women employed in traditionally male blue-collar occupations, women excel, promote, and develop as leaders and skilled tradeswomen within the trades and in traditionally male blue-collar jobs. They have careers. They also hit glass ceilings. However, the obstacles they face and the remedies they devise differ markedly from those of white-collar, often upper middle-class women, whose situations the Glass Ceiling Act seemed designed to address.

NOTES

1. U.S. Glass Ceiling Commission, *A Solid Investment: Making Full Use of the Nation's Human Capital* (Final Report of the Commission). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1995.
2. Glass Ceiling Commission, Vision Statement, available online at www.mith2.umd.edu/WomensStudies/GenderIssues/GlassCeiling/LaborDeptInfo/mission-statement (retrieved July 22, 2005).
3. K. Kissman, "Women in Blue-Collar Occupations: An Exploration of Constraints and Facilitators." *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 17(3) (1990): 139–49.
4. R. M. Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993).
5. P. K. Mansfield, P. B. Koch, J. Henderson, J. R. Vicary, M. Cohn, and E. W. Young, "The Job Climate for Women in Traditionally Male Blue-Collar Occupations." *Sex Roles*, 25(1/2) (1991): 63–79.
6. J. A. Greene, *Blue Collar Women at Work with Men: Negotiating the Hostile Environment* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, in press).
7. Margaret Foegen Karsten, "Race, Gender, Class and Management: An Introduction," in *Management, Gender, and Race in the 21st Century* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), pp. 19–26.
8. M. J. Austin, P. M. Kettner, and J. M. Kruzich. Assessing Recent Textbooks and Casebooks in Human Service Administration: Implications and Future Directions. Paper presented at the *Journal of Administration in Social Work* Editorial Board Meeting, University of South Carolina, Columbia, 2002.
9. M. L. Anderson and P. H. Collins, "Reconstructing Knowledge: Toward Inclusive Thinking," in M. L. Anderson and P. H. Collins, eds., *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), pp. 1–5.

8

The Ties that Bind and Separate Black and White Women

Stacy Blake-Beard, Maureen A. Scully, Suzzette Turnbull, Laurie Hunt, Karen L. Proudford, Jessica L. Porter, Gina LaRoche, and Kelly Fanning

Ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women's joint power.

—Audre Lorde

INTRODUCTION

Audre Lorde (1984, p. 117) offered these words over two decades ago—and they ring as true today as they did when she wrote them. In the years since Lorde's proclamation, women have both progressed and stalled. Recent statistics support the progress that women have experienced in navigating their careers. In 2001, women earned a growing proportion of educational degrees (57.3 percent of U.S. bachelor's degrees, 58.5 percent of all master's degrees, and 44.9 percent of all doctorates) and increased their presence in the workforce (in 2002, women made up 46.5 percent of the U.S. labor force and 50.5 percent of management and professional specialty positions) (Catalyst, 2004).

Yet despite the growing numbers of women in the professions, they still hold a small number of the top positions in organizations (Catalyst, 2004). Women make up only 15.7 percent of corporate officers and 13.6 percent of board directors; ten are Fortune 500 CEOs. If we look at the situation facing women of color, those statistics become even more dismal. Several factors are offered as barriers preventing women from reaching the tops of organizations in proportion to their presence in the workforce. These obstacles are exclusion from informal networks, challenge in accessing mentoring relationships, stereotyping and misconceptions about women's roles and abilities, and failure of senior leadership to be accountable for women's advancement (Catalyst, 2004).

In this endeavor, we wanted to look beyond these organizational and societal factors to focus on how women can help each other.

