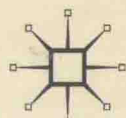


Majority–Minority Relations in  
Contemporary Women's Movements  
Strategic Sisterhood

LINE NYHAGEN PREDELLI and BEATRICE HALSAA



# Majority–Minority Relations in Contemporary Women's Movements

## Strategic Sisterhood

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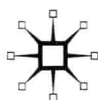
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# Preface

This book is the result of research conducted within *FEMCIT: Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe: The Impact of Women's Movements* ([www.femcit.org](http://www.femcit.org)), funded by the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme (2007–2011). The FEMCIT project was led by Scientific Director Beatrice Halsaa. Its research theme *Multicultural Citizenship: Intersections between Feminism, Ethnic Identity and Religion* was led by Line Nyhagen Predelli.

# Series Editors' Preface

This series offers books on citizenship, gender and diversity in multicultural Europe. It draws on new empirical research, and aims at comparative analysis of the struggles of women's and other radical social movements to remake citizenship. The point of departure is the EU-funded FEMCIT project which examined the impact of women's movements on citizenship in increasingly diverse and multicultural societies ([www.femcit.org](http://www.femcit.org)). This book series has a particular focus on developing an extended, multi-layered, multi-dimensional and gendered conceptualisation of citizenship. It proposes a more complex understanding of citizenship, which is inspired by the contributions of feminism and other social movements. It includes contributions that deal with the core issues of citizenship, gender and diversity – including sexuality, ethnicity, racialisation and class – in contemporary Europe and beyond.

*Beatrice Halsaa*  
*Sasha Roseneil*  
*Sevil Sümer*

# Acknowledgements

This book has been jointly written by us (Line Nyhagen Predelli and Beatrice Halsaa). As feminists from different generations, with different experiences of academic and movement feminism, we have thoroughly enjoyed working together over the past five years. The content of the book is a result of continuous, joint intellectual engagement, which has included challenges as well as more tedious work and pleasure as well as frustration. A feeling of joint achievement we can largely be proud of is a fair summary of what we have gained from the journey on which we have been together.

We have a strong belief that the production of knowledge about relations between minority and majority women in women's movements is an important scholarly endeavour. In this regard, it is interesting to note the prehistory of our engagement with this issue within the context of the FEMCIT project. As academics have slowly begun to pay attention to the political engagement of minority women's organisations in Norway (Nyhagen Predelli 2003 was the first study to do so), the two of us wrote up a full project proposal entitled 'Black Feminism in Norway' and sent off an application for funding to the Norwegian Research Council. We did not receive funding; the referee's comment explained that 'there is no Black feminism in Norway'.

Our aim has been to include as much insightful knowledge and accurate information as possible about women's movements in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. This has been particularly challenging in the case of Spain, as we are not native speakers of Spanish. Any errors that may exist are of course our responsibility as authors.

We wish to acknowledge the participation of Cecilie Thun and Adriana Sandu in parts of the research fieldwork upon which this book is based. We also wish to acknowledge the contribution made by Cecilie Thun to project discussions and the analysis of interviews from Norway, and the contribution by Kim Perren to writing about the UK women's movement's history. Furthermore we thank all the FEMCIT researchers who contributed to discussions during the project period for their continued collegial engagement.

We wish to thank all the interviewees in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom, including representatives from women's movement organisations, civil servants and politicians. The authors also wish to thank Ana Martinez for conducting some of the interviews in Spain, Esmeranda Manful for her participation in the document analysis for Spain and the United Kingdom, Trine Rogg Korsvik and Kristin Aukland for their participation in

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We also wish to thank the Norwegian Research Council for co-financing Cecilie Thun's PhD project and the Cultural Complexity Program at the University of Oslo, Norway, for its financial contribution to Beatrice Halsaa's research. We are grateful to the Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo, Norway, for its financial contribution to support the translation of Spanish interview transcripts into English and the indexing for this book.

We wish to express our heartfelt thanks to Office and Knowledge Transfer Manager Sharon Walker and to Project Administrators Nicola Selby, Rebecca Hand and Emma Good at the Centre for Research in Social Policy, Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, UK, for their professional assistance with the FEMCIT project over the past five years.

Finally we would like to thank Editor Philippa Grand and Editorial Assistant Andrew James at Palgrave Macmillan for their encouragement and patience.

