

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The purpose of this study is to analyze women of colors's (WOC) experiences working within the United States Forest Service (USFS) accessing the challenges of recruitment, retention, and promotional efforts. Using *testimonios* and Anzaldúa's theory of mestiza consciousness, I found three themes that included white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, presumed incompetence, and resistance and empowerment. Based on three women of color(s)'s *testimonios*, we provide suggestions for the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women of colors in the USFS. Further, women of colors collectively reclaim their power to voice their oppression and co-construct knowledge in their empowerment through an Anzaldúa poetic expression.

Learning from Women of Color within the United States Forest Service

by

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Jeanna A. Ramos, Author

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Diversity, inclusivity, and balance are the keys to the planet's ability to sustain itself and the human race's ability to survive. To have a healthy ecological system, diversity, inclusion, and balance must exist. This can only occur in the midst of a variety of plants and trees, clean air, fresh water, diverse wildlife and people coexisting in a natural balance. Everything in a system is significant and is needed for the system to function correctly and remain healthy. Today, we are exhausting the planet's natural resources (NR) and destroying the natural balance, and in turn, affecting people dependent on these same natural resources. The planet's balance has been disrupted because of the dominant Western culture (European male colonizers) ideology in Manifest Destiny (Gould 1981 & 1996). This ideology gave the Western culture the God-given right to control and rule over everyone and everything in its path towards supremacy (Buck 2001; Takaki 2008). In the United States, we have utilized the Western culture's capitalist approach towards natural resources management, which uses the slogan "use it all before it is gone." This Westernized approach is derived from greed, exploitation, and domination, but this approach no longer works because our resources are becoming depleted.

This thesis is not meant to place blame on anyone, it is only to demonstrate that monopolizing natural resources for capital gain does not and has not worked for the greater population's survival. We have forgotten about diversity, inclusion, and balance, and because of it desertification, erosion, and overuse of our natural resources have left us in the wake of climate change. Natural resources are quickly diminishing at an unsustainable rate, as demonstrated by an accelerated level of

climate change, an outcome that is detrimental to our planet and populations dependent on the earth's vital resources (Cordova 2007; Woodside 2012). It is time that we revisit this dominant scientific/ideological approach towards natural resources and human resources management within federal NR agencies, more specifically the US Forest Service. We must all consider other approaches, ideologies, knowledge, and insights towards natural resources if we are to survive for the next 100 years (Cordova 2007; Woodside 2012).

It is time that we pool our human resources to save our planet and increase our chances of survival for generations to come. When I speak of "human resources," I am referring to the diverse populations of cultures, races, and ethnicities that exist here possessing generational knowledge and approaches towards sustainable natural resources management. By utilizing human diversity towards our natural resources management, we increase our chances of long-term sustainability, conservation, and the restoration of balance, but this can only happen if we work together. Balance encompasses diversity and inclusion in an equitable, respectful, and valuing manner instead of the exclusionary, devaluing, and dominating manner utilized in past. Let us change our future by examining how we treat, value and respect ourselves, and each other. In the words of Gloria Anzaldúa:

"By creating a new mythos - that is, a change in the way we perceive reality, the way we see ourselves, and the ways we behave - la mestiza creates a new consciousness. The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject/object duality that keeps her prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our

thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war” (Anzaldá 2007,p. 102)

Problem Statement

In 1990, the US Department of Agriculture introduced a comprehensive plan called “Framework for Change: Workforce Diversity and Delivery of Programs” to build the US Forest Service’s workforce diversity and achieve demographic parity with the US population (US Forest Service 1998). In 2012, the Management Directive 715, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s Report for the Pacific Northwest, noted that women make up 39.45 % of the total employees working for the US Forest Service (US Forest Service 2013). Of the total US Forest Service employee workforce, women of color(s)’s population make up 5.38% (196 women) and white women consist of 34.07 % (1226 women) of Region 6 (Washington and Oregon). There seems to be an unequal occupational distribution within the Forest Service Region 6, twenty-three years after the “Framework for Change: Workforce Diversity” plan was implemented. Why is there such a large discrepancy between women of color(s) (196) and white women (1226)?

The question that comes to mind is, what efforts are being made to close the gap and why are they not successful? If the goal is inclusion, why is the Forest Service not starting their inclusion efforts internally within their own populations? Women of color(s) have been one of the most excluded and insufficiently utilized populations within the agency, so why not utilize their insight, perspectives, and experiences of exclusion to assist in the inclusion efforts?

By utilizing women of color(s)'s knowledge and expertise in exclusion, the agency increases its chances of inclusionary success; meanwhile, the agency places value on a population of women previously oppressed by the agency. The effort becomes a win/win situation: a win for the Forest Service's efforts working towards inclusion and a win for women of color(s) whom gain recognition, respect and dignity as employees. Women of color(s) are a valuable resource especially during this pivotal time and evolution within the agency. This thesis is intended to do just that, by providing women of color(s) a voice to speak of their own experiences of working within the Forest Service, through *testimonios*, to be heard by the agency, and to influence the Cultural Transformation's effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

My study will utilize Gloria E. Anzaldúa's theory of mestiza consciousness in order to analyze the information/data from a Chicana feminist queer perspective. In Anzaldúa's, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, she describes the struggle and interwoven complexity of Chicanas living on the borderlands between the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory) (, 2007). As Anzaldúa explains, "Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an 'alien' element. There is an exhilaration in being the participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being worked on" (2007). By this statement, Anzaldúa is stating that Mestizas are constantly being changed, evolved, and forced to adapt to the social forces around them. These forces shape them, mold them, and take from who they are, as women, trying to exist in a world

that does not understand them. Anzaldúa describes a state of mind or a state of being held by Chicanas (and other women of color[s]) because of their positionality, subjectivity, marginalization, assimilation, and the stigmas associated with being who they are and existing within the U.S. (2006). The mestiza consciousness is a lens of race, class, gender, and the intersectionality of identity for women of color(s) in the context of economic, political, and social discourses.

These discourses not only exist within society, they exist within the federal natural resources workforce. These discourses result in discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, micro- and macro-inequities preventing hiring, retention, upward mobility, employment protections, and inclusion. By understanding this consciousness, and women of color(s)'s identity within the federal workforce, we may be able to understand the challenges, limitations and barriers that exist within the US Forest Service. In turn, understanding these women's consciousness and perspectives, through *testimonios*, we may then comprehend the factors that contribute to their oppression and draw upon them to promote social strategic change. The US Forest Service cannot increase insufficient populations without understanding who women of color(s) are, the challenges they face, and the experiences they have had within the current workforce.

Methodology

This study will utilize an qualitative methodology called *testimonios* that will provide women of color(s) a venue to speak of their experiences, be heard, and recognized through academic research. *Testimonios* are a testimonial narrative or qualitative inquiry, creating a social and discursive space for people of color, or in

these case women of color(s), to speak of their own personal experiences/experiential truths (Beverley, 2008). The women of color(s)'s population are not being limited to any specific area, but recruitment will be limited to the Siuslaw and Willamette National Forests. By recruiting within the Siuslaw and the Willamette National Forests, a small piece of an extremely large federal government agency can be examined and analyzed. The plan was to interview up to 10 women of color(s), but due to time constraints, only three women of color(s) were recruited for this study. All participants self-identified as African American, Latina, Indigenous Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and biracial or multiracial. Once eligibility was determined, each participant was interviewed to gather perspectives, insights and experiences of working for the US Forest Service. The four critical questions, which will be addressed in this study, are:

- How are women of color(s) recruited, retained, and promoted in the US Forest Service?
- What are women of color(s)'s experiences?
- What factors contribute to these experiences?

Women of color(s) have been held in insufficient numbers within natural resources for many years. Therefore, in order to create change we must identify barriers, limitations, and struggles, which oppress them. By highlighting these systems of oppression, the agency is able to target the parts of system that are ineffective and make changes, but that is only if the Forest Service's goal is truly to be inclusive. The goal of this study is to motivate a transition from oppression to empowerment. However, to empower women of color(s), we must critically understand the marginalization currently existing. The purpose of my study is to understand the

factors that may contribute to oppression, identify the themes, and provide suggestions to improve the hiring and retention practices.

Purpose

This thesis will document experiences and perspectives of women of color(s) in the Forest Service and highlight barriers, limitations, and challenges, and in turn, create awareness and provide the essential insight necessary to make inclusion possible for the Forest Service, but only if they choose to utilize my results. This study will provide Forest Service leaders explanations of why women of color(s) are prevented from equitable distributions of employment opportunities. These results may be used to examine policies, procedures, and practices that may inhibit women of color(s) from being retained, recruited, and promoted to assist in diversity and inclusion efforts. It is my hope that my results will be utilized not only by the Forest Service, but by other natural resources agencies to promote diversity and inclusivity for all people regardless of difference. I see this research study as a blueprint for other research studies that can improve inclusivity for all federal agencies, hence the quality of life for women of color(s) and all people of difference in the federal government.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to analyze the experiences of women of color(s) (WOCs) working within the United States (US) Forest Service. As such, I reviewed the literature addressing recruitment, retention, diversity and inclusion. This literature review sets the foundation for understanding the complexity of diversity and inclusion for women of color(s) within federal natural resources agencies. As the focus of this thesis, I would like to pay tribute to the women of color(s) that existed in the United States before everyone else, the Indigenous Native American women and Mexican women. I begin this section with a quote by Viola F. Cordova (2007) describing the “Native American philosophy”, which takes a solution oriented approach, community building within and across identity categories:

The *why* is important because Native American thought represents a variety of human thought that has not been thoroughly explored. When we make such statements as ‘*All humans...*[whatever characteristic one wishes to apply here],’ we fail to take into account the many possible ways that human beings might be defined. Each distinct cultural group, perhaps in an original isolation from other groups, provides three definitions around which they build all subsequent determinations about the world they live in. First, each has a definition or description of the world; second, there is a definition of what it is to be human in the world as it is so defined and described; and, the third, there is an attempt to outline the role of a human in that world. The distinct pattern of a culture may be seen to derive from these three definitions and may account for the distinctions between cultural groups. I refer to these definitions and descriptions as a worldview or *matrix*’ because they are not singular and disconnected definitions, but compose a whole picture of interrelated concepts and ideas. (p. 1)

These three definitions have a major significance in establishing a common understanding of how different cultures place value on “self,” community, other living things, and the world around them. Each cultural group defines, describes, and

places value on nature, natural resources and relationships with other cultures. As stated above, all cultural groups have different origins, worldviews, manners and approaches towards interacting within the world. This is an important point because it is the foundation of the values women of color(s) hold because they are the *matrix* in life (p.1-4). These *matrices* are also part of their cultural foundation, spiritual beliefs and values, traditions, perspectives, and approaches towards natural resources management (p.1-4). Indigenous women, as well as women of color(s), have a historic connection to the land we now call the United States, which includes an obligation to future generations (p.159-165). As Cordova states, what we, the current generation, do today affects the generations of tomorrow (p. 4). Many women of all color(s) have a special connection with the land because the *matrix* in life and their cultural community govern the way they live and the values and beliefs we hold dear (Cordova 2007).

In the following sections, I look to the matrices that inform, influence, and govern women of color(s)'s lives, and ultimately affect their quality of life and work experiences in federal natural resources agencies. Before I begin, I acknowledge that the term "women of color(s)" is a generalization of racial, cultural, and ethnic women from various locations, tribes, communities, family units, and religions, and for that reason, I am recognizing women of color(s) differences. These differences deriving from various geographic locations, climates, regions, cultural beliefs, ethnicities, lineage, and generations that have existed within the US (assimilation or acculturation); some women are similar while others are different. I would like to respect these women, individually, and collectively, however the purpose of this

thesis is to empower women of color(s), not further fragment their individuality. As stated within the theoretical framework, third space feminism is a place of cultural expression of which to build solidarity, which is also my intent for this thesis.

Epistemology of Women of Color(s) and Natural Resources

Viola F. Cordova (2007) illustrates an Indigenous Native American cultural activist positionality in relation to Mother Earth. Cordova is a highly respected Native American scholar and her ideologies about the Native American culture can best be described as:

The idea of a human nature, though existing in various guises, revolved round the fact that humans were creatures of the hive, the flock, the *we*. Humans were but one of many species of beings that coexisted equally, all dependent on the Mother, the Earth, for their substance. Humans differed from other flocks in that they had language, the better to bond the group. They saw themselves as existing in a web of highly interrelated and interdependent *substances*: air, water, other beings, and the land. They maintain their life forces by ingesting the life force of other beings. No less respect was due a wild onion than a deer. (p. 173)

All beings hold equal value and respect in the world, and are interdependent upon each other. Honor and respect are the values and beliefs of Indigenous Native Americans. To Native Americans, human nature is equal with all things, no matter the form. These perspectives, approaches, values and belief systems (ideologies) towards nature and natural resources are similar and different from other cultural groups (Berkes 1999; Deloria 1999; Middleton 2011). Cordova's work is essential in understanding the Native American philosophy, epistemology, and approaches toward natural resources, but her work does not address social and political interactions between her people and natural resources agencies. There is no information available on the insights, perspectives, and experiences of Native

American women in relation to natural resources agencies, Native women working with these agencies are silenced. It is important that Native American women voice the experiences working with natural resources agencies so others can understand the social and political disparities, challenges, and limitations.

Silvia Federici (2004) illustrates that African American and Asian American women today constitute the bulk of agricultural workers and are the frontrunners in the struggle for non-capitalist use of natural resources (land, forest, and water) (p. 47). Federici explains that land is no longer the fundamental means of production because new technologies have taken the power, self-reliance, and creativity of agriculture out of the people's hands. In the words of Federici, "It is an undisputed fact, but one difficult to measure, that in rural as well as urban areas, women are the subsistence farmers of the planet. That is, women produce the bulk of the food that is consumed by their families (immediate or extended) or sold at the local markets for consumptions, especially in Africa and Asia where most of the world population lives" (p. 48).

These insights and perspectives are important in establishing the cultural values, beliefs, and gender roles of African and Asian women, but Federici and Cordova demonstrate how the US culture has moved far away from the cultural and spiritual human/nature connection. The US has removed the value we once placed on the human productivity and the value on nature and replaced it with technology.

For women of color(s)'s nature, food production, and the human/nature connection has cultural, spiritual, and traditional value. Therefore, in the commodification of agriculture, they remove women of color(s)'s ability to conserve and care for the land

for future generations. Federici's work informs my thesis by providing insight on how the commodification of agricultural (including forestry) affects women of color(s) and how their knowledge was addressed, if at all.

Yolanda Alaniz and Megan Cornish (2008) explain the positionality of a super-exploited population, Mexicans, which have been continually marginalized, discriminated against, and oppressed. These people are utilized by agribusinesses as cheap labor, treated as subservient human beings, and exposed to dangerous conditions just so they can survive and make a wage. The authors explain how Mexicans are taken advantage of by agricultural giants because of their vulnerability within a country that is unfamiliar and unwelcoming to them. As stated by Alaniz and Cornish:

The agribusiness conglomerates so prevalent in the U.S. are no different from any other giant industry in their exploitations of labor for maximum profits...The agricultural giants rely on a large, drastically underpaid and super-exploited workforce—an agricultural proletariat that numbered 1,332,000 in July 2005. These laborers suffered the worst conditions, are paid the least, and are exposed to some of the most hazardous chemicals of the workers in the United States. Farmworkers are overwhelmingly people of color, and are largely immigrants from oppressed nations, predominantly Mexico, where wages, poverty, and unemployment low are exacerbated by hard austerity measures mandated by the International Monetary Fund and free trade agreements. Mexicanas/os are impelled by economic need to cross the border into the U.S., where they are forced to toil at atrociously low wages and are kicked out when the job is done. (p. 125)

Many Mexicans lack citizenship, comprehension of laws and policies, the ability to speak the English language, literacy, and/or are not familiar with the area or resources available to assist them. Mexicans and/or Chicanos were hurt because of their association with the Mexican heritage, which condemns them to a second-class status,

branded in their own lands as aliens due to racism. Due to their lived experiences within the US, Mexican understanding of natural resources was one of pain, sickness, poverty, and exclusion (Alaniz & Cornish 2008).

Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) talk about the racialization of “others” or marginalized groups within a monopolistic practices model of a capitalist drive nation, the United States. As Omi and Winant state, “the monopolistic practice model suggest a society structured in the interest of all whites, who gain thereby through a systematic transfer of resource from non-whites in a wide variety of fields” (p. 25). This model was structured to exploit vulnerable populations such as immigrants, which are not citizens within this country and validate their actions based on citizenship, hierarchal positionality (based on race, gender, and class). Racial formulations are social structures or hierarchies, based on racial identity, which inhibits or limits accessibility to resources (employment, housing, goods and services, or social assistance), opportunities, and quality of life. This theory speaks of how these hierarchies were created, which includes “othering” (racial separation) and it marginalizes groups, which do not belong to the dominant cultures (European descent).

These hierarchies are skewed in order to privilege, empower, and place the dominant culture in superior positions over all other races and set their values and belief systems as social norms. This theory truly informs this thesis and assists in understanding how women of color(s) may have been exploited in agriculture and forestry due to their race, gender, and class status. In turn, this plays a major role in

the social structure within natural resources agencies, which includes the commodification of timber products.

Historical Perspectives

Silvia Federici (2004) takes a global eco-feminist historical perspective by examining natural resources from Mexican and Peruvian women's perspectives, insights and approaches (p. 47-62). As stated by Federici, "In response to the land expropriation by the Spaniards (assisted by the local chiefs), women in Mexico and Peru in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ran to the mountains, rallied the population to resist the foreign invaders, and became the staunchest defender of the old cultures and religions, which were centered on the worship of nature-gods. Later, in the nineteenth century, in Africa and Asia women defended the traditional female farming systems from the systematic attempts that the European colonists made to dismantle them and to redefine agricultural work as a male job" (p. 49). Federici reaffirms how women of color(s) have sought safety and shelter within the forest and their historical relationship with Europeans during the colonial era. Historically, women of color(s) were fearful of the Europeans, forced to cope with their situations, and worshipped the nature-god, which demonstrates the value they placed on nature. For this study, these factors are essential when evaluating women of color(s), natural resources agencies, and the historical social relationship (lack of trust) between women of color(s) and the dominant culture.

According to Melissa J. Lane and Ann K. Saki (1996), the National Science Foundation (NSF) discusses inequality of funding for women of color(s) in the sciences. Lane and Saki determined a significant difference in the trend for women

and minority students attending upper level educational institutions, which seemed to decrease as the level of education increased (public and private universities). Grants and scholarships offering the largest amounts of money and longer durations were being awarded to white males (p. 625).

These biases assist in understanding the unequal distribution of federal funding within academia, and this contributes to pool qualified participants, which move through the pipeline from college to the workforce. Another essential component is the understanding the experiences that women of color(s) are having during their academic years while in pursuit of degrees in the sciences. This informs the disparities which are based on race, gender, and class that exist within academia, but ultimately reflecting the limited qualified women of color(s) available for the Forest Service to employ.

Educational Pipeline

Education is an essential component needed for employment marketability, but funding access and academic experience plays an important role in women of color(s)'s degree choice. Tate and Linn (2005) conducted a study on the experiences of women of color(s) within STEMs (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs in order to comprehend the influences, which limit participation within the sciences. It was determined that persistence is attributed to feeling welcome, supportive interactions with technology, the ability to separate themselves from the dominant society, self-confidence, and their treatment by others. As Tate and Linn explain,

Understanding some women of color belong to multiple identities...Identities originate in social life and are formed in response to

interactions with others. Experiences in social roles shape and transform identities. People may construct multiple meaning of self, based on their social roles such as student or American; their commitments; and their resources, such as intelligence or wealth. (Linn and Tate 2005, p.486)

Tate and Linn determined that identity and inclusion are two major contributors to the success of women of color(s) within academia and the governmental workforce (p. 491-492). If the academic institutions and/or governmental agency entities do not allow them to feel supported and welcomed, then chances of their success are lessened. These points are extremely important, provide essential insight, and provide a perspective, which will shape the foundation of this current study. Inclusion and exclusion factors play a role in federal government while educational opportunities and disparities will shape my thesis argument.