How can women help each other? Two decades later, Holvino (2005, p. 1) echoes Lorde's sentiment. She firmly maintains that "the best way for women to achieve power, support each other and make our organizations better is by engaging with our differences as women within and across racial-ethnic groups." In this effort, we focus specifically on the discourse between black and white women in the workforce. From an organizational context, black and white women are often the two largest groups of women represented (U.S. EEOC, 2003). As such, it is particularly important to understand how these two groups might be allies; it is equally important to understand what gets in their way. We do not see the challenges between black and white women as totally encompassing or illustrative of struggles that other women of color have with white women, or with black women for that matter. As Lorde (1984, pp. 127–28) so eloquently notes "The Woman of Color who is not Black and who charges me with rendering her invisible by assuming that her struggles with racism are identical with my own has something to tell me that I had better learn from, lest we both waste ourselves fighting the truths between us." Holvino (2005) purposefully centers on the experiences of Latinas to give voice to their often ignored perspectives. All of our stories are important; other scholars have devoted energy and time to illuminating the experiences and stories of women of color (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Eng, 1999; Hurtado, 2003; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983).

The scope of this chapter is focused on the unique conversation between black and white women. It is based on a structured conversation among four black and four white women about their past experiences with women across the racial divide. We specifically asked one another a series of structured questions; the overarching guide to our research was to explore the ties that bind and separate us in our efforts to work together. We offer an exploration into the sociohistorical tale between black and white women as it is with us now—the ways that we connect and disconnect from one another. Furthermore, we recommend actions that black and white women can take to support one another.

UNEASY HISTORY: THE DIFFICULTY AND PROMISE OF OUR SEGREGATED SISTERHOOD

As we began this project, we had ample evidence (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Blake, 1999; Connolly & Noumair, 1997; Granger, 2002; Lorde, 1984; Thomas, 1989; Thompson, 2001) that our sociohistorical pasts should be considered. Thomas (1989) writes about the impact of historical race relations, particularly the legacy of slavery, on the development and maintenance of relationships between blacks and whites formed in an organizational context.

Delving into works that documented black women's participation in the feminist and civil rights movements (Giddings, 1984; hooks, 1989; Hurtado, 1989), we found a historical bias undergirding the challenging relationships between black and white women. Although not widely acknowledged, several black female activists were ardent advocates of black women's participation in the women's rights struggle (Breines, 1996; Wallace, 1979). Yet black women faced virulent racism from their white counterparts as they worked "together" in the feminist movement.

The differences that emerged in the suffrage movement continue to affect contemporary relationships between white and black women. Bell, Meyerson, Nkomo, and Scully (2003)—two black and two white female academics working together on a research project—describe the impact of traditional race relations on their interactions. One of the black women claimed that due to her assumptions, which were based on past experiences, she had low expectations of white women's willingness to speak out on her behalf. One of the white women replied that such assumptions made it quite challenging to enter their partnership with a nondefensive stance and contribute her critical perspective, particularly if she disagreed with her black colleagues. In her dialogue with a white female colleague, Connolly confesses that "I do approach White women with skepticism until I get to know them as individuals and we work through our historical relationship. If there is no opportunity to work through our troubled collective past, there is no hope for a real personal relationship in the present" (Connolly & Noumair, 1997, p. 324). This legacy of anger, mistrust, and fear of betrayal has important implications for relationships in which black and white women can engage. They are not starting with a clean slate; so understanding the dynamics of their relationships, both the difficulty and the promise, is necessary to overcome this legacy.

OUR PROCESS

Our effort started with a set of questions that Blake-Beard (a black woman) wanted to answer—what allows black women and white women to support one another? What enables these relationships? What gets in their way? She extended an invitation to three black and four white women colleagues (see Table 8.1 for a description of coauthors). Several examples exist of researchers who have entered this dialogue of understanding relationships between and among black and white women in a similar way (Ayvazian & Tatum, 1994; Connolly & Noumair, 1997; Granger, 2002). Granger's (2002) research on black and white women's friendships offers an example of Blake-Beard's recruitment strategy to enlist her fellow contributors. For her study, Granger selected black and white female acquaintances who were involved in cross-race friendships. Rather than using purposeful sampling, Granger specifically wanted to connect with and study women who were committed to working against injustice and had a certain degree of sophistication and savvy in understanding and dealing with issues of race and racism. Connolly and Noumair (1997, p. 323) describe their collaboration as "a political act. It is a dialogue between two women, one Black

