



African-American Women Making Themselves

Notes on the Role of Black Feminist Research

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African-American women continually make themselves—always assuming an active role in the creation of culture and history. In this paper, I will put forward preliminary reflections on how, as Black feminist social scientists, we might operationalize in research practices Black feminist theoretical perspectives that seek to bring African-American women to the center of analysis. In other words, how can researchers explore the substance of African-American women's lives from the central vantage point of their experiences? This necessarily involves interrogating the relationship between scholars, researchers, and writers on one hand and working-class and poor women on the other

in examining how we think about and understand gender identity.

Representing African-American Women

Both within the African-American community and beyond it, African-American women continue to be defined in ways that deny their humanity. By now, a generation of scholars has explored how structures of unequal power relations give rise to images and stereotypes of African-American women that influence public policy in such fields as health, education, and family and how these representations facilitate the reproduction of

inequality. Essentialized notions of culture—culture viewed as an immutable set of negative traits passed down from generation to generation—are central to explanations for inequality. For example, concepts such as “culture of poverty” and “underclass culture” minimize structural factors responsible for inequality, suggesting that poverty is caused by the deficient culture of the poor. Central to these are negative stereotypes of African-American women as promiscuous, dependent welfare recipients, and inadequate mothers. As many writers, scholars, and activists have pointed out—from Moynihan’s description of the African-American matriarchal family to the recent debate around “welfare reform”—public policy demonizes African-American women, especially those with low income.

Historically, African Americans have challenged these negative stereotypes, but have generally accepted hierarchical models of gender relationships. In earlier work, I attempted to map out the ideological currents in African-American political movements as they relate to gender, suggesting that the three dominant approaches to African-American liberation embody very different constructs of gender.² The inclusionist paradigm seeks integration of African Americans into the existing social order, without a significant critique of the social, economic, or cultural structure of capitalism. This generally involves an acceptance of hierarchical gender roles and normative notions of family structure. William Julius Wilson’s proposals, which embody and reinforce traditional models of family structure and gender roles as an effective solution to the social problems facing African-American households, are a clear example of this approach.³ Conservative nationalism, which at first glance would appear as the opposite political direction, similarly incorporates a patriarchal model of family and gender roles. In organizations such as the

Nation of Islam, hierarchical gender roles are rationalized by religious or cultural discourses and often articulated in language that emphasizes the protection of women and gender complementarity.

African Americans in Defense of Ourselves

There is, however, yet a third paradigm. It calls for dismantling all forms of inequality, including those of gender relations. African-American women, in particular, have assumed the task of writing into history their experiences, incorporating their roles as workers, mothers, and activists. Contemporary work, which builds on a long tradition of writers such as Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, and Alice Dunbar Nelson, attempts to theorize a gender politics drawn from the experiences of the African-American community and African-American women. Emerging from this endeavor is Alice Walker’s formulation of “womanism” and Patricia Hill Collins’s pioneering work *Black Feminist Thought*, in which she calls for standpoint research, examining the ways in which

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African-American women have created a distinct standpoint on self, community, and society.⁴ Though Black feminisms may emerge from diverse theoretical perspectives, they frequently speak to the politics of race and class, as well as gender, and address the dialectics of struggle and community empowerment.

Black feminists, then, often seek to excavate the “cultures of resistance” that give rise

to a distinctive culture of gender identity. For example, Angela Davis's now classic 1981 volume describes the ways in which African-American women, from their vantage point at the crossroads of race, class, and gender, established "standards for a new womanhood."⁵ Ten years later, Patricia Hill Collins argued that "Black women intellectuals have laid a vital analytic foundation for a distinctive standpoint on self, community and society and, in doing so, created a Black women's intellectual tradition."⁶

Contemporary African-American feminism was stimulated by the civil rights movement of the 1960s. But the successes of the civil rights struggle have also brought about unprecedented class stratification among African Americans. Though most Black feminists, particularly those concerned with the interaction of class, race, and gender, consciously attempt to reflect the voices of the working-class majority in their work,⁷ much of contemporary writing on the lives of African-American women represents the views of Black feminist academics, writers, independent scholars, and activists.⁸ To what extent are the voices of contemporary working-class and low-income women of African descent represented in discussions of new constructions of gender?