Social and Political Discourse within Federal Natural Resources

Agencies:

Nicole D. Peterson's (2009) study that deals with the exclusion, resulting from inclusionary practices in Mexican Natural Resources. By describing non-governmental organizations and government agencies' use of participatory methods (community participation) to design and implement natural resources management and economic development programs, inclusion results in exclusion. The context of the study focuses on the fishing industry, oceans surrounding California and Mexico, and how inclusionary practices using participatory methods have been manipulated to be inclusive to stakeholders that agree with their management style and exclusionary to others that may oppose. Tactics include email distribution lists, scheduling meetings when the working class stakeholder must work, strategic poster

placement and last minute invitation notices, and selectively choosing meeting locations (i.e. golf course, out of town) This study informs the current thesis by highlighting the manipulation of inclusive tools within government that skew stakeholder's input and bias decisions made on natural resources management. It also demonstrates the power dynamics between private corporations and governmental institutions and how the power is kept in the hands of the few, which also influences the content of my thesis.

US Forest Service-Recruitment and Retention: Inclusion and Exclusion:

Greg Brown and Charles C. Harris (1993) discuss the challenges of developing and implementing programs that satisfy the evolving social, economic, and political demands of the public—mediating potential conflicts between society and the US Forest Service. The societal representations within America are not reflective of the ethnic and gender representations within the US Forest Service. As stated by Brown and Harris,

The effort to diversifying the Forest Service work for is thus the response to a clear legal imperative; however, the ramifications of the agency's work force diversification objectives extend beyond any legal mandate to their broader implications for organizational change and adaptations. Meeting the legal requirement of Affirmative Action is essential, but it is equally important to have the workforce diversity required to achieve the creative problem solving and the policy and management decisions necessary for a public agency to effectively serve an increasingly diverse society and a world where globalization of the economy and environmental protection is occurring. (p. 1)

The standpoint of the US Forest Service towards diversity of women and minorities comes from federal mandates and lawsuits resulting from discriminatory practices of exclusion towards women and racial minorities. By promoting the diversification of

the formally male dominated work environment, the public image transitions from negative to positive towards the agency. The article highlights the Work Force 1995 Program being “the implicit belief that personnel diversification will lead to an organizational mix of employees, in terms of both gender and culture [race not mentioned], that can better adapt to changing social conditions: One of the program’s stated goals is to have an organizational culture that is receptive and adaptive to changing values and roles” (p. 2). As demonstrated, the Forest Service does not change policy, inclusion efforts, and/or values placed on inclusion unless a successful lawsuit has prevailed. The US Forest Service and Civil Rights compliance are essential components, which inform the social dynamics between federal government and underrepresented populations within. This article provides insight on the power dynamics and how government implements compliance in the midst of social change.

James G. Lewis (2005) highlights women’s disparities, the journey towards equal rights, and lawsuits that affect inclusion with the US Forest Service. Lewis highlights the historical standards and expectations of forester’s wives and how, since the beginning, the US Forest Service, the agency, established the reputation of a “good old boy” fraternity. Lewis states,

For much of the 20th century, the esprit de corps of the Forest Service depended heavily on the notion of the agency as an elite fraternity. The job of forester itself—a combination of lumberjack frontiersman, explorer, and Old West Sheriff—provided an opportunity for men to live the [strenuous life], that most masculine of lifestyles. The reality, however, was that this boys’ club could not have functioned nearly as well without the women in its midst. It is only within the last three decades of the 20th century that women have been admitted into the fraternity, and only after they forced their way in. (p. 259)

The social norms and culture of the Forest Service has always been based on the support, exploitation, and spousal support of women, considered free labor until 1973. Gene Bernardi filed a lawsuit against the Forest Service on the basis of sexual discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and won (p. 261). As Lewis stated, “she and several other women filed a class-action lawsuit over the hiring and promotion of women and minorities in Region 5, California” (p. 261). The Forest Service agreed to a “Bernardi Consent Decree” (District court agree in 1981), which translated to a hiring quota system. The result of the lawsuits were accessibility to upper ranking positions, higher pay scales, and nearly a 50/50 US Forest Service employee base (Lewis 2005). The journey to equality and civil rights is important in informing my thesis of what it takes for change to occur and the lengths in which women of color(s) must go to in order to achieve equity.

Sungjoo Choi(2007) examined the diversity and representation trends in federal employment, by analyzing pay and grade. The study speaks to how successful the federal government has been in employing women and minorities, but highlights hiring is concentrated on the lower- and mid-level positions. As Choi states, “women and minorities are underrepresented at the upper-level positions in the hierarchical bureaucracies. In that the vertical ranks of public bureaucracies are necessarily highly correlated to the authority and influence on important and decision-making processes, the unequal representation of women and minorities at the upper-policy levels can possibly result in the unfair treatment of people who have the membership of these groups” (p. 41). These facts demonstrate a large underrepresentation of women and minorities within higher managerial and executive

levels of government and results in their voices not being heard when policies were being made and when resolutions were debated. The issue is that white males hold upper management positions and as a result, they control and manage the agency's hiring and retention practices (p. 41). Choi's research is a very important part of the federal government employment dynamics and is needed to assist in this study's exploration of unequal and disproportionality of women of color(s). There is no mention of women of color(s); it is assumed, but not stated or addressed directly. This study solidifies the race and gender factor does play a part in inequities, disparities, and social and political dynamics, which are a critical component of this current study.

Greg Brown and Charles C. Harris (2001), in a comparative study of the US Forest Service diversification efforts, examine the role women have played as potential change agents. This study analyzes survey data collected from two national studies of the Forest Service in 1990 and 1996. This study demonstrates a "concurrent with workforce diversification efforts, the agency confronted demands from the courts, Congress, and interest groups to change national forest management by emphasizing national forest preservation over the production of commodities such as timber and livestock forage" (p. 246). Brown and Harris' (2001) study indicates,

Women continue to exhibit higher levels of general environmental concern than men, suggesting their role as potential [savior] in helping the agency to make the transition to increased emphasis on ecosystem management. Conversely, diversification of the Forest Service workforce continues to be highly contentious, with employees feeling that the recruitment and promotion of women without adequate training and/or experience have left the agency unprepared to meet the complex demands. The inability of the Forest Service to satisfy multiple, conflicting constituencies in the

face of agency downsizing suggest the role of women as [scapegoats] whose perceived lack of experience is responsible for agency shortcomings. (p. 246)

As suggested by Brown and Harris, historical convergence of workforce diversification with changes in national forest policy inevitably places women in the conflicting role of both “saviors” and “scapegoats.” The workforce stigmas on women, because of gender differences placed by patriarchal male standards and expectations within the Forest Service, are detrimental to diversification efforts. These practices promote exclusion instead of the inclusion the Work Force 1995 is intended to accomplish. This informs this study because of the biases and unjust treatment these women are facing in the workplace, and as a result, creates barriers and limitations for women of color(s) in the workplace.

Tokenism

Audrey J. Murrell and Thomas J. Zagenczyk (2006) explore race, gender, and role model statuses within management by exploring the impact of the informal development of relationships within US corporations. These authors highlight prior studies conducted on women and people of color and the positionality of role models within management and how women and people of color identify role models. Murrell and Zagenczyk have conducted extensive research on gender, race, and ethnicity and explain tokenism as:

Several conditions accompany being a token: high visibility, high risk, low tolerance for mistakes, and hyper-representation. Tokens' distinctiveness makes them stand out in way that can be detrimental to building interpersonal relationships and being selected as role models. Interacting with highly visible tokens is risky; if a mistake is made, everyone will see that error because everyone is already looking. This is particularly true in the case of close (versus distant) role models. Because any mistake made is so public, tokens also

face far more severe penalties if they make an error. Finally, the success or failure of token is not attributed just to their own merit; in success and, more important, failure...they are seen as representing their whole demographic group (i.e. women, African Americans). (p. 124)

There is a high level of responsibility, vulnerability, and high visibility for women and minorities given the opportunity to succeed within a corporation. This is also the position of women and minorities working in the public sector of federal government. For women of color(s), being placed in this position may be appealing because of the privilege and recognition, but it also places them in isolation and forces them to assimilate to accommodate the dominant culture. These women may not be comfortable or lack a sense of agency, but the need to provide for their families and a better quality of life may be worth the risk.

Margaret Foegen Karsten (2006) discusses how managerial women, minorities, or both, have differing stress effects dependent upon race and ethnic association. As Karsten states, "Women may be more likely than men to perceive organizational politics as stressors. Minorities and females experience the glass or concrete ceiling, harassment, tokenism, isolation, stereotypes, work-family, conflict, the [maternal wall] and prejudice and discrimination as stressors" (p. 239-240). Karsten conducts a stress comparison of men, women, and minorities emphasizing how much historical oppressions, cultural belief and value systems, and gender responsibilities have placed increased stressors for women of color(s) because of their interwoven identity. As Karsten explains,

Negative synergy may explain why stressors associated with being female and a member of a racial/ethnic minorities group may be more harmful than an additive model implies. It may place their

career progress in double jeopardy. Few studies have been done on such individuals, but Davidson's comparison of black and white managerial women shows that both groups rank being undervalued or underutilized among their top three stressors. Beyond that, earlier, performance pressure, powerlessness, and a need to be three times as qualified to get the same job as whites complete the top five stressors for executive black women. (p. 243)

The level of disparities placed upon women of color(s), the increased effort and level of responsibility, and physical, emotional, and psychological stress and pressure placed on women of color(s) to assimilate with the dominant culture is extremely intense. It is my belief that the additive model implies weakness, which women of color(s) are far from being. Women of color(s) are resilient women that have survived the oppressive forces, which have resulted in exploitation, yet they still persist. These women have their own forms of resistance and prevail in the midst of suppression. Karsten's research also addresses upward mobility for women of color(s) that chose to assimilate or acculturate towards the white or dominant culture work environment through integration. Karsten defines these terms.

Acculturation is the process through which people, particularly immigrants or racial/ethnic minorities adapt to the dominant culture or choose not to do so. *Assimilation* is an acculturation strategy involving immersion in and acceptance of the mainstream culture. *Integration* mean being immersed in both the dominant and minority cultures; *marginalization*, linked with the highest stress levels, implies a rejection of both. (p. 242).

To maximize women of color(s)'s chances at obtaining and maintaining positions within an organization, they must integrate into the dominant culture's domain, the US Workforce. Karsten's research is directly related to my research topic, but does not address the specificity of natural resources or federal government. This article informs my research in the venue of upward mobility, assimilation, and acculturation,

which are issues that women of color(s) face in the workplace. This provides a venue of understanding how the dominant culture views the reality of women of color(s), and is vital to this researches analysis.

Katherine C. Naff (2001) addresses tokenism of women and minorities amid the emotional toll, stereotypes, and assumptions and analysis of federal fact finding reports by highlighting disparities. Naff claims “tokenism,” as a phenomenon, can take a heavy emotional toll on people placed in this position. It can impair the confidence and self-esteem of [tokens] individuals and force them to work to outperform their colleagues to legitimize their place in the organization” (p. 96). Naff discusses the stereotypes and assumption stigmas, associated with women and people of color, occurring when individuals are in jobs that are not typically associated with a group. Due to Asian American women cultural traits of being unassertiveness, possessing unavailing behavior, and noncompetitive mannerism along with supervisor’s aggressive, masterly, and competitive behaviors, result internalization of how you perceive themselves and poor work performance. If the individual does not match the stereotype assigned to the job, the person is seen as likely to fail, both by themselves and others. Naff explains further, “people who internalize their own [lack to fit] with jobs may engage in self-limiting behavior, performing far below their capacity; the same lack of fit often results in biased appraisals of their performance by others” (p. 96). She states that in that employment setting, African American managers were given less-challenging work. Therefore, this resulted in lower skill development and less feedback on their performance. In turn, these individuals stunted their prospects for long-term career development.

Glass Ceiling

Katherine C. Naff (2001) explains her qualitative and quantitative research study on the glass ceiling's effects on women and people of color in the private and public sectors. Using government-wide survey data complemented with observations made by federal participants in focus groups, Naff was able to identify the existence and nature of the glass ceiling within federal government, "fact-finding reports by the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, US General Accounting Office (GAO), Department of Labor, and the US Office of Personnel Management gained national attention due to its confirmation of the Glass Ceiling's existence. The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission's fact-finding report [confirmed] the enduring aptness of the glass ceiling metaphor. At the highest levels of business, there is indeed a barrier only rarely penetrated by people of color and women" (p. 70). Six reasons were listed to explain the glass ceiling's existence: 1) personal investment-education, professional experience, and occupational choices; 2) mobility without family ties—working for more than one agency and ability to move for the job; 3) total and complete dedication to the job; 4) accessibility to job through networks; 5) more opportunities—women and people of color less likely to be considered; 6) and one's own family affects one's career—married or has children (p. 70). Other reasons for the ceiling's existence include, but were not limited to: gender, race and ethnic stereotypes and assumptions by upper management when hiring, giving promotions, and/or personal investment and loyalty to the job without exception (p. 80-90). Naff stresses the importance in examining women of color(s), specifically because of the stigmas associated with their identity within society. As Naff explains:

It is important to look at women of color separately because they tend to be the poorest segment of society, disproportionately represented in single-parent households, on welfare roles, and in low-paying occupations. Even studies that conclude that Asian Pacific American men earn salaries nearly equal to Euro-American men in the federal sector have found that Asian Pacific American women do not. Some research has found that African American women do not do as well as Latino men or other women. (p. 89).

As explained, women of color(s) are placed under scrutiny due to the disparities within society, which in turn affect their positionality within the federal government because their identity as a woman and a minority. Naff further explains,

The fact that with 40% of the variance in advancement explained, there is still a negative effect for being Native American, Latino, or African American is compellingly supported for the suggestion that a glass ceiling limits their advancement in federal government...As with women, there is no evidence that a lack of interest in advancement or willingness to do what it takes to get ahead explains the disadvantage faced by people of color. Responses to items related to work attitudes on the workforce diversity survey show that at least three quarter of each race/ethnic group is committed to their job [to a great extent]. Nearly half of each group indicated that they are willing to spend whatever time on the job is necessary to advance their careers; the exception was Euro-Americans, were only about one quarter responded that this was true to a [great extent]. (p. 91)

The amount of effort men and women of color(s) will commit to for a chance at advancement within federal government, yet chances are, to do so are for women of color(s), too few. Men exert less effort and have lower expectations than women, yet are able to advance and achieve upward mobility quicker. Women of color(s) not only have to work harder than men and white women, they must prove themselves up to three times more in order to advance within the agency. People of color are willing to give up time with their families, will work harder and will go that extra mile to get a

chance, yet this is not the case for most of the Euro-Americans that possess these positions.

Kecia M. Thomas and Jimmy L. Davis (2006) have conducted research on diversity management and the glass ceiling by analyzing civil rights cases, violations, and compliance with US organizations. The glass ceiling is described, “as the artificial barrier to the advancement of women and minorities; invisible, impermeable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications (p. 52). Thomas and Davis explain how the glass ceiling works in conjunction with the glass escalator:

A study of career paths of women and people of color found, consistent with the glass ceiling theory, that women and minorities wait longer for promotions than do white men. In fact, this study suggested that within industries of increasing racial and gender diversity, white men receive career benefits; this phenomenon is known as the glass escalator. Due to the glass escalator effect, white men’s long history as leaders may create favorable conditions for their upward mobility, especially in situations where they are becoming a minority (p. 54).

White privilege and white supremacy has created and maintained a system that favors white males and segregates and excludes women and minorities into subordinate statuses and prevents upward mobility within organizations. As Thomas and Davis explain, the glass ceiling cannot be broken until leaders are convinced of its existence, and understand the realities of its effects by a member of a minority group in the workplace. Thomas and Davis further clarify,

A study of male CEO’s and executive women suggests that the two groups see the glass ceiling differently. Male CEOs believed that women’s lack of interest, family responsibilities, and lack of representation in the leadership pipeline prevent them from reaching top corporate positions. In contrast, executive women mentioned as barriers women’s lack of access to frequently male-dominated

networks, their shortage of mentoring opportunities, and their lack of access to developmental opportunities that would place them in the leadership pipeline. (p. 78)

As the passage demonstrates, the perspectives of men and women in upper level management positions are not the perspectives of lower waged and lower status people. How much accessibility, mentoring, and exposure do women of color(s) have to these types of positions? Women of color(s) are not men, not white, and gendered barriers that come along with their identities are not addressed here. Women of color(s) have cultural, gender, community expectations, standards and gender roles that differ from the dominant white culture. Therefore, the level of responsibility is heightened. These are struggles, barriers, and limitations that the dominant culture does not even consider or care to consider. Yet this is their reality.

Norma M. Riccucci (2009) conducted a study examining the extent to which the federal government has achieved social equality for women and minorities. This study examines social equity (justice, fairness, and equality in the distribution of jobs in federal employment across racial, ethnic, and gender lines), degree to which federal government fills jobs in its upper levels (equally and fairly in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity), and employment patterns by grade and salary between the years 1984-2004 to determine the extent to which women and people of color have made progress in gaining entry into the more powerful, higher-paying, prestigious ranks of the federal government. Riccucci concluded,

White women have made some progress in terms of reaching higher-level positions, but their pay continues to lag behind white as well as Asian men. Despite small changes over the past 20 years, and slight variations between and among the groups, people of color over all

continue to be concentrated in lower-level, lower-paying jobs in the federal government. In addition, white women and people of color continue to be segregated in those agencies that have traditionally employed them (e.g., Health and Human Services). And, even with the appearance of progress within some agencies (e.g., Latino men in the Department of Homeland Security), lower pay and segmentation in less prestigious units or departments prevail. In effect, white women and people of color continue to be disadvantaged by glass ceiling and glass walls. Affirmative action policies, legislation, and even litigations also must be aimed at the upper, higher-paying levels of government jobs; As noted, social equity in the upper reaches of government is critical for effective democratic governance. (p. 379).

Even though, women and people of color are making progress, the progress is lateral; within the lower paying sectors of government. White women have made more progress in the upper-level positions, whereas people of color are still centrally located in lower paying and lower status positions. Women and women of color(s), as well as men of color, are lumped into the same category when determining the progress percentage of how many existed within the federal government. So their numbers may be bleaker. Riccucci's work is important and valuable in determining the progress made within the federal government 45 years after the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but no information is provided on the progress of women of color(s) in federal government or the US Forest Service.

White Male Privilege

George Lipsitz (2000) writes on the possessive investment in whiteness that occurred during the formulation of the United States and still exists today within society and the US Workforce. Lipsitz explains,

In our society at this time, precise awareness of the present moment requires an understanding of the existence and the destructive consequences of [white] identity. More than the product of private prejudices, whiteness emerged as a relevant category in American life largely because of realities created by slavery and segregation, by

immigration restrictions and Indian policy, by conquest and colonialism. A fictive identity of [whiteness] appeared in law as an abstraction, and it became actualized in everyday life in many ways. American economic political life gave different racial group unequal access to citizenship property, while cultural practices including wild west shows, minstrel shows, racist images in advertising, and Hollywood films institutionalized racism by uniting ethnically diverse European-American audiences into the imaged community—one called into being through inscribed appeals to the solidarity of white supremacy. Although cross ethnic identification and pan-ethnic antiracism in culture, politics, and economics have often interrupted and resisted racialized white supremacist notions of American identity, from colonial days to the present, successful political coalitions serving dominant interest have often relied on exclusionary concepts of whiteness to fuse unity among otherwise antagonistic individuals and groups. (p. 350-351)

As Lipsitz explained, the “white” identity was created along with ideology of what it is to be American in an effort to ensure white supremacy, domination, and control over all others. This was a strong movement by white supremacists to ensure that power, privilege, resources, and accessibility would remain in the hands of whites, becoming barriers of acceptance, inclusion, and human rights to anyone else. These were hegemonic practices then and which still exist today in the US organizations, visible by populations within organizations that hold high status positions and the location of federal government jobs.

