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## WHITE MEN IN MULTICULTURAL COALITIONS\*

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## WHITE MEN IN MULTICULTURAL COALITIONS

### I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we discuss some of the potentials and pitfalls accompanying efforts to create and sustain multicultural coalitions. In particular, we focus on the issues faced by white men in such situations. This particular focus seems appropriate for several reasons: (1) in the current context of intellectual and political struggles around race and gender relations, new visions and practical options for white men (and for everyone else) are essential, and a coalition is one of these options; (2) white men, as power holders in most organizations and communities in this society, are important resources in any multicultural living and working arrangement or social change effort; (3) white men, as repositories of historic racism and sexism, and the privileges accompanying these dominant statuses, must learn and change in order to work effectively in multicultural settings; (4) as two progressive, upper-middle class, middle-aged, white men working on these issues we are in a position to speak of and to, and perhaps only of and to, white men and their/our concerns and hopes in this regard.

Our own learning about these matters is not complete by any means; but we share our current progress, partly in the hope of educating others and partly as a means of soliciting the feedback by which we may become wiser. We expect that white men will experience a range of emotions in reading this chapter. Many are unused to seeing whiteness and maleness addressed as group-level phenomena. But we are an identifiable and "namable" social group, and a group with a great deal of power in race and gender relations. While it is important to avoid stereotyping white males, it is also important to identify some of the characteristic ways we work and live, and especially how we interact with others. Some white male readers may agree and identify with us; others may deny the issues, reframe them or argue with and resent us. These issues do arouse strong feelings - in ourselves and in others. White men who are different from ourselves (by class or religion or sexual orientation) are likely to experience some issues differently and to face

different opportunities and barriers as they pursue their values and goals. White male readers with considerable experience in multicultural interactions and coalitions probably will react differently from others, based in large part on these multicultural experiences. We also assume that white women, and people of color, will read and react to this material quite differently from white men.

Although our primary focus in this paper is on the issues of race in multicultural coalitions, we on occasion address issues of class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, status and role. All these dimensions of social diversity and social structure occur simultaneously and interact with one another. Moreover, they all have certain elements in common: the existence of domination and exclusion as well as privilege, historic difficulty in dealing with differences, the encouragement of internal divisions and internecine warfare, patterns of individual internalization of oppression, and often the semi-invisibility of oppression. Unless the existence of and interactions among these varied dimensions are acknowledged, any single coalitional form will be rent with internal division. The history and literature regarding intergroup coalitions in the U. S. society, with few exceptions, concentrates on one of these dimensions - race - to the exclusion of others; this eventually results in incomplete understanding of the multi-faceted nature of group oppression and risks furthering some forms of oppression while pursuing the reduction of others. In practice, such flawed understanding can increase divisiveness and conflicts among different oppressed groups and help maintain white, male, upper-class power and control.

Why are multicultural coalitions important? We live in a society and in organizations marked both by the dominance of white men and by the increasing diversity of populations and workforces containing people of color and white women. In the context of historic patterns of stratification, segregation and oppression, people of different races and genders (and classes and other statuses and ethnicities as well) are organized into adversarial struggles with one another, and with our legacy of domination and subordination, privilege and disadvantage. The proportion of poor people in the U. S. is increasing, and the proportion of poor people of color is increasing

even more rapidly. This leads to intensified conflict over decreasing economic opportunities and other resources.

In the decade of the 90s, and beyond, we will see an increasingly global economy, as well as a domestic one, in which white men are a minority, increasing numbers of people of color and women in the active work force, increasing numbers of people of color and women in positions of moderate power in organizations and communities, increasing gaps and tensions between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, and increasing need for inter- as well as intra- national collaboration. Neither revolutions by the oppressed, nor strategic planning by privileged groups, will be effective alone in dealing with these changes. The quest for new economic and political arrangements, let alone peace and justice, requires many groups to work together to overcome our heritage of division, exclusion, and dominance/subordination.

One model of how people may live and work together in the context of increasing diversity is the COALITION. Coalition refers to the organization of more than one party or unit, typically separate or in conflict (historically or currently), working together to influence the actions of another party, system or situation. In this sense of the term a coalition is a temporary social system. That is, since a coalition works with, but does not eliminate or ignore, differences and conflicts of interests, it may disintegrate when certain specific (and perhaps localized) agendas are accomplished. In this sense, a coalition is a model of how to proceed, a model of a process.

At times, the process of coalitioning may be institutionalized in the structure of a new or ongoing economic or political organization, or a community decision-making apparatus. For instance, recent discussions of multicultural organizations and multicultural organizational development (Cox, 1991; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Thomas, 1990) have, at their heart, some of the same principles as do discussions of more temporary multicultural coalitions for social change. The same is true for dispute resolution systems: to be responsive and effective in complex, multi-interest group disputes, they adapt many of the principles of the coalitional process discussed in this chapter (Crowfoot and Wondelleck, 1990). In fact, if conflicting parties

who come to an agreement are not to lose their separate identities, agendas or constituencies, an effective settlement structure must have created at least a temporary and issue-focused coalition. Thus, the coalition model has broad relevance and potential utility for many multicultural struggles, organizations and situations.

## II. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT COALITIONS

What are some of the societal preconditions or assumptions underlying a theory of multicultural coalitions? First, we assume that our society is marked by economic and political stratification of groups based, at least in part, on their racial, gender, class and ethnic characteristics and statuses. Groups defined by these characteristics also have different histories, cultures, power and access to valued material and symbolic resources. It is natural, given the stratification of this society, for contests and conflicts to occur over the allocation of resources, including material goods, political power and cultural symbols and respect.

A subordinate or challenging group that desires to protect and/or increase its share of societal resources (and/or create related social changes) often must find additional resources beyond its own group. These additional resources range from access to powerful establishment decision makers, to numbers of members, to information and skills needed to achieve change, to funds, to communication channels, to the type and amount of power that requires response. In a coalition, they all are potentially available to challenging groups.

Although varied interest groups are stratified by social and economic status and access to key resources, they all are somewhat interdependent with one another. But interdependence takes many forms, not all of which are equally valued. Seldom is there equal status interdependence among different and largely independent racial and ethnic groups, nor among different and interdependent gender groups. For these groups, differential access to resources results in their having more or less power and status, and not equal status. Sometimes a coerced form of interdependence is created, really dominance/subordination, as a result of a group's inability to choose among alternative interdependences or to escape the system and become truly

independent, as in separated communities of people of color within the boundaries of the United States or emigrated elsewhere, or in separated organizations of women and men. Sometimes unequal interdependence is a result of domination by powerful and wealthy groups led by white men, and accompanied by the more or less compliant acceptance by groups of people of color, by people with less economic means, or by groups of women. To varying degrees, groups may accept their subordinate or oppressed status in the social system or the community in order to survive. In some cases, subordinate groups' interdependence is maintained by their "value" to the dominant group, as in the form of a large reserve pool of unemployed or unpaid labor, a large pool of compliant voters or non-voters, an available pool for military action, or a group available for social support and sexual gratification. In some cases, of course, relatively equal status interdependence and interaction among parties of the same or relatively equal power and resources really may exist.

The strength of necessary and desired ties among interdependent groups, and the lack of alternatives for subordinate groups, mean that our society has not splintered apart in some centripetal fashion, despite imagined "balkanization" by some spokespersons who fear greater recognition, autonomy and power for previously invisible, dependent and powerless groups. If there were not significant degree of group interdependence, moreover, there would be little chance of conflict and contest, because such conflicts depend upon multi-group contact and interactions around what are perceived to be a limited set goals and resources. Moreover, particular groups do share some common or transcendent values and interests (e.g. national identity, core values, and common survival, acceptance of hierarchical authority, system coherence, etc.); these commonalities, even when temporary and situationally specific, take us beyond simplistic conceptions of the dangers of "identity politics" and "balkanization".

Multicultural coalitions that bring different groups together, in (even a temporary) alliance, are a positive response to the Scylla and Charybdis of American racial relations -- assimilation and balkanization. With each group insistent on retaining its own identity and agenda, yet with each group agreeing to work together on some common agendas and reducing

violence toward the other, multicultural coalitions may help develop a realistic and practical model for how we may all learn to reduce exploitation and violence, and overcome separation and work together. In such coalitions, learning may occur about topics such as: privilege and oppression, anger and fear, discrimination and prejudice, organizing and advocacy, conflict and negotiation, commonalities and boundaries, power and powerlessness, loss and grief, trust and collaboration, denial and projection. Thus, multicultural coalitions carry the positive potential of re-educating and re-relating Americans whose identities were formed and socialized in separated communities, and whose relationships were structured into superordination or subordination. They may also be arenas in which we can explore new relationships of greater equity, mutuality, and respect between groups and individuals, and where individualism can be honored in ways that recognize and cherish communal and group traditions and identities. The lessons learned from building multicultural coalitions may educate us as to the outlines and possibilities of new relationships, organizations and communities, and to the strategies and programs of change needed to realize these possibilities. As Smith & Smith note (1981, p. 126): "What I feel is radical is trying to make coalitions with people who are different from you. I feel it is radical to be dealing with race and sex and class and sexual identity all at one time. I think that is really radical because it has never been done before." For many people who perceive, as does Howard (1993, p. 40), that "the issue of racism and cultural diversity in the U.S. [is] a struggle we are all in together," and can't be solved by any one group, multicultural coalitions are an essential vehicle for racial problem solving.

Coalitions occur at different levels of social systems: (1) the macro level of political and economic systems and interactions, e.g. in relations among nations, regions within nations, major social classes or ethnic groups, separate organizations, or major political parties; (2) the mezzo level of organizational or community functioning, e.g. among different political interest groups within a city, separate departments of a public agency or a business, or different racial groups within a local church; (3) the micro level of interpersonal relationships, e.g. among two or several individuals, either alone or within a family or small group or work-team. We primarily



address problems and issues in coalitions at the mezzo level of organizations and communities, since that is where our primary expertise is, and since that level is critical for success at the other levels.

### III. INTERRACIAL AND MULTIRACIAL COALITIONS

Bennett's (1971) discussion of racial coalitions suggests a framework for examining a series of concrete examples in terms of the parties to such endeavors. He identifies as partners many of the groups in Table 1. The examples in this table include coalitions with varying degrees of intentional organization, some tacit and others publicly acknowledged. Even those that were not successful in attaining their goals or in maintaining positive internal processes contribute to helping to understand the basis of formation of coalitions and their problems.