Gaining insight into the everyday lives of African-American women and how they interpret them requires conscious methodological approaches and research practices. Increasingly, scholars are turning to research tools that facilitate this. These include the use of qualitative methods such as ethnography and community participation in research.

Research Methods

The civil rights movement was an impetus not only for the resurgence of Black feminism but also for "second wave" feminism. From these streams has emerged an impor-

tant critique of traditional research methods, indicting, for example, the false separation between subject and object, or the "knower and the known"⁹ and the hierarchical relations between the researcher and the informant—practices that mute the expression of women's experiences. Furthermore, feminist researchers suggested that particularly in the study of resistance, empowerment, and protest, a conventional understanding of political activities and methodological focus on surveys and structured interviews rather than participant observation frequently does not illuminate the types of resistance efforts in which women are involved and tends to obscure the agency of women.¹⁰

These early critiques pointed to the value of oral history, ethnography, and other qualitative methods in uncovering women's perspectives. For this reason, the effort to bring women into the analysis has involved important methodological interventions, foremost of which is "work with the personal testimony of individual women."¹¹ Some feminist researchers have pointed to the value of oral interviews¹² (and argued the merit of ethnography as an alternative approach). Such qualitative approaches are thought to facilitate "standpoint epistemology," whereby "less powerful members of society have the potential for a more complete view of social reality than others, precisely because of their disadvantaged position."¹³

As critics of ethnography have noted, however, the ethnographic endeavor too may embody hierarchical relationships of researcher and subject, the ethnocentric construction of the nonwestern "other," and the representation of partial truths.¹⁴ These predicaments have led some researchers, concerned with the researchers' inability to adequately represent the "other," to declare an end to "truth" or to welcome multiple versions of truth. In response, Frances Mascia-Lees and her colleagues suggest, citing Nancy Harstock, "The post modern view that truth and knowledge are contin-



Leith Mullings. Photo by John Smock.

gent and multiple may be seen to act as a truth claim itself, a claim that undermines the ontological status of the subject at the very time when women and non-Western peoples have begun to claim themselves as subject.”¹⁵

A more productive approach to addressing the concerns of representation may be community collaboration in research. Despite some very significant problems, incorporating community collaboration into research has the potential to speak to some of the dilemmas of traditional ethnography and produce information useful to the community. Furthermore, it allows us to uncover the cultures of resistance that stand in opposition to the dominant representations of African-American women that inform public policy.

Community Participation in Research

The essence of participatory research is the notion of dialogue between the researcher

and the “community.” The subjects of the study have significant input in selecting and formulating the research problem; constructing the research design, which includes determining the data to be collected and the methodology to be employed; the analysis of data; the disposition of the findings; and, where appropriate, developing a plan for projects suggested by the findings.¹⁶

Skeptics raise questions about the same issues—for example, objectivity, validity, and partisanship—problematized by the feminist critique of traditional methodology. Proponents of participatory research argue, however, not only that this approach combines research, education, and action¹⁷ as a powerful tool to empower people to improve their social conditions,¹⁸ but that it also produces a much more profound understanding of social problems.¹⁹

A recent experience with participatory research led me to think more about what Black feminist research might look like. The project

was located in Harlem, a multiclass, predominantly African-American community of nearly 100,000 people, located in northern Manhattan. I was familiar with the community, in that I had lived in Harlem for nearly twenty years, and for eight of those years I had also worked at the City College of New

York, located in Harlem. I was recruited to the project by the contractor, the Harlem-based New York Urban League. This project, which was funded by the Centers for Disease Control, involved an interdisciplinary team²⁰ of researchers in exploring the reasons for the disproportionate rate of infant mortality and low-weight babies among African-American women of all socioeconomic groups.