Decision about the location of federal jobs has also systematically supported the subsidy for whiteness. Federal civilian employment dropped by 41,419 in central cities between 1966-1973, but total employment in metropolitan areas grew by 26,558. While one might naturally expect the location of government building that serve the public to follow population trends, the federal government’s policies in locating offices and records centers in suburbs helped aggravate the flight of jobs to suburban location less accessible to inner-city residents. Since racial discrimination in the private sector forces minority workers to seek government positions disproportionate to their numbers, these moves exact particular hardships on them. In addition, minorities who follow their jobs to the suburbs generally encounter increased commuter costs because housing discrimination

makes it harder and more expensive for them to relocate than for whites. (p. 355)

This demonstrates to what length whites will go to make sure power, privilege, superiority and supremacy reign over all things that stand in their way. The timeframe 1966-1973 is two years after the Civil Rights Act was passed and still occurs today. Lipsitz's work highlights the many dimensions whites have exercised, in the past and present, their social, economic, and political power in order to secure their investments for a beneficial future. The investment in whiteness is critical in establishing who started the division between whites and others, and this article it also addresses federal government employment. On the other hand, this article did not specifically address women of color(s) in the US Forest Service, and for that reason, there is still an unfilled gap in literature.

US Forest Service Inclusion Efforts:

The US Forest Service's Region 6, Oregon and Washington, statistical data reflects 45% of their employee populations are women and only 3% are women of color(s) (USFS, 2012). Why is there such a discrepancy between white women and women of color(s)? Statistical reports produced by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the US Forest Service Washington Office has produced reports that demonstrate deficiencies in their own women of color(s) employee population, yet these agencies do not inquire why these deficiencies are occurring (NSF 2011; PPS 2012).

Women of color(s) (WOC(s)) have been historically underrepresented in federal government; this has been documented through statistical reports produced by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and "the Best Place to Work in Federal

Government” produced by Partnership for Public Service (NSF 2011; PPS 2012). For this reason, I am interested in finding out the reason as to why there is such a discrepancy between the numbers of white (18%), Hispanic (1%), Indigenous Native (1%), and African (1%) women working in the Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEMs) (NSF 2011). In today’s society, it is very rare to find an individual person which is of a pure racial and/or ethnicity descent, and for this reason, the result is that the racial and ethnicity of that individual is removed through generalization of the terms “Hispanic, Indigenous, and African” (Anzaldúa 2006).

Chapter 3 Methodology

Purpose

This thesis examines women of color(s)'s experiences working within the US Forest Service through the use of a *testimonios* methodology. This method uses one-on-one semi-structured interviews to collect data necessary for this study. This method also allows for the rich data necessary to obtain the perspectives, insights, and experiences of women of color(s) while working within the US Forest Service. Through the use of this method, the researcher was allowed the flexibility to clarify any information, which may have not been clear. It is important to have adaptability during the interviews to ensure that clarity is attained for accuracy. The ultimate goal of this research study is to allow these women to voice their experiences in a safe environment where they feel comfort and are free to express themselves. The *conocimientos* gathered in this study will provide the essential information necessary to assist the US Forest Service in their current and future efforts towards diversity and inclusion.

Research Questions:

- How are women of color(s) recruited, retained, and promoted in the US Forest Service?
- What are women of color(s)'s experiences?
- What factors contribute to these experiences?

Problem Statement

In 1990, the US Department of Agriculture introduced a comprehensive plan called "Framework for Change: Workforce Diversity and Delivery of Programs" to

build the US Forest Service's workforce diversity and achieve demographic parity within its population (US Forest Service 1998). In 2012, the Management Directive 715 for Region 6 (Washington and Oregon), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Report for the Pacific Northwest, noted that women make up 39.45 % of the total US Forest Service employee workforce (US Forest Service 2013). Of the total employee population, women of color(s) consisted of 5.38% (196 women), while white women comprised 34.07 % (1226 women) (EEOC-Equal Employment Commission 2012). There seems to be an unequal occupational distribution within Region 6; twenty-three years after the "Framework for Change: Workforce Diversity" plan was implemented. Why is there such a large discrepancy between women of color(s) (196) and white women (1226)?

Targeted Populations

The target populations for this study consisted of women of color(s) and supervisors. The target enrollment population for this study was ten women of color(s), but only three were interviewed within the time constraints given. Three women of color(s) were recruited, qualified and participated in this study. The women that participated in this study self-identified as: Chinese American, Indigenous Native American, and Latina Guatemalan. *Testimonios* were used to collect the data necessary for this thesis.

Qualifying Criteria:

The following criterion was used in determining eligibility. For women of color(s):

1. Self-identified as women of color(s) (Hispanic/Latina, Indigenous Native American, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and/or biracial or multiracial).
2. Over the age of 18 years,

3. Current or former employee of the US Forest Service with a minimum of 5-years of work experience; and
4. Literate and fluent in English.

Supervisor:

1. Over the age of 18 years;
 2. Current employees of the US Forest Service with a minimum of 1-year supervisory experience in the US Forest Service;
 3. Recruited and/or retained at least one woman of color during their 1 year of supervisory experience; and
 4. Literate and fluent in English.
- *No participant participated in this study*

Terminology

Women of color(s):

Within this thesis, there are three racial identities: therefore, to ensure I do not generalize women of color(s) within one term I have chosen to use the “(s)” to encompass all three identities. I use the term “women of color(s)” to embrace all women of color from all races and ethnicities, and not lumping them all into one group and thus, generalize them as a whole. When I am speaking of women of color(s), I am referring to race, ethnicity, gender, and class in the context of cultural and political, perspectives and worldviews. The women interviewed have different perspectives, realities, insights, and experiences than the white women, which is the reason for this study.

Region 6: Region 6 consists of Washington and Oregon. Oregon is the state where the Siuslaw and Willamette National Forests are located and where I was able to recruit my targeted population. Siuslaw and Willamette National Forests are the two district

offices I obtained permission to recruit from and where the statistical data was collected from.

Region 4:

Region 4 consists of Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Utah. One of the participants, Kaya, worked in this location, which is the reason I have providing this region. No data was collected for this region due to limited accessibility to this statistical data.

Procedures

This *testimonio*-based study includes semi-structured informal interviews conducted with women of color(s) currently or formerly employed by the US Forest Service. The participants were recruited via flyers posted in social gathering areas (bulletin boards) located in USFS office. An email invitation was distributed via the Willamette and Siuslaw National Forest (NF) district listserv. In addition, snowball sampling was used through connections made during my 1.5-year internship.

Once the fliers, email invitations, and snowball samplings were distributed and the subjects made their initial contact, I sent prospective participants a copy of the eligibility screening consent form and a copy of the interview questions via email. Participants were then asked to review both documents, sign the eligibility screening form, and return the form to me.

Once the signed eligibility screening form was returned, I then contacted the participant (now qualified subject) directly, via email or phone call, to schedule a face-to-face or phone interview. Once an interview appointment was scheduled, an

Informed Consent form was sent to the participant for their review before the interview date. Interviews were conducted face-to-face.

Face-to Face Interview

During the face-to-face interview, the participant was provided a copy of the Informed Consent form and asked to read along as I read through the document. After reading the form, I asked the participant if there were any questions. After all questions were answered, any unclear sections were clarified, and then the participants were asked if they agreed to be audio recorded. After consent was granted, the form was signed and the interview was conducted.

Each participant was provided a copy of their signed eligibility form and a signed Informed Consent form for their own records. Once all interviews were conducted, the audio recordings were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using Anzaldúa's theory of mestiza consciousness.

Confidentiality

When all interviews were transcribed, names identifying the participants were removed and replaced with pseudonyms to protect the participant's confidentiality. Any information extracted from the transcription that may identify the participant were removed and replaced with generic data, placed into brackets in the participant's excerpts. For the purposes of this study, the offices mentioned by the participants were replaced with generic office sites and also placed into brackets. However, I use the hierarchal titles such as district, supervisor, regional, and Washington Office in order to demonstrate the level of management represented.

Coding and Analysis

Testimonios, a qualitative narrative approach that utilizes storytelling as a tool of empowerment, along with the lens of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness allowed me to examine the challenges women of color(s) face and the barriers and limitations that may exist within the US Forest Service. Anzaldúa's theory uses *testimonios* to explore the challenges women of color(s) face first-hand. *Testimonios* have been used by women of color(s), historically as a source of healing and political expression which provides agency (the ability of people to act or empower themselves), in the midst of oppressive conditions. Once women of color(s) establish agency and subjectivity, solidarity and social change is possible. For this reason, I am using *testimonios* to collect the data necessary for this research study.

After the interviews were conducted, I used Anzaldúa's theory to code and process the information. I read through interview transcripts, coded the excerpt for themes, then formed common themes that were salient and repetitive. During this process, I wrote memos or theoretical notes to discover categories, developed main and sub-categories to see how the information could be organized, and then found relationships using axial coding. Next, I sought core categories, integrated categories with selective coding, and then analyzed the data using theory.

Mestiza Consciousness Theory

Once the interviews were transcribed, I utilized Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness theory to identify the main themes highlighted in the interviews. The most noticeable themes were to examine and analyze the data for each participant.

Next, I found Anzaldúa's quotes to analyze the data discussed in the discussion portion of this thesis.

Positionality

I started a Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies focusing on Ethnic Studies, Women Studies, and Philosophy in September 2010. The US Forest Service hired me in February 2012 as a Pathways Intern. I am an Equal Employment Specialist Trainee, under the supervision of Kathy Fletcher (current supervisor), in the Civil Rights Unit. In this position, I serve the Siuslaw and Willamette National Forests.

Through a connection with Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), I requested a meeting with Kathy Fletcher to discuss the US Forest Service's diversity and inclusion programs. Mrs. Fletcher informed me about her own work with the Forest Service and the diversity and inclusion efforts currently being implemented. I spoke to Mrs. Fletcher about my background with natural resources agencies and my goal of becoming a diversity trainer. After our meeting, Mrs. Fletcher hired me to be a Pathway Intern and conduct the Micro-inequities (subtle actions and behavior that make others feel devalued, slighted, or not a part of the team) trainings within the Siuslaw and Willamette National Forest. I am the first Civil Rights Equal Employment Specialist trainee hired for the US Forest Service within Region 6. As such, there was no formal training or manual provided.

During my training with Mrs. Fletcher, I have learned to trust in government again. Mrs. Fletcher has become not only my mentor and supervisor, but she has

become my friend. Before I came to work for the Forest Service, I was released from duty by another federal government organization because they found out that I was a lesbian. This previous experience left me with deep scars and reservations about working for the government. In fact, the reason I went back to school was to become a diversity trainer, return to the same organization in the capacity of Civil Rights trainer. Mrs. Fletcher had faith in me and wanted to assist me with my goal. Since then, I have learned about Civil Rights laws, processes, and procedures and I have met many influential people within the organization that have been assisting me in achieving my goals. Mrs. Fletcher is the reason I will have a job after I graduate, which is not the norm for a master's student.

My bachelor's degree is in Natural Resources Management, with an emphasis in Human Impacts on Soil Systems. I started this master's degree program before working for the US Forest Service and before meeting Mrs. Fletcher, and as such, the Forest Service has in no way influenced my decision to pursue this master's degree. Mrs. Fletcher did suggest that I conduct the research on US Forest Service employees as a means of finding out more about the agency and networking to establish connections. Before I started with the Forest Service, I spoke with Mrs. Fletcher and informed her that I wanted to find out if my past experiences with natural resources were unique to me, or if other women of color(s)' experiences were the same or different.

Limitations and Bias

During the writing of this thesis, I found there to be three major limitations: time limitations for recruitment, information accessibility, the US Forest Service's

ability to limit the information published, and theory limitations. As a current employee of the Forest Service with the ability to interview Forest Service employees, I have a certain level of responsibility to the agency, the employee's confidentiality, and to my role as a researcher. In this section, I will address each of the above listed limitations in sequence.

Academic and federal institutional barriers were a limiting factor in the research process. Another one of my restrictions was resource accessibility. As a Forest Service employee, I felt uncomfortable in accessing privileged Forest Service Civil Rights statistical data. Therefore, almost all of the statistical data was accessed via the Internet. I asked permission from my supervisor to access the 2012 MD 715 report, which has not been published as of yet and I was granted permission to access this information for this thesis.

Many of the interviews I have collected reflect negatively toward the agency. In addition, there are two major illegal offenses in which the agency may be held accountable for. For these reasons, access to my thesis may be restricted to the requisite audience. It is my belief that this information is important and should be available to the Civil Right Regional Office, otherwise employees' civil rights violations against these and other women of color(s) will continue unabated.

As stated previously, I am a woman of color, and Equal Employment Specialist, working in the Civil Rights Unit. This places me in a difficult position as a student researcher. First, I am a woman of color with the privilege of listening to the *testimonios* of women of color(s) that have been treated unjustly and placed in compromising situations. I feel it is my obligation to be the voice for these women

and make sure that their voices are heard. I am also an activist that believes in equal rights, protections, and justice for all, which includes the women that have entrusted me with their stories.

As an Equal Employment Specialist, it is my job to make sure that these women are informed of their rights and are aware of their right to file a complaint for the mistreatment they have endured. It is my job to conduct diversity and inclusion training with all employees within the Forest Service in the efforts to minimize unfair, unequal, and discriminatory practices within the agency. In this new position, I have not been working long enough to be considered permanent. I have a three-year probationary period before full and complete conversion into a permanent long-standing appointment, and risk termination.

Lastly, I have an obligation to myself as a researcher to not violate the confidentiality of my participants, which is also a part of my cultural and personal integrity. I am a human being with hopes and dreams, but it is very hard to know that women like me are suffering physically, emotionally, and psychologically from the same injustices that I have endured while working for the government. At the onset of my research, I did not anticipate finding how widespread the experiences of racism, sexism, classism, ageism, ableism, and looksism against women of color(s) at the USFS.

In addition, the theory of the mestiza consciousness is based on inclusion of self and others, but does not address the interconnectivity of all three oppressive systems (White Supremacist Capitalistic Patriarchy) working together to combat the inclusion of the participants. WSCP deals with exclusion, separation, inflexibility,

superiority, and domination. For this reason, the application of the mestiza consciousness was limited to a frame of reference for my analysis.

Chapter 4 Theoretical Framework

This thesis is focused on learning from the experiences of women of color(s) working within the US Forest Service to understand why they are underrepresented. I use Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of the mestiza consciousness to analyze the data collected from semi-structured interviews. The intent of this thesis is to transform women of color(s)'s experience into knowledge (*conocimiento*) through the use of the mestiza consciousness theory. The purpose of this approach is to understand the cultural, social and political dynamics, which affects the experience of women of color(s) in the Forest Service. The *conocimiento* constructed can be used to assist in increasing the underrepresented population within natural resources agencies and assist with the diversity and inclusion effort. This is very important study especially because of the current US economy transitioning toward a global economy.

The US has adjusted its economy to reach beyond the borders of the US to include all world countries and national economies--globalization. The US has made adjustments to their approach to diversity and inclusive dimensions for employees within federal government agencies. The most effective way to approach a global economy is to recruit and retain diversity and promote inclusion for all people regardless of difference, this includes women of color(s). The US Forest Service has begun their transition toward inclusivity through training on the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This is a landmark piece of legislation in the United States that outlawed major forms of discrimination against racial, ethnic, national and religious minorities, and women, which includes the No Fear Act that is an obligation to provide a work environment free of discrimination and retaliation, inclusive dialogues (social

interactions promoting inclusionary practices) and inclusionary training to promote inclusive practices within the agency (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2013; U.S. Department of Agriculture-Master Agreement 2011).

These current Forest Service efforts are a step in the right direction, but there are some important elements that are being left out of the equation, which are the practices and the experiences currently occurring with the agency. Anzaldúa (2002) problematizes the US's conceptualization of diversity and inclusion when the perception of reality is skewed toward the dominant cultures ideology, perspective, approach, and inclusionary practice:

At the crack of change between millennia, you and the rest of humanity are undergoing profound transformations and shifts in perception. All, including the planet and every species, are caught between cultures and bleed-troughs among different worlds—Each with its own version of reality. We are experiencing a personal, global identity crisis in a disintegrating social order that possesses little heart and functions to oppress people by organizing them in hierarchies of commerce and power—a collusion of government, transnational industry, business, and military all linked by pragmatic technology and science voracious for money and control. This system and its hierarchies impact people's lives in concrete and devastating ways and justify a sliding scale of human worth used to keep humankind divided. (p. 541)

Anzaldúa refers to a transformation or *nepantla* and a shifting of perceptions occurring within society and governmental workforces. The transformation contradicts the conventional practices of only considering one perspective, the dominant culture, and making everyone conform to their beliefs and value systems. Dominant cultural worldviews of hierarchy and stratification of oppressed group are being dismantled by new age inclusion and social norms by the younger generations coming into these institutions. Society is changing and what worked before (society

governing each other and maintaining order) no longer works and elitist control strategies of stratification are becoming obsolete and outdated. The quote above highlights the existence of differing realities that have always existed, but have been intentionally ignored which promote division and separation instead of inclusion.

Differences exist and are a normal part of who we are as human beings. It is time for the system to be deconstructed and rebuilt from new perspective, worldviews, and realities that promote inclusivity of all people regardless of difference, race, gender, class, age, sex, sexual orientation, color, ability (physical, learning, and mental), parental status, religion, nation origin, genetics, and retaliation for reporting discriminatory practices. Even though society and the workforce are changing, hierarchies, division, and separation practices are still occurring. For this reason, marginalized groups have different experiences, insights, and understandings of what inclusion means. The dominant culture must change the way they approach and address society and the workforce by embracing the possibilities of differing perspectives, insights, and knowledge of reality. For inclusion to occur, people must be valued and respected regardless of the types of difference a person possesses, but this is not the norm for society or the workforce.

If the federal government is moving towards diversity and inclusion, they must understand the experience and the realities of their own employees. This is a reality they can no longer deny if inclusion is the goal of the Forest Service. The Forest Service is changing and evolving, and change is inevitable. We, as a Forest Service agency, must examine ourselves, our behaviors, and our beliefs and values

systems. We must learn to value, respect, listen, communicate and learn from one another.

Gloria Anzaldúa:

As a Chicana lesbian theorist, Gloria Anzaldúa is a scholar of Chicana cultural theory, feminist theory, and queer theory. She was the oldest of sixth-generation Mexicanos from the Río Grande Valley of South Texas (Anzaldúa 2009, p. 2). Anzaldúa has interacted with various people and ideas from a number of divergent worldviews, yet refused to be contained within a single group, belief system or geographical/political/psychic location.

Anzaldúa was an activist who participated in the Chicana/o, women, and queer movements, but during these times in her life she felt fragmented. She was being asked to stand in solidarity with all three affiliations and forced to choose between them; yet all affiliations embraced her identity. Anzaldúa felt fragmented, torn, and her loyalty tested to see which part of her identity was more salient in the fight for equal rights and equality. She refused to be disjointed and restricted by labels, but demanded equal right and equality for everyone including the individuals that fell between the cracks of society or other word called “half-breeds” (p.25).