Coalitions between people of color and affluent white groups with liberal ideologies represent the classic case in the U.S. experience. Most of the available literature on racial coalitions deals with these formations, their successes and failures, and their promises and hopes. For instance, numerous case studies of school desegregation efforts have indicated attempts to create interracial coalitions between people of color, and organizations representing them, and middle-class and/or affluent liberal white groups, including the NAACP, LDF, MALDEF, ACLU, Urban League, League of Women Voters, Councils of Churches, and so on (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976).

Sonenshein's (1993) analysis of the relationships among Blacks and affluent middle class white liberals in urban elections shows two different models: polarization and crossover. In the first, whites and Blacks are strongly opposed, and where Blacks achieve victory it is due to greater unity and mobilization of the black electorate. In the second, "black unity is supplemented by major linkages to white liberal support. (Sonenshein, 1993, p. 334)." The polarization model appears "predominantly in eastern and midwestern cities with large black populations, strong competing ethnic communities, remnants of party organization, and high levels of white racial antipathy (Sonenshein, 1993, p. 333). The crossover model describes occurrences in western

TABLE 1 INTERRACIAL COALITIONS AMONG VARIOUS GROUPS/PARTIES

Parties	Descriptions
Persons of color and privileged white elites	<p>Some community elites challenges to segregation and implementation of judicial decisions to desegregate schools and public services</p> <p>Some colleges' regulations against racial harassment</p>
Persons of color and white affluent people	<p>National political groups in Southern reconstruction efforts after the Civil War</p> <p>Atlanta municipal politics (Burman, 1979; Davidson, 1972)</p> <p>Development of the NAACP</p> <p>Feminist movement</p> <p>Boston mayoral campaign of Mel King</p> <p>Bilingual education movement</p> <p>Some efforts to advance affirmative action, diversity and multiculturalism</p>
Persons of color and and working-class Whites	<p>Martin Luther King's later effort with SCLC (Especially in the North)</p> <p>Union support for policies benefiting both people of color and working class whites (Foner, 1974)</p> <p>Some poor communities' campaigns to resist pollution, drugs, and crime</p> <p>Rainbow Coalition</p>
Different ethnic & groups	<p>Latinos and African-Americans of varying classes in the labor movement (Davidson, 1972) and in some city politics</p> <p>Historic efforts by some Jewish and African-American organizations and communities</p> <p>Campaigns against environmental racism</p> <p>Some protests against organizational discrimination</p> <p>Rainbow Coalition</p>

states, particularly California. In these places, "there are smaller black populations, fewer competing ethnic groups, a reform political culture and lower levels of white racial antipathy (Sonenshein, 1993, p. 334)."

Sonenshein's historical research on multiracial coalitions in Los Angeles community politics shows evidence for a crossover model of racial politics. In this city, "Blacks used their power in principal alliance with liberal reformers, particularly Jews (Sonenshein, 1993, p. 348)", and the key factor in changes in city policies was ideological affinity between Blacks and white liberals. This affinity can be developed into a successful alliance when the groups' political interests do not directly clash. Sonenshein also observed that despite the vulnerabilities of black-white liberal alliances, many moderate size black communities will have a difficult time winning community wide elections without them. He suggests that alliances between Blacks and Latinos may become prominent when there are class conflicts between white liberals and Blacks. Unless this "intra-minority" alliance makes up a large share of the community's population, however, it also will need support from the white community in order to succeed. The combination of class conflicts and racial conflicts often makes victory very difficult for historically oppressed peoples.

White elites and relatively affluent white liberal have limitations as coalition partners with people of color. Neither white group may really "need" such a coalition for long, and what may be a survival-level issue for persons of color may only be a moderately important issue for these white groups. In addition, white groups often have the power to "use" or exploit the coalition to gain added resources for themselves while only symbolically adhering to an agenda serving people of color. These elite white groups often are so steeped in the value tradition of American life that they eschew concepts of collective rights in favor of a focus on individual rights as the cornerstone of civil rights' and civil liberties' campaigns. As the American political scene has shifted in the past 20 years, for example, and as demands for minorities' rights increasingly have taken a collectivist turn (quotas, group advance and reparations), many white liberals have found themselves torn between these traditional values of individualism and traditional coalitional allies' collectivist goals. Schuchter (1968) has noted, for instance, how the

"beliefs and myths of democratic means and ends" also seem to run against the success of a "liberal coalition." White liberals' rootedness in systems of at least partial privilege also have made them culturally adverse to disorderly and militant action by protesting groups and to blanket diagnoses of white racism. Nonviolence and pacifism, rather than violence and disorder, often were their cherished change strategies, and individualism and individual conversion were their favored ways of relating to the realities of discrimination and oppression. Shifts in tactics and analysis to "Black power" or "Brown power", to local control, and to institutional racism rather than individual prejudice or discrimination, often weakened these whites' commitments to historic interracial coalitions.

As one subgroup of generally liberal whites, Jews' own interests in countering oppression and discrimination, and their strongly held values of social justice, made them a significant part of Democratic Party politics, the civil rights movement, and other historic interracial coalitions. In the past twenty years, however, we have seen an erosion of the traditional support of Jews for the changing "Black agenda" and the developing agenda of persons of color. Jews' upwardly mobile class and status, the polarization of African and Middle Eastern politics, and domestic anti-Semitism have rendered many Jews' commitments to interracial coalitions, and to Black advance, quite fragile. In the 1984 Presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson, the changed dynamics between Blacks and Jewish liberals, and the consequent erosion of Jewish support for this historic coalition, were very evident. Yet, even earlier, in 1979, when Andrew Young was U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, his discussions with an observer from the Palestinian Liberation Organization resulted in outraged protests by Jewish leaders. Jackson's later derogatory descriptions of Jews and his support by Louis Farakhan, as well as other pronouncements by ministers of the Nation of Islam, have become comparable foci of conflict.

Barbara Smith (1988), a Black woman, writes openly about her feelings and views about these coalitions: she does this in part because of her commitment to coalitions as the only means available to accomplish the societal changes she sees as necessary.

I am focusing on relationships between Black and Jewish women, because in my own life these relationships have both terrorized me and also shown me that people who are not the same not only can get along, but at times can work together to make effective political change (Smith, 1988, p. 68).

In communicating her experience she tells us about the struggle many people in coalitions feel as they try to deal with the differences and sometimes gulfs between various groups.

One of the things I found most overwhelming was the sense that I had to be writing for two distinct audiences at the same time. I was very aware that what I want to say to other Black women is properly part of an "in-house" discussion and it undoubtedly would be a lot more comfortable for us if somehow the act of writing did not require it to go public. With Jewish women, on the other hand, although we may have a shared bond of feminism, what I say comes from a position outside the group (Smith, 1988, p. 69).

Smith's discussion specifies some of the issues arising in interracial coalitions formed as part of the feminist movement. The feminist movement has given rise to many coalitions among white women and women of color and to an ongoing struggle to deal with racism in the midst of their common focus on sexism. These coalitional efforts have given rise to important and insightful analyzes of interracial and interclass dynamics among women seeking basic societal change. For instance, a number of feminist works (e.g. hooks, 1990; Lorde, 1984) have questioned the degree to which white women can join with women of color in coalitions which truly are interracial and which pursue the interests of these various groups. These issues are even more problematic, even if less well articulated, for interracial coalitions involving white men.

Coalitions between people of color and working-class whites are not often discussed, but they are common, occurring with great frequency in little noticed daily events and activities. Certainly they involve many more people on both sides than do the coalitions involving white liberals and/or elites. Such intraclass coalitions remain the great hope of many Marxist scholars and organizers of class consciousness and collective action. The basic assumption is that class matters (or can matter) more than race or ethnicity itself, and that working-class whites and people of color have similar objective interests, as a function of their common position in the social allocation process (Boggs, 1970). Davidson (1972) argues, for instance, that Blacks could and should form coalitions with white working-class groups, because these groups share common objective interests. Further, Foner (1974) reports that Martin Luther King, Jr., sought to ally

northern black and white laboring groups because of their common agenda in organizing the unemployed, expanding the war on poverty, and unionizing the largely minority groups of unorganized service workers.

Some critics of intraclass interracial coalitions point to the extensive and intense ethnic conflicts currently occurring both in the U.S. and in formerly communist countries as examples of the priority of ethnic identities and solidarities over class interests, identities and solidarities. Other critics of this approach stress the racism or potentially "counter revolutionary" posture of white working-class groups. On the other hand, intra-class interracial coalitions have such a powerful potential, that, as Roediger (1991) notes, white elites historically have responded by trying to manipulate and destroy such potential alliances. In the 19th century U.S., he argues (Roediger, 1991), early Irish immigrants were discriminated against, partly via the label "white nigger." Once these Irish began to create alliances with Blacks in the free labor debates and movement, white elites re-labelled the Irish as white, and encouraged them to join with other (immigrant) white laborers to resist the advance of free Black labor. In a more current context, we have seen the Reagan-Bush Republican Party strategy to redefine civil rights, reduce the government's role and destroy the Democratic New Deal Alliance of working class Blacks and whites via the creation of new alliances between working class whites and affluent/elite whites, partly on subtle or covert anti-Black terms (Shull, 1993).

Despite these limitations, unions led by whites have been the most reliable coalition allies of people of color, sometimes in direct support for the advance of people of color, and at other times indirectly, as unions advocate programs for white working-class people that also benefit Black and Latino workers. Moreover, poor people of all races have benefited from labor-initiated/supported social welfare programs, such as Head Start, welfare liberalization, vocational and career education, manpower retraining, unemployment compensation and the like. All these subordinate groups also have benefited from the acquisition or organizational and leadership skills gained through participation in labor unions' and labor's actions for social change.

Thus, Leggett (1968) argues that there is considerable reason for optimism about intraclass coalitions, because militant white workers often support the right of minorities, despite their prejudices. As the changed economic conditions of the 1980s and 90s heightened economic threats for the working class, however, there are increasing examples where these dynamics have resulted in intensified conflict between whites and persons of color. Work force reductions have frightened all working and middle-class Americans, but persons of color still bear more of these reductions than do whites. On the other hand, these changes always have the potential of being perceived and dealt with by whites and persons of color as a shared crisis. If reacted to in this way, these economic adversities can become the basis of intraclass, interracial coalitions which seek jobs, other economically related protections, and ultimately political realignments as well.