We utilized several methodological strategies to collect data: participant observation, longitudinal case studies, focus groups, and a survey. First, we engaged in participant observation at eight neighborhood and workplace sites, where two ethnographers spent three to four months. Second, we worked with twenty-two women of varied demographic and socioeconomic characteristics over the course of a year, yielding longitudinal case studies. Third, we convened eleven focus groups composed of community residents to discuss specific issues related to the context of infant mortality in Harlem. Finally, based on data gleaned from participant observation and the focus

groups, we developed an open-ended interview that was administered to eighty-three randomly selected women in central Harlem. The interview covered a range of topics, including work, family, stress, environment, health, political participation, and pregnancy.

Community residents collaborated in all phases of the research. This was facilitated through a twenty-four-member community advisory board (CAB), recruited from community-based organizations, unions, tenants organizations, youth programs, and service organizations; and community dialogue groups, smaller groups of residents who met with researchers to discuss specific aspects of the research. Members of the CAB and the community dialogue groups and other community residents were key participants in designing, guiding, and evaluating the research. This included selection of questions to be researched, research site, and topics for the questionnaire; facilitating the research through contacts and entry to research sites; evaluation; representing the project in various arenas; assisting in developing strategies for public dissemination; and providing general advice. Finally, through the use of ethnographic methods we involved hundreds of community residents in the research.

The participation of community residents was essential to the project. It significantly

extended our understanding of everyday life by illuminating the hidden dimension of transformative work—"efforts to sustain continuity under transformed circumstances, and efforts to transform circumstances in order to maintain continuity"²¹—through which new constructions of gender are often expressed. Following the direction of community residents to sites and arenas that would not have been immediately obvious to us immeasurably deepened our understanding of how women express their reading of gender through their actions in the realms of household and community and how these interpretations are contested at all levels—from "neutral" statistics to inflammatory policy speeches in the halls of Congress.

For example, one of the first requirements of the research was to prepare a community analysis based on quantitative data. Using this community report, we prepared a series of fact sheets presenting the community description and other project findings in a popular form. These were mailed out to community organizations and distributed at community events, as well as distributed by CAB members through their organizations. We also produced a set of slides depicting the community description data to be used by community organizations in making presentations to community residents or to potential funders. To compile these, we analyzed census and other data. We reported the data, using the traditional categories generally found in public documents, for example, unemployment, percentage of people below poverty, percentage of people receiving public assistance, numbers of vacant buildings, and so on.

When we presented a draft of the slides and fact sheets to the CAB, members suggested that we revise our presentation to demonstrate the strengths, as well as the problems, of the community. As a result of this discussion, we created additional slides that counterposed some figures, for example,

displaying the percentage of people *above* the poverty line and the percentage of people *not* on public assistance. With community residents, we tried to address the ways in which apparently "objective" statistical presentations emphasize negative characteristics and thereby legitimize stereotypes and unequal power relationships. Together, the researchers and the CAB began to think about alternative approaches that would illuminate the resistance and activism of women in trying to deal with their daily lives. This could take the direction of researching complaints of police brutality; enforcing housing code requirements; ensuring lack of heat and hot water; taking legal action concerning job loss; and resisting the placement of children in special education.

These discussions with the CAB led us to add an additional site to our research design, extending the research to include participant observation in Housing Court, located in downtown Manhattan. It is here that many Harlem women, in their struggle to retain decent shelter for themselves and their families, represent themselves in confronting the *lawyers* of the landlords who own the buildings in which they reside. Over one-third of the respondents to our survey had taken their landlords to court, and two-thirds of those had represented themselves without the benefit of a lawyer. One member of our CAB described the "tremendous courage" of these women as follows:

To go into housing court, women and their children must walk past court officers who often treat them in a demeaning manner, into a courtroom where the court is not sympathetic to poor people and is pressed with an enormous calendar. The judge sees the tenant as a problem: she does not speak his language; she may have children who are crying; she may be arguing with the landlord's lawyer.

