another may be only visible through the analysis here. In one interview, a respondent described the difficulty she had reconciling her own career as a health care provider with her commitment to solidarity with her fat-positive roommate. This discussion is important because it demonstrates the necessity of affective commitments in bridging ideological chasms and creating bonds of solidarity even where there is no ideological harmony. In another interview, however, another respondent discussed what for our purposes here is an example of the same phenomenon—affective commitment generating solidarity where no ideological consensus exists. In this case, however, the relationship is with a fellow activist and the issue upon which there is an ideological yawn is the proper application of an identity category, Black lesbian feminist, to a transwoman. The two examples provided by different respondents would seem to have little to do with one another.

However, it is the common thread of affect over ideology that interests us most here. The challenge for writing comes from the necessity of explaining the content and context of each example of the common thread without oscillating wildly between divergent examples and losing track of the central theme.

With this tendency in mind, the major sections of the chapter are grouped together according to the methodology they employ, the type of empirical material they analyze, and, most importantly, the thematic element they are used here to demonstrate. Because these three elements largely overlap, the structure of the chapter follows from their natural groupings. The first group of sections and empirical cases is primarily made up of textual analysis. The pieces studied here are collections of published texts and they are analyzed for their discursive contribution to articulating identity and its relationship to the politics of reproductive justice. These are used to understand the hegemonic notions of identity within the movement. They demonstrate the discursive and ideological structure within which the activists who are observed and interviewed in the study are operating.

The second grouping of sections is made up both of participant observations and interview case studies. These are primarily used as examples of a more active construction and deployment of identity in active political contexts. They are also used to demonstrate the way in which identity is contested and transgressed in the moment of praxis. Participant observations demonstrate attempts to generate identity in events like activist training sessions, but also the building of affective bonds that transgress and transform identity through the common labor of politics. Interviews included in this section describe activists' conceptions of their own identities and their relation to their political perspectives and practices. These interviews also sometimes

demonstrate the uncomfortable relationship activists have had with their own identities where these are hybrid or where they conflict with dominant conceptions of the identity in question.

The third general section is comprised almost entirely of interviews focusing on the types of relationships and groupings that have emerged out of the shared labor, the multifarious interactions, and other forms encounter. It focuses primarily on relationships that cast doubt on the stability of identity politics frameworks, especially those frameworks that the interview respondents themselves articulated. What these deconstructions provide is the spacing necessary to look for other, non-representational political forms to emerge and come into view. The final section of the present chapter consists of a synthesis of the overall argument of the study, developed primarily in Chapter 2, with the empirical evidence collected and present here. This chapter will attempt to review some of the relevant case studies in order to demonstrate the overall shape of the critique of identity politics and proposal of Deleuzian affective politics.

Textual Analysis – Developing the Identity of Reproductive Justice

In order to appreciate the ways that rhetorical reframing occurs as a key political strategy of reproductive justice organizations, I examined several published SisterSong documents. In the main, these documents were newsletters and briefing papers. I also reviewed the book *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organizing for Reproductive Justice* by Jael Silliman, Margaret Fried, Loretta Ross, and Elena Gutierrez. The information contained in these written texts represents the hegemonic discourse of reproductive justice politics and the meaning of the women of color identity category that serves as the congregational core for the movement and organization.

In *Undivided Rights* (Silliman et al 2004), reproductive justice organizing is chronicled, documented, and analyzed by several of the movement's leaders. With a close reading of this

text, we can begin to see how the ideological leaders of the movement understand what is happening when women of diverse racial and class backgrounds form collectivities to respond to concrete social problems. The women who wrote the book subscribe strongly to intersectionality as the motivating analytic paradigm for understanding both the experiences of women of color and indigenous women, but also for the formation of women of color collectivities. However, it is part of the critical task of this project to engage through interviews, focus groups, and other personalized methods to find the divergent discursive threads within this political organization. Silliman, Ross, Fried, and Gutierrez argue that it is the rational determination that non-white-raced women have a different and differentially oppressive experience of reproductive control and regulation than white-raced women that forms the basis for organizing a "women of color" group to upset structures of inequality (Silliman et al 2004). However, at the same time they point toward something more complex in their explanations for why such political bonds are actually formed and sustained. They argue that these bonds are formed not only through rational determination that "we're all in the same boat," but through affective bonds of solidarity and through a sympathetic politics that respects and celebrates the irreducibility of difference rather than one that produces and rationalizes new "women of color" subjects.

The analysis of this piece demonstrates the attempt at the level of theory and ideology by reproductive justice leaders and activists to bridge the paradox at the heart of any subaltern-based identity politics. Because the spirit and ethos of the reproductive justice movement holds to the importance of the liberation of all facets of difference, it is incumbent upon leaders and theorists of the movement's politics to provide an intellectual framework that is capable of accommodating the process of differentiation itself. What is problematic about the uptake of the intersectionality paradigm is that it allows for differences but not differentiation as a process, as

an impulse. This argument will be fleshed out in greater detail in commenting on the experiences and perspectives of interview respondents.

My central motivation for examining and understanding the written texts of the movement is to develop an appreciation for two things that are only legible in the textual artifacts produced by the organizations themselves. First, these texts help us to understand the complex discursive turns in which these groups make in reframing traditional terms like rights, autonomy, freedom, and choice so that these terms will become transformed in their content away from individualistic liberal humanism and toward a liberatory and critical political discourse that uses such terms for shining light on oppressive structures. Indeed, the power of rhetorical reframing can demonstrate the ultimate contingency of all vocabularies. Second, examining these texts allows us to see the contrasts between the hegemonic discourse and the proliferating divergent threads, thus providing critical insight into the politics of group formation and maintenance. It is also the case that this method of data collection is perhaps the most "objectivist" and authoritarian, as my interpretations of these texts are, for the most party, final.

It is the case that textual analysis strays furthest from the participatory ethic that animates the methodology of this study. It includes a strong interpretive hand, one in which the analyst's interpretation of the text is singular and final, and in which there is no participatory feedback loop such as the one existing in the interviews. However, the analysis of texts ironically justifies such a solitary analytic perspective. After all, the production of texts is in itself an attempt to generate more influence for a solitary voice, to remove it from conversation and multiplicity and provide it a more palpable authority, a more distinctive power than would be the case had it not been written down and published. By the same token, my analysis of a text bears the same qualities.

Participant Observations on the Practice of Identity Politics

On February 28, 2011, I attended a panel discussion and training meeting led by representatives of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective, Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom (SYRF), the Black Church Initiative (BCI), and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Freedom (RCRC). The meeting took place on the University of Georgia campus in Athens. The theme for the discussion was "The Intersections of Race, Faith, Gender, and Reproductive Justice." First, each woman on the panel spoke for about 15 minutes, then, after a short break, they fielded questions from the audience about the issues discussed as well as giving tactical and rhetorical advice for countering the message of an upcoming protest by a pro-life group.

The discussion began with a series of short statements by each of the women on the panel. Beginning with a statement from a minister from the BCI and RCRC, the early discussion centered on an attempt to reframe the meaning of "life" in pro-life and pro-choice political discourse. Much of the reverend's statement drew out a distinction between what she understands to be a "real" care for the lives of all humans and an exclusive focus on the unborn. She argued that the focus of pro-life groups on abortion only should be countered with a politics that focuses on the dismantling of systems of inequality as well as the elimination of poverty and related deprivations.

She also drew attention to the attempt by pro-life organizations, and specifically the Georgia chapter of the National Right to Life Committee, to draw the African American community into sympathy with pro-life politics by invoking the specter of an abortion-induced genocide against African Americans. She regarded this attempt as an attempt to manipulate black Americans and to split pro-choice political blocs along racial lines. Specifically, she

invoked the "Maafa 21" campaign, which compares abortion in the African American community to the African slave trade. According to the minister, "Maafa" is a Swahili term meaning "great tragedy" and it is used to refer to the historic and continuing violence perpetrated against Africans and the African diaspora through slavery, colonialism, persecution, and other forms of mass violence. According to the minister, pro-choice activists should have confidence that this strategy will not work, as loose invocation of the *maafa* is generally regarded as deeply offensive. The minister argued that *maafa* has a deep, even sacred, significance for African Americans, much like the significance of the *shoa* in the Jewish community. However, the minister also argued that the pro-choice movement should not rest idly on this assurance, and should not assume that pro-life groups have no traction among African Americans. The minister argued that it is important that the pro-choice movement continue to become more race-conscious and to commit itself more fully to the struggle against the structures of inequality and oppression that make "choice" an empty slogan for African American women and which give the racial rhetoric of pro-life groups any traction at all. She was emphatic in arguing that pro-life arguments have power in the African American community because of the structures of poverty and racism that make abortion rates higher among African Americans. She argued that there is a widespread perception among African Americans that they are unwanted, unwelcome, or worse. The structural factors at play as well as generalized social mistrust lead to both high abortion rates and a sense of community-wide anxiety about the possibility that African American women are pressured into choosing abortion by the lack of a social support system and the perceived devaluation of African American mothers and children.

The minister did not appear to give any strong consideration to the possibility of genuinely pro-life sentiment among African-Americans, generally regarding any attempt to

deploy a racial rhetorical dimension to pro-life arguments as an attempt to manipulate African American mistrust of the wider national community and the government. Furthermore, the minister's position links pro-choice politics with African American identity in an organic way.

At some level, of course, this argument is solely about what it purported to be—a discussion between pro-choice activists about tactics for combating a particular pro-life strategy. At that level, it is simple politics. It is Gramscian ideological warfare. At another level, however, it is something else. It is not necessarily an attempt to win over the hearts and minds of the African American community. Instead, it is a rhetorical attempt to actually create the African American community at the level of representation, to define it rhetorically and ideologically. By arguing that any attempt to advocate a pro-life position that may appeal to the concerns of African Americans as mere manipulation, there is a representational claim made for the naturalness of a particular politics. In this case, the argument is that pro-choice politics is so obviously correct and in the interest of African Americans that any alternative with any traction must be successful only due to emotional manipulation. The African American community is create here at a representational and discursive level, being defined as a community that is natural and uncompromisingly pro-choice.

These discursive turns make clear the way that identity is used in order to link up and naturalize a relationship between a subject group and a particular politics. This is an expression of the representational regime that uses an identity as an element of a political and discursive conflict. By rhetorically linking a political perspective with a particular identity, one is freed from having to make an argument on its merits. This is not to say that the argument has no merits, or that its merits are not sufficient to make the claims its advocates make for it. Instead, it is merely an observation that by linking identity with a political position, one who dissents

from that position but claims that identity must defend their right to their identity. Put differently, the linkage of identity with a political position on some key issue means that a person claiming that identity now has their priorities decided for them by others. By claiming an identity, a person must assent to the politics associated with that identity or risk being ostracized.