Anzaldúa is one woman with multiple affiliations and identities who felt she should not have to choose. A quote from Anzaldúa best explains her positionality,

You say my name is ambivalence? Think of me as Shiva, a many-armed and –legged body with one foot on brown soil, and on white, one in straight society, on in the gay world, the man’s world, the women’s , one limb in the literary world, another in the working class, the socialist, and the occult worlds. A sort of spider woman hanging by one thin strand of web. Who, me, confused? Ambivalent? Not so. Only your labels split me (Keating 2009, p. 106).

Her bold expression of personal integrity, holistic political and provocative approach to activism tests convention means of thinking and constructing knowledge she has bases on her own lived experiences. Women of color(s), like Anzaldúa, walk between cultures within society and the workforce. Anzaldúa's multidimensional perceptiveness on identity and the framework of her theory, *mestiza consciousness*, is the perfect tool for creating knowledge, *conocimiento*, from women of color(s)'s experiences within the Forest Service. In the following sections, I will introduce *mestiza consciousness* and then show how this theory will be used to analyze the data collected.

La Mestiza Consciousness

Gloria E. Anzaldúa's (2007) theory of *mestiza consciousness* is a Chicana feminist queer lens. The *mestiza consciousness* is a multifaceted theory that addresses societal and cultural binaries, dichotomies, and the fragmentation of identity by hierarchal societal practices placed on Mexican women (as well as other women of color(s)) within the United States. This consciousness theory rejects race, color, class, gender, and sexual orientation categorizations and societal practices of exclusion by removing societal, cultural, and spiritual boundaries of what it mean to be a woman. This theory speaks of the pain, contradiction, and inner struggle that exist within a racialized body, fragmented by a society that do not understand women of color(s)'s intricately interwoven identity. As a resolution, Anzaldúa has created a theory which contradicts and deflects societal norms and hierarchies by embracing the entirety of a women's identity without fragmenting themselves or others, a median.

Anzaldúa's passage describes her version of the complexity, struggle, and the inner war she faces as women of color(s) within the United States:

As a *Mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective tenured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. *Soy un amasamiento [I am kneading]*, I am an act of kneading, of uniting, and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings (, pg. 102).

Anzaldúa is expressing her frustration with her own people and a society that has cast her out. Being a patlache [lesbian] is only one segment of Anzaldúa's identity, yet one portion of her identity that separates from her own Mexican culture and the dominant Anglo culture (Western), consisting of white heterosexual abled body male and females. The term "patlache" or lesbian only describes Anzaldúa's sexuality and not who she is as a woman of color; yet these two identities, lesbian and woman of color, are inseparable because they exist within one person. The multiplicity of her intersecting identities provides her with a perspective and a reality that is different from others. Anzaldúa's perspective of reality stems from her cultural, spiritual, political beliefs and values, and life experiences that may or may not differ from than other women and/ or women of color(s)'s realities. These insights, perspectives and experience produce knowledge or otherwise known as *conocimiento* that can assist in the Forest Service's efforts towards inclusion, if they are explored.

In Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, she describes the interwoven complexity of Chicanas living on the borderlands between the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our

own territory). As Anzaldúa explains, “Living on borders and margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element. There is exhilaration in being the participant in the further evolution of humankind, in being worked on” (Anzaldúa Introduction preface). By this, Anzaldúa means that Mestizas are constantly changing, evolving, and adapting to the social forces around them. These forces shape them, mold them, and take from who they are as women, trying to exist in a world that does not understand them. Anzaldúa describes a state of mind or a state of being held by Chicanas (and other women of color(s)) because of their positionality, subjectivity, marginalization, assimilation, and the stigmas associated with being who they are and existing within the U.S. (Anzaldúa 2006). The mestiza consciousness is a lens of race, class, gender, and sexuality identities, or the intersectionality of identity, for women of color(s) in the context of economic, political, and social discourses.

These exclusionary discourses exist not only within society, but they exist within the federal natural resources workforce. These discourses result in discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, micro- and macro-inequities preventing hiring, retention, upward mobility as well as employment protections for women of color(s) in the federal agencies. Through the use of the mestiza consciousness, we are better able to understanding women of color(s)’s identities, lived experiences, and realities. These women’s insights, perspectives, and experiences collected through *testimonios* can then be converted to *conocimiento* to promote social change within employment laws, policies, and procedures within federal government. With this

conocimiento, the US Forest Service can use this data to construct strategies to remove the barriers to inclusion in order to increase women of color(s) populations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is my belief that to truly understand the disparities, struggles, and marginalization of women of color(s) in the US Forest Service face, we must ask the right questions. Women of color(s) encompass a continuum of identities that are represented within all natural resources government agencies. Therefore, it is in our best interest to understand their challenges if we are to increase their populations within these agencies. *Testimonios* provides the venue needed to open the door to understand the reasons recruitment and retention insufficient population exist within the US Forest Service. My thesis creates a venue, template, and a pedagogical plethora of insights, knowledge pools, and perspectives of women of color(s) from which to learn. The Forest Service has gathered the statistical data on women of color(s)'s population within the Forest Service on a yearly basis, but the statistical data only demonstrates an insufficient population, not the reasoning behind the data. In order to work towards resolution and social justice for women of color(s) within the US Forest Service and other federal government agencies, we must give value to their insights, knowledge, perspectives and experiences. By giving value to women of color(s)'s insight, perspective, knowledge, and experiences, the US Forest Service will provide them with empowerment, inclusion, and visibility to a population of women that are valuable to the agency. In turn, this study provides critical data necessary to enhance the inclusion efforts already in place working for a brighter future with dignity and respect for all employees regardless of difference.

Mestiza Consciousness: Previous Studies

In this section, I address two studies where the mestiza consciousness was used to study women of color(s) in an effort to understand their social and political positionality in relation to the United States. Sylvanna M. Falcón (2013) and C. Alejandra Elenes (2001) both share the interest of feminism, human rights, racism/antiracism, borderlands theories and Chicana/Mexicana feminist pedagogies and both provide essential insights of women of color(s).

Falcón's study (2003) merges two theories, W. E. B Du Bois' "*double consciousness*" and Gloria Anzaldúa's "*mestiza consciousness*" to analyze the experiences of three Afro-Peruvian women attending the third United Nations (UN) World Conference against racism in Durban, South Africa. Falcón merges these two theories to provide a holistic understanding of how gendered racism shapes her participant's lives and how and their desire to gain transnational solidarity with other women in the African Diaspora of the Americas (p. 660). Falcón injects gender into the double consciousness to expand the *mestiza* consciousness beyond the United States (US) and US-Mexico borderlands to assist in understanding how women's agency plays a role in the *mestiza* double consciousness.

Falcón concluded that neither one of the theories, double consciousness and mestiza consciousness, could be used alone because of the limited scope, dimension, and intersecting identities these women possess. As stated by Falcón:

I am arguing for an intersection and expansion of Du Bois and Anzaldúa. Whereas Du Bois narrated the lives of African Americans in the United States at the turn of the century through the lens of double consciousness, and Anzaldúa theorized the complex existence of Chicanas through her discussion of the *mestiza* consciousness, the lives of Sofía, Mónica, and Martha [participants in her study] can be

understood by neither framework alone. Rather, their minimal identities and experiences as racialized women in the country of the Global South require a conversation between the ideas of Du Bois and Anzaldúa. By gendering double consciousness and expanding *mestiza* consciousness beyond the United States and the U.S. Mexico boarderlands, we can better understand how women's agency plays a role in what I refer to as *mestiza* double consciousness (p.672).

Falcón's participants were Afro-Peruvians living in Perú, geographically located in a Latin American country, yet they are considered Africans, hence the participant's interwoven identities necessitate the need to merge theories to contextualize the dimension of analysis required for this study. In other words, to analyze race, gender, language, and nationalism of women with a multifaceted identity a multidimensional lens such as *mestiza double consciousness*, need to be used. By merging these two theories, Falcón was better able to understand the lives of Sofía, Mónica, and Martha because they interpret racist encounters in a general way, and they engage in acts of resistance.

Falcón found two prevailing factors for the experiences of the three participants: "My interviews analyze racism using the double consciousness lens and they react to racism because of their *mestiza* consciousness" (p.677). As Falcón explains:

They [participants] recognize gendered racism as transnational and meriting a response in solidarity with other African descendants. However, striving towards a *mestiza* double consciousness will be a complicated journey between the Global North and Global South. Building bond with people of color in the United States poses challenges to transnational solidarity against racism for my interviewee. One reason is the inaccurate representation of U.S. black life that exacerbates the borders inside the borderlands, and another is the internalization of problematic American qualities, (i.e. dominating

and dictating) by U.S. people of color themselves who do not feel to be direct beneficiaries of U.S. power. (p. 677)

Falcón highlights the limitations and differentiation between her participants (Afro-Peruvian women) and other African descendants within the U.S., causing obstacles to solidarity against racism. Limited understanding of what racism means is different depending on geographic location. Therefore, differing realities, worldviews, and emergent behaviors vary hindering unified efforts. Also, the issue of developing countries and the United States suffering from racism, protection, and struggle are different.

This study is valuable in providing insight about solidarity efforts across borders and the differing realities, worldviews, and struggles Africans face which assist in my study. My participants reflect various identities, some first generation, 8th generation, and Indigenous people originally from the United States, before colonization. For this reason, I utilize this theory to conduct the interview. This second study examines students attending a university within academia in California.

C. Alejandra Elenes's (2001) research study utilized the *mestiza* consciousness to analyze the tense relationships between Chicana faculty and white women students in the classroom. Elenes proposes a "way to implement the goals of border/transformational pedagogies in the classroom practice in order to deal with the multiplicity of ideologies present in educational settings" (p. 689). By bringing these multiple ideologies and points of view to the classroom, Elenes conducts discussions that promote productive discourses and dualistic thinking through the use of the *mestiza consciousness* theory that allow students and teachers to participate in an

open dialogue. The data consisted of course evaluations and the results were tested through various arguments, course work, and discussions. By using Anzaldúa's conceptualization of *mestiza consciousness*, border/transformational pedagogies propose ways in which they could enact a practice where students and teachers participate in a way that deconstructs dualistic thinking.

Elenes's study was based on race and utilized the *mestiza consciousness* to construct inclusive academic learning environment where both women of color(s) and white students could learn with minimal resistance. This study was successful in regards to her class because lectures were then conducted in a harmonious manner with academic learning occurring at maximum capacity. Elenes's study is valuable in providing insight as to how to promote inclusive discussions. This study also allows an inclusive approach to women's studies when attention is placed on the topic and specifically to how it affects *all* women. The limitation of this study is that the focus is on women's studies classes and not focused on federal government diversity issues. I can see how this study would assist in conducting diversity training for the future, but the current research study is dealing with exploring the experiences of women of color(s) within the Forest Service. Elenes's study will be valuable in constructing diversity trainings after the current data is collected and I am ready to develop training materials.

This research study, which uses the *mestiza consciousness* and focuses on women of color(s) in a federal government natural resources agency, is attempting to explore exclusionary practices of a government institution's systems and support systems. The purpose of this study is to examine women of color(s)'s experience with

two goals: promote inclusionary practices and increase the current population of women of color(s) within the US Forest Services. This study is the first to use *testimonios*, personal narratives, to explore the experiences, challenges, and limitations within the Forest Service. Therefore, this is a unique study, which will be valuable to the federal government, natural resources agencies private and public, and may be used as a model for similar underrepresented populations to promote inclusion for all regardless of difference.

Chapter 5 Discussion

For the analysis, Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of mestiza consciousness was used to uncover WOC's experiences. This lens assisted in the comprehension of this newly acquired *conocimiento* (knowledge) gathered from the *testimonios* of the women of color(s) interviewed for this study. Using the mestiza consciousness, I found three main themes, which are: 1) White Supremacist Capitalistic Patriarchy (WSCP), 2) Presumed Incompetent, and 3) Resistance and Empowerment. In the following sections, I provide the research questions, overview and profiles, themes and definitions, theoretical support, and direct quotes from participants. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a summation of my findings.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided this study were: a) How are women of color(s) retained, recruited, and promoted in the US Forest Service? b) What are women of color(s)'s experiences? c) What factors contribute to these experiences? d) How do these experiences change over time, if at all?

Overview of the Participants

This study included a total of three US Forest Service employees who self-identified as women of color(s). Supervisors were not included in this study even though three supervisors expressed interest and made contact, only one completed the eligibility form, but none participated in the interview process. Plausible explanations include that I only worked a part-time schedule and supervisors only made contact via the US Forest Service email system, or this study was not a priority for them, which

are not mutually exclusive. In spite of the lack of supervisor participation, three women of color(s) did participate and interviews were conducted.

Three participants made contact, qualified, and participated in this research study. To maintain confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity with given names of Ming Lee, Maria, and Kaya. Participants worked within Region 6, which includes Washington and Oregon and/or Region 4 consisting of Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Utah. Two participants, Ming Lee and Maria, are current employees while Kaya no longer works for the US Forest Service.

The participants' occupations varied, but each worked within specialized positions (Writer Editor, Engineer, and Archeologist) suited to serve the overall mission of the US Forest Service. All participants identified as women of color(s), two of which were recruited through the Forest Service Student Career Employment Program (SCEP), now called Pathways Internships, and the third participant applied for a position through the standard hiring practice. The SCEP is an internship program that hires students attending a two-year or four-year college, preparing and training them for upcoming permanent positions. When a position becomes available, the student is then converted into a permanent position within the agency. In the following section, I explore more in depth the women of color's backgrounds and explore how they identify personally.

Women of Color(s) Participant Profiles

This section will provide background information necessary to understand the position of the women of color(s) involved in this study. The age range was approximately 30 to 65 years old, with years of service ranging from 7 seasons

(considered 7 years of service) to 25 years. One of the participants chose not to divulge her age. I can only speculate that this may be to further conceal her identity.

Ming Lee self-identified as an “Asian/Pacific Islander and 8th generation Chinese,” but later in the interview specified she was Chinese American. She was raised in Hawaii and grew up with love and respect for the land and its resources. Ming Lee’s perspective toward natural resources and community are captured in the following quote:

Hawaii...The things we have taken for granted are no longer there and that is why I say, I have grown up sheltered in this paradise that is no more and my family is feeling it. Times have changed and that is why I am protective of the resources because of that.

Ming Lee is concerned about the maintenance of her family traditions and the conditions of the natural resources because of her own personal insight and experiences in Hawaii. When asked to describe how she personally identifies outside of work, Ming Lee explains she is a cancer survivor, environmentalist, and a “gourmand.” She explains that a gourmand is a person that “understands different cultures by eating and trying different foods and then reading about how they prepare different foods and their methods of preparing.” Ming Lee has worked for the US Forest Service for 25 years. She worked in a district office located in Utah for 10 years in an administrative support position for the District Ranger and then worked for the Washington Office, while stationed in Oregon, for another 15 years as a Writer/Editor. Ming Lee left her first position due to a spousal reassignment, but continues working in the USFS Washington office.

The second participant, Maria self-identifies as “a person from Central America,” and later specified that she is Guatemalan that speaks Spanish, with

English as her second language. Maria was born and raised in Guatemala and came to the United States to attend college, which is when she also became interested in natural resources and engineering:

I picked civil engineering because I wanted to pursue agronomy because I like to work with plants...civil [engineering] is a closer major to agronomy.

Maria enjoys the natural environment and vegetation, which is quite different from her homeland in Guatemala. Her passion for natural resources comes from the enjoyment of the outdoors, which has led her into her current position with the Forest Service. Maria has worked for the Forest Service for over 8 years as an Engineer in three separate offices located in Oregon and Washington. Maria was first hired as a SCEP in the regional office, but after her last summer she decided not to return.

When asked the reason for leaving the Forest Service, Maria stated she was not mentored, provided guidance, or given tasks to gain experience, and for that reason, she experienced boredom. After graduation, the Forest Service called Maria offering her a permanent full-time position, which she accepted. Since Maria returned, she has worked out of the regional's office for a short time, and then was moved to the supervisor's office due to agency reorganization. Kaya, like Maria, quit working for the US Forest Service, but Kaya did not return.

The third participant Kaya self-identifies as a Native American, Kootanie Indian of Idaho and does not consider herself a woman of race. At first, this was confusing to me, but after clarification, her positionality and identity became clear:

It is funny because I do not think of myself as a woman of color. I think of myself as a Kootanie (laugh)...I think that is the experience a lot of Indians. We think of ourselves as who our tribe is...we do not think of ourselves as colored people...I grew up in Alaska so I can

look paaaale [white]! I never thought of myself as a woman of color... I never felt [that way until] I was working for the Forest Service, I was seen as a woman of color there because we really don't have people of color. We have Indians.

Kaya identifies more with her tribe and skin color, than with the term “women of color(s).” Ming Lee has the same skin color as Kaya, yet Ming Lee did not draw attention to her light skin tone. In fact, this factor was not even brought up by Ming Lee or Maria at all. This is very interesting. I can only speculate that skin color (perceived whiteness), privilege (associated with whiteness) and identity fluidity are motivators in her perception of self and identity. Kaya did sign the Informed Consent form, stating she was a “woman of color,” yet states that she does not consider herself to be a woman of color in the interview. This fact implies there is an identity disassociation based on her perceived whiteness, which allows her to move freely and undetected within society--privilege based on white association.

This is a different way of thinking, but important in understanding how Kaya perceives herself and how she relates to others around her. Kaya's perspective towards natural resources was as follows:

I grew up on an island in Alaska and my parents raised me to live off the land, basically. And so I never thought of anything being natural versus unnatural resources and to me when I grew up, it was just the world. So that was the foundation for me in wanting to work for nature really, as opposed to an office building because I grew up in the woods. And then I grew up in Alaska and in elementary school every year, they really stressed science field trips and I was encouraged and exposed to how you can bridge nature and science to create new and interesting things. And so combining the fact that I love to be outside and love to do outdoor sports like cycling, climbing, and I like to surf, all of these things and when I was a kid, my parents always brought me to museums and stuff so during the summer, they could just leave me at the museum all day. They let me hang out at the museum so that is how the archeology came. And I was really into cultural anthropology as an undergrad and I realized I had to have a job with

skill so I started studying archeology, which would point me into the direction I wanted to be...outside. I could also work outside and do something with Native people.

For Kaya, there is a realistic connection between the natural world and herself, in relation to the outdoors. Her passion for outdoor sports, exposure to museums, and the educational connection between science and nature has nurtured her career choice. Kaya started with the Forest Service as a SCEP intern and possesses 7 years of work experience as a Cultural Archeologist at the district level, serving three district offices. As Kaya describes,

“The reason I took the job was because it was in my aboriginal territory. All three ranger districts that I worked in are all in our ceded lands...it’s not only my responsibility to my country, but it was also to my people...I could make sure I was doing the best job to take care of our collective history under the stewardship of the US Forest Service.”

Kaya’s connection to the land and people set the tone for her career and life’s path towards preservation of her cultural heritage and the ultimate reason she chose to work for the US Forest Service. After working for the agency for 7 years in the Cultural Archeologist position, Kaya recognized that she could not work for the US Forest Service because of the conflict she was having both professionally and culturally:

My reason for leaving was that I did not see the [specific] National Forest Service respecting and complying with the law that we swear to under oath to uphold and that is why I left... I am not going to change anything and so can’t be here...I am not going to compromise my archeology self, especially my Native Archeologist self...personal ethics...I am not going to compromise those, especially in my aboriginal territory.