TABLE 8.1. Coauthors of Study

Stacy Blake-Beard	Black	Professor, Simmons School of Management	• PhD in Organizational Psychology • Two step-children • Married • Oldest of four siblings • Born in Washington, DC • Grew up in Maryland • Research is on mentoring and diversity • Three Important Things: ○ Authentic Interactions ○ Empathy ○ Community
Maureen Scully	White	Professor, University of Massachusetts, Boston	• PhD in Organizational Behavior • One child • Married • Oldest of four siblings • Born and grew up in Massachusetts • Research is on employee grassroots efforts and meritocracy • Three Important Things: ○ Purposefully teaching in social responsibility in business school ○ Teaching and writing to address social inequality and change ○ Enjoying being mom to 4-year-old
Suzzette Turnbull	Black	Associate Director of MBA Program, Simmons School of Management	• MBA • No children • Single • Born in Jamaica • Grew up in Jamaica, New York, and Florida • Second of three siblings • Expertise in staff and volunteer management and fundraising • Three Important Things: ○ Tactile and detail oriented ○ Goal to think and talk more provocatively ○ First time engaging in an intimate discussion and analysis of race relations

TABLE 8.1. (Continued)

Laurie Hunt	White	Consultant and Coach, Laurie Hunt & Associates	• MA in Gender Studies • No children • Married • Born in western Canada • Grew up in Ontario • Third of five siblings • 20+ years in high-tech industry • Three Important Things: ○ Values are important—integrity, courage, respect, health, ○ Formerly was a white woman who didn't "get it" ○ Challenge is to control Canadian arrogance
Karen Proudford	Black	Professor, Morgan State University	• PhD in Management • No children • Single • Born in Germany • Grew up in Delaware • Youngest of four siblings • Research is on intergroup dynamics, leadership, and diversity • Three Important Things: ○ Loves doing conceptual/theoretical work ○ Loves doing applied work with practical implications for change ○ Very "in tune" and up-front about race dynamics
Kelly Fanning	White	Internal Consultant, Blue Cross Blue Shield	• MBA • No children • Committed long-term relationship • Grew up in Massachusetts • Youngest of two siblings • Background in youth and social services • Three Important Things: ○ Very honest ○ Greatest strength and weakness is works hard and has high standards ○ Traveled abroad to counter upbringing in racially homogenous town

(*continued*)

TABLE 8.1. (Continued)

Gina LaRoche	Black	Managing Director, INSPIRITAS	• MBA • Two children • Married • Grew up in New York and Massachusetts • Oldest of three siblings • 18+ years in sales and training in high-tech • Three Important Things: ○ Athletic—training to do first marathon ○ Fled corporate America and started two companies, one with husband ○ Love to help people grow
Jessica Porter	White	Research Associate, Harvard Business School	• MBA • Two children • Married • Grew up in Michigan • Oldest of two siblings • Founder and past Executive Director of Association of Labor Assistants and Childbirth Educators (ALACE) • Three Important Things: ○ Like to have fun while working ○ Gestates ideas, so silence should not be mistaken for indifference ○ Appreciates feedback from people with whom she works

Data for this table were compiled from coauthors' bios and their responses to one of the invitation questions: As we are jumping into this work, what are three important things that we should know about you?

and one White. It is a deeply personal account of both our thoughts and feelings about race, gender, and sexuality and a description of the processes involved in exploring them within ourselves and with each other." Much like our predecessors, we wanted to create a space to do a deep dive into our similarities and differences. In her initial invitation, Blake-Beard suggested, "I wanted to assemble a multicultural community of scholars whom I trust to really mull over this topic. I see this chapter as an invitation to actually do what we are writing about—draw from our past experiences to illuminate how black and white women can effectively and authentically work together."