Participatory research allowed us to more fully document the daily experiences of African-American women. The findings of this study are fully reported,²² but it is important to note here that in Harlem, where more than 70 percent of households are headed by women, women develop a variety of creative subsistence strategies to confront difficult conditions, including multiple jobs in the formal and informal sectors and flexible and fluid support networks.

Community collaboration in the research advanced our understanding of how women create free social spaces in which to nurture family and community and by doing so confront the hegemonic boundaries of gender and create the foundation for new identities. These are evident in the actions of women and also in their interpretations of gender identity. Though not necessarily theorized in academic language, there is a conscious construction of gender roles that emphasizes self-reliance and independence.

As part of the survey, we asked women: "How were you raised to think about being a woman?" In answering that question, almost twice as many women gave answers that emphasized themes of independence, competence, and self-reliance as compared to more traditional gender role behavior, such as "Act like a woman and do all the things a woman should do"; "To be a mother and a housewife"; or "The woman is supposed to just stay home and take care of the home and stay pregnant." Respondents gave such answers as "Be strong and achieve"; "Be independent"; "Be responsible, do not depend on anyone but yourself"; "Be strong and do not depend on a man to take care of me"; "That I can do anything I want"; and "To take care of myself—to be independent and self-supporting."

When asked, "What is the most important thing about being a woman?" the majority of respondents did not mention reproduction, but gave answers that gave priority to inde-

pendence, responsibility, self-esteem, education, and competence. For example, "Being able to stand on your own two feet"; "Decency, respectfulness, smart; having an awareness about who you are and what you will or will not accept"; and "Dignity and independence." Even among those whose first response addressed issues of reproduction, this was often viewed in a broader context, as the following answer demonstrates: "Being able to give birth; being able to carry the burden of society on my shoulders, black women are supposed to be strong like Timex—take a licking and keep on kicking."

As the above responses demonstrate, identification with the larger community, as well as self-sufficiency, has traditionally been a major aspect of gender identity for African-American women. Several African-American women scholars have commented on this aspect of identity. Nellie McKay discusses the role of "community identity" in construction of positive self-images.²³ Patricia Hill Collins also points to the importance of community in self-validation. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, too, notes that "a critical component of the black female self is her tie to the Afro-American community."²⁴ Identification with community was evident in the very high levels of activism we encountered in most sectors of the community. Respondents to the survey reported being involved in a broad range of community activities, including tenant associations, block associations, school boards, community boards, churches or religious organizations, PTAs, self-help groups, social groups, political organizations, environmental organizations, and organizations fighting drugs.

The Sojourner Syndrome

Through community collaboration, we were able to document, not merely describe, the multiplicative effects of class, race, and gender on health. The message of the intersecting

and overlapping gendered notions of responsibilities may be conceptualized as the Sojourner Syndrome. Sojourner Truth was born in slavery around 1799 and liberated by the New York State Emancipation Act of 1827. In 1843, she assumed the name of Sojourner Truth and began to travel across the country as an abolitionist itinerant preacher. She worked closely with leading abolitionists and became involved in the early women's rights movement. In her famous speech that underscores the memorable phrase "Ain't I a Woman?" Sojourner

Truth dramatically depicts the various responsibilities of African-American women, carried out in circumstances characterized by racial and gender oppression:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place, and ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm. I have ploughed, and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as hard as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?²⁵