Most elite and liberal efforts to reform or improve race relations in America have thrust minority groups against the immediate interests of working-class and poor whites: school desegregation mainly desegregated white working-class schools; affirmative action mostly opened working class whites' jobs to minority entry; funds to support new programs for minorities were taxed in such regressive fashion they were paid for disproportionately by middle- and working class whites, and so on. Thus, these white groups often "feel" the greatest threat from policies aimed at advancing people of color, regardless of any analysis of them as parallel victims of class and race domination by affluent white elites (Lynch, 1989; Hacker, 1992).

Discussions of coalition dynamics between men and women, especially white men and white women, have occurred most often around the extent and conditions for males' effective participation (or lack thereof) in the women's movement (e.g., Hagan, 1992) and in intimate heterosexual relationships (e.g., Hagan, 1991; Rubin, 1983). In addition, rumors and reports of difficulties in the interactions between individual white men, and men of color; with white women and women of color, have come from coalitions organized during the civil rights movement (including from organizations such as SNCC and SCLC) and the northern student movement (including from organizations such as SDS).

Interclass coalitions among people of color represent an additional pattern of collective association and action. One example of this sort of coalition occurs among various classes within an oppressed racial group (Davidson, 1972; Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967); here there may be racially common objective interests, although potentially distinguishable cultural and economic concerns. Just as there is occasional question and critique of the distance and conflict between the Black bourgeoisie or middle class and the masses of Black poor people, so are there many example of coalitions among these class groupings within the Black community. (Wilson, 1980).

Somewhat less evident is a record of attempts to create coalitions among various groups of people of color, as among Black and Latino groups. School desegregation situations again provide us with some example of these interracial coalitions. In several communities, such as Corpus Christi, Tucson, and Austin, Blacks and Latinos tried to join forces to advocate school desegregation, and to challenge the cultural and political dominance of white groups in local educational systems (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1976). Rothman (1971) reports Black and Puerto Rican parents' formation of a coalition seeking educational changes in New York City schools. At still another level, we have seen the development of a Black and Latino coalition within the national Democratic Party (Dreyfuss, 1979) and the creation of the Rainbow Coalition. These coalitions may be difficult to create and sustain because of the influence of different cultural traditions and the divergent lifestyles and values that characterize different groups of persons of color. In addition, each group has been socialized into negative and distrustful attitudes toward the others. Groups also may define their interests in different terms: there is some evidence that this was the case in Austin, where Latino community groups had a very different vision of school desegregation than did Black parents. Thus, in the long run they were not able to sustain a coalition. In Tucson, a Black-Latino coalition was sustained through the period of litigation, but began to erode after the judge issued his orders, and at the point when court costs and the details of remedial programs were the focus of attention.



More recently, the situation in Houston and other cities, (e.g. Chicago, Denver) shows how over time Black and Latino political relationships have changed. Gurwitt (1993, p. 32) describes the change in Houston:

For years the city's black and Hispanic political leaders worked closely in the face of a white establishment reluctant to cede either of them much influence. Over the past decade though, African Americans have made rapid strides in city government. Now Hispanics, the junior partner in the coalition because of their weaker electoral presence, have begun to come into their own as a political force. As that has happened, real differences are emerging.

Part of the background of these changes is a Latino population which is growing more rapidly than the Black population. Along with this change Latinos are being registered to vote in large numbers and are exercising their franchise. Sometimes these coalitions also are hard to sustain because white elites try to turn these groups against one another, and to divide and conquer minority challengers. The effects of institutional racism are nowhere as clear as in oppressed groups' efforts trying to cooperate and/or compete with one another for a minimal share of the society's scarce resources. This dynamic is illustrated by what happened in Chicago after Mayor Harold Washington's death, where Latinos left the partnership forged by Washington. They sided with white Mayoral candidate, Richard M. Daley, against two other mayoral candidates who were Black aldermen. The Latino community is divided on this switch--some see it as betrayal but others see it differently, like Wilfedo Cruz, who says, "Latinos are in the middle--they're playing smart politics like everyone else (Gurwitt, 1993, p. 34)."

This brief historic overview reminds us that although issues of class, gender and ethnicity sometimes have entered into discussions of interracial coalitions, they have occurred as side-bets. Little discussion has focused on how these various social identities and statuses may operate together in a multicultural coalition effort.

#### IV. THE WHITE MALE SITUATION OF PRIVILEGE

One of the key characteristics of life in this society for white males, especially for white males of middle and upper class status, is a set of privileges that provides us with dominant positions, resources and life opportunities. These privileged statuses are reflected in the ways we

behave toward and interact with others - with other white men as well as with women and people of color. Sometimes these privileged-based behaviors and rewards are visible and known to us; then they typically are interpreted as the result of individually merited behavior, and accepted as part of a natural order of set of life "givens". Often, however, they are invisible, not part of our consciousness, or vaguely understood but ignored. Members of other groups often perceive our privileges as unearned privileges, despite dominant social norms which mystify or otherwise interpret these realities as merited. Perhaps, at some level of consciousness it is true, as Hacker states, that "All white Americans realize that their skin comprises an inestimable asset (1992, p. 60)", but it is seldom acknowledged publicly. We often take these privileges and assets for granted because, as McIntosh notes (1989, p. 10), "... whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege." Their very invisibility, or our denial of them, lends them special power; if we were fully aware of our special privileges and their dominating effects, some of us would attempt to relinquish or temper them. Others of us would not, for a variety of reasons. Either way, recognition probably would give rise to greater guilt and fear of loss of privilege, as well as additional efforts to deny this reality.

McIntosh provides a series of examples of the "invisible privileges", the "unearned assets", she experiences as a white female. Many of these apply, often in even greater degree, to white males: but still other privileges accrue only to white males. Although McIntosh concentrates on a variety of everyday experiences, we focus here on some of the particular privileges that appear to accrue to white males operating in interaction or coalition with people of color and women. The following list is not meant as an exercise in "mea culpa" or guilt expiation, nor as an effort at "trashing" white men; it is part of our effort to identify and analyze the issues we face in multicultural interactions. For instance, in our own work (with ourselves and other white men) in multicultural coalitions and work-groups, we have seen and experienced some of the following white male privileges and dysfunctional behaviors.

#### Exercising options.

1. We have the option of not joining and/or of leaving multicultural coalitions without affecting the privileges available to us personally and to white men in general.
2. We often fail to make clear and explicit commitments to join with people of color and women to work for changes which will reduce oppression. Commitments to help others overcome "their inadequacies" are often offered as a substitute for "changing the system" or even our own behaviors.
3. We tend to interrupt others (more than others interrupt us.)
4. We feel (and act) freer than others to deviate from group groundrules, expectations and "appropriate" group behavior (e.g., sitting outside a circle, coming late to a meeting, announcing alternative pressing tasks, etc.).
5. We can hang out with other white men before and after group meetings and at breaks...and not be labelled "plotters" or an "in-group" or "separatists".
6. We can attend high level meetings without colleagues suggesting (and whispering) that we got there because of affirmative action.

Maintaining the white male power structure.

7. We have the freedom (and power) to select some members of oppressed groups we will listen to and others we will not. Thus we sometimes select (and therefore legitimate) who will be the leaders of groups of people of color and women.
8. We tend to maintain control of key group decisions in a coalition or work situation.
9. Those of us who are senior and of higher status often challenge and delegitimize (e.g., as "whimpy", "radical", "soft" and "naive") the perspective of other or younger white men on matters of race and gender.
10. We accept and respond to the leadership of other white men more easily than the leadership efforts of women and people of color. One way this occurs is via the tendency to recognize and accept ideas/suggestions only from other white men, and to ignore such inputs from women and people of color unless they have been affirmed by other white men.
11. White men in multiracial or multigender groups often are not open and disclosing about how power operates in traditional organizations and institutions. Instead, we are silent or defend directly or indirectly existing power structures and processes, and myths about how fair and open they are. Sometimes we ourselves are unaware of the racism and sexism of these organizational dynamics, and at other times we avoid betrayal of our own group and group interests.
12. White men often do not confront our peers higher in the hierarchy/patriarchy when we are in a mixed group, and especially not on issues of racism and sexism. Thus, we avoid the potential consequences of being criticized or ostracized by other white men.

Maintaining exclusion.

13. We tend to tell (or signal) "in jokes" that only other white men can understand, and to speak in coded language (such as with sports and military and culturally-specific metaphors) that exclude others.
14. We tend to challenge or be bored by or "tune out" others' (perhaps non-linear rational) ways of knowing, thinking through a problem, influencing, or change values and priorities, as inappropriate and inferior. Sometimes we react negatively to tone and style as we label some people and their cultural styles as "shrill", "angry", "overemotional", etc.
15. We conduct meetings in ways that are familiar and comfortable to us rather than seeking procedures that might be responsive to others' cultures and styles.
16. There are certain issues (why we are so competitive), feelings (fear and anxiety) information (what breaks we got going up the ladder) and problems (inadequate skills and relationships) that we just don't talk about - especially in mixed company.

#### Avoiding white male vulnerabilities.

17. We often avoid saying "I don't know" or "I am confused" or asking for help in front of other white men, or people of color and women, and thus do not have to treat others as equals or as equally vulnerable in the pursuit of information.
18. We usually can avoid being the only white male, or one of a minority of white males, in a diverse group.
19. We avoid sharing our feelings as our feelings, as opposed to ignoring feelings or displacing them onto issues or people who elicit reactions from us.
20. We can afford to limit our efforts to talk with, seek out, and work with women and people of color to those with whom we agree or feel comfortable.
21. We rarely acknowledge, much less apologize for, behaviors which are racist or sexist, especially if they are done unintentionally, nor do we generally seek to learn how we are racist and sexist in advance of a crisis.
22. We rarely talk about how we learned to be racist, sexist, and classist, nor about current norms and expectations from others and ourselves regarding their maintenance.

#### Actively delegitimizing and demeaning people of color and women.

23. When we hear about painful experiences of women and people of color we often joke about, delegitimize or trivialize these experiences, or offer uninvited suggestions about how to deal with them.
24. We often tell people of color and women how they "should feel" about their experiences...and how they "should not feel."
25. We often tell "old boys club" war stories that implicitly recount the putting down of others... and by implication send a warning to people of color and women that they, too, can be put down.