Identities in Crisis – Subalterns Speaking

A number of respondents, rather than arguing that there had been interactions with others who had challenged their assumptions about themselves and the relationship of identity to politics, argued that it had instead been internal differences that had challenged their notions of the stability of identity as a basis for a politics. The "liberation of the difference within" is the very process called for by Audre Lorde in her critique of the hegemonizing impulse of identity politics, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (Lorde 2007). What Lorde is referring to here is the tendency of identity politics groups to silence the subaltern elements within themselves in order to produce ideological and subjective unity.

Some of respondents' comments on their attempts to wrestle with the diversity of human experience and interaction while negotiating hegemonic representational structures are featured here. What is most significant in these cases is that the women being interviewed demonstrated that even as they accepted the overall logic of identity politics and built for themselves ideological structures conforming to their understanding of their identities and the relationship of identity to politics, they are simultaneously describing deviations and misalignments within their own lives. Contrary to the expectations of intersectionality theory, the liberation of internal difference does not necessarily lead to more connections based on the ever-increasing number of kaleidoscopic identities upon which one could align. Instead, what becomes clear is the

instability of identity itself, its contestation and transgression, and the importance of forming bonds of solidarity through alternative mechanisms.

Teresa – Hybridity and the Failure of the Identity Paradigm

In one of the first interviews conducted for this study, another interview respondent put the problem of misrepresentation quite elegantly. Her personal story of the search for an identity also illustrates the damage that can be done by the exercise of hegemony in identity formation quite well. She has gone through the process of progressive recognition of her internal differences, much like that of reproductive justice movement more broadly. While currently describing herself as "Afro-Latina," the development of this notion of identity reveals much more than any articulation of singular or even hybrid identity could. Indeed, she argued that her relationships with women of color were often fractured, as she had experiences that diverged significantly from those of various people, whether identifying as African-American or Latina, with whom she has interacted.

The same respondent stated that she had learned to draw strength from her hybridity, to see it as a resource that would allow her to relate with more people, to bring more diversified experiences to her own politics, and to understand the importance of the intersectional framework for her own psychological strength by admitting and embracing all facets of her identity rather than trying to suppress any part in service to any other. However, throughout the course of the interview, it became progressively more obvious that this realization of the strength of hybridity had only been achieved after a long series of disappointments and alienations from those who were in more hegemonic positionalities regarding their sense of identity.

The respondent, Teresa, described having been born to a Mexican-American mother and an African-American father in her mother's hometown in Texas. According to Teresa, the

majority of her mother's family, led by her father, deeply disapproved of her parents' interracial relationship. Feeling disconnected from the Mexican American community in which she was raised, Teresa's mother and grandmother left and moved to Teresa's father's community on the Georgia coast. Teresa explained that she never really felt totally identified with the African American community in which she was raised, but that she was encouraged by her mother and grandmother to assimilate, or at least to publicly appear to assimilate, as much as possible.

> For many years, especially as a child and throughout high school and college, I identified as black. The community I grew up in was an almost exclusively black Geechee community on St. Simon's Island in Georgia, and so, living in with my (maternal, Mexican) grandmother, even though I was Mexican in my home, I was black when I was outside the house. We had pictures of Virgin of Guadalupe on the wall, and we were Catholic, and we spoke Spanish, but we never spoke Spanish outside the house. We went to a black Baptist church most of the time. I even used my (African American) father's last name. We wanted to fit in, but I grew up sort of split like that. Throughout college I thought of myself as black too. I was involved in some political organizations on campus and affiliated with a lot of the Pan-Africanists, Black Nationalists, and Muslims (Nation of Islam primarily), and of course all those organizations were led by men, which I had a problem with. After college though and my problems with the strictly male control and leadership of the Black nationalist and Pan-Africanist organizations, I really started trying to recover my identity as a Latina, so for a while I identified as a Latina. I started going by my mother's (Spanish) last name.

As Teresa explained regarding her years in college, "The Pan-Africanists and Black nationalists I spent time with and worked with in college were very into the genocide idea. They often were not willing to concede women's autonomy in a way that was acceptable to me". This statement points to a key tension in reproductive justice politics. Reproductive justice politics denies neither racism nor the value of autonomy and rights. However, as far as reproductive justice bases its relevance on a stable, static, or singular notions of identity, it fails to allow for the complex and contradictory interactions of race, gender, and class in a way that does not force people to conform in the ways described Teresa. Teresa's experience indicates, in a more dramatic way than many others, the same tendency that is

central to the argument of this study. The attempt by reproductive justice theorists to articulate an identity or natural community for their politics will cause both misrepresentation and the pressure to elide difference and to suppress heterogeneity.

Speaking about her relationships with other women of color and the basis on which she has come to identify as a woman of color, she said, "I always felt though, that I didn't fit with either. I've found that in the company of many black woman, I'm sometimes not black enough, and with Latinas I'm not Latina enough. So I think that I've identified more strongly with this woman of color thing because I don't have some strong community background that I have to defend in order to bond. I think a lot of us though feel kind of incomplete or split the way I have felt."

The preceding statement indicates a great deal of the problem with intersectionality theory's attempt to open up identity politics to dissent and hybridity without doing away with identity as a foundation for politics. Teresa described being encouraged by the intersectional framework to embrace the relationality and hybridity of her identity, to bring out each of her various intersections to understand the ways in which her various identities modulate and affect each other. However, she nonetheless continues to feel split between being black and being a Latina. This persistence of this split cannot be dismissed as a personal foible. Instead, it should be understood as an expression of the presumed stability of identity within an intersectional paradigm. Intersectional theory can accommodate that Teresa may be both Latina and black and a woman and many other things and that all these identities are modified by their juxtaposition in a particular person's life. However, this theoretical paradigm does not make sufficient accommodation for the ways in which terms like Latina and black come to be transgressed and redefined. The terms, in Teresa's life, are not reconstituted by their relationships to one another

and their juxtaposition in a single person's experience, but rather by their inherent instability. The racial identifiers are destabilized and redefined entirely. Teresa notes that she often feels she is not Latina enough for other Latinas and not black enough for other black women. The issue at hand should not be, as intersectionality theory and other weak identity paradigms have it, the failure to sufficiently allow for the kaleidoscope of difference to render the maximum possible points of intersection and alignment between people. Instead, the issue ought to be the ways in which the still essentialized notions of identity are maintained despite being rendered in relation to one another. In Teresa's life, the issue is not so much that she is not being allowed to articulate both the Hispanic inflection of her blackness, or vice versa, but that others still hold the power to define these terms in a way that is exclusionary. She is being deprived of both identities because they are contested and transformed in her own life into something new. The ability to contest these identities, and more importantly to contest the hegemonic discursive structures by which they are claimed by some and denied to others, represents a major critique of the use of identity as a foundation for solidarity.

A further important issue arising from Teresa's experience was her description of the unlikely allies and relationships she had formed wholly outside the search for representational alliances and alignments. She described two white gay men, friends of her family, as two of the only people during her childhood and adolescence who were allowed into the duality of her existence during this period. She described this relationship, though it was personal and not political in intent, as having great meaning for her in constructing her own political perspective and her attitude toward potential allies with whom she lacked any representational intersection. Combined with her own feeling of being split, she described the kindness of these men as a key element in her interest in solidarity thought outside identity paradigms. She said these things

despite also drawing strength from identity-based paradigms of political action in which she had been raised, such as Pan-Africanism. The affects that emerged between her and these men, as well as the dearth of affinity she has sometimes felt with others that share more of her representational framework, constituted a new form of community that has continued to shape her political perspective. Along with having a long history of feeling torn between identity communities, Teresa has managed to forge relationships with others outside the expected representational communities. The connection between these two processes, their essential linkage, is a key component of the argument of this study. Identity politics by its nature squelches and silences deviation and dissent. It renders diverse human experience legible by forcing representational stereotypes upon it. It forces conformity, and when this is not possible, it excludes. However, there are always other forms of connection being sparked through affective encounter.

Alexandra – Tension between Identity and Affect

Another respondent, Alexandra, articulated an example of her attempts, though sometimes thwarted, to establish affective relationships and trans-identity alliance in the context of common labor. In the context of a group of activists mothers, the respondent, Alexandra, stated that it was through the common labor of combining environmental issues with reproductive justice issues, and combining each of these paradigms with the experience of what has been called "activist mothering" that she came to feel a great deal of affinity for the women in her group. She encouraged one of the women in her group, whom she described as Lebanese, to raise her child with the sense of being "of color" rather than "passing" as white. This quandary illustrates a major problem with issues of representation. The truth is that, indeed, there are times when people who have non-European ancestries "pass" as white and work against

the interests of those who are marginalized or oppressed on the basis of their national origin, race, or color. However, it is more important to recognize that the ability of Alexandra's Lebanese acquaintance to "pass" is actually a key element in transgressing easy alignments on the basis of identity. Alexandra saw a form of community, based more on her affective relationship with her Lebanese friend than on the rational determination of a subjective commonality, having the opportunity to emerge in this scenario. She could have described the attempt to build a community with this woman as being based on her recognition of her as a woman of color. However, she did not describe this as her basis for community. Instead, she characterized her hope that her acquaintance would not use her ability to pass to separate herself from the community of women with whom she had already built up an affective community.

She returned to the example of a Lebanese American friend who, despite her fair skin and light hair, experienced non-white racialization. "I have a friend who is Lebanese American and she never really identified as a woman of color because her skin is so fair and her hair is blonde, so she looks white. But because she's Arab, the larger society sort of told her that she wasn't white. However, she was Christian, and she was always very clear about not being Muslim. What that tells me is that those of us who are different from the majority white culture, when we have privileges we hold on to them."

However, she also argued that within communities other axes of privilege serve to split people even where they all ultimately identify as subordinated in one sense. "In the black community, I can see this, particularly as it relates to class. In one sense, there's this recognition that we're all black and no matter how much money you have in the bank or what your socio-economic status, you can still be subject to the same prejudice because of the color of your skin.

However, what we do to each other in our own community, dividing ourselves up along the basis of class or socioeconomic status, I think shows that a lot of that internalized oppression is there."

Another question I asked is about to understand the bonding across difference that happens in the multi-racial organization of SisterSong. "How does SisterSong, at an organizational or ideological level, produce the identity "woman of color"? How can you get from the point where you, as a black woman, self-identify as a woman of color, but your Lebanese friend may not, to the point that you can provide a basis for organization as "women of color"?