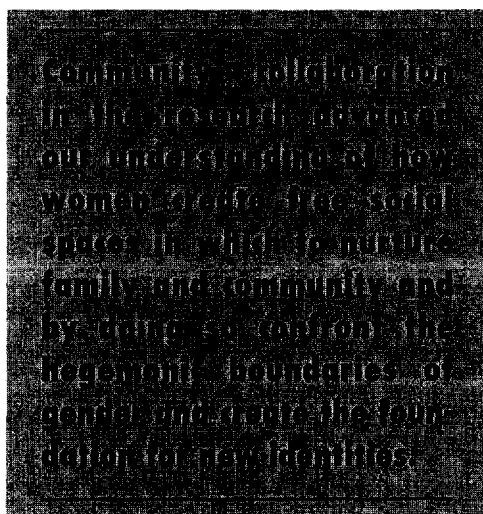
The story of Sojourner Truth has become emblematic and anthematic to the characteri-

zation of the lives of African-American women. She is a legend, larger than life, and assumes extraordinary role responsibilities. Her account embodies the issues that African-American women confront today:

the assumption of economic, household, and community responsibilities, which express themselves in family headship, working outside the home (like a man), and the constant need to address community discrimination—all often carried out in conditions of discrimination and scarce resources. In addition, the story speaks to the

contradiction between models of gender and the lives of African-American women: the exclusions from the protections of private patriarchy offered by concepts of womanhood, motherhood, and femininity; the experience of being silenced; and the loss of children.

The Sojourner Syndrome represents a strategy for fostering the reproduction and continuity of the community. The unusual roles historically assumed by African-American women have allowed the African-American community to survive under 400 years of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, discrimination, and postindustrial redundancy. During slavery, when the slave family was illegal, African-American women's assumption of motherhood and nurturance responsibilities allowed children to survive. After emancipation, at a time when married Euro-American women generally did not work outside the home, African-American women's work outside the home allowed the family to subsist in a situation where wage discrimination against both men and women did not permit a family



wage. Throughout, African-American women's individual and collective efforts on behalf of the community have facilitated group survival. In other words, the Sojourner Syndrome is a survival strategy. But it has many costs, and among them are health consequences.

Problems in Participatory Research

Research projects that enlist community residents in documenting structural oppression and resistance to it are likely to conflict with the institutions soliciting the research. National agencies and institutions, particularly those concerned with health and disease, often have a strong investment in an implicitly pathological model that portrays communities as "sick" and disorganized.²⁶ They may interpret oppositional behaviors as "noncompliant," "dysfunctional," or "pathological." Researchers often find themselves pressured by the funding agencies to report data in this framework.

In the project described above, community residents had a more nuanced approach. Though recognizing the severe health and social problems, they also had a strong investment in a "health" (as compared to a "disease") model of the community. The commitment to demonstrate the strengths, as well as the weakness, of the community was evident in the examples discussed above. Throughout the study, community residents of all socioeconomic strata expressed concern about the negative representation of Harlem and African Americans in media and social science studies.

These issues of representation may become particularly problematic when the purpose of the research is to attract funding from social service or state agencies. There is often an implicit or explicit directive to emphasize the social problems for which funding is sought, often resulting in an unbalanced por-

trayal of the community. In addition, the funding agencies may not appreciate or understand inquiry into strategies of resistance and the researchers may find themselves contesting the strongly held stereotypes. Though individuals associated with these agencies may seek to implement new approaches, institutional culture and history runs deep and may not be easily changed.

Most important, these institutions are frequently unwilling to accept results that point to long-term structural change. Research emphasizing dysfunctional cultural and individual behaviors produce recommendations for "manageable" interventions in the lives of the subjects. On the other hand, research designed to illuminate the structures of oppression and the ways in which people resist them frequently points to the need for large-scale societal changes in employment and access to shelter, education, and health care. Though these "rights" are integral to the discourse of international human rights, state institutions are generally not prepared to tackle transformative social change. Conflicts among researchers, community residents, and the funding agency may manifest in such issues as how results are reported, disposition of the data, and safeguarding the privacy of informants. In these disputes, the differential power of the institutions, researchers, and communities may become a serious issue.

Community participatory research, then, can yield important results. But it may be seriously compromised by reliance on state institutions to fund research. The organizations that sponsor research are generally not transformative institutions. Indeed, many of these institutions reflect class, corporate, and political interests that may be antithetical to the needs of the population. The history of social research is replete with examples of individuals, institutions, and agencies who have harmed the communities they sought to serve.