26. We often ignore or do not listen carefully to women and men of color and fail to recognize this discrimination as they seek to speak and otherwise be full partners in group discussions and other interactions. We often do not ask for the inputs, ideas, insights or experiences of people of color and white women.
27. White men often avoid acknowledging the impact of oppression on people of color and women, and avoid taking responsibility for our own involvement in oppression (we suggest it started before we were born, we are relatively unpowerful white men, women and people of color sometimes colluded with oppressive norms, etc.).
28. White men often fail to select people of color and white women as leaders and have rationalizations for doing this. We also have a variety of difficulties supporting and following their leadership - including acts of sabotage which are generally unrecognized, and when pointed out generally are ignored.
29. White men often avoid intervening into conversations and interactions with other white men to interrupt their sexist and racist talk or behavior.

No doubt there are others, and readers may add their own favorites. It is important to continue to learn about these privileges and individually and collectively work to change them.

These behaviors have certain characteristics in common. They are rooted in the history of U. S. race and gender relations, and represent the "taken-for-granted" basis of everyday life in our society for many white men. They represent, for the most part, unexamined and unreflective, and often unconscious and unintentional, behavior. Even when identified for what they are, and how they affect others, they persist. These behaviors maintain and reproduce domination and oppression. They also represent behaviors that women and people of color cannot count on performing with the same effects. They are taught to us, and learned by us, early in our lives, in families and schools, and subsequently rewarded through prevailing cultural values and social structures. They represent behavior that we can get away with, that we seldom are held accountable for. Such is the power of the white male culture and institutions that we inhabit, sustain, rule, and benefit from.

The power and the exploitative character and history of white male-dominated institutions must be emphasized, so there is no underestimation of both the importance of eliminating racism and sexism, and the difficulty of accomplishing this task. Since these institutions are the means

by which white males (and others) are socialized, controlled and rewarded, they are the source of substantial constraints on the positive potentials of our participation in multicultural coalitions.

We remind ourselves and readers of a small sample of the indicators of the realities of power and privilege of white male-dominated institutions and cultures:

1. Since our births, white men have been taught - sometimes overtly and consciously and sometimes covertly and subconsciously - that we are superior to people of color and women, and to expect and defend the system of privileges which attend this superiority.
2. These lessons have occurred within coercive white patriarchal structures of authority - including families, schools, religious institutions, police, work organizations, governmental units and the military.
3. Maintenance of white male privilege relies on many subtle and not-so-subtle forms of power and violence, including rape, lynching, battering within families and communities, other hate crimes, media interpretation of and dissemination of these events, and general social norms. Persons of color and white women are aware of these acts of violence toward members of their groups, the ever-present threat of such violence to themselves as individuals, and of their need for safety.
4. For the most part, the dominant institutions founded and led by white males have promoted important roles and values for those people of color and white women who accept white male privilege, and lesser roles and worth for others. Thus, we see continuing lower economic opportunities, lower average wages, lower access to leadership positions, and higher rates of poverty in these latter groups.

These conditions and consequences are pervasive in the United States, despite some progress to improve life conditions and opportunities for white women and people of color. No person, regardless of race or gender or class, remains unaffected by these conditions. At the same time, this long-standing system of oppression has been subject to continuing pressures to deliver on the basic national ideals of democracy, equity and fairness. While some changes have occurred, the basic culture and structures of power remain intact, and must be clearly perceived and dealt with shrewdly in efforts to advocate and pursue greater social justice.

Thus, we can expect many people of color and women to be understandably and realistically skeptical about white male participation in multicultural coalitions. At the same time, Ruether argues (1992, p. 17): "The struggle against patriarchy cannot be won simply by a woman's movement. Patriarchy is itself the original men's movement, and the struggle to overthrow it must be a movement of men as well as women." The same line of reasoning, with

regard to both doubt and necessity, applies to the struggle against racism. These reservations and opportunities should be part of the formulation of strategies and relationships for change that involve white males as allies and coalitions partners.

## V. INCENTIVES FOR WHITE MEN TO JOIN MULTICULTURAL COALITIONS

Given these patterns of domination and privilege, why might white men join multicultural coalitions? What is in it for them/us? What are our possible incentives and motivations? To what extent can these incentives lead to adjustments without fundamental changes in power and culture? To what extent can they lead to systemic transformations which will seriously challenge and reduce racism and sexism? What incentives and behavioral responses could lead to more effective white male participation in multicultural coalitions?

The focus on incentives and motivations must proceed - but cautiously. It is important to admit what we do not know about these issues as well as what we do know. In this vein, Thompson articulates the need for caution as follows (1991, p. 15):

I believe that it takes a leap of faith for us even to speculate on benefits for ending oppression. We have to first be willing to admit that all is not well with the way we have constructed reality and lived our lives.

At the same time, Thompson (1991) does speculate on the benefits to white men of living in a multicultural society: access to the ideas and talents of others whose realities are different, relief from the responsibility for the welfare of others who have been dependent subjects, freedom from the anxiety that the oppressed will rise up in anger against us, and freedom from crippling guilt regarding oppression. There obviously are many different perceptions of benefits for different white males who participate in multicultural coalitions or otherwise act for social justice. We must be careful about overgeneralizations and the tendency to stereotype both the characteristics and incentives of white men, as prior inquiry has overgeneralized and stereotyped about white women and people of color. Moreover, if everyone involved in multicultural coalitions does not reflect critically on and seek to understand the possible incentives for white male participation, there will probably be both under- and overestimation of the existence of incentives and

underestimation of their potential. These efforts at understanding also must avoid naivete about white men's motivations for change. There are many difficulties involved in white men moving from the role of oppressor to advocate or ally in the struggle for social justice. While we believe such participation is possible, and to at least some extent already occurring, we want neither to be "pollyannish" nor to underestimate what is required for more white male participation in genuine system transformation.

Some general characteristics of the current situation of our society set the stage for both the necessity and the difficulties of multicultural coalitions that include white men.

1. The U.S. economy, at best, is faltering and, at worst, is in long term decline. In any case the proportion of poor people is increasing, and the proportion of poor people of color is increasing more rapidly than poor white people. Many middle class people are losing health insurance, job seniority and other privileges which previously they had taken for granted. These changes lead to intensified conflict over a "smaller pie," or to redefinitions of needs and expectations of "the good life", and to redistribution of resources.

2. The composition of the U.S. and its workforce is changing to include a greater proportion of people of color and of white women. This can lead to a growing polarization along racial and gender lines, and/or a redefinition of organizational composition, norms and power distributions in ways that reduce racism and sexism.

3. The economy and social system is increasingly a global one, and one in which white people are in a minority. This can lead to white defense of privilege in islands defined by whiteness affluence, or to redefinition of privilege in interconnected, racially mixed groups where resources are more equitably shared.

As these factors illustrate, specific changes are occurring on a national and global basis which can be perceived and shaped in different ways. Groups' perceptions of these specifics, along with their basic views of group interests and the dynamics of power, greatly influence their views of the usefulness of interracial and multicultural coalitions. Our views of these fundamental matters shape what we suggest should be considered in thinking about the balance of



gains and losses from participation in a coalition. On matters of groups' interests and power dynamics, our view of what is necessary and possible is somewhere between the two extremes sketched earlier. For example, in relation to the economy, population and globalization, we see all too much evidence of polarized conflict in defense of the status quo, but at the same time we cautiously hope for and act on the assumption that redefinition and redistribution can occur. If this is to happen, multicultural coalitions will be one among many necessary means.

From our perspective, decisions about the potential advantages and disadvantages of interracial and multicultural coalitions must attend to the following issues:

1. Interracial and multicultural coalitions require time, energy and other resources. They are worth participating in only if they carry the high probability of achieving an important goal(s) held by persons of color and white women. There is no substitute for having carefully developed and specific goals, and the skills to reach these goals through development and use of the group's own resources.

When concluding that a group's own resources are inadequate, and that the group's goals too important to be ignored, a group must assess potential coalition partners. Assessments of the resources and goals of other potential coalition members is extremely difficult, and at best there is substantial risk of being wrong. Experience making such decisions, and experience with potential coalition partners, is the best means of reducing such risk, but gaining such experience itself requires taking substantial risks. Such risks are acceptable when based on a high need of allies in the face of critical unmet needs. Some advocacy groups go to great lengths to reduce their needs in order to lower their dependence on a coalition and on changes by established oppressive institutions; other groups maintain their needs and take the attendant risks of coalition formation. Such risks also can be taken on the basis of a vision and belief that central to the struggle against racism (and other forms of oppression) is the possibility of creating non-exploitative mutuality - as an end in itself. The creation of such mutuality cannot be done in the abstract, nor for a group or individual by someone else, but only through specific initiatives and actions by groups and individuals.

2. Interracial and multicultural coalitions often require interactions with groups which hold negative stereotypes toward groups of persons of color, and sometimes with groups which have the power to make exploitative decisions based on these prejudices. They always involve working within systems of discrimination and oppression. These coalitions are worth participating in only if the groups in the coalition are aware of their prejudices (e.g., racism and sexism) and are committed to acting against them and to reducing oppression. In addition, any group of persons from a specific racial minority, and any group of women, must be prepared to defend themselves in the face of discriminatory treatment. Even under these conditions there will be hurtful interactions and substantial struggle to achieve mutually satisfactory interactions.

3. Interracial and multicultural coalitions require leaders and other representatives to enter into communication, influence and decision-making which to some degree remove them from the norms, values, and commitments of their unique group. This always carries potential gains in terms of what is achieved through the coalition, including what is learned from interactions with others. But there is always the risk of losing the support and trust of the members of one's own group, and experiencing heightened levels of conflict that reduce the effectiveness and viability of the advocacy organization. There are ways to lower the risk by regular communication and mutual influence between different group representatives, and between group representatives and their members, thus developing strong two-way accountability systems.

4. Interracial and multicultural coalitions always have the potential of helping develop long term interorganizational and interpersonal relationships. In a society and world of growing interdependence and scarcity, such relationships have great potential value. Also in a time of eroding communities and public trust such relationships can be highly valued. In our experience, developing and maintaining such relationships is challenging; some bring with them great personal satisfaction beyond their utility for contributing to positive social change.

Using Crain's (1968) discussion of the reasons white community elites responded more or less positively to demands from racial pressure groups and interracial coalitions in the civil rights and school desegregation movements of the 1960s and 1970s as a starting point, we can identify

four major categories of incentives for white men's participation in contemporary multicultural coalitions. The left margin of Figure 1 provides an overview of these four categories: (1) enhancement of the welfare of a social unit; (2) help for people of color and white women (charity); (3) enhancement of the welfare of the white male group; and (4) meeting white males' unmet needs. In the body of this figure we distinguish some of the different ways in which white men may respond to each of these incentives: by action that maintains the status quo - with some reform, and by action that is potentially liberatory and transforming of the system of racism and sexism. Each of these incentives has a clear self-interest basis, but some are broader than others.