She replied, "I think what comes up most for me is the shared cultural experience. Obviously, I recognize that it's not a homogenous thing. There's not one black experience that is *the* black experience (her emphasis). It's the same with other women of color too. I think that although black culture may be different from Latina culture and Latina from Asian, we can all recognize that it's different from white or European culture, and that forms a bond. Our cultures in a women of color collective may be different, but they're also different from white culture. It's recognizing that, yes, this is what sets us apart, and drawing on those differences to make us stronger."

Following up on the previous question, I asked if "woman of color" forms a new identity, if it is something more coalitional and strategic, or if something altogether different is happening, she said, "My thought on that is that it doesn't necessarily form a new identity, it just adds another dimension. It is more coalitional. We're not coming together to create this new homogenized grouping. We're trying to capitalize on our differences and utilize them collectively to help us make a stronger voice and to help build a relationship across different

ethnic groups. I don't think it's about creating a new identity, but being able to work as a coalition."

All these sections and discussion begin to come together to demonstrate the complex coalitional identity that is being formed in the organization and mobilization of "women of color." It is clear from the text of this interview that there are tensions between how different women of color conceive of themselves and others as raced and as women of color, but it is also clear that a shared sense of "not fitting" is a motivating factor in organizing.

More importantly, however, it is clear that there is no solid sense of identity upon which the politics of reproductive justice can be based. It is constantly in the process of negotiation, and it is only the affective commitment emerging from shared labor that overcomes widely divergent experiences of racialization and gendering.

Ayla – "Floating" between Discrete Identities

Ayla's interview provided a telling companion interview to the one provided by Alexandra. Ayla did not describe herself by claiming a particular identity. In fact, her interview is primarily interesting for her description of the level of discomfort she had experienced with identity politics and attempts by others to push her into an identity category. However, she did talk a great deal about her Turkish ancestry, and the ease with which she had identified as white at various times in her life. It is for this reason that she provides an interesting companion to Alexandra. Alexandra was interested in describing her community with an Arab-American woman as a result of shared experience of activist mothering. She was also interested in convincing her friend to embrace an identity as a woman of color despite her ability to pass as white. What Ayla's interview demonstrates is the perspective of a woman who is able to pass as white, and indeed often identifies as white, without it having the significance Alexandra

accorded to it. Ayla's perspective demonstrates the conflict someone who lives between discrete identities faces. She also demonstrates the way in which identity politics can be a barrier to participation to those who live without the comfort of a strong attachment to a particular identity paradigm. Importantly, Ayla described her notion of her own identity as one in which her self-conception of her identiy clashed with the expectations she felt were placed on her by other women at a SisterSong conference. She described her experience of what might have been considered "passing" by other women of color, but her description of this experience was not one of choosing to be white to escape social marginalization, but of being partially accepted and partially denied by multiple communities simultaneously.

According to Ayla, "We had accepted ourselves as being part of a white population because we looked and acted white and all of our friends and people we interacted with were white and they readily accepted us." She later characterized her interactions with the women at a national SisterSong gathering as being unexpected. "But SisterSong was if anything a little difficult for me because I felt like people didn't realize that I identified with them even though my identity was never considering myself women of color. I went there thinking I was white, but in their eyes I wasn't, and more importantly, in their eyes they actually thought of me as being privileged, and I thought, wow, that is so not me." She also stated, "I never felt privileged because I've seen the life in Turkey. The things that made me happy weren't the things that made Western people, American people, happy."

What is significant here is that Ayla specifically describes her personal experiences and sense of identity as putting her in a stance of solidarity with others. However, she felt uncomfortable with what she felt was the attempt to convince her to identify as a woman of color who was privileged by the racial structure because of her ability to pass as white. While it might

be objectively true that someone who is able to pass as white is privileged in certain respects by the racial structure of a white-dominated society, it is nonetheless relevant for our purposes here that Ayla herself felt the emphasis on identity, on its stability and coherence, was harming the ability of women of different racial backgrounds to take advantage the affects generated from within the shared labor of the conference. This sense of the distorting and exclusionary effect applied to both her perceptions of the women of color's expectations of her and her response to the white women she encountered. She described her impressions of the effect the inward focus on finding a particular identity and finding the appropriate way to relate to people of other identities below.

> I sat in on this white women's little thing, expecting the same thing, expecting everyone to talk about here's how we're going to move this thing forward, and no, everyone was all self obsessed. They were more worried about their own issues of whatever it was, privilege against the women of color community. Whether or not they were giving power, I don't even know what the issues were to this day. And I'm glad to be on record saying this, there was this white people that clearly are struggling with the fact that they live in a world and they live in a country that allegedly celebrates this melting pot, that they live in a world of many, many colors, many backgrounds, many ethnicities.
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> And that's the first time I saw a certain type of white women. Women who clearly felt very defensive about being white. In that room, the focus seemed to be on the divide. And I don't know what it is about identity politics that causes other people to be lesser than they. I think it's insecurity based, I don't know I'm not a psychologist, but I think secure people see value in learning, and growing and sharing and experiencing. They look for that joy in life.
> The founder of Sistersong came in and said, first, "we create a space. That's what we do". If you want to use that space to make it all about you, that's fine. Second, we want these various communities to be able to advance our mission. We want this collective to advance the mission.

In contrast to the hard finality of the identities Ayla encountered at the conference, she referred to her conception of her identity and its relationship to a politics as "floating." She described herself as constantly caught between different identity paradigms, moving between

them and never fitting too comfortably into any one. She linked this feeling very elegantly with the geographic position of her family's ancestral homeland, Turkey. Just as Turkey bridges Europe and Asia spatially, Europe and the Middle East culturally, she felt always somewhat out of place with the bold statements of concrete identity she confronted at the SisterSong national conference in 2011. While she felt pressured to join with Middle Eastern women's caucuses, or perhaps the white women's affinity group, she felt somewhat out of place with any rock-like statement of identity. She felt that she moved between these affinities, and that while her sense of who she is was obviously related to her politics, she didn't feel that any of the mutually exclusive categorizations was in any way closely or necessarily related to her politics or even to her sense of self.

> Maybe we're Middle Eastern but now when you read more and more you don't even find turkey falling into that because they think the fact that it's a democracy like Israel, it often falls into this "not traditionally Middle Eastern." And because there are pieces of it in Europe and Asia, and I know where. It floats. In the same that turkey's sort of floating, despite it's history, and it's perceived politics, and it's geography, where it has all these touch-points, it's been floating, we've been floating. I've been floating. Kind of like, well, I'm not quite American, and I'm not fully Turkish because I'm too Westernized. And I like that. I've embraced that about myself and my identity.

What Ayla is describing here is something very similar to what we earlier saw Teresa describe about the experience of living between discrete identity categories. Again, the solution to the pressures and other negative consequences of having a floating identity is not the adoption of the intersectionality framework. Just as with Teresa's experience, Ayla's sense of floating is not something that needs to be resolved by being understanding as a geometric overlay of multiple discrete identities. It is not even necessary to modify the geometric identity theory through recognition that the multiple overlapping identities are modulated and altered by their

relationship to one another. Instead, the answer is found in the abandonment of identity as a basis for politics. The limits imposed by identity politics on solidarity are demonstrated in the tensions Alexandra described with her Lebanese friend. In that case, despite the prior existence of affective community, it seems both sides mistrust each other on the issue of racial representation, a tension that results in a distortion and strain upon their already existing productive relationship. In the case of Ayla, she found that the women of color she met at the SisterSong conference saw her as a privileged woman of color who had lost touch with her identity as a woman of color. She felt this attitude resulted in a prevention of the building of trust affects through common labor. The focus on representation among the white women with whom she interacted appeared to her to have similarly resulted in a failure to build up bonds of trust. Instead, she believed that an obsessive focus on privilege, identity, and what divided the women prevented them from being true allies. Such an artificial divide between potential allies produces an environment in which affective bonds are stifled in favor of overly introspective and divisive politics. The politics that emerges denies potential allies because of what people are rather than what they do or what they believe. Such a politics also becomes paralyzed by its own tendency to emphasize a self-centered journey of personal discovery over the essentially collective project of forming new social futures.

Discovering New Forms of Community

The final group of interviews featured here are some of the large collection of interview responses emphasizing the role that identity has played and continues to play in the political consciousness of many in the reproductive justice movement. However, what is most salient about these interviews is that they demonstrate the ways that particular interactions or circumstances of shared labor or experience can produce affective communities that challenge

the ideological frameworks people have developed for themselves. Each of the following cases is presented as a case study meant to demonstrate one of a number of general tendencies within the total number of interview responses. The three interview cases included here are used as exemplars while other responses were certainly informative and were different in content but rarely varied from these examples thematically. The number of case studies is here reduced for the sake of brevity and focus. A further feature of this section of the chapter is the increase in the portion of each case study made up of direct, at-length quotations. In previous sections, it has been advisable to describe and characterize large blocks of conversation into smaller synthetic summaries. In this section, however, because the issue at hand is the way that ideologies and representational frameworks are actively contested and transgressed within the lives of the very people who practice and ascribe to those frameworks it is important to allow the respondents to describe this process in their own words as much as possible. It is much more informative for a person to describe the ways in which she has been challenged and has revised her own perspective in her own words than would be the case with large-scale summarization.

The following case studies fall into three basic themes. The first describes a relationship with an ally that was unexpected and altered the ideological framework from the respondent operates politically and intellectually. The second describes a context in which identity played little role in the formation of her politics and, much like Ayla, she felt alienated by those who emphasized identity as their basis for coming together. She then describes the process of building a community based on shared labor and the affects emerging from it, as opposed to a representational agreement based on shared identity. The third case describes an activist who has focused to a great extent on overcoming the privileges and intrinsic oppressions she ascribes to her own identity and subjectivity. Her case is informative because it describes some of the

important political work done by sharing space and experience with people, allowing affects to grow and new communities to emerge in ways and contexts that were unexpected. Her case is informative because it is perhaps the most intentional of all the cases described in the study. Rather than being a challenge to her identity framework, it is a positive side effect of the shared labor of politics.

Julia – Challenging Intersectionality from within the Framework

Julia is an activist whose experience demonstrates in rich detail the basic thematic structure of the argument of this study. During the course of the interview, Julia described her own political development as being in lockstep conceptually with her discovery and refinement of her ideas about her own identity. She is strongly committed to the weak identity paradigm represented by intersectionality, associating her commitment to reproductive justice politics with this perspective. However, as we will see in the following quotations, Julia was willing to concede that there had been times and particular interactions with people who challenged her confidence in the stability of the identity paradigm she had developed. These were people whom she came to identify as allies, despite the effect these alliances had on the coherence of her perspective's linkage of identity and politics.