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

AID	Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion ( <i>Arbeids- og integrasjonsdepartementet</i> )
AMAM	Association of Women against Mutilation in Spain
ARK	Action Legal Rights for Women ( <i>Aksjon Rettssikkerhet for Kvinner</i> )
AYIN	African Youth in Norway
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BAMER	Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee
BAWR	Brent Asian Women's Refuge
BFD	Ministry of Children and Families ( <i>Barne- og familiedepartementet</i> )
BLD	Ministry of Children and Equality ( <i>Barne- og likestillingsdepartementet</i> )
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BMER	Black and Minority Ethnic or Refugee
BUFDIR	Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs ( <i>Barne, ungdoms og familiedirektoratet</i> )
CAADA	Co-ordinated Action against Domestic Abuse
CAVAS	Centre for Assisting Victims of Sexual Aggressions ( <i>Centro de Asistencia a Víctimas de Agresiones Sexuales</i> )
CEDAW	United Nation Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CELEM	Spanish Coordination for the European Women's Lobby ( <i>Coordinadora Española para el Lobby Europeo de Mujeres</i> )
CERD	The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the ICERD)
CIMTM	Commission for Investigating the Bad Treatment against Women ( <i>Comisión para la Investigación de Malos Tratos a Mujeres</i> )
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
EC	European Community
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EEA	Extended Economic Area
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission



Equis-FGM	Team for Sensitisation against Female Genital Mutilation ( <i>Equipo de sensibilización sobre Mutilación Genital Femenina</i> )
EU	European Union
EVAW	End Violence against Women Campaign
EWL	European Women's Lobby
FAMUVI	Raped Women's Assistance Federation ( <i>Federación de Asistencia a Mujeres Violadas</i> )
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FM	Women's Foundation ( <i>Fundacion Mujeres</i> )
FMP	Progressive Women's Foundation ( <i>Fundación Mujeres Progresistas</i> )
FMU	Forced Marriage Unit
FOKUS	Forum for Women and Development ( <i>FOKUS - Forum for Kvinner og Utviklingsspørsmål</i> )
FORWARD	Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development
FWG	Foreign Women's Group
GEO	Government Equalities Office
GLC	Greater London Council
HRS	Human Rights Service
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
IM	Institute of Women ( <i>Instituto de la Mujer</i> )
IMDI	The Directorate for Integration and Diversity ( <i>Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet</i> )
INLO	Immigrants' National Organization in Norway ( <i>Innvandernes Landsorganisasjon</i> )
IWY	International Women's Year
JURK	Legal Advice for Women ( <i>Juridisk Rådgivning for Kvinner</i> )
KIA	Christian Intercultural Association ( <i>Kristent Interkulturelt Arbeid</i> )
KRD	The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development ( <i>Kommunal- og Regional Departementet</i> )
MDM	Democratic Women's Movement ( <i>Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres</i> )
MiRA	The MiRA Resource Centre for Black, Immigrant and Refugee Women in Norway ( <i>MiRA - Ressurssenter for innvandrere- og flyktningkvinner</i> )
MP	Member of Parliament
MWN	Muslim Women's Network
NAWO	National Alliance of Women's Organisations
NAWP	Newham Asian Women's Project
NCLW	National Women's Liberation Conference
NCW	National Council of Women

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
NIWEP	Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
NOAS	The Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers ( <i>Norsk Organisasjon for Asylsøkere</i> )
NOU	Norwegian Official Report ( <i>Norsk Offentlig Utredning</i> )
NRK	Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation ( <i>Norsk Rikskringkasting</i> )
NWLC	National Women's Liberation Conference
Ombud	The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, previously the Gender Equality Ombud ( <i>Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet, tidligere Likestillingsombudet</i> )
OMOD	Organisation against Public Discrimination ( <i>Organisasjon Mot Offentlig Diskriminering</i> )
ORKIS	Oslo Red Cross International Centre ( <i>Oslo Røde Kors Internasjonale Senter</i> )
Ot.prp.	Propositions to the Norwegian Odelsting, <i>Odelstingsproposisjoner</i> , or green papers
OWAAD	Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent
PCE	Spanish Communist Party ( <i>Partido Comunista Español</i> )
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PP	People's Party ( <i>Partido Popular</i> )
PSOE	Socialist Party ( <i>Partido Socialista Obrero Español</i> )
RCRP	Rape Crisis Research Project
RNGS	Research Network on Gender Politics and the State
ROW	Rights of Women
RWRP	Refugee Women's Resource Project (at Asylum Aid)
SBS	Southall Black Sisters
SEIF	Self-help for immigrants and refugees ( <i>Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger</i> )
SMED	Centre against Ethnic Discrimination ( <i>Senter mot etnisk diskriminering</i> )
SNF	Sami Women's Forum ( <i>Sami Nisson-Forum</i> )
St.meld.	Reports to the Norwegian Parliament from a Ministry ( <i>Stortingsmelding</i> ), or white papers
SUS	'Stop under suspicion'
THEMIS	Association of Women's Lawyers ( <i>Asociación de Mujeres Juristas</i> )
TUC	Trade Unions Congress
UD	Norwegian Directorate of Immigration ( <i>Utlendingsdirektoratet</i> )
UGT	National Union of Workers ( <i>Union General de Trabajadores</i> )
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