The first category of incentives for white men to help create or join a multicultural coalition involves effort to advance the general welfare of a social unit, whether a society, community, organization or small group. This motive can be seen as a commitment to prosperity or perhaps to productive efficiency ("bottom line" language) in organizational or community performance and functioning. It clearly has a significant self-interest component, and often is the driving force behind senior management's or community leaders' stated commitment to a change in race and gender relations in the work place or community. In work organizations, attention generally is drawn to the market-based need to recruit and retain employees of color. It also is hoped that bringing together people who have different backgrounds and world views, and who can work together, can generate new and more interesting and effective ideas, products, solutions to social ills, etc., than can a more homogeneous enterprise. Sometimes, workforce diversity is seen as a better way of serving a more diverse group of customers or constituents.

Closely related to advancing organizational or community welfare may be the effort to stave off threats to these organizations from the mobilization of oppressed groups. Threats to peace and order, or to the good image of an organization, may also provoke change. The self-interest agenda here focuses more upon avoiding negative consequences than on achieving positive ones. Certain organizations may enter coalitions for racial change in order to avoid judicial or regulatory sanctions, mass employee defections, public embarrassment, market

Figure 1

**TYPES OF INCENTIVES LEADING TO WHITE  
MALE RESPONSES TO SOCIAL JUSTICE/MULTICULTURAL WORK**

Examples of Responses

Types of Incentives	Responses Oriented to Maintaining Status Quo- Narrow Self-interest	Responses Oriented to System Transformation- Broad Self-interest
1. Enhance Unit Welfare	Make incremental adjustments while maintaining white male power Maintain peace and order Reduce threat	Improve unit including redistribution of power and resources Seek peace through justice
2. Help People of Color & White Women	Paternalistic assistance which maintains subordinate status	Reparations and assistance which is empowering
3. Enhance White Male Group	Learn new information and sensitivity and gain new relationships while maintaining dominating behaviors	Change behavior to equitable sharing of resources and Collaboration on tasks
4. Meet Unmet Individual White Male Needs	Pleasant the "other" by demonstrating that one is special and an exception without changing attitudes and behaviors Maintain privileges Gain identity by borrowing from the culture of the "other"	Change guilt and fear of "other" by making amends for hurtful behavior and doing things which do not engender retaliation and bring about transformation Reduce privileges Come to know ones own cultural heritage including it's role in oppression and it's positive contributions

position loss, impending strikes, boycotts or protests, etc. At the societal level, the motive may be to prevent, control or co-opt disruption and mass rebellion.

One response to this incentive is characterized by an attempt to protect the current power structure and values of the unit while seeking incremental improvement - through the assimilation of people of color and white women, through minor reforms, through committees to investigate grievances, etc. A very different response includes focus on sharing power to determine organizational operations and goals with people of color and women and altering unit culture to reflect and incorporate other than white male values. Often individual white male responses to this incentive are an unclear and confused mix of these two types of responses.

The second category of incentives for white male participation in multicultural coalitions involves advancing or protecting the well-being of people of color or women. In this case the focus of attention is the "other" - oppressed or disadvantaged groups and individuals. This commitment to redress wrongs is closest to Crain's focus on acts of charity. It has rationales that include ethics as diverse as "noblesse oblige" and egalitarian sharing of resources. The self-interest component of this motivation may be the hope that reduction in exploitation and oppression can make life better for people who in turn can contribute more effectively to the total society and to everyone's welfare - or to reduction in the costs of maintaining oppression (taxes that go to prison maintenance, welfare costs, police protection, etc.). The responses of white men to this category of incentives also vary. One response is paternalistic, focusing on the deficiencies and failings of the "other", feelings of pity and providing assistance to them while maintaining them as victims in a dependent relationship with white male power. An alternative response emphasizes reparations for past injustices, feelings of respect and efforts to support changes in the system which will enhance the oppressed group's drive for empowerment and self-determination.

The third category of incentives for white male participation in multicultural coalitions focuses on the well-being of white men as a group - or as a sub-unit in an organization. White men increasingly are the targets of criticism and calls for change, and are subject to changes

wrought by norms of increased access and resources for white women and people of color. White men are becoming aware that there are few overt bonds among them as they individually face uncomfortable changes and challenges, and that there are important changes that they cannot realize alone. Thus, some organizations have created multicultural "study groups", interracial or race/gender workshops, or training sessions expressly for the purpose of (re)educating white males to perform better in a multicultural environment.

The range of responses to this incentive includes outright resistance to the changes desired by white women and people of color, and the staunch defense of white male privilege. It also includes minimalist changes to accommodate new demands and regulations. And it also includes full-fledged partnerships in efforts to redistribute power and reformulate basic goals and values. In multicultural coalitions, some white men and groups seek to gain increased knowledge of and sensitivity to the needs of others, sometimes in order to "psych out" the opposition and maintain their dominant status. Other seek to become re-educated about women and people of color without critically examining or changing their own assumptions, identities, roles and rewards as white men. A different pattern involves white men as a group working in new shared power arrangements with "others", with new values and behaviors which minimize both the deleterious effects of our socialization in racist and sexist ways of being and the negative impacts of white male cultures and structures of power on white women and people of color.

The fourth category of incentives for white men to participate in multicultural coalitions involves our own needs and desires in relation to our core selves. Some white men experience guilt and fear in individual or collective relations with white women and people of color; others experience isolation, lack of influence or dissatisfaction with these relationships. Some white men also experience a sense of alienation from ourselves, which leads to awareness that we do not know as ourselves fully, or are unable to express and act upon those "hidden parts" that were repressed in the effort to perform well in the white male culture. As one response to this incentive, some white males seek to gain the "credentials" of being a good multicultural partner through such involvement: thus wearing the badge of a multiculturalist, seeking to avoid internal

guilt and external criticism or attack for our own remaining prejudices or institutionally racist connections, and gaining approval for being a good employee, citizen, person, religious practitioner (Christian, Jew, etc.). Such motives may lead to behavior that primarily attempts to please people of color and white women, and in so doing suggest that the white men involved are special and different from other white men. Other responses seek to engage others in contributing to our personal learning and growth. The personal growth opportunities that draw some white men to multicultural coalitions also may contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultures of whiteness and maleness in which we were socialized.

These four broad types of incentives for joining multicultural coalitions are by no means exclusive or independent of one another; they obviously may overlap or contradict one another in particular circumstances. Moreover, how white men respond to these incentives involves choices with regard to the type and degree of change that may drive or accompany coalition participation. For instance, when white men seek to enhance an organization they are part of by assimilating people of color, and the incentive of helping the "other" is dominant, these incentives are not likely to lead to changes in the organizational culture or distribution of power, nor to sustained changes in the status of subordinate groups. There also may be contradictory impulses at work: for example, responses to the incentive of organizational welfare that fail to deal with redistribution of power may be accompanied by other efforts to assist the "other" in ways that truly empower subordinate groups. Moreover, when charity, as contrasted with mutual interest, is the prime incentive driving white male involvement in a coalition, it is likely to lead to resentment. Whites are likely to resent it when they feel people of color are inadequately "grateful" for their good works and contributions, and people of color are likely to resent whites' insistence on their appreciation and gratitude. This is a classic example of the instability of coalitions built on asymmetrical power relations rather than on mutual interest and vulnerability. Such contradictions and inconsistencies occur because of: (1) white males' different understandings of ourselves, our organizations and our motivations, and; (2) white males' different commitments to altering institutional racism and sexism.

Recent (and ancient) history makes it clear that most white male participation in multicultural coalitions leads to maintenance of the basic power and cultural arrangements of social units - e.g., the status quo. However, there are white males, and white male groups, whose responses do focus on systemic transformation in cultures and power. How can we act to increase the chances of these transformative responses and involvements? What role can we and each white male reader of this paper play in the development of such theory and practice? What roles can others play?

## VI. DECISIONS AND DILEMMAS FACING WHITE MALES IN MULTICULTURAL COALITIONS...AND SOME GUIDELINES

We turn now to a series of concrete and practical issues facing white males in multicultural coalitions. The sources of the following list are our personal experiences, conversations with other white men working with multicultural coalitions and organizations, conversations with people of color and white women engaged in these coalitions, and some of the available literature on interracial and intergender collaboration. These issues are important to our behaviors, as well as to theory and research. All partners in multicultural coalitions face important choices, and everyone involved needs to be able to talk about these matters, as well as to make decisions which serve the interests of the coalition and its participating groups. From the perspective of theory and research, multicultural coalitions are potentially important and rich sources of data, as well as stimuli for conceptualizing the different issues, processes and outcomes involved. By identifying the issues faced by white males in multicultural coalitions, we hope to contribute to practical deliberations, as well as to inquiry seeking further understanding of these complex social structures and processes.

The everyday decisions, dilemmas and role options discussed below are generic, and apply to various partners in multicultural coalition. But they apply quite differently to people of color and to whites, and to males and to females. For instance, white men typically focus on ourselves as individuals, and we often fail to see our commonalities as a social group; we need to



learn about the common styles and characteristics we share (as well as about our differences). By contrast, women of color often see themselves, and are treated by others, primarily as (members of) a group, and only sometimes do we (or they) elect to focus on their differences. (Anzaldua, 1990, p. 220). Thus, we all bring different orientations to the social identity group issues and options available in multicultural coalitions.

We can understand the very different risks and gains faced by people of different races and genders in these coalitions only by listening carefully to people from other groups. For instance, Reagon, an African-American woman, described her involvement in multicultural coalitions as follows (1983, p. 356):

If you are really doing coalition work, most of the time you feel threatened to the core, and if you don't you're not really doing no coalescing. The only reason you would consider trying to team up with somebody who could possibly kill you is because that's the only way you can figure you can stay alive.

Anzaldua writes to women of color ("mujeres of color") about doing coalition work with white women, and her insights extend to views of white men in multicultural coalitions (1990, p. 224-5):

One is not to be lulled into forgetting that coalition work attempts to balance power relations and undermine and subvert the system of domination-subordination that affects even our most unconscious thoughts. We live in a world where whites dominate colored and we participate in such a system every minute of our lives; the subordination/domination dynamic is that insidious. We, too, operate in a racist system whether we are rebelling against it or are colluding with it.