We are alike and different from one another in interesting and important ways. Our group represents different disciplines and professions; our varied backgrounds add to the depth of our effort. We all hold advanced degrees. Half of us have children. Some are married; some are in committed relationships; others are single. We hail from several states in the United States, as well as

Jamaica and Canada. Most of us reside and work in the Boston metropolitan area; only one lives in another state. The common denominator was that Blake-Beard knew and trusted each of the invitees; she believed that each would be able to enter this collaboration open to authentic sharing and learning.

Bell and colleagues (2003) also provide a model for our work—their research evolved from an investigation of black and white women's efforts to address workplace inequality to include a focus on their process as black and white women engaged in change. They acknowledged that for their work, the act of writing became a microcosm of their topic of inquiry. Bell et al. (2003) suggest that work done in this manner represents a "spirit of reflexive ethnography," which they describe as "an ongoing conversation about experience while one is simultaneously living in the moment. By extension, the reflexive ethnographer does not simply report the 'facts' or 'truths' but actively constructs interpretations of his or her own experiences in the field and then questions how those interpretations came about." Like Bell et al. (2003), we were writing about our own interaction as black and white women; our discourse with one another was the subject of our research effort. Unlike Bell and her colleagues, our entire team never met face to face. All of our research was conducted using a series of email messages, dissemination of shared documents, and conference calls (see Figure 8.1 for a timetable and description of our process).

In addition to the structured conversations and analysis of these conversations, Turnbull also conducted a literature search to uncover historic themes characterizing the challenges and opportunities facing white and black women working together. We juxtaposed the themes identified in the literature with the issues emerging from our own discourse.

Our next step was to break the team into four cross-race dyads. Each of the four pairs was charged with documenting the learning on one of several themes that we identified as critical in our work together. Each pair used the documents that we had produced as a team and the literature on black and white women to understand the dynamics we saw emerging in our group. The four pairs directed their documents to Blake-Beard, who synthesized our separate pieces into one cohesive document. Each coauthor was then given an opportunity to respond to Blake-Beard's synthesis, correct any glaring misperceptions, and ensure that the words in this chapter accurately reflected her experience of our interactions.

THEMES

Through the process of our structured conversations, e-mail compilations, conference calls, and dyadic work teams, several themes emerged. We focus on three in particular to deepen our understanding of factors that both get in the way and support collaborative action between black and white women. These three themes, which we found were interrelated, are intragroup and intergroup connections, fear and silence, and making friends and building allies.