This conflict was between her cultural responsibility to her own people and tribal lands versus federal government, civic responsibility and the oath to the laws and

treaties not being upheld. This conflict ultimately led to her quit her job and return to college to obtain a master's degree in Cultural Archaeology.

Findings

After analyzing the data, I found three themes: WSCP, PI, and RE. I describe each one below.

White Supremacist Capitalistic Patriarchy (WSCP):

White supremacist capitalistic patriarchy--interlocking systems of domination [race, capitalism and gender] that define our reality functioning simultaneously at all time... the ability to produce and perpetuate systems of oppression and class...complex accounting of identity. (Hooks, 1994)

As hooks described it, the term “white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy” (WSCP) is an interlocking system of domination based on race, gender, and class, which are interwoven within society and political governing institutions. This interlocking system is used to create social hierarchies, which separate the upper, middle, and lower class from each other and create a sense of “otherness,” which centers on whiteness and white male supremacy. These social hierarchies were formulated to keep people of color and people of difference in subservient, inferior, and low wage positions within society and the workforce. These hierarchies also provide privilege, power, and wealth to white elitist and maintain the superiority of the white identity.

These interlocking systems function within the United States and its workforce. These systems also govern how we perceive reality and create a sense of agency for ourselves, and others. hooks explains how women of color(s) cannot look through a singular lens because they were impacted by multiple systems of

domination which we may or may not be aware exist. These systems of oppression (race, gender, sex, age, disability, national origin, language, etc.) are all important to keep in mind when we are examining society and government and must be looked upon with equal importance. WSCP is a structural oppression, which maintains power and privilege in the hands of the people on top (few) and withholds it from people held in lower levels (many). WSCP shapes the experiences, insights, perspectives, and experiences of women of color(s) because society influences the bureaucracy within the US Forest Service.

Presumed Incompetent

For the purposes of this thesis, the term *presumed incompetent* is the assumption that a person or group lacks the ability to understand, learn, or associate with the dominant group (i.e. white people). These assumptions may be based upon a person's race, language, nationality, class, or gender identity membership and almost always results in negative behaviors towards them. This theme refers to an individual oppression because it utilizes unjust forces (micro aggressions) and/or authority (people in positions of authority or a higher ranking) to exclude and isolate them (i.e. the US Forest Service employee) from the group. For example, not adhering to social norms of thinking, linearly or having a learning disability may result in being out-casted or isolated from the group or assigned labels (i.e. stupid or incompetent).

Resistance and Empowerment

Resistance refers the manner or behavior women of color(s) use to resist the oppressive conditions they were exposed to (i.e. avoiding people

[white males and females] that demonstrated negative behaviors towards them). Empowerment refers to the manner in which women of color(s) reclaim the power that has been taken away from them (i.e. reporting unjust and unfair treatment towards them). In the cases presented, women of color(s) work in a predominantly white work environment (males and females) with very few women of color(s) or people of color(s). Being one of the few WOC in the office, these women do not hold social and political power or privilege within the agency. These women, at times, were forced to work under hostile and toxic work environments, yet they have found ways to resist and empower themselves. Using Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of the *mestiza* consciousness as a lens of analysis, these three themes were highlighted within the data collected. In the next section, I provide excerpts from Anzaldúa's theory of *mestiza* consciousness to examine the data.

Mestiza Consciousness and Theoretical Support

Mestiza consciousness is a "holistic, relational modes of thinking and acting or "La conciencia de la mestiza," "a more whole perspective, on that includes rather than excludes" (Keating 2009, p. 10). Anzaldúa's theory is a survival strategy based on five major components: product of crossbreeding, duality, flexibility, inclusion, and coalition building. In this section, I will address each of the five individually to ensure a common understanding of the components:

1. Crossbreeding: "Indigenous like corn, and like corn, the *mestiza* is a product of crossbreeding, designed for preservation under a variety of conditions" (Anzaldúa 2007, p. 103). This section is based on resilience, strength, and endurance.

2. Duality: “Mestiza consciousness is a consciousness of duality which embraces ambiguity and contradiction” (Ibid, p.59). This principle is based on binary thinking of men/women, good/bad, homosexual/heterosexual, etc. Anzaldúa breaks down the binaries by blurring the lines of social norms.
3. Flexibility: “Rigidity means death. Only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically. *La mestiza* constantly has to shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking, characterized by movement away from set patterns and goals and toward a more whole perspective, one that includes rather than excludes” (Ibid, p. 101).
4. Inclusion Instead of Exclusion: Operating in a pluralistic mode (a reality which works from dual principles in a harmonious fashion) and beyond an oppositional consciousness (Ibid, p. 109).
5. Coalition Building: The creation of a common culture depends on mutual knowledge with people working together in solidarity. Including all cultures, ideologies, knowledge, people, nations, and giving everyone equal value as human beings.
 - a. Men--Machismo (Ibid, p. 105), inventing a new masculinity and not homogenizing men (Ibid, p. 108).
 - b. Sexual Minorities (i.e. lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, etc.)
 - c. White People – In the words of Anzaldúa, “I think we need to allow whites to be our allies” (Ibid, p 107).

These five components work together to *holistically* work together to ensure inclusivity, promoted *conocimiento*, and establish a means of solidarity by working together instead of against one another. These five components/principles are only a part of Anzaldúa’s theory I’ve used in this research study to analyze the collected data.

In opposition, Anzaldúa also talks about a presumed incompetence of the harm white oppressors have done to people of color in the colonization era. She explains:

We [people of color] need you to own the fact that [white culture] looks upon us as less than human, that you stole our land, our personhood, and our self-respect. We need you to make public restitution: to say that, to compensate for your own sense of defectiveness, you strive for power over us, you erase our history and our experience because it makes you feel guilty—you’d rather

forget your british acts. To say you've split yourself from minority groups, that you disown us, that your dual consciousness splits off parts of yourself, transferring the negative parts to us (p. 107-108).

This quote is describing the guilty, deflection, and domination white people have placed on themselves because of their historical action of the past. In this passage, Anzaldúa is describing how women of color(s) have been forced to divide their loyalties between women of color(s) because they live within a white world, yet existing within their own. Being forced to live in this dualistic mode, some women have internalized these racist forces, which haunt them every day.

Anzaldúa speaks of the repercussions of having to deal with the internalization of racism and how deep the scars may burrow in a person's soul. This poetic passage assisted in the analysis of the manner the women interviewed felt at one point in time, and how they were able to move forward to empower themselves.

Anzaldúa explains:

We who are oppressed by racism internalize its deadly pollen along with the air we breathe. Make no mistake about it, the fruits of the weed are dysfunctional lifestyles, which mutilate our physical bodies, stunt our intellects, and make emotional wrecks of us. Racism sucks out the life blood from our bodies, our souls. As survivors of Racism, women-of-color(s) suffer stress and continual 'post-traumatic stress syndrome.'(cited in Keating 2009, p.129)

Anzaldúa addresses how racism can become internalized due to the frequency, intensity, and prolonged exposure these women (and people of color) are forced to endure over time, which is called systematic racism. Systematic racism is a multidimensional system or hierarchy formulated to be interdependent on each component or layer, working together to achieve and reinforce racism. These

dynamics are reflected within a quote by Anzaldúa, which shows how systematic and internalized racism work together:

Systematic racism...In-fighting manifests itself as verbal and emotional violence. What's particular about this violence is it doubles back on itself. Instead of joining forces to fight imperialism we're derailed into fighting with each other, into maneuvering for power positions. Internalized racism gets "gendered" or "sexed" between woman and mestizas, people who historically were the most chingadas (fucked)...It doesn't just happen between Native women and Chicanas. It's happened between other ethnic groups, between Chicana/os and Asians, between African Americans and other groups [women included]. Ethnic groups are thrown a few crumbs in the form of teaching positions, grants, decision-making in hiring, etc., and we fight each other for them. It's the old divide-and-conquer strategy. (2007, p. 285)

The divide-and-conquer strategy is a tool used by elites to deflect the oppressed individual's or group's attention away from oppressive conditions occurring within the workplace and place the attention on each other. Horizontal hostility, pitting oppressed individuals or groups against one another for power and superiority, is one of the tools used to divide people, in this case by race, gender, and class. Both internal and systematic racism work together against people of difference and grounded onto culturally based belief systems, which were formulated and placed on our cultures by social norms.

Anzaldúa elaborates on how the mestiza consciousness works against the social norms placed by society. These social norms are placed upon all cultures, nationalities, races, genders, classes, and sexual orientations to oppress some people (people seen as "others" or out-groups) and ordain superiority for mid-to-upper class people (dominant white or in-groups). Anzaldúa speaks of her ideology of society and the goal of the mestiza consciousness as:

Our goal is not to use differences to separate us from others, but neither is it to gloss over them. Many of us identify with groups and social positions not limited to our ethnic, racial, religious, class, gender, or national classifications. Though most people self-define by what they exclude, we define who we are by what they include—what I call the *new tribalism*. Though most of us live *entremundos*, between and among worlds, we are frustrated by those who step over the line, by hybridities and ambiguities, and by what does not fit our expectations of ‘race’ and sex. (Ibid, p. 245)

Anzaldúa explains how society is racially structured and how the social classifications need to be dismantled to create a new world of what society, or the new tribalism to create harmony, diversity and inclusion. The issue women of color(s) face are the cultural values, beliefs and shame that accompany a lack of respect.

Women of color(s) are bound by the belief and value systems of their culture. Respect is one of the values they hold in high regard with positions of authority and if not adhered to, then shame and disgrace accompany perceived “deviant” behaviors.

Anzaldúa (year?) talks about the Latina cultural value system in the following quote:

Respeto [respect] carries with it a set of rules so that social categories and hierarchies will be kept in order: respect is reserved for *la abuela* [grandmother], *papa* [father], *el patron* [master, boss, head, or employer], those with power in the community and women are at the bottom of the ladder one rung above the deviants. The Chicano, Mexicano, and some Indian cultures have no tolerance for deviance. Deviance is whatever is condemned by the community. (p. 40).

Living in the borderlands, women of color(s) are bound by their own culture and the dominant culture’s beliefs and value systems, worldviews, and realities. These factors contribute to how the dominant culture perceives women of color(s) and how women of color(s) (and people of color) reinforce.

Summary

The theory of the mestiza consciousness supports my argument within the discussion portion of this thesis. All of these passages provide the mestiza perspective of inclusion, empowerment, cultural beliefs and values, systems of oppression, and social norms, which are all significant factors in the data collected.

Themes and Participant Quotes

WSCP:

All three participants shared stories of being the only woman of color, lacking support and network systems within the USFS. For Ming Lee and Maria, their experiences resulted in isolation, marginalization, and a feeling of hopelessness, yet they did not give up, with the exception of Kaya. For Kaya, after 7 years (7 seasons) of working for the Forest Service, she chose to quit and return to school for herself. All participants spoke of the white supremacy (leadership or dominance based on belonging to social group) based on race, gender, and class.

Ming Lee actually speaks of two oppressive forces being race and class, which includes education. All participants spoke of in-group/out-group association in relation to the work environment and social dynamics. As the only Chinese American working in the Washington Office in Oregon, Ming Lee worked in a predominantly white work environment for most of her career. Ming Lee spoke of her experiences when she arrived in the Washington office,

They just don't think they [coworkers and supervisors] know how to deal with us because there are just not enough of us. Like I said, [coworker] and I was the only ones in our group, no African Americans, no Hispanics, no Native Americans...I just don't think maybe they expect difference. I think [the

group] has tunnel vision because they...deal with software, and not anything else.

Ming Lee speaks of a lack of diversity and how coworkers and supervisors are unprepared to work with difference. The focus is on work expectations and the social dynamics are secondary, but when Ming Lee begins speaks of the social dynamic, it was not favorable. In fact, she refers to some white women in the office as the “mean girls club”, which was explained in the following statement:

Good old boys club...Nothing has changed except...[it now includes] they are [white] women... from an upper- or middle-class background... they [“mean girls”] go to the Ivy League schools and they usually have graduate degrees...anything outside of this is not up to snuff...they [white women] don't want to play[be inclusive]. There is another woman in that mean girls club, ...when she was working in the forest, she and this other woman who happened to be a Japanese American, applied for the same position and the only reason the Japanese woman got it was because she was a minority and I started to question, how do you know that? What were the differences in your qualifications? So I think that people now think twice when people make blatant statements like that, especially when I am in the room anyway. I don't belong to the Ivy League club (laugh). I am not in the in-group, I am not and I think it is not only education, but it starts off with race, then it goes to education, but it is also...your background, your socioeconomic background.

Ming Lee's reflection demonstrates the agency's inability to work with people of difference. Ming Lee demonstrates how she found herself sticking up for other women of color(s) in the office as a means of avoiding the injustices she faces. Ming Lee also highlights the only support system was each other and how resistance comes from an individualistic thought process within the dominant culture and resistance against difference. She also addressed her own analysis of the matrices of domination being race and

class. As a Writer/Editor, Ming Lee's title enables her to have class privilege, yet she still experienced exclusion because of her racial difference.

Maria has limited contact and interaction with women of color(s), or women in general, while working in the supervisor's office. She explains how she was the only woman of color in engineering and experienced frustration and struggled for inclusion. Maria explains the social dynamics between her and another coworker:

They [coworkers and supervisors] don't want to hear accents...for example, I have seen people that want to go for a walk. I have seen people invite other people, but...they don't invite me because maybe it is I am Hispanic... It is very interesting because he [Director of Engineering] invites the other engineers, except me or the other person of color that is because they don't like him [another person of color]. They don't want to see us in the group.

Since English is Maria's second language, language seems to separate her from her group. Maria suggests there is an obvious separation between people that speak English as a first language and people that speak English as a second language. Race and national origin seem to also be contributors to the social dynamics within the Engineering department. The social interactions Maria is describing are from coworkers and supervisors in her current work environment. These interactions are also occurring at the supervisor's office level, yet the actions are similar to Ming Lee's, who works out of the Washington office, which is at management level. These two participants address the lack of support and a lack of coworker and supervisor understanding of difference preventing the inclusion for these women of color(s).

Kaya works in a district office and has never worked with another woman of color, but does speak of two interactions she has had with the woman in the office.

She explains,

I have never worked with a woman of color! (laugh) I have worked with another woman though! (laugh) There was one woman. She was in her 40s. She and I got along great, but she ended up leaving. I do not know why, but I missed her when she was gone... There was like one Ranger [another woman], who I met before she was a Ranger, so was like a Ranger in training. My boss said, 'oh god they tapped her now watch. She is going to change.' She was really neat. She was a geologist. I am glad they [management] are going to make her a ranger. He [direct supervisor] said, 'No, just watch. She is going to change.' And...she did change. It was very interesting...before she was a ranger in training...would come by, visit, say 'hi' and really supportive. And by the time I ended up deciding to quit, I heard that there were two rangers that weren't very assured that I could do the job...I just seemed like a very bubbly girl and it turned out to be this girl [Ranger in training]. I said, 'Ah she did change!' And I would just say, that is a really good way, that is just like white female aggression right there because she never once asked if I could do the job and never asked my supervisors if I could do my job. She never actually worked with me to even know what I am capable of, but because of my personality...I do a very good job at being professional above anything.

According to Kaya's reflection, she has only worked with white women in the district level and the women she has worked with either did not stay or were promoted. Kaya uses the term "white female aggression" in relation to a white female coworker's upward mobility and her behavior toward her. Kaya also speaks of this "Ranger in training" being critical of Kaya's work even without proper knowledge or questioning her supervisor. Kaya no longer works for the US Forest Service despite her breadth of knowledge and experience. When asked what it would take to have her return, Kaya replied:

It would take signed agreements between all three forests...serious cultural and law training and if they [management] can train everyone [all employees] to understand the laws that I [cultural archaeologist] am bound to work under...and understand that when Indians ask for something, they are not just trying to be difficult...we [Forest Service] are bound by treaties. We [archeologist and other employees] are all part of one group. If these things

could be taught to all of the Forest Service employees and if the Rangers would sign, agree, and commit to comply with our own federal laws that we are sworn to uphold, [and I would have to]...receive support from the people above me.

In this excerpt, Kaya eludes to a lack of cultural sensitivity, lack of training, exclusion, Native discriminatory behaviors on the part of the management at the expense of Indigenous Native Americans. Kaya speaks of treaty violations, which pose personal and professional conflicts between her cultural obligations and her work obligations. While working for the US Forest Service, Kaya was placed “between a rock and a hard place.”

Presumed Incompetent

All three participants spoke of how their identity and attributes influenced and shaped their social interactions with other coworkers, but Kaya’s experiences differed from Ming Lee’s and Maria’s. All three women spoke of oppressive and harassing conditions within the Forest Service resulting in conflict and exclusion. All women spoke of coworker’s and supervisor’s lack of understanding of difference and the social dynamic within each of the three levels (Washington, supervisor, and district level) of the US Forest Service. All three participants are racially different from their coworkers, but each was treated very different, and form of action was respectively different.

Ming Lee, as the oldest and most senior employee of the three, took a wholly different approach. Working in the Washington Office and being a Chinese American woman in a predominantly white female office setting, Ming Lee describes the social dynamic between the in-group and the out-groups. She explains,

Washington [office]...At this level...I think it is purely the people that I

work with...stabbing you in the back...they don't tell you what you are doing wrong, they just report it and then you hear about it later. So you are taken by surprise...They made me look incompetent...kinda like high school...in-crowd or the Cheerleaders... mean girls vs. the outsiders. I was always the nerd in high school and now...I am the outsider...They did not share information...they would have private conversations...If you ask me, if people were cut-throat in the Washington Office...more ambitious and sometimes a way to obtain these ambitions is maybe to make other people look incompetent or use other people as scapegoats. Yeah, I was made to look as if I was incompetent and lazy when I simply did not have the information or I was told to work with someone on a project. That person would refuse to even talk to me, get together, or meet with me and then when I brought that up to my supervisor [Ming Lee's direct supervisor], and I told her [Ming Lee's supervisor] that (coworker or supervisor) would not meet with me. Well, try harder...it was always like the blame was put on me. She did not go to (coworker or supervisor) and tell her it is time; you have to work with (Ming Lee) and come up and meet these objectives. I always had to do this. I was contentedly turned down. What else can I do? So again I was made to look like I was incompetent, lazy.

Ming Lee compares the Washington Office staff to high school teenage cheerleaders, demonstrating insiders (in-group) and outsiders (out-group or "othering") to characterize the social dynamics within the agency. Ming Lee describes the actions and behaviors towards her, which make her feel incompetent, unsupported, and ultimately an outsider working within the US Forest Service at a Washington level office. The words "blame," "scapegoat," and "mean girls" (in the previous section) to describe the treatment allude to bullying and harassment, but also describe her sentiments to the way she was treated. The "mean girls" constructed stereotypes, generalizations, and withheld information from Ming Lee so as for her to be viewed as incompetent. She also mentions that these "mean girls" would not provide her with information necessary to do her job effectively, at one point was even voted out of her work group.

In yet another excerpt, Ming Lee describes the social dynamics in the workplace affecting her ability to feel safe as a woman of color. Ming Lee explains what happened when she spoke with her supervisor about this event:

I told him...I had a journal and would write in my journal, some of which I thought were grounds for harassment. He wouldn't listen to me. To him they weren't credible and he wouldn't believe me. The reasons, I can only assume, was that it was because of my color. But he wouldn't help me...there was nothing I could do. Then I think the breaking point came where she [mean girl] actually called a meeting in front of the whole group, together, and embarrassed me by asking everyone to vote to see if (Ming Lee) stays in this group...She voted me out in front of everyone...She ambushed me... I think it was because they were white. There is this credibility gap. People believe what the people of the same race tell them.