She described the development of her perspective on the relationship of identity to politics in great detail and with a special attention to the various groups she has belonged to and the need to find a framework that did not require her to suppress any aspect of her identity, which she consistently described as black lesbian feminist. Over time, she wound her way from group to group in order to find an intellectual framework she believed would allow her to sufficiently represent all these aspects of her self. She described her first involvement in race-based politics being connected to an encounter with crude and vicious racism during her

undergraduate education. She described a flyer being passed around with a picture of a black man hanging by a noose from a tree on campus frequented by black students. It was this event that she described awakening her racial consciousness and involving her in racial politics.

However, Julia also said that she did not come to feel at home with the racial politics she had begun to develop because of the heteronormativity of the black student union at her university. It is worth quoting at length some of Julia's statements about the role played in her political development by her attempt to find a non-heteronormative and queer-friendly group that responded to her cultural needs. She also describes the lack of attention to racism she found in the white LGBTQ community.

> It was also there that I came out as a lesbian. And being at a campus where the black community is less than one percent of the student population and the queer community was very white and I didn't really identity with that community, I felt very isolated. I was sort of engrossed in this process of being an activist but feeling very isolated and not finding community in that.
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> I worked with a black lesbian social group that didn't really do any advocacy. They just provided women-friendly black lesbian space that was culturally relevant to my needs. The first meeting I attended we shared our coming out stories and we were at this woman's house until 5:30 in the morning with all of us just opening up and for so many women I know that was the first time they were in an open community space where they opened up.
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> I sought out other black, gay, and lesbian queer men and women in a black LGBT organization that holds pride festivals every summer. And as we were passing out flyers a lot of the white gay men took our pamphlets and threw them on the ground. And it was snowing outside and that was a bit disheartening. We had the solidarity with the women, but with the white gay men, that just didn't work.
>
> After having been at the foundation and having gone through all these movements that spoke to pieces of me, and not really me as a whole person in all of my intersections, I was really able to find a home with reproductive justice.

The previous statements are all indicative of the tremendous importance Julia placed on her development of a strong sense of identity and a political framework that would allow her to address "all [her] intersections." It is very important to Julia for her political perspective to be intimately rooted in her sense of who she is at a racial, gendered, and class level, as well as at the level of sexual orientation. However, the next part of the interview provides a powerful critique of paradigms that focus on strongly on the linkage between identity and politics. Specifically, Julia was asked if there had been any interactions or circumstances that gave her doubt about the stability of the identities she had claimed as integral to her political perspective. I asked if any relationships had challenged the identity-based ideological framework she had developed, and, if so, what her response to such a challenge had been. Because it is central to the question at hand in this study, it is appropriate here to quote Julia's response.

> I would have to say that there is a transwoman here in New York. And she identifies feminist and she identifies as lesbian and I was like "What? Wait!" So that for me, and her sharing her story and the stories that transwomen experience in terms of the level of violence and resentment that they dare to be who are they are. And for me, I hadn't had too much, quite frankly, interaction with transwomen on a level where we could have these deep conversation around sex and sexuality and how they express their sex and sexuality. And for her to identify as a lesbian and me to be a lesbian I was like "wow." For me that was a breakthrough. Yeah, that was my breakthrough, a transwomen who was feminist and identifies as a lesbian that really blew my mind. And when she opened up and started sharing her story that really opened my eyes and made me want to learn more. And that's the thing about reproductive justice too. It's not that you have to be on board as soon as you hear something, as long as you're curious and you want to learn, then that's the first step.

It is deeply significant in the preceding quote that Julia does not claim that she has come to understand the significance of being in solidarity with transwomen and making a trans-friendly framework out of the strongly representational and identity-based paradigm she has

developed over time. Later in the interview, Julia explained that she had shared political activities with the women she described, and had come to trust her, before she interacted with her at a personal enough level to really develop an opinion on the appropriateness of a transwoman laying claim to the identity Julia also claimed, and which she had done a great deal of personal work over the course of our life to claim. She is describing a purely affective commitment here. She admits that, according to her identity politics perspective, she does not really know how well trans solidarity fits, but she knows she wants to be in solidarity with transwomen. She explained that she stands in solidarity with transwomen because of how affected she was by the first woman she really knew who claimed that identity and challenged her own comfort zone about what it means to be in solidarity with someone. The significance of such a move should not be understated. It is deeply important for thinking about developing communities that transgress easy boundaries of identity and allow for new chains of affinity and collective desire to emerge in scenarios where they were not anticipated.

Julia also described an alternative response to the crisis in ideology that can be brought on by a challenge to the stability of identities.

> There were some older women, some women from the older generation who were having a discussion about transwomen, and she straight out said, she said that trans people have a mental illness. And, I think that, for me, it shocked me and I couldn't believe what I was hearing.
> The second thing was for Occupy Wall Street I was a part of a radical feminist contingent. And there was a woman on our coalition that was like, 'I am not going to be speaking in solidarity with trans women.' And so, I had to then, as an ally and standing in solidarity with my friend, I had to say to the trans community, you know, the ideas and the statements of one member of our coalition do not reflect our collective thought around transwomen and inclusion. That is reflective of one person's identity, one feminism, but that's not shared within our coalition. And so I had to smooth things over.

These responses she described are important to reproduce here because they are emblematic of a perfectly rational response by activists who root their politics in a strong notion of the stability of gender identity. To think this approach is cruel or callous is precisely the sort of affective response that this study is advocating. Yet such a response is not clearly indicated from the perspective of protecting the stability of an ideological system. The threat posed by alternative ways of experiencing and expressing gender for the coherence of strong identity paradigms should not be understated. What is significant here is the important Julia placed on the compassion and solidarity she felt with her trans allies. As she had explained earlier in the interview, she has not yet totally developed a theoretical framework that is capable of accommodating that both she and someone who was born male can both be black lesbian feminists, and yet she willing to concede the fluidity of those identifiers in order to keep in solidarity with someone she understands, cares about, and with whom she shares a great deal of political affinity.

Julia describes her general commitment toward being open-minded and standing in solidarity with others who are marginalized and isolated in the way she has often felt herself as living openly, with fullness. Her relationship with the diverse people with whom she has come into contact has oriented her toward a perspective that values her own identity but does not take it as a closed system to be protected at the expense of finding community with allies from unexpected places.

According to Julia, "I speak about this a lot when I speak about what I call the antis, the anti-women, antiwhatevers. They're trying to protect and defend their way of life, which is static, and we're just trying to protect our right to live. Understanding that life changes, the world changes, needs change, we change as individuals, we're fluid as individuals. Our

identities are fluid, and we have to protect the evolution of that." The argument of this study is precisely that identity politics often fail to allow for the way in which any encounter makes possible a change in the world that renders such political structures obsolete. New worlds of political possibility open up without warning and in unexpected places.

Janet – Shared Labor and Emergent Solidarity

Janet provides an interesting and dramatic contrast with the perspective and background offered by Julia. While Julia spent a great deal of effort and energy developing a complex identity paradigm in which to situate her own experiences and political goals, Janet specifically eschewed any such approach to understanding politics. Janet, much like Ayla earlier, found her own identity to have little natural connection with a specific politics. However, her politics, like Julia's, underwent an unexpected series of developments as a result of sharing political labor with other people with experiences and perspectives that differed from her own. The context of this development was quite different in Janet's case, however. In Janet's case, the context of her development of an affective grouping with new allies is through the context of the emotional toll her work in a women's health clinic had taken on her and others. Recognizing and indeed emphasizing the politically tinged nature of the work of being an abortion provider, Janet and her coworkers developed a sense of solidarity through their shared labor. She is explicit in denying a representational cause for the solidarity she comes to feel with her coworkers. In terms of addressing her relationship to her identity, and the role that it plays in her politics, it is worth quoting Janet at length.

> I think that I'm expected to have that thread of thought because of where I am now, the organization I'm with now. I guess this is the most political thing I've done. I really have a hard time finding that sense of community with people that in that way. I don't think I identify, or think of the people that I work with,

> because of the fact that we are women. I feel like from my experience, and from working with them, there are so many things about the way they think that are not even the way that I, it's not in line with the way I think. The reasons why they're there don't resemble the reasons why I'm there. And it makes me feel awkward having to identify with them, as a group. I don't really, I mean, I guess what I'm saying is I don't really feel like it's because I find somebody who is, fits—you know I'm Korean. And I don't think I identify with somebody just because they might be a Korean American woman. I think that I have—well, sometimes a Korean American woman will come into the clinic, and I think I do this thing where I project my experience, my personal experiences, onto them. And I project what their family life is like. And I think that's not really fair or a good thing to do. And it hasn't been accurate in my experience, so far, doing that. I've been to a lot of events where people express what you alluded to, which is the sentiment that we're all here because we're women, we have this, I don't know. I think it's this jump or step that I haven't made yet. And that's why I'm not really sure where I fit into being part of it. I think that it's, I'm not really sure why I feel like that. I think other people would be more willing to express that unity based on the virtue of being a woman, but sometimes I'm not really sure. The reason I don't like that is that I feel it doesn't require people to think about what they're believing in. I just think it's really simplistic reason to. I don't think it does justice to why. If we do feel solidarity just because we're women it doesn't do justice to all the reasons why we should and why we do.

The previous quote demonstrates a series of complex issues relating identity to the development of a politics, and, specifically, Janet's conception of the role her own identity does or does not play in her political development. It is interesting that she is even more critical of identity politics that any other respondent in the study. She notes that she does not believe she does or ought to identify with another Korean American woman simply because she is Korean American. In fact, she notes that what is often called identification with someone, in the context of representational politics, is in fact only a form of projection. She says she must fight the urge to project her own experiences and perspectives onto someone else solely because they share an ethnic or racial background and a gender. In this case, identity comes to serve only as a way of creating presumptions about motivations, opinions, experiences that might allow for an alliance where no affective connection actually exists. Where there is no real connect, identity can serve

as something of a short hand for generating instant connection. According to Janet, this is unfair both to the person onto whom experiences are projected and to the political causes that bring people together. It seems to be a way of shortchanging the importance of the issues and causes, the collective desires of affective political groups, in favor of unwittingly enlisting people in the cause. Janet describes this tendency of identity politics, such as the expectation that she will identify with the work she does solely by virtue of her being a woman, as a failure to pay sufficient attention the reasons one ought to believe in important things.