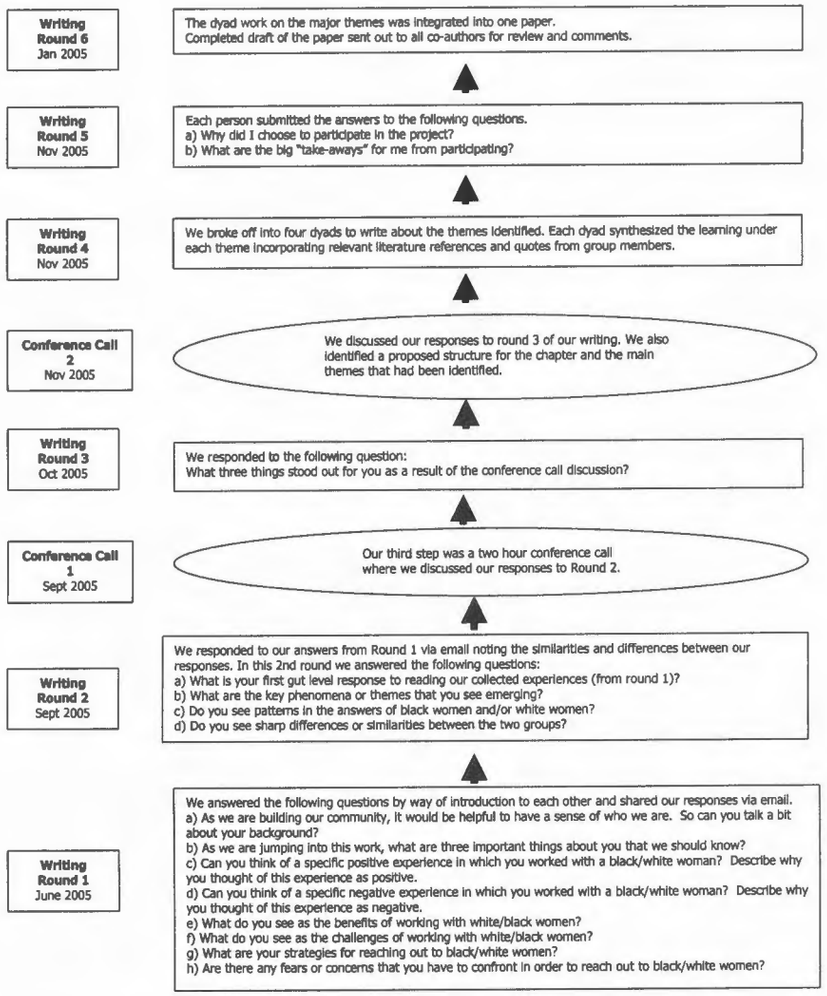

FIGURE 8.1. Research process.

Connections: Intragroup and Intergroup Dynamics among Black and White Women

> *Women must recognize that power circulates in many directions, and because we all have the experiences of advantage and disadvantage, this knowledge allows for the possibility of connection that breaks the cycle [of denial, accusation, confession and disconnect in women's groups].*
>
> —Holvino (2005, p. 5)

As we discussed our reactions to our personal histories, we recognized interesting patterns. For example, we noted that the black women seemed to connect to each other's experiences. The social psychological processes of similarity and attraction (Byrne, 1971) were operative as the black women recognized and were drawn to one another. LaRoche said, "I felt an immediate collegiality with the black women on the call. I only personally know about a handful of powerful black women (outside my family), so I think this group has grown to a place of special meaning for me." Proudford indicated,

> What was most striking to me about our conversation was what seemed like an instant affinity among the black women and the lack thereof among the white women. As a black woman, I think I listened for points of connection with the experiences of other black women—because it is so (or has been) so rare to be in situations with my black female peers. As soon as I hear one, I feel a rush of excitement and want to say, "Yes! That's just how I saw it!" or "That's just what it was like for me!

Blake-Beard described these feelings as associated with being wrapped in a warm, comforting, perhaps healing blanket.

The reaction of the black women may have been tied to also being one of few, or holding token status in their career journeys. Kanter (1977, p. 207) described tokens as "the few of a different type in an organization with a numerically dominant type." Many professional black women are still one of few in their work settings. Rarely do they have an opportunity to see and interact with other women of color—so when the opportunity is offered to connect with other black women, the interactions are valued and treasured. As Turnbull indicated, "When you're in the minority and you see a peer, those feelings rise within you, and you gravitate to that person. Sometimes, just knowing you're in the same room or in the same organization can provide that sense of relief."

The warm blanket metaphor seemed to resonate with white women as well. Hunt noted, "I was envious. There were three other white women 'dissidents' on the call... and yet we did not feel that sense of community so evident among the black women." One described a recent experience at a conference attended by women of color:

> the white women sat at two tables individually and the black women immediately created a community in a large circle. I looked across the room in envy that time as well. What do white women need to create that type of community?... What is it that keeps us at a distance and prevents us from getting close to keep each other warm as black women do?

This striking contrast between bonding among black women and the experiences of white women was echoed by other white women. As Scully indicated, "White women have seen this quick way in which black women are relieved and delighted to meet another sister who 'gets it.' I think white women

are a little envious of this fast bonding and know that we don't have this quick connection at work in general, except in some very male-dominated environments." Hunt added,

> White women do not come from the same place or level of "getting it." Although we have a common underpinning, our experiences are not immediately unifying. The competitiveness between white women and the resulting lack of solidarity means I can't totally rely on my fellow white women to be supportive even knowing they are fellow dissidents. There are various levels of "getting it" for white people and seemingly a more absolute level of "getting it" for black women because it is their lived experience—their warm blanket of common experience.