This passage demonstrates a credibility issue for minorities, with the Forest Service limiting women of color(s)'s protection. According to Ming Lee's, her racial and gender affiliation prevented her from being taken seriously, and as a result, presumed incompetent. As stated by Ming Lee, there is a credibility gap that is determined by race, gender, and class.

As a Chinese American, Ming Lee does talk about her own cultural beliefs and values in relation to the workplace. In the following excerpt, she explains the social and political dynamics of being a woman of color working within the US Forest Service. Ming Lee explains,

Well I think that people [coworkers and supervisors] have a stereotype of us. Us, being Asian Americans, are kind of geeky and quiet and don't confront and for the most part they are right. We are not confrontational so they walk all over us...I think people [coworkers and supervisors] have gotten away with doing that...to me...because I did not stand up... typical Asian culture taught me that you get good grades and don't make waves, and that's how I was raised. So people [white people] expect that, but they also take advantage of that.

Ming Lee feels that the values and belief systems of her culture are being used against her by coworkers and management. She clearly states that the US Forest Services' dominant white culture takes advantage of the fact that Chinese American people are taught to achieve academic success and not complain about unequal or unjust conditions. In Maria's case, language, national origin, and gender play a critical role in her efforts towards inclusion. The issues Maria faces in the work environment are centered on her ability to speak standard English and the actions and behaviors others have toward her because of the language barrier. Maria explains:

When I am outside [of work], of course, I speak Spanish and I feel free to talk with people than when I am at work. I feel like English is my second language, sometimes it is hard to open myself [up] to other people. They [dominant white culture] see me and they say 'you are so quiet' and... 'you keep everything inside'... 'I mean you are so quiet' and yes I am quiet because I am afraid sometimes to speak up...if I say something wrong people tell you. "You did not say this right," or "you did not say this right," so they try to isolate you and put you in a different group. I have expressed myself in other groups, but I see that people [white people] take the idea of other people [people of color] and use them for their own.

Maria refers to the fear she feels she steps into the office. She also talks about not being able to express herself because of the language barrier that is criticized by coworkers or blamed on Maria being shy. Fear and shame are alluded to when she speaks of her experiences within the office, but these social interactions are not just focused on her, they are also directed at another male coworker of color. Maria explains,

It does not only happen just to me, but it happens to other coworkers, he [Latino coworker] is a colored person. They [white male coworker] criticize a lot about him and I feel so bad because if you say something [complain] and they [supervisor] say to you that you are not right. "You don't know what you are talking about" or "oh just shut up".... So that is why. If your ideas do not count, then why are you going to speak up? Just keep it inside [deal with it

internally] and be quiet. I am just going to get your job done and that is all I need, right. You keep your mouth shut.

Maria demonstrates isolation and an element of cultural codes (learned behaviors), which she and a male person of color resort to when working within her unit. Maria describes that she is not the only person feeling oppressed. Maria's language barrier, restricted expression, fear of being wrong and exploited feelings of being afraid to speak up, seem to render her immobilized. Even when she expresses her frustrations and observations to others, she is led to believe her perceptions and experiences are perceived as unwarranted and incorrect. For Maria's language, cultural differences, and national origin results in exclusion, silence, internalization, and discrediting of ideas. In the workplace, her accent results in being seen as incompetent, inferior, and lacking in worth. Kaya, being an Indigenous Native American woman from the United States, has attributes, which seem to be accepted by coworkers, but still led to similar outcomes.

Kaya, on the other hand, has a very different experience and is based on her ability to blend in. This factor contributes heavily to the way she is treated and her own perception of reality in the workplace. Kaya worked in an older male-dominated work environment and as the only woman, specifically woman of color, in the office. Kaya explains:

I will have to say as a pretty Native woman, which I and my boss always used to joke about...I never thought of myself as who I am now or what I look like now. You know, I was an overweight teenager with big glasses and I was a total science nerd. So that is who I am as a person...I don't think of myself, as my boss says, as a "pretty Indian girl" [objectified]. We would always joke about that because it really did not have a presence in the room...I learned I could kinda use it as authority [wields power]...it had that dramatic effect of being like...getting people to really pay attention and listen...advantages and disadvantages...It is all strategy when you go into meetings...I used that as a

powerful tool in my little arsenal. If you are not pretty, there is a totally different interaction that people have especially in the Forest Service.

Kaya's *testimonio* describes the social interaction within her office as dependent upon how a person looks. She alludes to physical appearance and perception as being interrelated and whether or not you are seen and heard. Kaya was accepted within her unit by her supervisors because of her physical appearance and her ability to do the job. This issue for Kaya was not inclusion amongst her coworkers, but it was a conflict with the social interactions with other coworkers. This was discussed in the WSCP section, but it was also described by Kaya in the following excerpt:

All three of us [coworker and supervisor] were working really hard to try and change things...as my boss was retiring, so they offered me a job, so I had to go to grad school so I could meet the education requirement, but they already knew that I could perform these job functions because I was already doing them...the three of us discussed how things were probably weren't going to change and since I was going to get a better education, I should find a better job. It was a great job and there are a lot of pluses, but ultimately I knew that was not for me.

In Kaya's case, visual attributes worked to her advantage. Kaya is approximately 5' 5" and slender with long, dark hair and brown eyes with a light [white] skin tone. She has a pleasant smile, a friendly demeanor, looks to be in her early 20's and pretty, according to male standards. These visual attributes and ability to fit in provided her the opportunity to obtain hands-on experience and educational opportunities that ultimately resulted in a permanent position offered to her. Kaya did not express feelings of being marginalized or oppressed. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Kaya stated that her supervisors worked together as a team to get the work done and influence change. Kaya was able to fit in with other professionals, whom were doing

the same job, yet it is not enough to validate her maintaining employment with the Forest Service.

Kaya, trained as a Cultural Archaeologist, was informed by her supervisor and trainer that the agency was cutting corners. In fact, Kaya states, “We all knew about the corner cutting, my supervisor pointed it out to me.” The agency and her supervisor overlooked the agency’s compliance as part of the expectations of her job. In Kaya’s case, the stereotype of a “pretty native woman,” along with her inexperience, youth and age, allowed coworkers to assume Kaya was incompetent. The expectation was that if Kaya wanted to work for the Forest Service, she must overlook the agency’s behaviors and treaty violations against her own tribe and people.

As stated previously, as a Cultural Archeologist, Kaya went out in the field and conducted historical/cultural reports on cultural resources. As Kaya describes:

As an archeologist, every project has to go through the archeology or as it is called the “heritage department” for a special use permit. For every big logging operation has to have authorization because of national preservation laws, the National Environmental Action Program (NEPA) and HEPHA those two NEPAs. Every project has to go through us [archeologists] which creates this huge backlog so when there is only two people doing this type of work, the overload causes the cutting corners. We would get calls saying, “The dump truck is out there” you know. We tell them that they did not send us a report and we don’t know what is going on. We have our own process that we have to go through and they had to go through state historical preservation office.

Kaya’s job was to conduct and make sure that all of the procedures were followed, yet was pressured to allow improprieties to occur within the

agency. She was a steward of the land [cultural resource manager] managing the cultural resources on her own tribal land, yet expected to overlook treaties and National Preservation Laws. Kaya allowed these practices to occur, which could have resulted in lawsuits, yet her supervisor trained her to overlook them. Her coworker's objectification of her character, her age, and racial association allowed her to be seen as inferior, incompetent and dismissed as a steward of the land. She expressed her frustration with the Forest Service's politics and her hopelessness, as questioned whether she could change the system, so she quit.

Resistance and Empowerment

Ming Lee expressed how she assimilated toward the dominant culture to fit in and how her perceptions changed over time:

I went to an almost all white school in the Bay Area. I wanted to lose my Hawaiian accent because I wanted to fit in. And so, assimilation; I had this idea that if I *assimilated* I would not stand out. *I cannot stand out* in a high school where there were five Asian Americans, one African American, and maybe 10 Latinas. Minorities stood out, but I did not want to... I trust too easily. Well after my experience and people taking advantage of me, and I learned not to trust people...on my guard because I will get hurt. ...[Ming Lee] at the dog park is different from [Ming Lee] at work. You see these multiple personalities because I can't trust people all the way. I trust my family and friends because I don't know who is going to stab me in the back because it has been done to me and I hate to say it. It is because I have been accused of being a thief, a liar, being lazy, of being voted out of the group. It leaves you, it left me with deep scars [pain] and I will never forget that. I know I should not say this, but I will never forgive [resentment] them either....I am comfortable, but it took me about 50 years to get to that place. So, yeah I wanted to be like everyone, like them, but then I realized what they are and I don't want to be them anymore.

Ming Lee attempted to fit in and not stand out among the dominant white culture within the US Forest Service, but resulted in an unwelcoming environment. Her

experiences have provided Ming Lee with valuable insights and perspective, but ultimately left her with deep emotional and psychological scars. False accusations levied her protective, distrusting, and cautious, both inside and outside the workplace. The work conditions caused her to alter her behaviors and actions towards everyone, except close friends and family. Ming Lee's current interactions have led to a lack of trust with coworkers and management, avoidance, and protection (via reporting unjust behaviors and legal assistance if necessary). When asked how she protects herself, Ming Lee's replies, "I just take it up to the highest level as I can without having to pursue a lawsuit." When asked why she did not quit, Ming Lee replied as follows,

I could just quit, walk away and all my problems would just go away, but then I thought: What's better is if I stay and THEY HAVE TO FACE ME! I AM NOT GIVING UP! So I did...I am not going to let anyone push me around anymore. I did, I allowed them to. If my supervisor, the head of [department], would not listen to me, I really should have taken [attorney friend's] offer up and slammed them with a lawsuit because I am ready to take it that far. I am not afraid anymore to embarrass whoever, because I want them to be held accountable...you internalize it, if you let people push you around for whatever reason...the stress of not making people accountable for what they did to me, led to my cancer.

In the midst of the oppressive work conditions, Ming Lee found a way to empower herself. As she states, she was not going to just give up and walk away. Ming Lee found empowerment through self-protection methods of reporting unfair and unjust working conditions. Ming Lee's empowerment came at the expense of her health, until she began standing up for herself. Maria has also found resistance and empowerment within the US Forest Service.

Maria's experience is one of proving her worth to herself and empowering herself through the work she does. Maria is working in a male-dominated work environment, working with older white males. She did not understand the actions and

behaviors of the dominant culture within the Forest Service. Therefore, race, gender, and national origin make her efforts towards inclusion difficult. Maria explains:

Sometime guys want to work with guys...I don't demonstrate that I can't do it. I say I can do it, everything. I meet the deadline as I said and I try to do the things the guys do. And that is why I try not to put myself down in work. This guy, I am not going to say his name. He is the [unit] director...He [director] doesn't...speak to me and I am assuming because he doesn't know how to relate to me...I have noticed that. Sometimes I have to come to him and maybe say 'hi'...even though he sits next to me...he comes two or three times per week, he sits next to my cubicle, but he doesn't say anything to me. He comes and speaks to this person and this person, but he doesn't talk to me (hand gestures illustrations the coworker's locations which are right next to her workspace).

Maria tries to match the value, beliefs, and behaviors of the people she works with, but her efforts are deflected. She expresses the need to prove herself and her ability, but is frustrated with upper management and coworkers' avoidance. Maria explains that she is quite capable of doing the job required, but she is left with the impression that others do not understand or know how to relate to her. Maria is seeking interaction and teamwork, but instead becomes isolated, marginalized and oppressed. Kaya experiences are different because English is her first language, and supervisors accept her, which is due to her physical appearance.

Kaya experiences assimilation within a male dominated district office. Her ability to alter her visual appearance, pale up, allows her the ability to be included and accepted. As Kaya states:

Because when I started, no one knew who I was. I just went in there and say, it is funny because I did work with a bunch of Forest Service men and now I feel like a retired Forest Service man (laugh). So I have totally changed.

In Kaya's *testimonio*, she experiences complete assimilation. The following statement by Kaya explains her perspective and insight of working within the US Forest Service. She states:

In Alaska it is very diverse, so when I moved to Idaho I had to make that adjustment...this was a white community and a white world and where I live in Idaho, that is the way they [white people] see the world... I don't feel like the Native community talks a lot about walking in two worlds [mestiza], I don't think that is my lived experience. I think that these are all fake borders [nepantla] to create senses of others, othering the dominant or the oppressed, you know, but to me it is all there. Trying to separate [nepantla] doesn't change anything...To me the idea of walking in two worlds; I think it is a huge disservice because it creates...a sense of loss as opposed to possibility.

Kaya finds empowerment in understanding the perceived realities of the dominant culture and adjusts herself to fit this reality. She also finds empowerment from embracing all parts of cultures and realizes that to exist, she must be flexible and adaptive. The excerpt demonstrates that Kaya has found that being a mestiza and living in nepantla is to include and embrace all parts of herself and the world around her.

Summary

The main themes WSCP, presumed incompetent, and resistance and empowerment were highlighted within each of the interview. Ming Lee, Maria, and Kaya had similar yet vastly different experiences during their tenure with the US Forest Service that factor into their experiences, insights, and perspectives. These are valuable in exploring and learning from these women and provide the insight necessary to effect change. Their experiences illustrate challenges and struggle that may affect other women of color(s) in the workplace, but also provides insight factors that foster

retention, diversity, and promotional efforts. The following chapter provides an analysis of the findings.

Conclusion:

The experiences Ming Lee, Maria, and Kaya have had working for the US Forest Service were ones of exclusion and not inclusion. WSCP and Presumed Incompetent deals with exclusion, separation, inflexibly, superiority, and domination based on: Ming Lee-Race, class, and socioeconomic status; Maria-Race, nationality, and language; Kaya-Race, cultural and spiritual values and beliefs. For this reason, I had to use quotes by Anzaldúa to describe what I was seeing in the participant transcripts. The mestiza consciousness would be reflected in applying the resolutions provided by the participants to improve the diversity and inclusionary efforts. The resolutions and suggestions are provided in appendix A of this thesis. I believe that the mestiza consciousness's five components can be used, along with other theories, in analyzing and addressing exclusionary work environments.

When I started this thesis, the purpose of the research study was to find out if the experiences I had working for the government was unique to me or were they the experiences of other women of color(s). Well, I have come to find out that the experiences that I have are very similar to the women of color(s) that have participated in this study. I have faced discrimination on a micro and macro scale because of a language barrier and because I was not educated. I did not fit into the box of society because I am a lesbian woman of color and I am of a mixed decent; therefore, I guess what I have found is that I was gaining the mestiza consciousness through this research. I am a Civil Right Manager, Equal Employment Specialist, and

the *conocimiento* I have gained is how to be a change agent within an agency that does not understand difference.

Difference has a lot of meaning and with this study I have learned what it means to be women of color(s) within a predominantly white governed agency. My goal is to have the opportunity to change the experiences of these women and of other people of difference within the agency; negative to positive for everyone. I came back for my master's degree to assist the government with diversity and inclusive efforts within the agency. This research study has helped to provide me with the tools, strategies, and *conocimiento* to effect change and improve the quality of the agency and of its employees. I want to help everyone: men, women, and gay people of color(s) as well as the dominant white society understand that there is value in being different. Everyone is different. It is human nature and a valuable tool if we learn to use it to our advantage instead of seeing it as a disadvantage. Diversity is inclusion. I want to be the conduit that bridges the gap between all people and the one that plants seeds of knowledge in the minds of others. These seeds, if cared for, can grow into knowledge and growth. You see, I have grown and healed through this thesis also because I am Indigenous Native Zopatac Indian, Mexican, and German. The way I see it, the healing for the agency is also healing for me.

Chapter 6 Results

This chapter analyzes the identities and experiences of women of color(s) working in the United States (US) Forest Service in relation to recruitment, retention, and promotion practices. In this section, Anzaldúa's theory of mestiza consciousness was used as the theoretical lens to analyze the data collected. This lens assists in the comprehension of this newly acquired *conocimiento*, knowledge, from the *testimonios* of the women of color(s) interviewed for this study. The use of the mestiza consciousness theory assisted in highlighting the themes that emerged. The themes highlighted in the interviews were White Supremacist Capital Patriarchy, Presumed Incompetent, Resistance and Empowerment and seemed to be interwoven due to the complexity of the women of color(s)'s lived experiences. These interwoven concepts along with the intersecting experiences of the women interviewed, highlighted the multidimensional experiences women of color(s) faced while working with the Forest Service. This section will consist of themes, followed by a quote by Anzaldúa to bridge the gap. I follow with a summary of my findings. The purpose of this section is to examine how Ming Lee, Maria, and Kaya's work experiences intersect with theory of mestiza consciousness.

Themes and Participant Quotes

White Supremacist Capitalistic Patriarchy

The white supremacist capitalistic patriarchal ideological concept is a intricately interwoven theme, which is difficult to highlight individually because of their intersecting structured dynamics. All of the structural dynamics have been formulated for one central purpose: elitist's power, privilege, superiority, dominance,

control, and overall wealth (Anzaldúa 2007; hooks 1984 & 2000; Keating 2008; Sánchez 2006; Torres 2003; Ybarra 2011). This ideological concept embraces the intersecting forces of oppression that work to divide and separate people by race, class, and gender. In turn, these oppressive forces formulate dominant social norms which society used so stratify people into hierarchies (hooks 2000). Consequently, these forces are affecting women of color(s) working within the US Forest Service, which is demonstrated in the following discussion.

Ming Lee:

Reflecting upon the narratives and experiences of Ming Lee revealed a clash of realities between her views and the views of other women (white women) in the office. Her *testimonios* highlights a sense of female competition, individualism, and whiteness being at the core of this conflict. Both Ming Lee and her female coworkers are considered to be oppressed groups because of their gender association (i.e. white women: gender oppression and women of color(s): gender and race oppression), both historically and within society today; yet there is a power struggle and competition occurring between them.

This type of social interaction can best be described as horizontal hostility because these women (women of color(s) and white women) are exerting aggressive or hostile behavior towards each other within the workplace. In Ming Lee's case, she is hired in a position and seeks inclusion, but the white mid-to-upper-class white women (*mean girls* as Ming Lee calls them) are demonstrating negative behaviors towards Ming Lee, allowing her to feel unwelcomed, bullied, and harassed. These

dynamics are reflected by a quote from Anzaldúa about systematic and internalized racism:

Systematic racism...In-fighting manifests itself as verbal and emotional violence. What's particular about this violence is it doubles back on itself. Instead of joining forces to fight imperialism we're derailed into fighting with each other, into maneuvering for power positions. Internalized racism gets "gendered" or "sexed" between woman and mestizas, people who historically were the most chingadas (fucked)...It doesn't just happen between Native women and Chicanas. It's happened between other ethnic groups, between Chicana/os and Asians, between African Americans and other groups [women included]. Ethnic groups are thrown a few crumbs in the form of teaching positions, grants, decision-making in hiring, etc., and we fight each other for them. It's the old divide-and-conquer strategy. (p. 285)

The divide-and-conquer strategy is a tool used by elitists to deflect the oppressed individual's or group's attention away from oppressive conditions occurring within the workplace and place the attention on each other (Anzaldúa 2009; Buck 2001; Omni & Winant 1994; Tong, 2009). Horizontal hostility, pitting oppressed individuals or groups against one another for power and superiority, is one of the tools used to divide people, in this case by race, gender, and class (Anzaldúa 2009; Buck 2001; Omni & Winant 1994; Tong, 2009). Most of the time the people involved in horizontal hostility behaviors and actions are not even aware that it is occurring because they are too focused on power, privilege, and control. The division of race, gender, and class into hierarchal stratification is premised by white supremacist superiority, capitalistic profit/gain, and patriarchal male dominance.