Another element of Janet's interview that provides a great deal of the context for the development of Janet's political solidarity with her coworkers, of whom it is clear she has some initial mistrust, is the following description of her relationship with the work done at the clinic. She describes part of the heavy emotional burden places on those who work in the business of providing abortion care, family planning services, and general women's healthcare to underserved and poor women.

> I guess it's just been people who are coming in for multiple procedures that, I don't know, I just feel like. I'm kind of overwhelmed by thinking about what we need to be doing. When people come again and again, I'm like, 'Please take your birth control! We're even offering it to you for free.' And I feel terrible when I think that. It's similar to something that's interesting to see at the clinic is patients who separate themselves from other patients. I'm sure you've heard this, the story that 'my abortion's the only okay one, blah blah blah.' I definitely see that mentality in people. People have a hard time giving other people slack. We're just judgmental and privileged society in a lot of ways.

This quote demonstrates the types of emotional work that necessarily comes along with the work that she does, and the toll she shares with those who share that labor. The issues Janet describes in the above quote are telling as well regarding her relationship with the patients she sees at the clinic. What is significant about the above statement is not only a demonstration of

the emotional toll of her work, but her statement about the importance of forgiveness, compassion, and empathy. These are key affects that are under-emphasized in identity politics. The presumption of identity politics is too often In this case, despite her opposition to the assumptions of identity politics about the proper course of political alignment, the actual material circumstances of shared activity generate a level of affective connection.

> I think that the times that I have felt commonality or that I feel progress in myself or I feel bonded, I guess, with the people I work with is when we talk about things we didn't expect or things that are difficult. I know there were a lot of things that I didn't expect work to be like. And I thought, I was really surprised who had started to train felt the same things I had felt when I started to train. Also, when we're given space to talk about things, to question our feelings and our values and why we're even there, I feel respect for the people who work there more.
> I think it's that, if we have a really hard case, someone will. What I'm thinking about is when I just have lunch with someone and we just talk casually about our days and then we were talking about work. Then, these things come up.

In this context, Janet provides a different conception of the manner in which alternative and affective communities are formed out the experience of shared labor. This case is distinctly different from what we saw with Julia. In this case, it was not an alliance with someone who challenged her sense of identity and her predispositions about proper alliances and objective. Instead, Janet came to develop a strong sense of solidarity with other women working in the same women's clinic. In her case, she had not expected to develop such strong sense of solidarity with the others women at her work. However, while the content is different the relevant theme for our developing political ontology is the same. Janet came into a scenario with a particular perspective on what she was doing, one that did not coalesce easily with the identity politics perspectives her coworkers held. However, she nonetheless developed a new alliance and a new grouping she did not expect as a result of affective connections born of shared

political labor. The significance of Janet's contribution to the study can be summed up by the commonality of Julia and Janet's thematic development of an affective and fluid politics. This is important because the theme remains the same while the content and the starting perspective are totally different between the two cases.

Mallory – Creating Spaces for Affective Solidarity

Mallory's interview presents a third major theme of the responses to identity politics and the possibilities for creating new and aleatory forms of political community. Mallory's interview speaks from a perspective that is quite different from the perspective found in any of the previous interview respondents. She described herself as a middle-class white woman. She described her background as being tuned into the ways that her white privilege manifests itself because she grew up in an environment where she was constantly in contact with people of many ethnicities and races and with different backgrounds. She noted the importance of her experience living in an international dormitory at a university when her father was working on his doctorate. This period and experience, as well as her parents' Christian missionary convictions, played a major role in shaping her commitment to both social justice and sensitivity to her own racial and class privilege.

Unlike Janet, who rejected the importance of her identity for developing her political perspective, Mallory regards her identity as central to her political project. Her politics, however, are rooted in her identity in a very different way than Julia's. Mallory's identity is very bound up in attempting to confront oppressive forms of privilege in the unexamined practice of her everyday life. However, she has also had events and relationships that have affected the way in which she practices her political life. These experiences have been personal, but also have helped her develop a sophisticated perspective on how to form communities that transgress

ideological boundaries on the basis of affective bonds. She has described a deeply personal experience that brought her to reproductive justice politics and changed her perspective on the relationship between her identity as a woman, and as a white woman specifically, and her politics as a feminist.

> I've always been acutely aware of my privilege even when I didn't have the terminology or other people to talk to about who I was or how I was. Now I see activism as a way of undermining my own privilege and empowering other communities, but also empowering my own communities by encouraging white people to check our privilege, examine it, and potentially use it for good, though that can be problematic also. Specifically RJ activism, I came to because I had an abortion. At that point I didn't really identify as pro-choice, I assumed being a feminist meant that I was pro-choice. Then I got pregnant, and there was no choice for me about what I was going to do. I was going to terminate the pregnancy even though it was still very emotional for me.

A key element of the above statement from Mallory is that she only came to really know what it meant to be pro-choice when she was faced with the deep emotional turmoil of an unexpected pregnancy. However, it is important that prior to this experience she passively assumed she must be pro-choice because she was a woman and she identified as a feminist. The sentiment is something like the sentiment Janet criticized initially in the people she encountered at her clinic. However, Mallory described her perspective, her compassion for others in the same position, and her commitment to standing in solidarity with those in need developed out of the experience she had with her unplanned pregnancy. This is important because it demonstrates the depth that a seriously affecting event can have in the development of a political perspective. During the course of the interview, Mallory indicated that it was a general commitment to understanding privilege and standing in solidarity with those in need that she began to develop because of these experiences, not simply a commitment to stand with those who had the same experience.

It is important to note the way that Mallory has put this ethic of compassion and solidarity into effect in her life. I asked her about any experiences she had or relationships she developed that caused an unexpected challenge to her way of thinking about the world. She described an interaction with a former roommate that challenged her presumptions about the relationship between body image and health, as well as pushing her to expand the limits of what she was willing to concede in the name of compassion and existing affects of solidarity.

> I have experienced that. It's hard to find the right words to describe that experience. A friend of mine is really fat, and we were living together for a while and while I was going to the portion of my nursing education to become a registered nurse she was kind of coming into her own identity as a fat acceptance and fat activism and understanding skinny privilege. So she really challenged me on things I didn't really know how to support for her, for a few reasons. First, I don't identify as fat, and in my nursing education we constantly reinforced the idea that being fat was unhealthy that being overweight was unhealthy. And it was really offensive to her to hear me talk about these people. And of course I never meant to be offensive to her and I didn't really it would be offensive to her, but because of the fact that we were extremely close friends and we had known each other for a long time and we were both RJ activists and we talked openly about racism and openly about sexism and heteronormativity and all these things, she felt comfortable saying to me, the way you talk about fat people is extremely offensive. So we embarked on this dialogue that I think will be part of our relationship forever, so I feel comfortable coming to her and asking questions and saying, how do I represent myself as a fat positive healthcare provider? It kind of blows my mind, so never mind what happens in my nursing classroom when I bring up fat positivity. It's in an area where I'm working hard to meditate on everyday and to think about how I play into it. The conversations that we had and will have forever are representative of how we can share a space with someone and share a relationship with someone without ignoring everything that each of you brings to that space to that relationship and being able to confront everything you bring without anyone feeling judged.

The above quote is an interesting example of the same principle that we saw in Julia's interactions with her trans friend and ally. In this case, however, the crisis brought on by the relationship with her roommate was less severe as a threat to her ideological system than was the

case with Julia. In the case of Mallory, what is most significant here is that she opened herself up to the criticism her friends offered, and that, because the woman was her friend, she was willing to concede the argument and try to understand her perspective without being able to immediately reconcile her friend's perspective and her own. This is based in her existing affective commitment to maintaining her relationship with this woman. They had built up affective bonds through a long history of shared political activism and discussion and other labor that had given Mallory an openness to criticism she might not have had otherwise. It is this very openness to criticism and intimate relationship between allies that Mallory then took as a key element in her understanding of how we can open up safe spaces for the creation of alternative communities. She described what she has attempted to do in her social justice-oriented housing cooperative.

> When you're in a relaxed and comfortable space, and then you still can allow people to say—well, for example, one of my housemates is trans-identified. Everybody knows somebody who has had an abortion, or who doesn't identify as heterosexual. We all have contacts with these people who are different from each other. And I think if we were aware of their many identities then it would be easier to have compassion. You sort of create a whole family that's not bound by blood or biology, but is bound by our commitment to social justice and human rights. It's a very profound thing to be with a group of people who say, "I'm going to make myself vulnerable."

Just as Deleuze and Guattari described power as the capacity to affect and be affected (Deleuze and Guattari 1987), so Mallory described her relationship with the other members of her social and reproductive justice-oriented housing cooperative as "making [oneself] vulnerable." She described how important this vulnerability is for the process of building political communities, changing consciousness, and building relationships. In opening oneself to the possibility of being affected, of being altered through multiple moments of encounter with

diverse people in multifarious scenarios, it is possible to develop alternative modes of being together in the world. This is the essential task of building a collectivity, especially one oriented toward altering and shaping the trajectory and arrangement of social futures.

Identity and the Possibility of Alternative Forms of Community

The preceding examples all, in various ways and to various degrees, demonstrate the two key themes of this study. The first of these is the failure of identity politics as a conceptual and practical model for forming actionable political collectivities and communities. As was argued at a theoretical level in previous chapters and again through the use of empirical examples here, the attempt to articulate a natural constituency, an intrinsic community, or an integral subjectivity for any politics is always also a disciplinary, hegemonizing process. It is an exercise in the delineation of boundaries, the selective valuation of particular features, and the suppression or marginalization of other differences.

A key theme of the responses and empirical interventions featured in this chapter is the persistent deviation from identity, whether in one's own life or in one's associations. While it may be possible to demonstrate that representation is, in a word, not representative enough in any particular case, this insight does not in and of itself close off the possibility of a reform of the paradigm to make it more representative. Indeed, this is precisely what intersectionality theory is meant to do. Another paradigm could certainly be developed, even more accommodating of difference than intersectionality but still focused on identity as the axis of political alignment. What is necessary here is to demonstrate that such an approach is not a productive enterprise. To do this, it is necessary to show that identity, in and of itself, is not a proper basis for political alignment and in fact has a pernicious chilling effect on the potential of politics.