Turnbull was not surprised at the differences in how the two groups formed at this conference. "I've taken that dynamic for granted, because it's the way we've always interacted as a race. For the same reason, I've never noticed that white women don't gravitate the same way to one another."

It may be that white women were engaged in an internal (intragroup), perhaps even intrapsychic dialogue about race. Porter said, "I see how race has shaped me in the form of privilege, but when I examine my identity I don't feel a tremendous bond or affinity with other white people. In fact, I am more likely to feel alienated and embarrassed by them." Porter's experience is illustrated in Bell and Nkomo's (2001) exploration of white and black professional women. They found that the black women were very vocal in stating what they cherish about their racial identity. In contrast, the white women expressed ambivalence, confusion, and frustration when asked to describe what they cherished about being white women.

As we grappled to understand the differences we saw between the black and white women in our group, we suggested potential explanations for the lack of connection that the white women in our group felt. Scully offered this explanation: "In our own dynamics on the phone, it seemed like the white women were not so much directly connecting with each other as simultaneously engaged in the activity of working on understanding the black women's perspective." Although there is a problem with white women and trust (intragroup), Hunt suggests that the dynamic on our first conference call was the white women trying to find the balance between respectfully listening to what the black women had to say—letting their voices be heard—while at the same time contributing to the conversation.

Scully suggested that the need to bond may not be as urgent for white women because they are now present in larger (though not large) numbers. Scully's suppositions are supported by Ely's (1995) research on proportional representation and gender. In her research on female lawyers, Ely found that in firms with a greater number of women in high-status positions, women throughout those organizations experienced several benefits. Women in sex-integrated firms were

more easily able to integrate aspects of masculinity and femininity and regarded feminine attributes as a source of strength, in stark contrast to women in male-dominated firms. As more women enter and advance in the workplace, and token status diffuses, women draw strength from their numbers and the presence of alternative models of successful women. Drawing on her past experiences as a woman in a predominantly male organization, Scully speculated:

> Here's what I think may be going on for white women: White women have now infiltrated many work places in great enough numbers such that we aren't in solo positions and starved for connection with someone in similar shoes, but not in such great numbers that there is gender equity and no need for bonding. I remember at [a leading business school], the faculty women talked about how when there were 6 women on a faculty of 100, they met regularly and gave each other a lot of sustenance. By the time I was there and there were 17 women out of 100, there were too many of us to find a time and fit at any one person's dining room table for dinner, but we were still few enough that there were plenty of gender issues.

The presence of those remaining "issues" and challenges ensures that connection will remain a priority. As Hunt indicates:

> I think white women do come together for bonding. More and more in organizations women's networking groups are appearing with a focus on addressing gender issues and for connection.... I think white women are starved for connection. I know I was for most of my corporate marketing career in a male-dominated industry (high tech). When I became involved in women's leadership and diversity, I can still remember the overwhelming sense of "I am not alone" once I started to realize how many other women felt the same isolation—regardless of race or ethnicity or job or level in the organization. When it comes to race, however, I think white women just don't know what it means to consider race; they don't understand the significance of race to them as white women. So... in conversations like the one we're having in this group, for race-conscious white women, I think we're just trying really hard to get it right.

Hunt's comments make it clear that it can be quite difficult for white women to engage in a discussion *with each other* about race. So intragroup connection among white women is complicated, making intergroup connection with black women more complicated.