VAW	Violence against women
WA	Women's Aid
WAF	Women against Fundamentalism
WAITS	Women Acting in Today's Society
WANGO	World Associations of Non-Governmental Organisations
WAR	Women against Rape
WAVE	Women against Violence Europe Network
WEU	Women and Equality Unit
WHO	World Health Organisation
WLM	Women's Liberation Movement
WNC	Women's National Commission
WRA	Women's Rights Association ( <i>Kvinnesaksforeningen</i> )
WRC	Women's Resource Centre
WU	Women's Unit
WWEN	Wales Women's European Network

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# 1

## Women's Movements, Gender Equality, Citizenship and Ethnic Diversity in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom

### Introduction

This book examines how relations between ethnic 'majority' and 'minority' women's organisations<sup>1</sup> in contemporary women's movements, as well as relations between women's movements and governments in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom, have developed and are being talked about by women's movement activists. Our focus on these relations originates from an interest in the mobilisation of white, Black, migrant, indigenous, national and ethnic minority women in separate organisations in the United Kingdom and Norway starting from the 1960s and 1970s, and in Spain from the 1970s and 1980s. The claims forwarded by ethnic majority women's organisations at that time focused on issues perceived to be most relevant to them, and although class was considered as part of an intersectional lens on women's inequality, at least by those on the political left, racism and ethnic discrimination were generally absent from their agenda. Ethnic minority women's organisations emerged from the experiences of Black, migrant, indigenous, national and ethnic minority women, and their political claims centred on gender, race and ethnicity, as well as on migration issues, whilst also acknowledging the importance of class issues. Since ethnic majority women's organisations at that time did not engage explicitly with issues of race and ethnicity in their political claims-making, ethnic minority women's organisations critiqued them for being blind to the importance of race and ethnicity, and even ethnocentric and racist. Black and post-colonial feminist critiques of white women's movement agendas and claims-making arose concomitantly in the United States (Beale 1969; Cade 1970; hooks 1982; Lorde 1984; Mohanty 1988; Crenshaw 1989; Hill Collins 1991; Narayan 1997; see also Boxer 1998;<sup>2</sup> Roth 2004; Breines 2006) and in the United Kingdom (Carby 1982; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983; Amos and Parmar 1984; Bhavnani and Coulson 1985; Grewal et al. 1988;

see also Mirza 1997; Sudbury 1998). The critiques included calls for white women to consider their own racial privilege and to radically transform their feminist theories and practices, and for women’s movements to develop and integrate more intersectional analyses in their political demands for equality. But what has happened since the emergence of separate organising among ethnic majority and minority women? We wanted to explore how ‘sisterhood’, strategic cooperation and political claims-making across racial and ethnic boundaries have developed and are being talked about by contemporary women’s movement activists: Do ethnic minority and majority women still organise separately? Do they join forces in articulating their demands on governments? Do organised minority activists talk critically about majority women’s activism, or are they rather indifferent? How have majority women’s organisations responded to ethnic minority women and their separate mobilisation, and how do they deal with criticism from ethnic minority women’s organisations? To what extent and on what issues have ethnic minority and majority women been able to cooperate, irrespective of tensions and disagreements? Inspired by Sudbury (1998), we seek to understand whether ethnic majority women’s organisations have embraced and accepted, or resisted and rejected, the interests of ethnic minority women, and the extent to which majority and minority women’s organisations have formed alliances in order to influence public policy. In line with Roth’s *Separate Roads to Feminism* (2004: 4), we view the separate organising of ethnic minority and majority women not as a result of ‘natural’ differences, but as a result of the way that activists understood their interests and choices, given the specific sets of circumstances in which they were activists. We examine the mobilisation of women’s organisations along racial and ethnic boundaries, the articulations of critique by ethnic minority women, the responses of majority women’s movements as well as the occasional efforts at joint mobilisation and claims-making. We compare women’s movements in three rather different countries – Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom – and this enables us to consider a variety of ‘the specific set of circumstances’ within which women’s interests have been mobilised. We explore the different political histories and variations in contemporary welfare, gender and citizenship policies in order to understand variations and similarities in the relationships between minority and majority women’s movements. Historical and socio-political factors, state structures as well as social movement and civil society characteristics are all relevant to understanding why ethnic minority and majority women have organised separately along racial and ethnic lines (Roth 2004). In turn, separate organising, in addition to differing political interests, has made it difficult for women’s organisations to establish dialogue, alliance and cooperation across racial and ethnic boundaries. A full chapter overview of our book can be found at the end of this first chapter.