Black Feminist Research: Where Do We Go from Here?

What might Black feminist research practices look like? They would have much in common with overlapping feminist research strategies that seek to "bring women in";²⁷ approaches to Black studies that describe it as descriptive, corrective, and prescriptive;²⁸ and left and progressive approaches to scholarship that assert that the purpose of scholarship is not to study the world, but to change it. Black feminist research practices are informed by these bodies of literature, but also enrich and extend them. Like DeVault, in her discussion of feminist methodology, we might claim a "distinctiveness without giving definition."²⁹

But as writers on Black feminist theory have pointed out, what ideally marks Black feminist research is its grounding in the unique interaction of race, class, and gender from which emerges the experience of African-American women and its rootedness in communities of resistance. The enterprise is both descriptive in writing African-American women into history and corrective in its critique of male-dominated, patriarchal social theories and interpretations of women's lives that may be functions of class, race, and gender hierarchies. For this reason, research practices developed by Black feminists have the potential to critique and enrich feminist

methodology and social science research in general.

First, Black feminist research practices must be collaborative. This will require serious reflection on the relationship of researchers to the community. What are the implications of the fact that researchers may share race and gender identification with their subjects but may now occupy a different

For research to be transformative, the subjects of research must become actors in the transformation of their own environment, as well as interpreters of their own space and place. In the end, the change agents of history are social movements in which everyday people, in their own language and from their own experiences, collectively work to change their world. Culture then becomes a weapon of struggle.

socioeconomic position? Research methods then must be geared toward bringing the everyday lives of African-American women to the forefront. In this sense, the search for appropriate methodologies has much in common with feminist methodological interventions. Here qualitative research techniques may have a special role, but "giving voice is not enough."³⁰ Research practices must help to reveal the "hidden structures of oppres-

sion"—the power and resource differentials arising from class, race, and gender hierarchies.

Second, the research relationship must reflect the researcher's identification with and responsibilities toward the African-American community. Ethical responsibilities concerning research practices, protection of informants, disposition of data, and framing of results must go beyond the codes of ethics practiced by most reasonable disciplines. These considerations become particularly important in the case of a population that has limited access to control over how knowledge

is presented and represented. The African-American community has a long history of physical mistreatment and ideological defamation through exploitative research.

Finally, in my view, to be effective, Black feminist research must link itself to social movements through which change can take place—it must be prescriptive. The relationship of scholarship to practice continues to be debated in various disciplines: For example, “advocacy anthropology,”³¹ “permanent sociology,”³² and “conscious partiality” in feminist approaches³³ all speak to this issue. But several Black feminist researchers suggest that we have a special responsibility for praxis: that the political purpose of theory should serve transformation and empowerment.³⁴ Such approaches presume change from the standpoint of the interest of the subject.

This underscores the necessity for research to be truly collaborative. For research to be transformative, the subjects of research must become actors in the transformation of their own environment, as well as interpreters of their own space and place. In the end, the change agents of history are social movements in which everyday people, in their own language and from their own experiences, collectively work to change their world. Culture then becomes a weapon of struggle.

Notes

1. The phrase is adapted from E. P. Thompson, author of *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963).
2. Leith Mullings, *On Our Own Terms: Race, Class and Gender in the Lives of African American Women* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
3. William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
4. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
5. Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Routledge, 1981).

6. Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p. 15.
7. Patricia Hill Collins, for example, states, “Reclaiming the Black women’s intellectual tradition involves examining the everyday ideas of black women not previously considered intellectuals.” Ibid.
8. Rose M. Brewer, “Theorizing Race, Class and Gender: The New Scholarship of Black Feminist Intellectuals and Black Women’s Labor,” in Stanlie James and Abena Busia, eds., *Theorizing Black Feminisms: The Visionary Pragmatism of Black Women* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 236.
9. Marjorie L. DeVault, “Talking Back to Sociology: Distinctive Contributions of Feminist Methodology,” *Annual Review of Sociology* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Annual Reviews, Inc.), Vol. 22 (1996), pp. 29–50.
10. Ida Susser, “Political Activity Among Working Class Women in a U.S. City,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 13, no. 1 (1986), pp. 108–117; Sandra Morgen and Ann Bookman, “Rethinking Women and Politics: An Introductory Essay,” in Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen, eds., *Women and the Politics of Empowerment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).
11. DeVault, “Talking Back to Sociology,” p. 33.
12. Kathryn Anderson et al., “Beginning Where We Are: Feminist Methodology in Oral History,” *Oral History Review*, Vol. 15 (1987), pp. 103–127.
13. Joyce Nielson, “Introduction,” in Joyce Nielson, ed., *Feminist Research Methods* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p. 10.
14. James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985); Judith Stacy, “Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?” in Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, eds., *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
15. Frances E. Mascia-Lees, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerino Cohen, “The Postmodernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 15, no. 1 (1989).
16. See Peter Park, “What Is Participatory Research? A Theoretical and Methodological Perspective,” in Peter Park et al., eds., *Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the U.S. and Canada* (Westport, Conn.: Bergen and Garvey, 1993).
17. For example, Budd Hall, “Introduction,” in Park et al., eds., *Voices of Change*.
18. Park, “What Is Participatory Research?”
19. Jean J. Schensul and Donald D. Stull, *Collaborative Research and Social Change: Applied Anthropology in Action* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987).
20. The principal investigators were myself; Dr. Diane McLean, an epidemiologist at the Harlem Hospital Prevention Center; Dr. Janet Mitchell, chief of neonatology at Harlem Hospital; and Dennis Walcott, CEO of the New York Urban League. Dr. Alaka Wali served as the senior ethnographer. Several graduate students, Deborah

Thomas, Denise Oliver, Sabiyha Prince, and Patricia Tovar, served as ethnographers and research assistants. The proposals for community participation were developed by the research team and are fully reported in Leith Mullings, Alaka Wali, Diane McLean, Janet Mitchell, Sabiyha Prince, Deborah Thomas, and Patricia Tovar, "Qualitative Methodologies and Community Participation in Examining Preterm Delivery," *Journal of Maternal and Child Health* (forthcoming).

21. Mullings, *On Our Own Terms*, p. 98.

22. Leith Mullings and Alaka Wali, *Stress and Resistance: The Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, forthcoming November 2000).

23. Cited in Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," in Gluck and Patai, eds. *Women's Words*, p. 44.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

25. There are two strikingly different accounts of the events that occurred in 1891 and Sojourner Truth's address. See Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform and Rebellion* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), pp. 67-69, for both accounts.

26. See the discussion by John D. O'Neil, Jeffrey R. Reading, and Audrey Leader of "the portrait of a sick, disorganized community implicit in this epidemiological

discourse . . . as justification for continued marginalization and paternalism towards Canadian Aborigines." "Changing the Relations of Surveillance: The Development of a Discourse of Resistance in Aboriginal Epidemiology," *Human Organization*, Vol. 57, no. 2 (1998).

27. DeVault, "Talking Back to Sociology," p. 32.

28. Manning Marable, "Black Studies," *Race and Reason*, Vol. 4 (1997), pp. 3-8.

29. DeVault, p. 34.

30. Sherry Gorelick, "Contradictions of Feminist Methodology," in Heidi Gottfried, ed., *Feminism and Social Change: Bridging Theory and Practice* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 23-46; quote from p. 27.

31. Roger Sanjek, "Anthropological Work at a Gray Panther Health Clinic: Academic, Applied, and Advocacy Goals," in Leith Mullings, ed., *Cities of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

32. Jacques Hamel, "The Positions of Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Touraine Respecting Qualitative Methods," *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 49, no. 1 (1998).

33. Maria Mies, "Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research," in Gloria Bowles and Renate Duelli Klein, eds., *Theories of Women's Studies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 117-139.

34. See, for example, Davis, *Women, Race and Class*; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.