The fact that Ming Lee was hired threatens these women's privilege and superiority within the agency. Therefore, exerting their power and superiority within upper management positions keeps Ming Lee and other minorities from being retained within the agency, hence maintaining power and privilege for the dominant

white employees. Ming Lee admits that it is not all women, only a few women whom she refers to as *mean girls*. Women in general are still not paid the same wage as men within federal government, yet the attention is focused on each other and not the oppressor (white upper management males in power within the agency) (Kim 2004; Lewis 2005; NSF-National Science Foundation 2011). This is a federal government agency, yet these types of behaviors are occurring and are focused on women of color(s).

Maria:

The narrative and experiences of Maria reflect the ways white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy can resemble an illness or disease that plagues women of color(s), sometimes without their knowledge. This multifaceted concept/ideology cannot be tangibly seen nor touched yet women of color(s) come into contact with it every day (similar to germs). Sometimes it makes people sick or ill and other times it can be washed off before it ever infects us. People can take precautions to protect themselves against it, but the options are avoidance of discriminatory behavior, changing jobs (costly and has uncertainly—placing into a similar situation), and standing up to them as each and every discriminatory behavior occurs (taxing on a person's self-worth and self-esteem). Maria deals with the bacteria by washing it off her hands or not allowing these behaviors to bother her. Maria works within a white male dominated work environment, and as such, she has no choice but to deal with it. She is the only woman without woman of color support systems in place to assist her, except the people within the Civil Rights Unit, but the cost of reporting these

behaviors and protecting herself are outweighed by the consequences (US Forest Service 2013).

The workload within her unit is very time consuming and if she is to report it, she has to have documentation and/or witnesses. No one talks to her or helps her; therefore, she is already alone and if she speaks up, things can get worse. Maria feels as if there are no options for her except tolerance and avoidance because without support systems and other women of color(s) to support her efforts to protect herself, her problems will be overlooked or dismissed. Maria experiences white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy in a different manner than Ming Lee. Before I relate this to theory, I am providing an excerpt from Maria's transcript to provide an example:

I would say that the problem I am confronting right now is that they tell me to pass some exams...to become a COR ...construction operation manager. It is a certification you have to get...[coworker speaking] make sure you [Maria] understand this [the material] because when I [white male coworker] took...the training and had to go to a one week of quick orientation with a special teacher...That is how I [white male coworker] passed the exam otherwise you are not going to pass it.

This is a prime example of the situation Maria faces working in the engineering unit within her office. During this interview, Maria informed me that the only way an engineer would be able to pass this exam was to have hands on experience or specialized training. Maria was not offered this training and was not offered assistance from other coworkers to pass this exam. When Maria started with the Forest Service in a permanent position, she received minimal assistance in becoming familiar with the resources and computer programs she was being asked to use. Maria felt as if "people in the Forest Service are not open to help you...Everyone should have time, maybe 15 minutes, to help other people." Maria had to become self-

sufficient and learn on her own with minimal support from coworkers and supervisors.

Like Ming Lee, Maria was hired into a position where coworkers made her feel as if she is not worthy of inclusion. As indicated in the above-mentioned Anzaldúa's quote, white supremacy is achieved by divide-and-conquering by means of race, gender and class differences. In Maria's case, the white supremacy capitalistic patriarchal strategy was activated through micro-aggression by means of personal interaction between white male (white supremacy and patriarchy) coworkers which informed her that the only way she could pass this exam was with access to specialized training (capitalism-providing privilege on the basis of racial preference). Micro-aggressions are defined as specific negative interactions between those of different races, cultures, or genders through non-physical aggression, but these negative interactions can result in bullying, harassment, and discrimination (Lexico Publishing, 2013). Maria was neither offered nor provided training accessibility and does not receive assistance from coworkers; as a result, her chances of success in passing the exam or being successful in her job is minimized.

These white supremacist capitalistic patriarchal strategies have been constructed to serve white male elitists' need to keep white males on top of the social and workforce hierarchical stratification. By the agency allowing discriminatory behaviors, Maria's education opportunities, resources, and mentorship are held in check as they encourage superiority, dominance and control for white males (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Buck 2002; Hooks 2000; Omni & Winant 1994; Rosette 2006) As Anzaldúa (2013) states:

Nobody's going to save you. No one's going to cut you down, cut the thorns thick around you. No one's going to storm the castle walls nor kiss awake your birth, climb down your hair, nor mount you onto the white steed. There is no one who will feed the yearning. Face it. You will have to do, do it yourself.
(page #)

Working within an all-white male dominated work environment is not easy for Maria to deal with. Co-workers could have stepped up to help her, but instead they rattle the carrot of privilege and superiority over her head to make sure she knows it is there.

These tactics are similar to the childish games being played with Ming Lee with the insider/outsider game—different unit but same basic concept. Maria's experiences and positionality within the agency is not fair, it is unequal treatment and it is against the law, yet it is allowed to happen within the Forest Service. Micro-aggressive behaviors are hard to prove and you have to have documentation and/or witnesses to support your claim of discrimination, bullying, and harassment. If you don't have proof, you don't have a case (US Forest Service 2013). Maria's experience was very different from Kaya's because of her positionality within the agency and the characteristics encompassed in her identity.

Kaya:

Kaya's *testimonio* states that she has never worked with women of color(s), but has only worked with one other woman, which ultimately resulted in conflict. Kaya's experiences were that of inclusion and not exclusion. This is very different from other participants and the reasons, as alluded to by Kaya, were because of her physical appearance, personality and career decision to turn a blind eye toward agency noncompliance.

Kaya works within an environment dominated by older white males, which is similar to Maria's environment. Kaya stated, "it is funny because I did work with a bunch of Forest Service men and now I feel like a retired Forest Service man (laugh). And especially because it was an office full of mostly older men that are now retired, so now I feel like I should be retiring" (laugh). Kaya feels that her "bubbly personality" and her physical appearance, best summarized by her supervisor's description as "pretty native woman," have made inclusion less of an issue for her. The interaction others have with Kaya seems to be based on objectification (based on appearance) and exotification of native women (based on her Native American tribal identification). This conclusion is based on an interview excerpt extracted from her *testimonio*:

There was a guy, we always joked that he had a crush on me. He was just an odd older man that was fascinated by Indians and Indian history, and I was like God. Do not let him know I am Indian, please! So I get that anywhere, not just at work. I don't get that luxury of that just at work.

Kaya's statement alludes to the fact that she is able to exist undetected, as a native woman, because she is light skinned and has the ability to "pale up." For this reason, I am able to state that whiteness, white identity or a similar appearance, and the male gaze (visual appeal to the male gender) are factors in Kaya's inclusion within the agency. In addition, these factors are being considered as contributing to her occupational experience within the Forest Service. Eden Torres in *Chicanas without Apology: Chicana sin Verguenza*, states:

We did not choose to leave our homelands as many European immigrants have, not elect to be absorbed into the dominant culture through forces assimilation, which is a kind of brutality against the spirit. Our indigenous ancestors made no request to be incorporated into town or three national states through violence. As Mexican

settlers did not choose to lose our language and culture, to be included (yet excluded) in the original social experiment known as the United States of America. As a result of this material reality, we have been made relatively powerless over the and within public and private institutions that directly affect our lives—churches, schools, governments, and the structure of commerce. But the *psychological colonization* associated with that powerlessness is as devastating to the community as are the physical manifestation of systematic exclusion and discrimination. (Torres 2003, pg. 19-20)

Kaya is a Kootanie woman and she is proud of her people, her land, and for the cultural resources she was protecting through her land. It was her belief that taking this position within the Forest Service, as a steward of federal lands and a cultural resource archeologist, would provide her the opportunity to work in a position of power to protect the cultural resources of her tribe and perform her civil duty to her country all at the same time. Kaya's job entailed working within three districts, which protected the lands on her reservation, but the politics within government demonstrated who really had the power.

Kaya ultimately quit her position and returned to school because the employees within the agency, coworkers and supervisors, were not upholding their oaths as federal employees to protect the land and uphold the laws. I asked Kaya what it would take to get her to come back to the agency and she stated the following:

It would take signed agreements between all three forests...serious cultural & law training and if they [all district employees] can train everyone to understand the laws that I am bound to work under...and understand that when Indians ask for something, they are not just trying to be difficult...we [Forest Service] are bound by treaties. We are all part of one group. If these two things could be taught to all of the Forest Service employee and if the Rangers would sign, agree, and commit to comply with our own federal laws that we are sworn to uphold, [and]...receive support from the people above me...my superiors and not just my Archeologist superiors, but the Rangers and the Forest Supervisor.

Kaya's statement is very powerful and insightful. Within her statement she addresses her experiences as a native woman and a civil servant of a federal government agency with cultural insensitivity, legal noncompliance, and the lack of support she had to uphold the federal mandates. This is an agency that promotes diversity, inclusion, and safety reflected by their mission, "We achieve our mission through civil rights compliance, advocacy, and education" (US Forest Service 2013). Her ultimate reason for discontinued service was because she felt that her moral obligation to the federal government and her people was being compromised.

The key themes concluded by Kaya's statement are: cultural insensitivity, noncompliance by federal employees (macro-aggressions breaking federal laws) and the number of people allowing these types of actions and behaviors to occur (all white male and female-white supremacy); these are all tools of white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy. Let me unpack this even further. Employees of the Forest Service blatantly oppressing a historically oppressed group (Indigenous Kootanie Indians) and breaking treaties/laws while forcing a Kootanie woman employee (cultural archeologist) to allow this behavior to occur: this is called systematic and institutional racism because the actions and behaviors start with the employees on the ground and are reinforced by upper management and allowed to occur without repercussion. In fact, it was her own supervisor that informed her of this in compliance and expected her to allow it to happen. Capitalism becomes visible through the breaking of treaties, which maximize profit without law restrictions. This demonstrates the power of white males working within an agency that act above the

law, yet only complying with the laws which promote white supremacy, and white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

Summary:

The intricately interwoven forces of white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy has many strategies and tools, which are rendered invisible and are very hard to prove. This ideological concept is deeply embedded in the social and political institutional systems working within the agency. For Ming Lee, the white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy was visible by the actions of the *mean girls*, which allowed them to bully her and push her out. For Maria, it was white males making sure she did not have access to the tools, resources, education, and assistance to be successful within the agency. For Kaya, it was placing her in a position of conflict between her people and that agency. My conclusion is that many employees are not being held accountable for exclusionary and unlawful actions and behaviors towards women of color(s). This is more than visible within these women's *testimonios*. In fact, even some supervisors and management are participating in these types of behaviors. If the agency is allowing these types of behavior to occur they are acting in violation of the Civil Rights Act and can be held accountable by law.

Presumed Incompetent:

This section focuses on the presumed incompetent of these women by coworkers and/or supervisor within the agency.

Ming Lee:

Within Ming Lee's interview the words "incompetent," "lazy," "scapegoat," "insider," and "outsider," were used by Ming Lee to describe how she was made to

feel. She mentions that these *mean girls* would not provide her with information necessary to do her job effectively, at one point was even voted out of her work group. Ming Lee explains what happened when she spoke with her supervisor about this event:

I told him...I had a journal and would write in my journal, some of which I thought were grounds for harassment. He wouldn't listen to me. To him they weren't credible and he wouldn't believe me. The reasons, I can only assume, was that it was because of my color. But he wouldn't help me...there was nothing I could do. Then I think the breaking point came where she [mean girl] actually called a meeting in front of the whole group, together, and embarrassed me by asking everyone to vote to see if (Ming Lee) stays in this group...She voted me out in front of everyone...She ambushed me.... I think it was because they were white. There is this credibility gap. People believe what the people of the same race tell them.

This passage demonstrates a credibility issue for minorities with the Forest Service preventing women of color(s)'s protection. According to Ming Lee's statement, her racial and gender affiliation prevents her from being taken seriously; and as such, presumed incompetent (Anzaldúa 2009; Bender 2003; Berg 2001; Sánchez 2006; Ybarra 2011). As stated in Ming Lee's statement, there is a credibility gap that is determined by race, gender, and class.

Maria:

Maria seems reflect a space between realities (her own and the dominant culture within the Forest Service) or a space of seeing multiple, frequently contradictory, perspectives, having been torn from a comfortable place. Maria was excited about coming to work for the Forest Service, but realized that the agency placed little value on her abilities or presents in the office.

During Maria's Student Career Employment Position (SCEP) or internship, she was not given any opportunity to learn about engineering as an engineering intern. Let's review an excerpt from Maria to demonstrate her presumed incompetence:

I came to work for the summer time as a SCEP student with the Forest Service, I would say that I do not want to talk bad, but it was very frustrating because I was not getting the experiences I needed as an engineer.[lack of support and mentoring] I noticed that most of the people at that time did not help me at all. I was trying to do the things by myself and then I was working all the time asking people if they had a project so I can help and learn. I am sorry I don't have anything. And then I decided to quit so I said why should I work for the Forest Service since I don't get the help or a mentor and plus I am a student. I was sitting in a chair and not doing anything. I was feeling frustrated because I did not have anything to do, so that is why I started to get lazy because I started to do my own thing or my homework because I was not getting any help...

The Forest Service is hiring women of color(s), but are not utilizing or providing the opportunity for this woman of color(s) to learn about the agency or the engineering program. During the interview, Maria expressed how she sought out other engineering coworkers for projects so she could gain experience, but no one would allow her to assist. The SCEP program was formulated to provide opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience within the Forest Service agency in preparation of upcoming vacant positions (United State Forest Service 2012). In addition, the Forest Service is targeting underrepresented groups with a program called the Multicultural Workforce Strategic Initiatives to increase diversity within the agency (United State Forest Service 2012). The question becomes, if Maria's experiences were similar to other women of color(s)'s experiences, then why would they want to work for the Forest Service?

According to Erika D. Tate and Marcia C. Linn (2005), women of color(s) student's social identity directly impacts their academic identity and overall performance (Tate & Linn 2005). An example is "a student who feels uncomfortable in the engineering environment may experience difficulty in forming study groups helpful to their academic performance; social identity also impacts their intellectual identity and overall performance" (p.489). This study reinforces how social dynamics in the office can affect women of color(s)'s performance and work quality, which was demonstrated by Maria's interview excerpt.

Maria and Ming Lee:

Both Maria and Ming Lee are women of color(s) that are bound by their own culture as well as the dominant culture's beliefs and value systems, simultaneously. Being placed in this position within the work environment sometimes causes conflict between the two. Maria loves the work she does and believes in helping people demonstrated by the following interview excerpt:

I love my job and I try to do the best that I can. I try to do the best that I can. I like to help other people and I try to get most of my work done on time and I meet deadlines. When I don't know...and when I don't know how to do it, I try to ask or help and try to communicate with other people.

Maria enjoys the work she does even though she is not made to feel welcome. Maria feels alone within an agency where she is one of two Latinas (the other located in a different unit on the opposite end of the building) working in the entire office of 300 people. The lack of Latinas in the office renders her isolated and removed from the employee support system, yet she loves her job and stays. Ming Lee also works in an office with minimal Chinese or Asian employees. She, like Maria, has values and

beliefs that differ from the dominant culture as demonstrated by Ming Lee's interview excerpt:

Well I think that people have a stereotype of us. Us being Asian Americans are kinda geeky and that we are quiet and we don't confront and for the most part they are right. We are not confrontational so they walk all over us and they do. I think people got away with doing what they have done to me in those circumstances that I explained to you because I did not stand up. Because you know, you growing up, you respect your elders; I was brought up by my grandparents basically. It was the typical Asian culture that taught me that you get good grades and you don't make waves, don't make waves and so that's how I was raised. So people expect that, but they also take advantage of that.

Both of these women are from different cultural backgrounds, yet they have similar beliefs about the way they should treat others in our own community and in the workplace.

Although Maria (Guatemalan Latina) works within a white male dominant work environment which reinforces machismo (male superiority or patriarchal) and Ming Lee works with white females (very few males), which reinforce their dominance by supporting their male counterparts, Ming Lee and Maria are made fully aware, by coworkers, their place within the agency and how others feel about them. So what is holding her back from speaking up? Anzaldúa (2007) talks about the Latina cultural value system in the following quote:

Respeto [respect] carries with it a set of rules so that social categories and hierarchies will be kept in order: respect is reserved for *la abuela* [grandmother], *papa* [father], *el patron* [master, boss, head, or employer], those with power in the community women are at the bottom of the ladder one rung above the deviants. The Chicano, Mexicano, and some Indian cultures have no tolerance for deviance. Deviance is whatever is condemned by the community. (p. 40).

Living in the borderlands, women of color(s) are bound by their own culture and the dominant culture's beliefs and value systems, worldviews, and realities. These factors

contribute to how the dominant culture perceives them. The dominant culture does not understand their values and beliefs and do not take the time to learn about them. The dominant culture perceives and expects that women of color(s)'s values and beliefs are the same as their own; and as such, women of color(s) are expected to act in the same manner (assimilate or conform). If women of color(s) employees act or behave different from the standards and the norm of dominant cultures, they are to be presumed to be incompetent, inferior, and unqualified (Karsten 2006; Keating 2008; Sánchez 2006; Ybarra 2011). To keep their jobs, Maria and Ming Lee must be compliant and obedient; therefore, they both must live within their conditions and accept the worldview and realities of the dominant culture's expectations.

Kaya:

In stage Kaya's case, the employees used her positionality as a Forest Service employee, and for that reason, she is unable to report the information. Kaya was trained as a cultural archeologist by her supervisor and was also informed by her supervisor that the agency cutting corners; hence, overlooking the agencies incompliance was part of the expectation of her job. In her case, the stereotype of being a "pretty native woman," along with her inexperience and age, made them assume she was incompetent. The presumed assumption was if she wanted to work for the Forest Service, she must overlook the agency's behavior and overlook the treaty violations against her own tribe. Kaya, being the only woman of color (Native woman) within the agency and an employee of the government; this meant her opinion would be overlooked and dismissed. The minimal representation of women within the agency, and the lack of cultural support systems within the agency,

allowed her voice to be silenced; and as such, rendered invisible within a male controlled work environment.

Summary:

There seems to be bias in the inner workings of the agency and a presumed incompetence associated with women of color(s) that are based on the lack of representation, lack of cultural understanding, stereotypes, and white supremacist behaviors. In Ming Lee's case, the behavior towards her was rendered irrelevant and not valid enough to be addressed directly by her supervisor. In Maria's case, her presence within the agency did not warrant mentoring and assistance. For Kaya, her physical appearance and her cultural membership meant nothing to the agency, which was bound by oath and law. Presumed incompetent, a topic within all of these interviews, allowed these women to be marginalized, devalued, and ultimately silenced which is an indicator of racism, genderism, and classism existing within a federal government agency. Anzaldúa supports this claim through a quote from

Borderlands: La Frontera:

Individually, but also as a racial entity, we need to voice our needs. We need to say to white society: We need you to accept that fact that Chicanos are different, to acknowledge your rejection and negation of us. We need you to own the fact that you look upon us as less than human, that you stole our land, our personhood, and our self-respect. We need you to make public restitution: to say that, to compensate for your own sense of defectiveness, you strive for power over us, you erase our history and our experience because it makes, you feel guilty—you've rather forget your brutish acts. To say you've split yourself from minority group, that you disown us, that your dual consciousness splits off parts of yourself, transferring the negative parts to us (Where there is persecution of minorities, there is a shadow of projection. Where there is violence and war, there is repression of shadow). (p. 107-108).