We are tentative about reaching conclusions about the dynamic we have noted, however. On closer inspection, the intragroup dynamics among black women and among white women do not fall neatly into a solidarity/lack of solidarity dichotomy. There are, for example, ways in which white women act in concert. Dumas (1985, p. 330) gives an account of the backlash encountered when a black woman assumed a position as dean in a large university:

> When she took the position her faculty, all White women seemed very happy to have her, and wanted to get to know her better. She spent a great deal of time with them in social gatherings and orientation meetings.
>
> However, when the time came to turn her attention to work, she began to have problems. The faculty that seemed so eager to work with her and who appeared from the academic and professional credentials to be well qualified for their jobs began to appear more and more insecure and immature.

The dean's efforts to have faculty members take more responsibility for their work were met with stiff resistance. Dumas indicates that faculty complained when the dean was away, seemed unable to keep small disagreements from escalating into major conflicts, and reported being less satisfied with their jobs. The lone faculty member who did accept the dean's challenge and on whom the dean had come to rely, received an Afro wig in the mail. Though no evidence exists that white women knowingly engaged in a concerted effort to oust the dean, the actions of at least several white women—and presumably, the silence of white women who may not have been so inclined—resulted in overtly racist behavior. Such examples raise the question of what being "connected" looks like for white women—or of what the possible consequences of disconnection may be.

Nor are the dynamics among black women easily codified. Black women also disagree intensely about a range of issues including age, skin color, and socioeconomic status, which challenges their ability to sustain relationships with one another. As Connolly and Noumair (1997, p. 325) note, "Internalized racism and sexism are felt most profoundly in the contempt that Black women feel for each other. Sisterhood works conceptually but does not begin to touch how angry, judgmental, and vicious we can be with each other." Black women are not immune to the "queen bee syndrome," the competitive and even destructive behavior senior women visit on more junior women whom they are not willing to help (Poe & Courter, 1994; Rindfleish, 2000). Black women also may struggle with competitiveness if they are in an environment that signals that only one spot is available at the top. Connolly indicates that she is "most in touch with my feelings of competition and envy when I am around smart, high-achieving, successful Black women" (Connolly & Noumair, 1997, p. 325). A lack of connection among black women may not look the same—may not be as visible—as it is among white women. But it still exists. Lorde (1984, p. 160) names black women's pain in not being in connection with one another, "In order to withstand the weather, we had to become stone, and now we bruise ourselves upon the other who is closest."

The perception about who is or is not connecting can affect the level of trust between the groups—both whether or not each group sees itself as trustworthy and trusts the other. As Porter pointed out, "It seems that we have this critical question in front of us, which is: how do we help black women to trust that white women are capable of being loyal and antiracist and how do we assist

white women to step forward into a relationship where they feel disempowered and likely to be rejected?" The complexities of intragroup and intergroup dynamics affect how we perceive trustworthiness within and between groups. Our perceptions often turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. We tend to look for and focus on information that confirms our prior perceptions about a person's trustworthiness and ignore or minimize information that disconfirms them. If we don't trust a person we will look for, find, and remember incidents of breach of trust. If we trust a person, we are more likely to overlook or forget a breach of trust if it does happen.

We must become adept at navigating both intra- and intergroup dynamics. Reaching conclusions about who is more and less connected is difficult, though we certainly have impressions that drive our behavior (in ways that may further highlight and reinforce only the differences). The intragroup dynamics among white and black women have a similar ring. However, when juxtaposed against the larger organizational and societal dynamics, these distinctions may be overshadowed by the intergroup power dynamics. Acknowledging the intragroup dynamics reminds us of the similarities, whereas recognizing the intergroup dynamic reminds us we are not identical. The interplay of both sets of dynamics may erect barriers, particularly fear and silence that preclude black and white women from fully seeing and experiencing each other.

Fear and Her Sister: Silence

> *I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood.*
>
> —Lorde (1984, p. 40)

Our group realized that this task that Lorde discusses in her germinal book *Sister Outsider* is at the heart of the work that we must do together to realistically and effectively answer the question of how black and white women can work together. In fact, to connect with one another across dimensions of race and other dimensions of difference, we need to be visible and present. How is it that we each bring our authentic voice, including the questions and doubts, the concerns and the insecurities, to understanding our common and unique destinies? The concept and presence of voice, the distinctive expression of an individual (hooks, 1989), is critical.