And Hagan addresses women's relations with men in ways that also apply to multicultural coalitions (1991, p. 32).

Individual men are microcosms of the larger misogynist climate. Interaction with men is hazardous for women because men are born and reared in a male-supremacist, womanhating culture such as ours have internalized those same values. At some level, men actually believe in them. Some men are nicer than others; some are more violent than others; some believe superiority is innate; others eschew their gender privileges a false and constructed; some are homosexual, men of color or physically disabled. But all these men live daily in a society designed to benefit their gender. They will act out of their conditioning of male privilege unless they have consciously chosen to select other behaviors.

We hope other writers will continue to address the issues faced by members of different groups in multicultural coalitions and will, along with other white men, critique and extend the list of issues we present here.

The general characteristics of coalition formation mean that we can expect, from the beginning and continuing throughout the life of the coalition, ongoing conflicts and therefore the high probability of negotiations among parties. We can also expect other responses to these conflicts, including suppression, domination and mutual avoidance. When negotiations occur they will focus on the extent to which various parties and participants share common goals and interests, yet have some different goals and interests, and the extent to which they hold common and differing strategies of change.

Such negotiations and discussions may focus on intraracial and intragender, as well as interracial and intergender, differences. To the extent that white males and their organizations traditionally (but not always) have higher status and power than do people of color and woman, multicultural coalitions will struggle with this power disparity and seek some form of power parity. Work in a multicultural coalition, as in any cross-cultural relationship, requires new group processes and personal skills, as well as means of experiencing hopefulness for progress toward greater justice. Thus there constantly is a unique learning agenda and opportunities for personal growth in these settings. All coalitions, and all coalition members, also must deal constantly with their links to the external environment, to the impact of coalition activity on those links, and to the effect of those links on coalition involvement and activity.

The particular decisions and dilemmas that follow are organized in terms of four major areas of concern, based on: (1) forms of participation, (2) internal operations, (3) external relationships, and (4) demise of the coalition. Figure 2 identifies each of these decisions and dilemmas.

Should white males participate? If yes, how?

1. Can or should white males participate in an interracial or multicultural coalition individually, or as part of a white male group or subgroup? Our cultural emphasis on

Figure 2

## DECISIONS AND DILEMMAS SURROUNDING WHITE MALE PARTICIPATION IN MULTICULTURAL COALITIONS

**How should white males participate?**

- as individuals or as part of a white male group or subgroup
- acknowledge one's own oppression and assert own goals
- which of us should be (and should not be) coalition members
- with needs for re-education
- are there coalitions we should not be part of

**What are key internal dynamics?**

- what roles for white males
- how to create safety for all
- what to expect from different racial and gender composition
- what decision-making and implementation systems
- what multicultural rituals and celebrations
- how to use specialized white male expertise
- how might white men deal with our feelings

**What should be external relationships with other white men?**

- how can white men deal with supportive peers
- how can white men deal with oppressors and targets of chance
- how to deal with charges of reverse discrimination
- how to deal with our institutional and personal privileges

**What needs attention in ending the coalition?**

- how can productive relationships and actions be continued
- how can temporary coalitions play a role in lasting organizational and community change
- how can images and models of success be promoted

individualism (individual merit, achievement, responsibility, representation), especially prominent among white males, often leads to a denial of our group identity, our commonalities with other white men, our embeddedness in historic patterns and privileges of sexism and racism, and thus our collective responsibility for oppression and for change (Bennett, 1971; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). Such individualism and attendant competition and isolation often makes it difficult for white males to work as a group, particularly in situations in which there is little precedent for joint activities. If white males participate without accountability to an organized constituency, how can we take responsibility for other white males in the coalition or for our peer group in general?

2. How can white males be aware of, and assert, our own needs and goals as part of multifaceted challenges to oppression? How can we show our understanding and commitment to change patterns of racism, sexism and classism, and at the same time seek what we as white men want and need (e.g., respect, opportunities, a share in coalition decision-making)? How are trade-offs to be managed or balanced in the collective endeavor? Will white males' needs be assessed thoughtfully by others, or judged automatically as evidence of our efforts to maintain current unjust privileges? If white males' needs are not legitimated and dealt with openly, we may sign on as passive followers of others' agenda, or as imposers on others' behaviors: both options fail to achieve new models of multiculturalism and can lessen the effects when multicultural coalitions.

3. What limits, if any, are there to the types of white males or white male groups who could be viable partners in an interracial and multicultural coalition? How should the different stages of racial (and gender) awareness (Jackson & Hardiman, 1992; Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1992) present in white male coalition members be dealt with? Danzig (1966) argues that many whites involved in collaborative or coalitional work with Blacks have felt that appropriate white behavior is to be "color blind", to treat race as irrelevant and to "not see" a person's race. Jackson & Hardiman (1992) have argued that this is a relatively primitive stage of white racial awareness. More highly developed stages of racial awareness include "color consciousness", with it's awareness of differences and its understanding that equitable treatment is not necessarily the

same treatment. How can white men take major responsibility for increasing our own race and gender awareness in an educational or awareness-raising process? Part of this process is personal work of white men with each other, as they seek to be effective coalition members. In undertaking these responsibilities, we must avoid the trap of playing off one another to "look good" or to "look better than other white men" in the eyes of people of color (or in trying to "be Black" by trashing other white men - Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967): to do so once again reproduces the culture of competitive individualism, downplays and denies group patterns, avoids looking at ourselves by pointing fingers at others, and denies our collective white male responsibility for institutional racism and sexism. How can we support and cherish individual differences among white men and avoid a stifling orthodoxy while acknowledging our commonalities and collective responsibilities? How can we be an effective support group for each other as we focus on recognizing and minimizing our own racism and sexism?

4. How can we white males handle our own needs for constant education and re-education around issues of racism and sexism? Many white men place the burden of our education on women and people of color, on the assumption that they see (certain aspects of) us better than we see ourselves. But this is an unfair and onerous burden, one that increasingly is being rejected by coalition members. As Lorde argues (1984, p. 113):

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors, to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns....This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought.

And Hagan, while focusing on gender and not race, states a similar conclusion, but one that goes further in placing responsibility for re-education with men (1991, p. 32-33):

...avoid getting rooked into being the teacher or trainer: this is an inappropriate role for women and ultimately counterproductive. As women we do not really know how a man deconstructs his conditioning: he comes to consciousness as an oppressor, we come to consciousness as the oppressed. The curriculum for reeducation is entirely different. Ultimately, to make authentic change, a man must take responsibility for his own education (just as whites must assume responsibility for learning antiracist behavior).

Thompson has identified four barriers which have kept him and other white heterosexual men from fully understanding oppression (1991, p. 14-15); if these barriers can be overcome we can all make progress.

1. Lack of information about the experience of oppression.
2. Belief that we, the dominant group, have a market on truth.
3. Fear of offending members of oppressed groups and fear of their anger.
4. Belief that being white, heterosexual and male is better than being colored, homosexual or female.

5. White men doing multicultural work often want to gain the approval of and avoid rejection by the people of color and women with whom they work. Indeed, Hacker argues that (1992, p. 55) "...white liberals want to be liked by black people, as if having their goodwill is a seal of approval...(and be) counted on as friends and allies." One cost of this orientation is noted by Shewey, as he observes that men sometimes act in particular ways in the presence of women (1992, p. 28):

Around women, men often feel the need to show off and know it all, while letting the women carry the tender, tentative emotions. In mixed company, men tend to edit out whatever expression women have ever shamed or criticized them for, whether "acting just like a man" (raunchy language, crude humor, blistering anger) or falling short of the role of the strong, stalwart protector (self-doubt, tears, indecision). By themselves, men often feel freer to express the whole range of emotions.

How should white male coalition members manage our patterned dependencies and traditional luxuries in this regard? How can we get our approval and rewards from the change-oriented work itself, as well as from our white male companions, without requiring others to take care of us? In a similar vein, how can we respond to the "white bashing" or "male bashing" which sometimes occurs in mixed groups, especially when we act out unintentional or unconscious racism or sexism? We know such things will occur; the question is how we and our coalition partners will handle them.

6. Are there some multiracial and multigender coalitions which white males cannot or should not be part of? In some situations, people of color and white women pursue organizational or community goals which white males are uneasy about or would prefer not to join in pursuing. In other situations, white men want to participate but people of color and women will not desire

white male participation, for reasons of principle or strategy. For example, Crowfoot was part of a group of males who elected to work together in sponsoring public activities and operating a small organization to address the issues of child abuse. Based on this work, he sought to write for a women's publication about childhood abuse - despite the goal of the publication to accept only articles written by women. When his inquiry and offer to write was ignored, he experienced doubts about continuing to support the publication, but decided to remain part of the group and the publication audience, but came to recognize the legitimacy of women separately operating the publication and at the same time seeking male subscribers and contributors. How can white males accept being excluded from such coalitions and still support the efforts from outside? Can white males do this without being patronizing, denying feelings of exclusion, or alleging "reverse discrimination"? Is it possible for white males to be direct and honest about our reasons for not wanting to be part of some coalitions, including discussing our terms, safety levels, choices of strategies and targets of change? Can white males who are engaged in multicultural coalitions require other white males who are behaving in repeatedly destructive ways to leave? And if this is done, how can it be done in ways which are least disruptive to the coalition and most respectful to the involved individuals?

What are some key coalition dynamics...and needed actions?

7. Given typical patterns of white male domination in families, organizations and communities, what should our roles be in a multicultural coalition? Should they be limited with regard to leadership, public visibility, strategy formulation, etc.? Several observers report that white members of interracial coalitions often have assumed the high status and dominant roles, thus reducing Blacks to the status of junior partners (Bonacich & Goodman, 1972; Braxton & Prichard, 1977; Burman, 1979; Foner, 1974; Marx & Useem, 1991; Wilcox, 1974). As we indicated previously, this is sure evidence of continuing racism and a recipe for cooptation and eventual difficulty. In addressing coalitions among women, Anzaldua deals with the realities of oppression affecting women of color and lesbians, especially, and their ability to be heard and exert their needs in an interracial coalition (1990, p. 229):

All parties involved in coalitions need to recognize the necessity that women-of-color and lesbians define the terms of engagement: that we be listened to, that we articulate who we are, where we have come from (racial past), how we understand oppression to work, how we think we can get out from under and what strategies we can use for accomplishing the particular tasks we have chosen to perform. When we don't collectively define ourselves and locations, the group will automatically operate under white assumptions, white definitions and white strategies.