Resistance and Empowerment:**Ming Lee:**

Ming Lee came to the realization that she was not going to take this treatment anymore and was going to take back the power. She found empowerment by looking inside herself for the answers. This change occurred when she became sick with cancer and was forced to take a second look at her life. Ming Lee gained a new perspective and insight on life and the way she was going to live it. She realized that her work environment was not going to change and these women were not going to accept her, so she reevaluated her reality. Ming Lee did not give her power to the mean girls; instead she stood up to these women and made a change for herself. The following excerpt explains her newly found empowerment:

I could just quit and just walk away and all my problems would just go away, but then I thought. What's better is if I stay and **THEY HAVE TO FACE ME! I AM NOT GIVING UP!** So I did...I am not going to let anyone push me around anymore. I did, I allowed them to. If my supervisor, the head of [department], would not listen to me, I really should have taken [attorney friend] offer up and slammed them with a lawsuit because I am ready to take it that far. I am not afraid anymore to embarrass whoever; because I want them to be held accountable...you internalize it, if you let people push you around for whatever reason...the stress of not making people accountable for what they did to me lead to my cancer.

For Ming Lee, the stress of her ongoing situation resulted in breast cancer, but having cancer and surviving gave her the inspiration to find empowerment within herself. Now she just ignores the mean girls and with the support of her new supervisor, she no longer has to work with them. Ming Lee also found empowerment outside of the workplace through hobbies. She finds enjoyment with close family and friends, environmental activism and spending time with her dog.

Maria:

Like Ming Lee, Maria had come to a place in her life where she was ready to give in and give up, but the only empowerment she has found is through church and God. As Maria's interview excerpt stated, "One thing that I do is to pray to God and ask God to help me because I cannot do it by myself". During this part of the interview, Maria started crying. She has been deeply hurt by the actions of her coworkers and found it hard to cope with the realities of having to work within this environment every day. There is little she can do about her situation because she needs her job, but the cost of her reality is sucking her into the abode of the shadow (Anzaldúa 2002, p. 550). This is a place of depression, guilt and bitterness although "you choose to face the beast of depression alone you have not the tools to deal with it," and as such, this is Maria's reality.

The stress is overwhelming and Maria is shutting down her feelings, which has plummeted her into depression and unremitted sorrow (see Anzaldúa 2002, p. 550). Anzaldúa relates to Maria's feeling through the following quote:

Though in a conscious mind, black and dark may be associated with death, evil and destruction, in the subconscious mind and in our dreams, white is associated with disease, death and hopelessness.
(cited in Shaw 2007, p.366-367)

Maria, like a lot of women working in the workforce, are dealing with being hired into a position that makes them feel as if they do not belong and they do not want them there. The actions and behaviors of coworkers and supervisors are resulting in physical, mental, and emotional distresses that may lead to health concerns and conditions (Moradi & Rosco 2006; Tate & Linn 2005; Symanski & Stewart 2012). Coworkers and supervisor do not seem to recognize the value, perspectives, and

insight from Maria because they fear and do not understand her (Anzaldúa 2007, 106).

Maria empowers herself, in the midst of the stress and oppressive conditions, through her faith in church, God, and spirituality. She finds hope, resistance, and empowerment in prayers. Maria does not understand why she is treated in a manner of unworthiness and disrespect, so she dismisses their behaviors and actions as “just how the white culture is.”

Kaya:

Kaya realizes she lives in a world of difference and her reality is embraced, accepting herself for who she is. Within the interview, Kaya talks about her worldview and what she thinks about living within the borderlands:

In Alaska it is very diverse so when I moved to Idaho, I had to make that adjustment...this was a white community and a white world and where I live in Idaho that is way they [white people] see the world... I don't feel like the Native community talks about a lot about walking in two worlds [mestiza], I don't think that is my lived experience. I think that these are all fake borders [nepantla] to create senses of others, othering the dominant, or the oppressed, you know, but to me it is all there. Trying to separate [nepantla] doesn't change anything. It is not like I go home and experience a different world from the world I am in every day. To me the idea of walking in two worlds, I think it is a huge disservice because it creates...a sense of loss as opposed to possibility.

She is a proud Kootanie woman that lives in a world of whites and other races that do not understand her beliefs, values, and worth, but she has chosen to exist within a stage that very few understand. I must say at first, I did not understand, but after our interview I was able to see and understand more clearly. The concept of living in two worlds is, in a sense, creating fragmentation for Kaya, for her and how she lives in her world. Kaya's separation of identity equates into a loss of supposed possibility; she feels confident and content with herself. Kaya sees value in the mixing of worlds

and embracing self as a whole. Anzaldúa (2002) describes the place where Kaya resides with the following passage,

Like consciousness, *conocimiento* is about relatedness—to self, others, and the world. Power comes from being in touch with your body, soul, and spirit, and letting their wisdom lead you. Honoring people's otherness, las napanteras advocate the “nos/otras” position—and alliance between “us” and “other”... This more requires a different way of thinking and relating to others; it requires that we act on our interconnectivity, and mode of connecting similar to hypertexts' multiple lines—it includes diverse others and does not depend on traditional categories or sameness. It enacts a re-tribalization by recognizing that some members of a racial or ethnic group do not necessarily stay with the consciousness and conditioning of the group they're born into, but shift momentarily or permanently. (p. 570)

Anzaldúa expresses the need for people and cultures to stop fragmenting themselves and others because doing so results in a huge disservice and limits their possibility for growth. Women of color(s) walk between the borderlands, between worlds, but are these two worlds as different as we believe they are?

Summary

Within the Mestiza world, there are people that think that they are better than others, machismo exists, racism based on skin tone, and hate and fear of what we do not understand. This is even true within the Latin@ world. We choose our own path and reality. Destiny, reality, resistance, and empowerment come in the form of understanding, knowledge, and compassion for yourself and others. In other words, how we choose to see and live life is up to us. We can be the teachers (positive) or we can be the fighters (negative), but we have to live in our skin and work amongst the dominant culture. We must choose the path we want and need to take in order to live with ourselves.

Ming Lee, Maria, and Kaya all found empowerment in very different ways, but they all found a reality that suits their needs and positionality. Ming Lee has taken the role of resistance by removing herself from the mean girls and treating them as if they do not exist. She finds tranquility outside of the office in her own personal life where she empowers herself by being a “gourmand” and learning about cultures through food. Maria conducts her resistance through hard work and through her faith in a higher power. For Maria, empowerment comes from helping people and volunteering within her own cultural community, which makes her feel good about herself and the work she does. Kaya found her resistance and empowerment by respecting her own values and beliefs of government, civil service; respecting herself and her tribe by discontinuing her work with the federal government. Due to her experiential *conocimiento*, Kaya went back to school and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in archeology.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to learning from experiences of women of color(s) in the US Forest Service, but I have learned more than I had anticipated. I have learned that women of color(s) do possess the essential tools and strategies necessary assist the US Forest Service and if given the chance we can make a difference. I have learned that the experiences that I have had working within government were not exclusive to me. There are other women of color(s) experiencing the same types of disparities, but we (I also being a woman of color) can work together to make the work environment a better place. We have found ways to overcome these negative experiences and empower ourselves from the *conocimiento* gained by our own experience and the experiences of other (women of color[s]).

This study has assisted in highlighting these experiences beyond the statistical data collected through statistical reports. It raised consciousness and awareness for ourselves, the Forest Service, and academia. By talking about our experiences, through *testimonios*, there is an element of healing that I did not think was possible. Healing is important if we want to overcome the deep scars which we carry with us from prior negative experiences. These women devised a strategic plan to effect change, build support systems, dialogues, and training necessary to promote a more inclusive work environment for them and other people of difference.

From the *conocimiento* gained from this study, I have written a an Executive Summary that the US Forest Service can utilize to overcome the barriers and challenges with regard to recruitment, retention, and promotion of women of color. During the course of this study, the US Forest Service expressed interest in the results

and suggestions provided in the appendix; hence, these women of color's voices will be heard. Their *conocimiento* will make a difference in the future of other women of color(s) because it highlights the barriers and challenge these women face today.

I found the theory of Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness reveals the types of oppression these participants are experiencing within the Forest Service. These women of color(s) are facing social and political discourses that have made the work environment difficult for diversity and inclusion. Women of color(s) and people of difference need to be utilized as resources making sure all concerns, obstacles, perspectives and insights are consider in the conversation. People of difference are the experts and the five components of the mestiza consciousness can be used as guidelines in the removal of these oppressions; if they are used as the goals to attain diversity and inclusion. These tools, strategies, and perspectives are important in the battle for equality, diversity and inclusion, but there are limits to this study.

Recruitment for this study as limited to the Siuslaw and Willamette National Forests, but I was contacted by a number of women of color from around the United States. The time constraints of getting this thesis completed only allowed me to interview three women of color(s), but even after the deadline women were contacting me and wanting to be part of the study. This was very exciting because all of these women have their own personal experiences of working for the Forest Service and want to make sure they are also heard. These limitations allow for further research to be possible.

There is a need for further research specific to women of color(s) within the US Forest Service within other department such as Pacific Northwest Division of the

US Forest Service. Further research is need for women of color that possess a number of differences such as gay women of color(s) or women of color(s)'s with disabilities (learning and physical) within the US Forest Service. Other studies can address the experiences of women of color and how white women perceive women of color's experiences; differences between white woman's experiences and women of color experiences; and how women of color and white women work together in solidarity within the US Forest Service. These are just some suggestions of research studies that are needed in the exploration of diversity and inclusion.

These types of research studies provide insight, *conocimiento*, and visibility to a population of women that have been invisible for years within the Forest Service. By using Ming Lee, Maria, and Kaya's insights, perspectives, experiences and suggestion an inclusive strategic plan has been constructed for women of color(s), a perspective not previously available to this group. These three women are current agents for future change, however, we need more women to step forward to make a difference. In the following section, I provide a collective statement by the women of colors of statements that participated in this study. I wanted them to speak to the reader directly, so their voices are lifted. The statement is like a manifesto, or feminist or womynisto, which is a public declaration of policy and aims that demand the USFS recognize them, act as an alliance, and a pledge to transform the workplace for a hopeful redress of their wounds. These suggestions will be preceded by a poem expressing what it means to be a woman of color(s) in the US Forest Service, inspired by Anzaldúa.

As a solution-based approach thesis, all three of my participants offered suggestions for improving the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women of color(s) in the USFS.

Participant Suggestion

Ming Lee:

Definitely Outreach and make sure once they get hired and they move to their site that there is a safety net for them. People to show them around or mentors that have the information, housing, medical, and all of the services they will need to have. They probably get that to their new hires. Make sure they have that and then include them to the potlucks they have on the forests. Or take them to drinks after work on a Friday. Make them feel like they are part what they use to recall the Forest Service family, but that concept has gone away. That is why I liked to work for the Forest Service in a small town because on Fridays everyone was invited to go have steaks dinner and beer at the local bar. They had great steak there, so we would all go there and you got caught up there and I did not even work there, but in Idaho, I worked in Utah I started to work, but the spouses were included and so you just got to know people. You made those friendships.

Maria:

I would say, giving them the same opportunity as other people and maybe open more people to be a mentor. That way new people that come to work for the Forest Service, she has a mentor and she can move around quicker. I mean she can mover quicker around. When I say a mentor, I mean someone that can help her find the resources and find this in the computer and help her with the work that she is going to be assigned.

Kaya:

Yeah! Definitely! My boss, I know he took some hard hits for me at first, you know because there is always that learning curve and he hired a pretty young girl. He got a lot of crap for that you know because that is what people saw out of that and he was like, "Shut up". Yeah, having a strong mentor like that is a huge help. I don't think I would have stayed there had I not had a great working relationship with Tom, my boss, and then Steve which was both of my bosses. If I had not had the relationships I had with those two, I don't think I would have stayed as long as I had or given the opportunity.

Poetic Voices of Ming Lee, Maria and Kaya

The poetic voices of my participants express the resistance and empowerment that women of colors with a mestiza consciousness embody. At the conclusion of their respective interviews, participants respond eloquently to Anzaldúa's "To live in the Borderlands means you".

To be a woman of color working within the Forest Service means you...

Are strong and someone that likes to be independent. [Are not] afraid with what other people think or tell about you. Ready to confront the white people in any situation. Don't feel bad if someone comes up to you with lot of aggressive words...just have to move on and don't see the negatives, only see the positives. There are a lot of negatives, but you can always change it to the positive. One thing I have learned is that a lot of negative impacts on you, but from there you can change it and take the sweetness from it.

Work for freedom and to work for change, work for yourself, and work toward the future. I never saw myself as a woman of color working at the Forest Service only as being an American taking care of my land. I think of it as working for freedom because like this is one of the huge gifts we have in America, but we have to work for it and we have to work at it...So I have to say like, to work for freedom and to work for change, work for yourself, and work toward the future.

To be resilient...resilient...and the opposite of assimilation, which would be outspoken and resilient.

Appendix A Executive Summary

US Forest Service Inclusiveness and Diversity: How to recruit, retain, and promote diversity and inclusion for women of color and people of difference.

Diversity of thought is key to successful organizations, and it comes from hiring people from all different backgrounds—rural and urban ... male and female ... with ethnicities, professions, and perspectives of all kinds. Promoting dignity and respect not only for our customers, but also for coworkers and supervisors. The Forest Service must become a fully inclusive organization: an agency where everyone is welcome, respected, and has equal opportunity to contribute and succeed; an agency that reflects America. This is essential if we are going to serve our diverse communities and compete in the job market. In the past 40 years, we have made a lot of progress, but there are still areas of underrepresentation, both in our workforce and in the communities the US Forest serves.

A research study, “Learning from the Experiences of Women of Color in the US Forest Service” was conducted in 2013 by Jeanna Ramos, MAIS (Forest Service employee). This study was a qualitative study conducted with three women of color(s) employees assessing the challenges of recruitment, retention, and promotional efforts within the Forest Service. From this study, suggestions and recommendations were concluded and are presented in this executive summary.

Through the use of these program suggestions, the following benefits may be attained:

1. Increased productivity and teambuilding
2. Increased creativity and problem solving through diversity and inclusion
3. Help to build synergy in teams and enhance communication skills between coworkers, management, and stakeholders.

Women of color are only one of the few populations underrepresented within the US Forest Service. This executive summary provides six recommendation which can improve the recruitment, retention, and inclusion for people of difference which include: women of color(s) and people of color(s), veterens, people differently abled, women, gay (LGBTQQIA), etc.. These recommendations/suggestions promote diversity and inclusion by opening the lines of communication within units, offices and ultimately the overall agency’s coworkers, community members, and stakeholders.

Attached, you will find a list of programs, activities, and training suggestions that will assist in with inclusion, teambuilding, and diversity efforts. These suggestions come from women of color that are currently or have been previously employed by the Forest Service. These programs can increase underrepresented populations and assist in building a welcoming work environment for people of difference.

Women of Color's Recommendations and Suggestions:

1. Local Forest Service Family Event:
 - a. For new hires and permanent employees
 - i. Bi-weekly or monthly social events-competition focused on teambuilding or hobbies
 - ii. Potluck or BBQs outside of office: Inclusive of family, spouses, children and pet friendly
 - iii. Sports Teams – i.e. Softball, touch football, basketball (regular or wheelchair) against other district offices or units
 - iv. Special Emphasis Program Managers-assist and/or coordinate volunteer work with community (i.e. Community cultural events, Habitat for Humanity, veterans, senior citizens etc.)
 1. The idea is to help the community – working together to promote understanding and compassion for each other.
2. Mentoring Programs-For people of difference and others
 - a. For new hires and permanent staff transfers
 - i. Pair new people with another local employee (preferably within the same unit) with similar interests or hobbies
 1. Show newbie around the town:
 - a. Restaurants, supermarkets, shopping areas, entertainment, etc.
 - b. Community events, daycare, animal care facilities, library, Church locations if needed
 2. Provide safety Nets:
 - a. Have someone designated within the office to assist new people with:
 - i. Information about the local area
 - ii. Medical facilities and pharmacy availability
 - iii. Housing
 - iv. Recreation
 - v. And other needs and service to allow the new people to become familiar with the area
 3. Have a designated person assigned (seasoned employee) keep in touch with a new hire making sure they feel welcome and have what they need- ongoing support for the first 6 months
 4. Orientation- organization and local office
 - a. Introduce to other staff, units, supervisors, and essential people to know to get things done.

- b. Point out recycle areas, compost, supplies, parking facilities and/or parking permits
 - c. How do order supplies needed to do the work, computer systems, how to reserve a car, what training are required, computer help desk numbers, etc.
- 3. Outreach for Recruitment
 - a. Have Special Emphasis Program Managers work with recruitment teams and supervisor to assist with recruitment needs.
 - b. Provide specialized cultural training (understanding differences for SEPM with each other and with recruitment team) and teambuilding.
 - c. Utilize women of color and people of difference within the agency to assist in seeking targeted outreach candidates.
- 4. Promote and advertise Special Emphasis Programs and Managers
 - a. Make sure that new hires and transferred employees are aware of whom the SEPMs are and what they do in their local areas.
- 5. Structure Dialogue of Difference sessions
 - a. Pairing of people to assist in understanding difference (i.e. veteran with some other than a veteran). Having two people go to lunch together or attending an event, but they have to spend time with one another.
 - b. Idea for differences:
 - i. Race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability (learning, physical and/or mental, parental status, etc.
- 6. Luncheons of Difference:
 - a. Have a person designated to coordinate speakers, movies, and/ or events around difference with a different theme each month.
 - i. This person be trained in Difference, Power and Discrimination issues, conflict management, and assist in coordination of dialogue of difference
 - 1. Created a safe space for open conversation about difference

Appendix B Questionnaire for Women of color(s):

The following questions will be asked during the 1 to 1.5 hours interview. We may not be able to get to all of these questions, but each question is essential for this research study. For this reason, I offer three options in which to participate in this study:

1. **Interview:** Review the questions before the interview and verbally respond to as many questions in the interview in the time allowed; **OR**
2. **Interview:** Review the questions, type responses and bring the responses to use as a guide for the interview; **OR**
3. **No Interview:** Review the questions, type in your responses, and return the questionnaire to Jeanna Ramos at ramosj@onid.orst.edu

Background Questions:

- 1) What is your age?
- 2) As a woman of color, how do you self-identify yourself?
- 3) How many years have you worked with the US Forest Service?
 - a) If you had more than one position, what were the positions and where were they located?
 - i) If you left these positions, what were your reasons for leaving?
- 4) How do you identify yourself outside of the workplace?
- 5) How do you identify yourself inside the workplace?
 - a) If your identity is different, why is it different?
 - b) If your inside-self and out-self are different, what would it take to allow you to be yourself within the agency?
- 6) Being a woman of color, what made you want to come to work for the US Forest Service?
 - a) Did you actively seek employment with the US Forest Service or did the Forest Service outreach out to you as a woman of color?
- 7) What made you want to work within natural resources?
 - a) Were you exposed to natural resources in grades K-12?
 - b) How did you become aware of natural resources as a career?

Targeted Questions:

- 8) Being a woman of color, how would you describe your experience at beginning of your career in the Forest Service vs. now?

- i) Has your experienced changed and if so how?
- 9) Being a woman of color, how does your cultural identity influence others in the work place?
- a) How does your gender identity influence other professionals?
 - b) How does it differ from other women?
- 10) How does the identity of coworker influence you and the work you do?
- a) Why?
 - b) In what ways does this affect you?
- 11) What makes you want to continue working for the US Forest Service?
- a) Have you ever wanted to quit? And if so, why?
 - b) What are some of the reasons you feel other women of color(s) are leaving?
- 12) Being a woman of color, what systems or programs are in place to support you?
- a) What are they and do you feel they work?
 - i) Have you ever been approached and asked to be a cultural resource or to assist in the inclusion efforts within the agency? If asked would you?
- 13) Being a woman of color with extensive experience working with the Forest Service,
what suggestions would you give to increase the hiring and retention rates of women of color(s)?
- 14) (Please finish this sentence) To be a woman of color working within the Forest Service is to be....

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