The linkage of identity with politics can also serve as a bludgeon to control dissent, as we saw with the Maafa 21 campaign. Let us think of other circumstances in which such a linkage of politics and identity is made, and then examine what the consequences of such linkages are. As an example, someone who claims an LGBTQ sexual orientation or identity may be expected by the organized sections of the LGBTQ movement to support right of same-sex couples to marry. A person claiming this identity may indeed support this political position, but if one did not support it, for whatever reason, one would risk being labeled a traitor. Even if one supported the position but did not make this issue a litmus test for the political candidates one supports, one would risk being treated with confusion and mistrust, perhaps even hostility. For instance, it is possible that a person claiming an LGBTQ identity may support the economic plans, defense positions, or other positions of a candidate or movement not known for its friendliness to same-sex marriage and other gay rights issues. Whatever one's feelings about the appropriate positions to take on any of these issues, to deny LGBTQ people the right to decide and priortize however they might see fit is to deny them the full humanity accorded to heterosexuals. Heterosexual people are considered capable of deciding their position on same-sex marriage on the merits and of prioritizing their political objectives accordingly without being thought of as a traitor. However, the same courtesy is not extended to LGBTQ people when their identity is linked up with a particular political position. There are, of course, many ways to argue for the correctness of a position supporting the right of same-sex marriage on the merits. Presumably, one would not appeal to identity to support same-sex marriage with those voters who are heterosexual. However, it is also possible to enforce the position on someone claiming an LGBTQ identity by threatening them with ostracism and alienation.

Other examples ought to be evident from the pattern established above. Poor and working class people who do not support redistributionist economic policies, or social safety net policies are often treated as rubes being manipulated by powerful forces. They might also be accused—as they are in Thomas Frank's *What's the Matter with Kansas?*—of being easily distracted by social conservatism so they will not align themselves with those in the same economic position (Frank 2005). Regardless on one's position on any of the social issues or economic issues Frank is concerned with, the issue that is never addressed is who gave Thomas Frank the right to decide for working class people, or the proverbial "Kansans" of the title, what is and ought to be important to them. Wealthy people can support higher taxes on people in their income bracket to support a great social safety net, and they are rarely considered class traitors or economically irrational, but working class people who vote for lower taxes and less protection for workers are assumed to have been duped. Similar examples abound, from white people supporting the Civil Rights Movement being labeled "race traitors" to African American conservatives like Clarence Thomas and Larry Elder being tagged with the same or similar epithets.

In any case, what should be clear is that the linkage of identity with a particular political position is meant to enlist people into a politics by enforcements of representational unity rather than by rational determination of the merits of the issue or the affective grouping that comes from shared experience. What this section should demonstrate is that identity politics is a way to run an end-around political conflict and the diversity of perspectives available to every person. Subjectless, non-representational commitment between diverse peoples can emerge out of real affective connection. The affects that drive people to make decision at variance with their

identity communities, classes, or other structural groupings are the same affects that open up new communities based on ethical agreement, solidarity, friendship, and, to put it simply, love.

Completing the Critique of Representational Politics

What is clear from the widespread agreement of interview respondents as well as from observations of active interactions between activists at various events is that identity, while perhaps an important ideological component of the process of forming a coherent and persistent "movement", is not sufficient to explain the actual interactions in which activists and other actors are engaged. The compulsion toward dissent, of subalterns attempting to speak, is palpable. Indeed, this should not be surprising, as this is the same process of dissent and attempts at representation that compel the marginalized sectors of every representational community to speak out and assert the internal difference that had been elided.

One theme here should not be overlooked, and that is that the two basic phenomena I have described—dissent from conception of identity that elide internal difference, on the one hand, and the formation of bonds of solidarity and affect that challenge the presumptions of identity politics, on the other—are variations on the same principle. It is important not to treat these as discrete and unrelated phenomena. The impulse of subalterns to dissent, of people who are denied a status to claim it in spite of resistance, and of those whose differences are marginalized to articulate them—the impulses that give the reproductive justice movement its vibrancy and strength—is the same impulse that is manifest when new forms of community emerge that defy the logics activists and others build up to rationalize and schematize their commitments. Thus, to critique identity politics within the reproductive justice movement, and within the minds of individual reproductive justice activists, is not to level criticism at their practices; instead, it is an acknowledgement of the pernicious effect that representational

thinking can have on politics. The impulse is to set boundaries and elide difference in the hope of producing a singular subject out of variable experience, to produce one voice out of many.

The ontology proposed in this study refuses the tendency to conflate acting collectively with the formation of a single collective subject. The emergent groupings and the aleatory encounters that provide the fertile ground for them are an ontological unit that has no need to squelch internal differentiation. Because the grounds upon which the group is formed are primarily affective, with any ideological content emerging as a secondary component, the group is the momentary coalescing of heterogeneous elements around collective desiring. Where the affects are insufficient to justify the continuation of collective being, the collectivity falls apart. Where one member or segment of the group feels the need to elide difference in the interest of stability or organizational unity, the affects may be temporarily enhanced, or, in other cases, they may be strained. In either case, the existence or non-existence of sufficient affective connection to sustain collective being is in and of itself the sufficient cause and condition for the existence of the aleatory community. While an examination of such groups may seem counterproductive, as they are seemingly weak, the focus on affective communities, assemblages of affinity, is an important element in transgressing and transforming existing structures of power. These groups, by their very nature, change some portion of the social topography in such a way that logics of social control must reorient themselves to account for the new realities. What all this demonstrates is, again, that the various phenomenon being described in this chapter are variations on the same them. This is true whether the phenomenon is the failure of an existing identity paradigm to faithfully represent the interests of a marginalized group, or the suppression of internal dissent and difference in the interest of unity, or, again, the formation of an alliance that transgresses lines of expectation and social location.

Reproductive justice organizations whose members and staffers gave their time and energy to contributing to this study, such as SisterSong, acknowledge and pursue this insight. During a training session for activists that was used as a participant observation in this study, SisterSong founder Loretta Ross described the importance of dissent and liberation and acknowledgement of intra-group differences in conjunction with common goals and collective action. She described such a scenario as the essence of a movement, while characterizing the impulse to silence dissent and elide difference in the service of common goals as a "cult". Such a perspective is indeed laudable, and from the observations I was able to make during the course of this study, I can only applaud the efforts of organizations like SisterSong to make those sentiments a reality. However, what is at issue in this study is the very political ontology that privileges representation over praxis. It is the articulation of identity as a natural community for a politics that is always already silencing dissent and eliding difference. Again, this critique is not a suggestion that any particular movement or organization should be more inclusive or should do a better job of opening space for dissent. These are indeed laudable goals, but they are not the issue here. Instead, what I am advocating here is an intellectual reorientation, a change in the way we think about politics. By refusing to simply explain away the problems of representational politics in dealing with dissent and difference, and by refusing to ignore the issue by making superficial observations about the permanence of subalterns in every organization and movement, we can begin to think differently about how political groups are formed and what new types of communities can offer to politics. We can also learn to adjust our expectations for various forms of politics, acknowledging the limits to what identity politics and other representational paradigms can offer.

The Formation of Subjectless Groups

What is significant about each of the examples in this study is a consistent theme. In every case, when an identity, a subjectivity, or any other representational anchor for a politics is articulated, it is challenged by events, interactions, or other circumstances. In these cases, when identity and a system of representation is in crisis, there is always an obvious way to stave off the crisis—revert back to a defense of the representational framework. The easier solution is to simply embrace the exclusionary, hegemonic, and authoritarian impulse.

When Julia was asked how her relationships and interactions with transwomen, especially lesbian transwomen, affected her conception of the relationship of identity to politics, she did not choose to exclude transwomen from her representational framework, though she admitted they made things complicated for her. She also stated with cautious disapproval that other, older women had indeed embraced the exclusionary impulse, solidifying the racial and gendered subject by excluding transwomen.

In another case, a respondent, Helen, described a similar encounter. She characterized her politics as being rooted in her gender. More importantly, she described her conception of her gender and her connection with other women in highly essentialist, naturalistic terms. She characterized the bond she had with other women as arising from the common experience of the feminine hormonal and menstrual cycles, as well as by a shared and particular relationship with various forces of nature, such as the oceans and the moon. When asked, however, if such a characterization of the basis of feminist politics must exclude transwomen from the community of women, she replied that it was difficult for her to answer, but that she did not feel it had to. She described her relationship with a transwoman as being very close, empathetic, and solidaristic. She also described her trans acquaintance as very much a woman, without any

reservations. When asked about the conflict such a relationship and conviction put her sense of identity and of the naturalness of gender into, she replied that had simply not figured it all out, but that she was willing to stand in solidarity with her friend, regardless of the logic.

What is significant here is that she did not have to acknowledge any such conflict. She could have simply denied her acquaintance the status "woman" as this representational subjectivity relates to Helen's politics. Taking such a position certainly could have produced other potential conflicts, such as how to be sufficiently supportive of someone you might consider an ally while resolutely denying her a status she considers to be central to her own politics. Put differently, one might wonder how one can claim to be an ally of someone who considers her claim to an identity, in this case the identity "woman", to be central to her political objectives, while simultaneously denying her that status. Such a scenario would seem to make one an enemy rather than ally, whatever protestations to the contrary.

In Helen's case, as in the case of the respondents generally, such a scenario was not even entertained. Instead, in each case, the respondent chose to concede the existence of a flaw in the representational framework and the ideology she had built for herself, and then, conceding the existence of contradictions, chose to step outside the confines of her logical framework in order to embrace someone she knew who did not fit, or embrace a position in a circumstance that was not the clear choice given the parameters of her ideology. The argument of this study is that this process of conceding contradiction and making exceptions cannot be explained as mere cognitive dissonance, though such a charge might constitute the strongest objection to the pattern documented here.

Cognitive dissonance requires holding contradictory ideas simultaneously and affirming the truth of both ideas. In this case, there does not seem to be any attempt to deny contradiction

or difficulty. In no case when a respondent was presented with a potential contradiction in her conceptual apparatus did she simply choose not to acknowledge such a contradiction. Nor did any respondent attempt a superficial "fix" to paper over the contradiction. Instead, respondents generally acknowledged the existence of the contradiction, expressed some sense of doubt regarding the strength of their representational framework, and then proceeded to embrace the contradictory case. Often a respondent would express a sense of hope that her system could be fixed so that the contradiction would no longer exist, but no respondent simply asserted that there was no contradiction or that there was a simple fix that would resolve it.

The general pattern of responses does not indicate any cognitive dissonance. On the contrary, the alternate position, the attempt to fall back into a defensive position while refusing to acknowledge the authoritarian and conservative effect such a stance has on the political question at hand, represents a much greater refusal to acknowledge the inconvenient reality of conflicting discourse. That being said, it is worth stating here that the women who took part in this study should be commended for their candor, their open-mindedness, and their humility. They were all too willing to make a very bold and difficult step by frankly acknowledging the contradictions in their own ideological systems and nonetheless choosing the more difficult but laudable path of embracing the potential "other" in spite of the damage it might do to their own painstakingly constructed identity frameworks and ideologies.