The obvious implications are for people of color in multicultural coalitions to "define the terms of engagement", lest they, too, "automatically operate under white assumptions, white definitions and white strategies." We suggest that white males adopt the role of a "powerful second banana" in such groups, in the sense of being responsive and supportive to the agenda and leadership of oppressed peoples, but at the same time strong advocates and negotiators for the coalition's public agenda and our own basic needs and priorities. Often this is difficult to do, both because of our personal styles and patterns of control and others' reactions to them. Chesler recently was part of a mixed gender change team, and was constantly treated by other white men outside the team as the team leader. This was an erroneous assumption, since a white woman was the actual team leader. But Chesler's own style of getting out in front, of speaking quickly and forcefully, as well as other white males' inability or unwillingness to hear and acknowledge female leadership and a female leadership style, kept confusing the issue. Eventually, the issue was forced, although by no means "resolved", by Chesler stating directly and frequently, and by indicating in public behavior, who the team leader was. In addition, as several authors have recommended (Bryant & Crowfoot, n.d.; Katz, 1978), the team held several evaluation and feedback sessions where these issues were pursued amongst ourselves.

8. How can the coalition be made a safe place for everyone? Given the level of distance, distrust, and competition within the white male group, as well as the domination, subordination, competition, contention and hostility that often exists between members of different races and genders, we can anticipate many problems in creating a safe and effective working environment within a coalition...just as we expect such difficulties in racial and gender mixed assembly lines, corporate or public agency boardrooms, college and public school classrooms, etc. (Feagin, 1991). White men generally do not know, and often do not respect, the conditions white women



and people of color need in order for them to experience a modicum of safety in a multicultural setting. Thus, although the development of intragroup and intergroup working relationships are essential in the coalition, they cannot be built, as many white males have tried to do, on the basis of love and friendship (Bennett, 1971; Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967). They will be built, if at all, on the basis of proven behaviors of shared power, effective collaboration, accountability to shared goals and actions for change that merit respect and earned trust. These are especially important criteria for people of color and white women, as they try to collaborate safely and effectively with members of a social category that historically has exploited their extensions of friendship and love. It also is important for white men who seek to overcome their training and predilection for domination, to experience vulnerability to groups we have been socialized to control and defend ourselves against and to change our behaviors toward these groups. In the process, white males may interact on a new basis amongst ourselves, creating increased mutual openness and vulnerability across the lines of class, status, age, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

Arrangements need to be made whereby women and people of color can shape the coalition with a minimum of energy and negative fallout, including "caucusing" or meeting separately at times. At the same time, white male members can meet in our own identity groups. The need for regular and legitimated separation among groups is articulated by Hagan (1991, p. 33).

I believe the cultivation of female power under male supremacy requires the practice of separation to a lesser or greater extent, depending upon the individual situation. Relief from constant exposure to men and male needs is necessary for a woman to perceive the depth of her innate female power.

As Shewey implied in an earlier quote, white men, too, can benefit from separate meetings. While working within a multicultural coalition in a large bureaucratic public agency, Crowfoot had the experience of coalition members deciding not to meet periodically in separate gender, race and physical ability groupings. While to some extent these separate gatherings occurred informally outside of formal coalition events, their formal absence denied some members' needs and helped reinforce a myth of "openness" that was promoted by the white male leadership.

These norms and practices prevented each group from dealing fully with their unique perspectives and feelings, and suppressed conflict. It is possible that members' needs to work together in a coalition made it risky for them to separate from one another - even for a short time. But it also is possible that the needs of women and people of color to work on issues while safe from white male observation, and potential future acts by people with power in the organization, were thwarted by the lack of caucusing.

9. What differences in the dynamics of multicultural coalitions can be expected based on differences in the ratio of men and women and the ratio of people of color and white people? What differences in coalition dynamics result from differences in the relative political or economic power of the organizations represented by people of color, white people, men and women? It is reasonable to expect that the race and gender of the majority of individuals in a coalition will influence how the coalition operates, but certainly organizations and constituencies with greater power will also have greater influence. Whatever the race and gender sources of heaviest influence, but particularly when they are white and male, special efforts will be required for the multicultural coalition not to automatically adopt these powerful groups' goals, strategic priorities and operating styles. Such special efforts require effective communication, surfacing of conflicts, and creative problem solving and negotiation. Notably, ways of dealing with and expressing each of these processes may differ for the diverse race and gender groups constituting the multicultural coalition.

10. What decision-making and implementation processes should be used? Most organizations dominated by white males rely on hierarchical authority, even though these arrangements are undemocratic and have significant negative impacts on all people involved. At the same time, such decisional processes are familiar to almost everyone, and their use avoids the creation of new formats which might take a great deal of time and energy away from central coalition tasks. Crowfoot has experienced a consensus decision-making structure in a multicultural coalition which, while generally effective, reverted to a hierarchical arrangement, of which he was a part, when the group faced a crisis which threatened physical safety. Subsequent

recriminations and guilt about power and control issues negatively affected the group. The experience demonstrated how deeply embedded and pervasive the tradition of hierarchical decision-making is, even when people have good intentions and experiences with other options. Walzer's (1971) notion of a caucusing process suggests a bargaining model within the coalition, and Crowfoot (1981) proposes several other models uniquely suited for social change-oriented organizations. Prior to actual decision-making, Bonacich & Goodman (1972) suggest that discussions focus on implementation strategies as well as goals, since coalition partners may discover their differences only at this stage of action-planning.

11. What multicultural rituals and/or celebrations need to be created? People of color who are uncomfortable adopting some white styles of relating and working within groups, whites who are offended by some Black styles (Blauner, 1972; Kochman, 1981), and women who are resistive to white male rational and linear working styles, all need to invent new patterns of work and play that are mutually appealing...and that in themselves help to create a new multicultural culture. Otherwise, we are likely to end up working on white males' turf in white males' ways...and be limited by the constraints of the same dominant paradigm we are struggling to alter. We need to both let go of "our way is the only way", learn other ways and support their adoption, and at the same time figure out what elements of our culture we want to maintain and celebrate. Chesler and Crowfoot both have been part of a small temporary organization which is endeavoring to be multicultural and thus has some marked similarities to a multicultural coalition. We have seen that our style of conducting meetings and discussions - white male and linear-rational - often is not effective and comfortable for others. What appeared at first to be common ways of setting agendas, getting things done, responding to time pressures, keeping "on track", and exercising leadership, turned out to be the expression of white male norms. White women and people of color in the organization have some different preferences and norms regarding the conduct of organizational business. A series of discussions and negotiations have resulted in open attention to these issues, and an effort to construct meetings with an eye to various cultural styles.

12. How can white male coalition members make use of our special expertise on white maleness? Such expertise, even if we are not conscious and articulate about it at first, can be an important element in understanding how traditional organizations operate and how we might plan and implement effective strategies for change. The weaknesses and vulnerabilities of white male-dominated power structures are vital information for coalitions seeking to change these systems of privilege. However, sharing such information often makes white male coalition members defensive and uneasy, and perhaps guilty about telling "club secrets." Other coalition members also have expertise about white maleness, and ways need to be found to join different perspectives and provide a broader and richer range of substantive and strategic analyses.

13. How might we deal with the feelings that are generated by coalition work? Regardless of the level of trust and safety that may appear to be attained in a multicultural coalition, threat, vulnerability and challenge remain. Even as we find pleasure and satisfaction in more equitable working relationships, white males, in particular, will face fear, anger, and pain as our own "knapsacks" (McIntosh, 1989) of prejudice and privilege are unpacked. We may experience embarrassment about our ignorance, fear of making a prejudiced comment or mistake in racial courtesy, fear of being attacked, anger about being attacked, uncertainty, pain in recognizing unflattering aspect of ourselves, etc. For instance, in the face of strong inquiry, challenge or attack by people of color (which three different forms of interaction sometimes cannot be distinguished by whites), a typical white male stance is to sit back, maintain a (relatively) straight face and stiff upper lip, and "tough it out". People of color, especially Black people, may anticipate a strong counterattack, or an expression of pain and danger. When they receive "nothing" they often assume that the white male is impervious to challenge, or cares nothing about the issues. The erroneous attributions on both sides (Kochman, 1981) often contribute to misunderstandings and relationships which are destructive to the goals of the coalition. How can white men share our perceptions of coalition dynamics and the burdens and pains of our social roles with coalition partners - with other white men, with white women, and with people of color? It is crucial that all coalition members have some understanding of one another's situations

of dominance and oppression, privilege and deprivation, and struggle (Thompson, 1991). It is important for white men to share our own sense of pain, both as oppressors and as occasionally oppressed members of this society (oppressed by class or religion or age or sexual orientation ability or as members of other subordinated groups, e.g. prisoner, child, rape victim, etc.). While it is clear that these are very different degrees and kinds of oppression, it is important for women and people of color to understand the oppression we experience and the constraints we feel to being truly ourselves. In order for this to happen the white men involved have to demonstrate clear understanding and concern about the oppression faced by people of color and white women, and in no way compare or equate our own experiences to those of other groups. Nevertheless, it often is difficult for people of color and women to listen to what may be perceived as the "whining" of privileged group members, and they quite naturally may resent the notion that "everyone is oppressed", when their own oppression is so pervasive, so heavily institutionalized and so often denied and enforced by white men.

What should be the external relationships of white males who are part of the coalition?

14. How should white men in a multicultural coalition deal with peers who are supportive of coalition efforts but are outside the coalition? How can we inform, liaison with, gain feedback and support from, and "bring along" this critical constituency in coalition agreements and actions? White men who are prepared to acknowledge collective responsibility for institutional racism and sexism, and who have a sense of accountability to a larger white male group, may create or join an outside peer support and resocialization group, and seek opportunities for formal re-education and action regarding whiteness, masculinity, economic privilege and skills in bringing about change. Such groups, which are not yet common, offer good potential for learning, self- and collective inquiry, and the peer support which is invaluable in achieving change.