Both similarities and differences can be observed between women’s movements in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom. In Chapter 2 we outline

in more detail the different timings of women's movement mobilisation in the three countries, primarily focusing on the 1970s and 1980s; the central issues that have been the focus of political claims-making; the various cleavages within women's movements that are related to broader political landscapes; and the development of governmental legislative and institutional responses to issues of gender inequality as well as ethnic and racial inequalities. Majoritised women's movements in the three countries have foregrounded issues of discrimination and inequality that have been perceived as urgent to their experiences and interests, and governments have framed their responses to address these issues as 'gender equality policies'. Ethnic and racial inequalities have, on the other hand, been at the centre of anti-racist and anti-discrimination movements and organisations established by various national, indigenous and ethnic minorities. Minoritised women have combined issues of gender inequality with issues of ethnic and racial inequalities and sought to argue for an intersectional lens which highlights their experience of multiple forms of discrimination. As argued by Roth (2004: 3), the articulation of feminist demands by 'activist women that were largely organisationally distinct from one another, and from the beginning, largely organised along racial/ethnic lines' resulted from the different contexts and circumstances within which women mobilised their activism, and the different choices they perceived themselves to have (*ibid.*: 1). Emerging from different types of protest movements, different groups of women have sought to advance their own interests in the face of both visible and more hidden forms of oppression. It can be argued that minoritised women, including Black, indigenous (e.g. Sami), Roma and other ethnic minority women, were pioneers in bridging the agendas of women's movements and anti-racist movements. Their efforts to combine feminism and anti-racism have at times been met with opposition from men within anti-racist movements as well as from majority women within women's movements. However, their concerns have also been met with support, and movements for gender rights and anti-racist movements have drawn inspiration from each other. The parallel development in Europe of multicultural societies and institutional responses to multiple forms of inequality are likely to increase and strengthen the continuous bridging of feminist and gender issues with issues of racism and discrimination within women's movements.

Another important influence on our work is that of whiteness studies, where Ruth Frankenberg (1993) has been a driving force in analysing 'how racism enters and shapes white women's lives' (*ibid.*: 10), highlighting the need for white women to reflect on their own racial positioning and privilege. While women's movements have argued strongly for the societal inclusion, participation and equality of women on a par with men, claims-making and practices within women's movements themselves have been critiqued for privileging white, middle-class women's views and interests, and for ignoring or rejecting Black and 'third-world' women. Overall, multiple forms of inequality shape the inclusion or exclusion of women and



men in civil society along three dimensions: (1) the relationship of civil society to the state, (2) the relationship between civil society actors and (3) the internal relations within specific civil society groups and organisations. In our research, we have focused particularly on any evidence of inclusionary and exclusionary discourses and practices in relation to ethnic minority women's status, mobilisation and participation within women's movements, and with respect to political claims-making. The interested reader will find historical overviews of women's movement mobilisation in Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom in Chapter 2. In this introductory chapter, a glimpse will suffice to highlight a few similarities and differences. The 1970s women's movement in the United Kingdom (commonly referred to as the *Women's Liberation Movement*) was very diverse and included a broad political spectrum of women's groups. Despite the ideological diversity of the movement, specific sets of political demands were agreed to at national feminist conferences in the early 1970s. The demands centred on labour market rights (equal pay and opportunities), access to abortion and contraception, child-care, legal and financial independence for women, lesbian women's rights and freedom from male violence (Caine 1997). During the 1970s, a number of women's organisations were formed at the national as well as local levels, including the Brixton Black Women's Group (established in 1973), the National Women's Aid Federation (established in 1974), the National Abortion Campaign (established in 1975), Rights of Women (established in 1975) and Southall Black Sisters (established in 1979). The Fawcett Society, whose history dates back to 1866, also had an active role in movement politics (see Lovenduski and Randall 1993: 181). The Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD, the national network organisation) was formed in 1978 and held its first national conference the following year. Central agenda issues were education, police brutality, immigration abuses and racism (Bryan et al. 1985). In contrast to Norway, where the interest in academic studies of ethnic minority women's mobilisation and activism is recent, and Spain, where there is a lack of such studies, in the United Kingdom there is a relatively large body of scholarship on both ethnic majority and ethnic minority women's mobilisation and activism. Such scholarship has provided considerable background information for our UK case study.

The main struggles of the majoritised women's movement in 1970s Norway (commonly referred to as *kvinnebevegelsen*)<sup>3</sup> were related to issues concerning abortion, childcare, equal pay, gender equality legislation, political representation, domestic abuse and EU membership (for a more detailed overview of the women's movement in Norway, see Chapter 2). As in other European countries, the movement was diverse and consisted of a mix of liberal, socialist and radical feminist organisations. At the national level, the number of explicitly feminist organisations was small (a total of seven; see Hernes 1982: 48), including the long-standing Norwegian Women's Rights Organisation (*Norsk Kvinnesaksforening*, established in 1884), the