Other explanations for the pattern of embracing the contradiction or exception, such as sentimentality, are much less credible. In each case, the women interviewed were experienced activists with no qualms about confrontational politics. All the respondents to the study have experience with political conflict and with the division of actors into "friend" and "foe" camps regarding their political objectives. There is little doubt that the people interviewed would have

little trouble regarding as a foe someone whom they perceived as constituting a threat to their political project. What is important about these cases is that the respondents did not perceive those they encountered to be foes or threats, despite the difficulties they might pose for the stability of their conceptual apparatuses. Indeed, the question asked of respondents was specifically whether there was a person or situation they had encountered that caused trouble for them ideologically precisely because they were friends, allies, or positive situations. The cases here do not document a pattern of activists deigning to tolerate an "other" that presents a threat to their political objectives simply because the activists cannot bear to be exclusionary. Instead, what is documented here is a pattern in which activists encounter allies or friends or positive developments they did not expect, and which their ideologies or representational frameworks are not prepared to accommodate. These activists then, as a general tendency, have chosen to open themselves up to the positive possibilities for new groups and arrangements to form that might accommodate their new allies, even at the cost of their previously held ideological frameworks. This is hardly sentimentalism or an inability to distinguish friend from foe.

As I have shown above, a denial of the contradiction does not, of course, solve the problem, but it allows the respondent to escape the immediate crisis of her representational framework. However, as I have said, no respondent elected that option. In every case, when asked about the interactions or events that challenged her sense of identity and subjectivity, the respondent said she was not sure how to explain the new wrinkle in her representational and ideological framework, but that she was committed to being an ally of those who complicated the previously stable frameworks.

Affect as the Mechanism of Political Solidarity

The cases presented here demonstrate a consistent pattern of two elements. First, the cases demonstrate a failure or crisis of the representational framework, the identity politics paradigm, brought on by circumstance, interaction, or a particular event. Second, the cases demonstrate a consistent papering over of these potential crises. The crises at the level of ideology and representation are put aside in favor of an affective commitment. When the ideological system is challenged, the respondents are not trying to rationally determine, within the confines of the ideology, the proper course or determination in every case. When some feminists or racial nationalists or others who espouse a highly identity-based conception of the relationship between a politics and its natural subject come into contact with situations or people that challenge their ideological and representational framework, if there is an affective commitment to that person or the movement or the goal, then they simply commit and wait to paper over the ideological cracks later on. All of this is meant to indicate that affect precedes representation. It is both logically prior and, as these examples demonstrate, it is prior in practice as well. Without the existence of affective commitments, apparatuses such as organizations, movements, and political ideologies have no life, no drive. Ideologies are important as a layer of stratified affects from another time, bonds that have been rationalized and systematized in order to remain stable against the maelstrom of change and uncertainty. However, ideologies and representational systems seem to be something of an artifact of prior affective relations, sustaining the previously formed bonds at the level of intellect and tradition after the original affects have become muted or drowned out. In this respect, ideology and representation having something like an inertial effect, keeping the machinic assemblage going after the initial force has dissipated.

An aspect of this phenomenon that is important to remember, however, is that when we discuss "affect" as a key component of the relationships between people, arising from common labor or shared experience, we are not simply talking about feelings. In Chapter 2, I explained that affects are not personal sentiments, poignancies, or *pathos*. Instead, affect, in the Deleuzian parlance in which the term is employed here, is an impersonal, or at least prepersonal, force that makes bridges the gaps between otherwise discrete elements of assemblages. Affects are something like the synchronizer systems of an automobile transmission, in that they allow for objects of various speeds and intensities to align and move at the same speed, creating a new assemblage of power. Such machinic language, when applied to the context of politics, helps us explain at a wider ontological level what occurs when two people who are otherwise disconnected come to identity as a community—though one that does not have a pre-existing subject or representational form—and to begin desiring-production, that is, making new social arrangements in accordance with their collective desires. It is also important to recall that these processes need not have intentionality. Indeed, it is one of the strengths of the paradigm that it eschews the need for rational subjects making overt political choices and making plans or manifestos according to their analysis of the situation at hand. Instead, we need only establish that an assemblage, a heterogeneous mix of setting, social or political circumstance, historical moment, and people are coming into an alignment and, through their encounter, they are altering collectively the trajectory of political being. Affects, the forces by which we affect one another and alter each other's trajectories in context with our environment, social structures, and historical moments, are the elements that generate new machinic assemblages, which then produce new futures.

The empirical analysis in the present chapter, especially where it concerns affective connections between people and the new collectivities born of such connections, demonstrates the pervasive existence of such alternative communities. It is important enough, at an empirical level, merely to demonstrate that these communities do exist, and indeed that they are more common than the rationally determined "subject groups" that dominate most political thought. They emerge whenever there are affects between people that produce a new sense of community. The feeling of community, the feeling that one belongs in whatever way, is itself a key affect and an artifact of the existence of a set of communal bonds. I have not only demonstrated that such communities exist, but we have provided cases that demonstrate the numerous contexts in which affective communities can be formed. There are those times, which proliferate throughout the cast studies, in which respondents have described a relationship with someone who does not fit the profile of an expected ally. One respondent, Sandra, described such an encounter with a man. She said that her vision of politics as being primarily about gender had left her unprepared when a man proved to be one of her strongest and most consistent allies. She had developed an identity-based ideological framework in which men were not considered bad or worthy of enmity, but were also not to be counted upon as allies. She said that notions of shared identification had been central to her thinking about politics. She worked on various campaigns with a man, however, and a strong sense of alliance and community emerged between them, one that she described as having had a strong effect in changing her sense of where allies and help might come from, and what the proper relationship of identity to political interests might be.

Subjectless Groups on the Plane of Consistency

At the theoretical level, we must remember that affects allow for the alteration of the ontological status of the being of a particular actor or object when he or she comes into relation with another. The affects shared between two objects make possible their access to what Deleuze and Guattari have called "the plane of consistency" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 506-7). The plane of consistency refers to a virtual state of reality in which the affects shared between various elements and assemblages make possible their alignment into new conglomerations and assemblages. The plane of consistency is the plane in social orders break apart and are recreated and transformed. In terms of the political significance of affective bonds, the plane of consistency is where identities are transgressed and rendered mere representational artifacts of true, affective relations of solidarity. When respondents describe being surprised by their interactions with other people, and by the discovery of allies and partners in places they never thought to look, the moment in which prior expectation and analyses of the world and social order collapse and are transgressed and transformed by alternative arrangements unburdened by existing axes of power, this is an engagement, at an affective level, with the plane of consistency. When respondents describe sharing political or social labor with others and finding a great deal more solidarity with them than they had anticipated, this is likewise an engagement with the plane of consistency. It is the breakdown of stratifications and the restructuring of society according to new arrangements. Moreover, it is unpredictable. It is what Althusser called "aleatory" (Althusser 2006, 264). Aleatory social arrangments are those that emerge from the randomness of encounter. As Althusser describes it—and for our purposes here we will keep to the realm of the political, though Althusser , like Deleuze and Guattari, are elaborating a total ontology—the slightest encounter between people in a particular location and context can

engender a chain reaction of events that creates new arrangements that could not have been planned or anticipated. It is precisely the randomness of the interactions that makes them simultaneously frustrating—it would be very difficult to set up a political program aimed at producing such interactions—but also radical. Structures of power and social organization that result in oppression and marginalization are ultimately institutions of control, and, when associations and alliances emerge that are unrecognizable within the paradigm of social analysis and control, power structures, we can expect, will have difficulty squelching the potential alliances and assemblages that may form and seek changes in accordance with their collective desires.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Recapitulating the Argument

In the course of this study, I have reviewed and critiqued many of the most influential conceptions of the subject of politics and the relationship of identity to politics. These are the conceptions of the political that have the most weight in the development of the theoretical praxis of the reproductive justice movement. I demonstrated that identity politics silences internal dissent and elides difference in the interest of unity, even as it claims to be a representational politics for the oppressed. I demonstrated that this tendency in identity politics is not an aberration or the product of chauvinistic leadership castes, but rather is an intrinsic feature of representational politics. Because representational political systems are drawn into the political and social regimes that subject people to the operations of power, they both participate in this power nexus and replicate its function on those they claim to represent as subjects. Moreover, representational politics compels unity and silences dissent by focusing on the stability of identities and excluding or silencing those who do not fit. Even where identity is modified into weak or relational paradigms, this fundamental failing persists.

Next, I offered an alternative philosophical lexicon that presents us with the possibility of eschewing problematic subjectivities as well as the process of subjection while also allowing for the formation of subjectless groups. These collectivities are more radical than the identity-based groupings they challenge, as they represent alternative ways of being together in the world and collectively working to produce social futures that do not conform to the confines of a subjective

regime of power. By avoiding the subjective regime of power, in which identity politics participates, the alternative, non-representational groups hypothesized here challenge contest the social structures and organizations of power that produce the subjectivities identity politics deploys. I also demonstrated that affect is a primary mechanism of formation of solidarity. I argued for a non-rationalist and affective explanation of solidarity that leaves out any need for the tortured logics of mutual interest. Too often there is profoundly functionalist and logically fallacious thinking undergirding such perspectives.

Following the theoretical development of the preceding argument, I reviewed evidence collected from empirical interventions, including textual analyses, participant observations, and interviews with reproductive justice activists. I demonstrated through the process of participatory spacing that reproductive justice organizations replicate the failures of identity politics through their deployment of identity-based arguments on behalf of their political objectives and of the legitimacy of their claims. I also showed that the impulse to dissent, to deviate from the identity paradigms being proffered by hegemonic discourse of the reproductive justice movement, is a constant feature of activism. Even where identity politics is deployed by particular activists in a strong and coherent way as a basis for their own politics, they note that their own identities are fractured or split in a way that the intersectional framework cannot accommodate. They also describe interactions they have had and circumstance in which they have found themselves that challenge the stability of their identity paradigms. Finally, I undertook to show the prevalence of affective, non-representational groupings of people emergent within the reproductive justice movement. I saw that the political practice and labor of reproductive justice is the primary fertile ground for the development of these forms of being-in-

common, despite their illegibility within dominant framework. These groupings, I argued, are expressions of the subjectless groups discussed in the theoretical chapter.