15. How can white male coalition members relate with other white men who are "perpetrators of oppression", or "bystanders", and thus who are the direct and indirect targets of the coalition's change efforts? How do we prevent either "trashing" and "bashing" these white

men, or ducking such dialogues or confrontations in order to avoid being "trashed", disrespected or excluded ourselves from important relationships? Rather than distancing ourselves from these white male peers, we need to acknowledge that at some level "we are they" and "they are us". Meeting this challenge involves dealing with passive and active resistance as well as attacks, influencing bystanders to become supporters, and not allowing targets to coopt us or otherwise use us in ways that compromise the coalition's efforts. Cooptation is very delicate and often occurs at subtle levels we barely notice. In a wonderfully honest chapter, Alderfer (1982) discussed how he may have accepted the pressure of senior white male colleagues not to name in writing a respected peer whose work he felt was marred by inappropriate racial assumptions. He noted that requests for silence and for not embarrassing colleagues is a pressure that "is common for senior white men to exert on each other in racial matters (1982, p. 146)." As we grapple with these peer pressures we also face the question of whether we will reach out to white men of different backgrounds, who are quite different from us; how will we handle our anti-racist, anti-sexist work with men of different classes, religious traditions, sexual orientations, etc.?

16. We do not stop being members of the dominant group when we work in a multicultural coalition. If unmerited and accumulated privilege is at the heart of injustice in this society, and at the heart of being a white male (particularly a white male of upper middle class status), do we, and how do we, divest ourselves of some of these privileges? Do we have to commit "class suicide" (Friere, 1970), or are there other ways of working for justice and living well with these contradictions? Is the very notion of "living well" in the midst of oppression a key aspect of the ideology of oppressors? At the same time, continual immersion in guilt and suffering destroys hope, energy to work for change and personal efficacy. What lifestyles, work-roles, citizen roles and roles of father, husband, friend and lover are manifestations of wisdom on these matters?

What issues need attention in ending the coalition or in following-up its work?

17. How does a coalition end? Not without thoughtful planning. Coalitions that end with a whimper, and that disappear into the dusk, usually are read as failures. Coalitions that end in a

planful way, with a bang, with recognition and recounting of successes and failures, with feedback and analysis of progress, with multicultural rituals and celebrations of termination, more often linger in our minds as fruitful and growth-producing experiences. Moreover, they are then more likely to linger in the public mind as successful models of work for change and as successful visions of future organizations and communities. Developing a multicultural coalition represents a substantial investment in relationships and in building an organization. Even if the coalition was undertaken as a temporary partnership, the relationships that were built, and the values and skills which have been developed, can be maintained. Partners also can consider the establishment of another coalition or a more permanent effort for social change, organizational improvement, or multicultural organizational development.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS.

We have argued that it is morally right, and in the self-interest of white males of upper-middle class status, to work for a more just and multicultural society and organizations. The bases of this self-interest and moral priority may vary amongst us - as do our concerns for our personal safety and survival, personal advantage, charity, moral integrity, system survival, etc. And the motives, as well as the roles for change, are different for white men of different classes, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages, etc. At the same time, we recognize that established structures and cultures of oppression have defined white male self-interest quite differently - and much more narrowly.

It also is clear that white men who wish to be involved in multicultural coalitions, including ourselves, have much to learn. We need to learn more about our own whiteness, our maleness and our other bases of privilege (e.g. class, sexual orientation and age), and how to change privilege and oppression. This involves deepening our cognitive and emotional understanding of our historic and current privileges, and the ways in which we accept, deny or otherwise deal with the privileges that we, and our ancestors and descendants, carry as a result of this status. It also means better understanding of the negative consequences of the white

patriarchy for people of color, for white women, and for white men. At the same time, white male education and exploration must include efforts to learn the histories, cultures and future goals of people of color and of white women.

Not all white people, and not all males, are alike in having access to our privileges, nor experiences with their negative consequences. Thus, it is important to explore the different meanings of maleness to men of different gender orientations, and the different meanings of whiteness to whites of different ethnicities and classes. Divisions within the white male group obviously are easily exploited by enemies of a multicultural agenda.

In short, we need to learn how to "unlearn" the values, attitudes and behaviors of an oppressor and how to operate in roles characterized by shared power, collaboration, diverse styles, and compassion and respect for ourselves and others. We need to develop our own description of the conditions under which our learning about race, gender and class issues best can occur. At the same time, white male education and change must include efforts to learn the histories, cultures and future goals of people of color and of white women. As one example, Figure 3 presents Brown's (1993) pioneering effort to identify, for herself, preferred conditions for racial learning.

To make these changes we need to learn how to assess better the risks of new behaviors, and to be willing to take more risks. There are many constraints and sanctions facing white men who elect to behave in ways that challenge white male supremacy. Indeed, breaking the informal and often unstated bonds of the "white male club" invites conflict, marginalization, rejection and exclusion. Jobs may be lost, families alienated, friends distanced, competencies questioned, privileges lost, maleness itself doubted, etc. But part of the way this "club", like any institution, maintains its power over the behavior of white men (and others as well), is by the very mythology of its power and the caution and fear it engenders. While we suspect that many white men will react negatively and powerfully to white male actions for racial change, many others will be glad to see new possibilities for their own and others' survival and growth. Much of the time we attribute greater risk, and assume lower personal power, than may be realistic, thereby



Figure 3

CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH RACIAL  
LEARNING OCCURS \*

Nancy L. Brown

As a white who works in a variety of organizations, I have found that learning about racism (my own, others', institutional) has increased my effectiveness in every work setting. Because this is so, I consciously seek ways to learn more, learn faster, and learn more deeply

about racism. In the following, I summarize what I have discovered so far about my process (not content) of learning in this area. Borrow whatever is useful for your own learning situation.

FIGURE 1

Conditions Which Help/Hinder Racial Learning

Conditions which Hinder or Inhibit Racial Learning

I learn less, I learn more slowly, or I learn more shallowly when:

1. I wait until others confront me.
2. My self-esteem is lower.
3. I fight racism primarily "for the benefit of blacks."
4. I go in blind and naive.
- 5a. I require an immediate yes-it-is or no-it-isn't decision of myself.
- 5b. I require a simplistic, either-it's-completely-racist-or it's-not-at-all answer.
6. I limit myself to one kind of learning opportunity.
7. I anticipate getting it all together, being finished at some future point.
8. I discount the value of language to my racial learning.
9. I limit my experiences to higher risk work situations where I want/need to perform, to look "together", and not "raggedy."
10. I don't find/use white role models.
11. I seek support for my learning primarily from blacks who:
  - have a different struggle regarding racism from my struggle,
  - are fighting racism directly, and for whom support of whites and learning about racism is an added energy drain
12. I swallow someone else's theory about how whites learn.

I encourage other whites to increase their effectiveness at work by identifying and strengthening their learning processes in regard to racism. T Groups and other settings involving experience-based learning provide opportunities to look at these issues in a relatively low-risk way with help from others, and to

Conditions which Help Racial Learning to Occur

I learn more, I learn faster, or I learn more deeply when:

1. I look inside first
2. My self-esteem is higher.
3. I understand my self-interest in fighting racism. I fight racism primarily for my benefit.
4. I understand and anticipate potential negative consequences to me of fighting racism.
5. I allow the possibility that racism may be a part of the situation and allow myself time to consider that possibility
6. I allow/require myself to have a balance of cognitive and experiential learnings about racism.
7. I accept the "onion theory", that I will continue to peel way layers of my own racism for the rest of my life.
- 8a. I use language as a tool to reveal myself to myself.
- 8b. I use others' language as a tool to reveal myself to myself.
9. I periodically use labs or seminars as relatively low-risk-to-me learning opportunities
10. I find/use white role models who:
  - display non-racist behavior,
  - are in a learning posture about racism.
11. I seek support for my learning primarily from whites who are also learning and who will encourage and support my learning.
12. I articulate how I learn about racism based on my own experience.

explore both thoughts and feelings. When in these settings myself, I've found that keeping in mind three brief guidelines helps me:

1. Initiate. Don't wait for someone else to do it.
2. Share feelings, as well as thoughts
3. Hang in. Persist.

\* \* \*

Good luck with your learning!

rendering ourselves less powerful and more passive, Risks that can be discussed with other white men and with coalition partners are risks that can be shared; risks that can be shared are risks that can be reduced via mutual support and collective action.

Closely related to risk-taking, and to status change, we need to learn how to develop positive forms of marginality (hooks, 1990; 1984; Mayo, 1992). Rather than revering our centrality in a system of injustice, and as well rejecting complete withdrawal from such systems, we need to discover how to be "in" but not "of" such systems (Worden, Levin & Chesler, 1976), how to work the margins of major institutions in ways that permit norm-challenging behavior that may lead to personal and social change. For instance, Bateson discusses how central the notion of temporariness and change is to the lives of women, and how often women alter their careers in order to sustain their relationships (1990). Men, too, need to learn how to create and adapt to multiple commitments and continual change in our lives and roles, including changes necessary to maintain ongoing commitments to increasing social justice and reducing exploitation.

To adopt new roles and values we need to develop new sources of social support for our changed behavior's and our involvement in social change efforts. We need to operate less alone and to seek out and exchange support with men of diverse classes, races and sexual orientations, and with women. Such exchanges need to include empathy and caring, as well as honest feedback, in the pursuit of new behaviors, attitudes and values which do not harass, exploit or otherwise oppress others. As we develop new support relationships, our existing relationships with co-workers, family members and friends will change. The changes we make in our work lives both reflect and engender changes in our family and community lives, and vice versa: "the personal is political and the political is personal". This is one reason engagement with the challenge of multicultural coalitions is so necessary and so rewarding for everyone, but especially for we white men. We need to be prepared for these changes and to see them as some of the benefits of more just and fair ways of being and living.

We need to learn how to create multicultural organizations. Despite the best efforts of pioneering thinkers and practitioners, we are far from a coherent understanding of the basic structures and processes involved in creating and sustaining political and economic organizations that operate on a multicultural basis. Without such advance, individually progressive behavior will go unrewarded, or worse; individual changes will not be sustained, and the potential for creative problem solving and group effectiveness will go unrealized.

Power is not given up voluntarily, and the pressure and force of movements for social change led by and focused on the goals of people of color and white women are of central importance for everyone committed to more diverse organizations and communities and social justice in general. Such movements also are absolutely essential sources of the ideas, visions, and values required to create and maintain more just structures and cultures. They also mobilize and organize the resources necessary to bring about important changes. Coalition-building should not detract from these social movements' needs to operate autonomously and powerfully, but should pursue means of broadening support for these movements and assisting their selective focus and influence on agendas and institutional practices.

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