Reflections – Hopes and Disappointments

Reproductive justice requires a theoretical framework that is capable of not only accommodating, but embracing diversity and heterogeneity. If reproductive justice activists hope to create a world in which the exclusionary and oppression political conditions of the past and present are not reproduced it must start with their own organizations. It is always necessary to take stock of the potential for abuse and exclusion inherent in any political paradigm. Being able to contribute in some way to the development of such a paradigm for an important political movement was one of the primary hopes I had entering this study. I hoped to be able to contribute something new and useful to the way in which we think about the politics of reproductive justice, and I wanted to make an effort to provide a study of some intellectual weight that would address an issue that is and always has been at the heart of the movement: how do we speak with and stand with the oppressed? How do we stand up for those experiencing oppression and marginalizing, especially within the organizations built to fight against oppression?

I believe this project has made strides toward accomplishing that goal, though it is a large and ambitious goal, one that is likely unattainable in any one project. However, without such hopes for the capacity of intellectual and scholarly activity to do social good, there is little reason to bother with such activities. The same can be said especially for projects such as this one, which take up politics and hope to contribute to social goods but eschew the functionalism of "movement literature" or an explicitly activist stance. I think that by opening up and elucidating the intrinsic problems of identity politics I have been able to contribute in my own small way to

overcoming a nagging and pernicious problem with reproductive justice politics, and social justice politics more widely.

Some aspects of the project have not turned out as I had hoped, however. More time and intensity for empirical work would have produced a more thoroughgoing synthesis of the theoretical and empirical elements of the study. The failure to generate more interviews and to conduct long-term participant observations can be remedied by allowing for more time to do such activities. The empirics in this study tell us a great deal, but a long-term ethnographic study could tell a great deal more about the process of representational change and the emergence of new groupings of people out of the context of shared labor.

For Space? – A Political Ontology for Geography

While this study has focused most overtly on political and social theory and sociological or anthropological topics in its content, the field of geography plays a central role in the motivation for this study and for its conceptual orientation. While the present study does not review or deploy with any great emphasis the geographic literature on identity politics or on the significance of Deleuze for spatial science and theory, geographers are the primary audience for which this study is written. The ontology proposed by this study is not wholly new to geography. Indeed, geographers such as Doreen Massey have been at the forefront of rethinking the meaning of space in a theoretical paradigm that understands spatial systems as both socially constructed but nonetheless material. Massey's work in *For Space* (2005) deploys a similarly Deleuzian approach to space, understanding space as the simultaneity of social, political, natural, and historical trajectories (Massey 2005). While time is the dimension in which any particular element or ontological unit changes, space would be the entire simultaneous context in which any ontological element is changing and becoming. Space is the dimension that elucidates

interconnections between phenomena, demonstrating their affects upon each other in the moment of encounter, of simultaneity. This notion of space is the broad notion to which the present study can contribute fruitfully.

In this study, the spatiality and ontology of political movements serves as the primary empirical focus. When we understand space as the simultaneity of trajectories or, as Althusser describes it in his *Philosophy of the Encounter* (2006), of the worlds that are made in the moment of encounter, then we can understand the subjectless groups produced in the moments of affect and encounter between people as profoundly spatial phenomena. The particularities and dynamics of these groups is a subject to which geographers and others with a spatial imagination and perspective can contribute. This study took as its objective to prove that these groups exist and they are of great political importance. Geographers, including myself, who take up the perspective deployed in this study might be able to map these subjectless groups, to understand whatever internally consistent dynamics and replicable structures they might have. Such dynamics and structures, if they were found, would have significant effects on the way in which we conduct political work. While this study has only focused on the theoretical significance of these empirically existing groupings, more exploratory and empirically-oriented studies designed to discover, if they exist, any way in which non-representational modes of conviviality can be produced, maintained, and predicted would mean we could propose specific forms of concrete political work that would provide a material, rather than only theoretical, alternative to representational politics.

In the process of describing the overall methodological orientation of this study, I referred to mapping and spacing as the two conceptual orientations for the collection, management, and interpretation of empirical material. That these are spatial terms is not mere

metaphor. The terms were borrowed, respectively from Deleuze and Guattari and from Derrida through Wainwright. To understand spacing as both an epistemological and a geographic exercise is not sophistry or word play. It is, by contrast, to understand the ways in which worlds are discursively created. It can also mean the ways in which worlds are materially created and the discursively understood and maintained. To look for the space between in representations of the world is to look for ways to re-make the world according to a different political order. It is to open the discursive structure enough for new forms of collective desire to produce new orderings, new configurations of colliding social and natural trajectories. More arenas of activity and more representational and discursive configuratons of the world can be spaced by other geographers. This piece has focused only on spacing the identity politics paradigms in the reproductive justice movement. Other projects might focus on any other movement, on discursive construction of the connection between nature and a people (Wainwright), or any other respresentational schema.

Mapping is perhaps the mirror image of spacing. Mapping is Deleuze's term for the provisional development of new ways of knowing the world (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 12). The world having become unfamiliar through the unsettling of comfortable representational schema, there is a need for reconstructing it epistemologically. It is an active process of making the world, of intervening in it, but it is also a provisional process in which we make our way through the mass of phenomena and attempt to make sense of it and make it our own. This study has attempted, as the companion of its spacing and immanent critique, to propose new ways of organizing and understanding the world of political activism. Specifically, this study has argued that through the development of affective bonds in the context of shared social and political labor, new ways of being together in the world emerge that have important ramifications for our

understanding of political processes. In the context of reproductive justice activities, activists sharing an ethical commitment and building up affects of trust and compassion allow for the transgression of the expected axes of alignment along identity. These also allow for the formation of networks of solidarity that do not fit any existing ideological or representational paradigm. As was alluded to above, further mapping-oriented studies by geographers could map the dynamics of these new groupings. They could also map the networks of solidarity and affect that emerge creating new political spatialities.

These groupings can also contribute to our understanding of the ontological spatiality of the political itself. We might understand the ontological arena in which politics takes place better if we refine our understanding of space itself. A grouping that challenges both conventional social axes of power and organization recreates the spatiality of social organization in a new form. It is not a recreation of space in its own image, as it must exist in mixture with other trajectories and configurations, but it is an active contribution to the creation of new social spatialities.

Finally, using affective bonds and heterodox, subjectless communities as the networks of a new spatiality would have important effects on other spatialities. Paul Gilroy's reconceptualization of the spatiality of blackness as a diaspora, an assemblage of affects, cultural memories and practices, political struggles, and conceptions of identity, is a good example of the way in which the spatiality of a system can be rethought. By turning away from the essentialisms of Afro-centrism, which overdetermined and homogenized black Atlantic culture by treating it as a series of deviations from an African core culture, and the atomistic anti-essentialism of much social science, which treated people of African descent in different places as having little to do with one another and as disconnected culturally, Gilroy was able to rethink

the spatiality of blackness in a way that changes the entire dynamics of the relationships between black people throughout the world (Gilroy 1993). Similar rethinkings of social space are possible by recalibrating our theoretical orientation to pay attention to affective assemblages and subjectless communities.

Intellectual Impacts – Theory, Science, and Prospects for Further Research

The present study must conclude by discussing the intellectual contribution it makes outside the discipline of geography. In any discussion of the intellectual merit of this particular project, it is necessary to look at the various intellectual elements and enterprises it represents. It would not be appropriate to call the present study a philosophical project in the sense in which philosophy is understood by Deleuze and Guattari, as the production of concepts, a series of lexical frames for understanding the world, for bringing some rational order to undifferentiated and chaotic phenomena (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 2). In this project, one finds no new terms or concepts. Nothing in the project is developed from thin air. Particular understandings of terms and concepts are modified and placed in relation to other concepts in novel ways, but all the philosophical material is pre-existing.

However, the present study does take up philosophical arguments and topics. It enters into reflection, critique, and redeployment of particular apparatuses of concepts. Some of these conceptual apparatuses are the various paradigms of identity and its proposed relationship to any particular politics, the anti-essentialism of immanent critique and deconstruction, and, finally, the Deleuzian ontology that places affect, machinic assemblages, and the fluidity and becoming-other of all being at its core. In that these philosophical elements are aimed at understanding material, social, and political phenomena, we should then understand this project's uptake of philosophy as primarily a theoretical project. Theory, in this case, would be the construction of a

conceptual apparatus that allows for organization of particular phenomena in order to facilitate the production of functional understandings and possible interventions in the world. This notion would make theory the bridge between the Deleuzian notion of philosophy and Deleuze's understanding of science as the production of prospects and functions (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 24).

The present study attempts to contribute to theory in a way that closely conforms to the preceding understanding of the relation of philosophy to science. This study critiques identity politics as a paradigm for the building of political collectivities, and it proposes in its place a Deleuzian political ontology based on the formation, through affective connections born of aleatory encounter, of radical forms of collectivity and community that transgress the bounds of existing social structures and topographies. These are theoretical contributions to arguments over the way in which we might understand politics in the future, and, in turn, the way in which we might produce functions, operations, and interventions into politics that allow for the collective creation of better social futures. We might think of these potential future artifacts and products of this theoretical paradigm as new technologies of politics.

The empirical element of this study is meant as a provisional foray into the science that is possible in relation to the theoretical paradigm linking it to various philosophical projects. The examination of the empirical existence of the hypothesized subjectless groups is a scientific project, if it also a project of reading and interpretation, for its purpose is to support the proposed theoretical paradigm, to provide the model for the deployment of the theoretical paradigm in the investigation of other phenomena, and to provide baseline information for the development of the aforementioned political technologies. These three elements can be repeated in the

deployment of this paradigm in other arenas of inquiry and in the investigation of other phenomena.

It is also important to situate the theoretical orientation developed here within a larger intellectual project. Theories and philosophies do not come from nowhere. They are also not political neutral. The theoretical stance of a project is already an expression of a particular intellectual approach to the world, one that sees intellectual problems to be solved where someone of a different theoretical orientation would see nothing worthy of consideration. In the case of this study, the larger intellectual project is the post-structuralist philosophical project. This study has looked toward the critique and dismantling of stable identity paradigms and the opening of up new forms of being that do not presume such an ontological stability. The death of identity, of the subject, of the individual, is, of course, a continuation of the post-structuralist anti-humanist project. The ethic post-structuralists are calling for is a steady, sober embrace of unknown, of the possible. When we unsettle paradigms that are comfortable but limiting, we open up in the crisis both anxiety and possibility. To unsettle identity politics is perhaps a way of disabusing people of their politics. However, it is also a recognition of the limits identity politics places on our ability to construct radical political alternatives. If we take these limits seriously and alter our concepts accordingly, as I have tried to do in this study, we may offer some small intellectual contribution to the collective effort to build just communities, networks of solidarity, and more humane social futures.

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