Through our work together, we also learned that bringing our authentic voice to our endeavor is no easy feat—in fact, there are many ways that we can be fearful as we engage with one another across dimensions of difference. Proudford said, "probably the biggest fear is that my contributions will be discounted, ignored—or worse, reformulated and presented as someone else's. I am always concerned about 'getting lost.'" Lorde's work is a powerful source of understanding for us; her writings are relevant and salient because she has lived

the very phenomenon we are trying to describe and live through our group experience.

A challenge we faced as were doing our work was the fear of self-revelation in such a way that might lead our colleagues to reevaluate our worth. Lorde (1984, p. 42) talks about fear as emerging from the act of self-revelation, "And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger." For some of us, it felt that opening up and sharing might put our relationships at risk, so we remained silent. Hunt remained silent "because whiteness and privilege are a part of me in ways that are not apparent to me, I'm afraid sometimes to speak because my privilege and racism will surface unknowingly." As we thought about our interactions, the symbol of a mask emerged. We drew from Dunbar's (1913) imagery of a mask that we wear, a mask that "grins and lies, it shades our cheeks and hides our eyes." The symbol of a mask is an apt one; it speaks to the covering up of what is real to present a false face. But we actually didn't see the same fear emerging from black and white women in our group; we saw different faces across the two groups. Lorde (1984, p. 42) also describes our individual causes of donning the mask: "In the case of silence, each of us draws the face of her own fear—fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the visibility without which we cannot truly live."

Black and white women in our group expressed different reasons for donning the mask, different sources of fear. For black women, we talked about being fearful of letting white women in because there could be dire consequences for us in relation to our professional safety. So when white women reach out to black women, they may "not respond to friendly overtures by white women for fear that they will be betrayed." hooks (1994) talks about black women's fear of betrayal from white women—that at some unpredictable moment, white women will assert their power and privilege. So black women do not open up and let their white colleagues in. As Scully concluded, "a lot is at stake if the feared risks of letting down one's guard to form a friendship actually materialize. At stake is the black woman's job and livelihood—a livelihood that may support an extended family given the persistent socioeconomic disparities by race in the U.S."

White women talked about fear from a different perspective. They talked about the fear of being seen as "not getting it," or not being aware of their privilege. hooks (1994, p. 107) describes white women as being fearful of exposure—fear of black women seeing "the gap between their words and their deeds, saw contradictions and inadequacies... that Black women have the power to see through their disguises, to see the parts of themselves they want no one to see." Thompson (1996, p. 101) described how "My fear of admitting to the reality of White skin privilege turned out to be a mask which hid how access to unearned privileges and self loathing can co-exist." In our experiences, white women in our group talked about not wanting to be perceived as racist or unaware of their privilege. As a result of their fear, they may opt not to reach out for fear of rejection or losing their friendships with black women. Although the origins of our fears were unique, we often had a common response—silence.

As we interacted with one another, we found that we were not silent about everything. In fact, we shared a great deal about our backgrounds and past experiences, positive and negative, with women across racial boundaries. We saw silence in areas where we were likely to bump into challenging dynamics—when we had to address substantive issues where we may have to confront loaded sociohistorical schemas across race.

In these charged relationships between black and white women, we see social psychological processes that engender silence. Some black woman consciously or unconsciously hide behind allegations of racism to shield themselves from criticism. For them, any critique offered from a white woman must be motivated by racism rather than the intent to share critical and necessary feedback. Wilson and Russell (1996) describe this behavioral strategy as self-protection (p. 170)—members of stigmatized groups hold on to their self-esteem by attributing criticism to the racism of others. White women, suspecting that feedback of any kind will lead to accusations of racism, engage in a kind of silence that Thomas (1989) has called "protective hesitation." This occurs when participants in a relationship characterized by different identity and power groups hold back on sharing critical information for fear of being accused of insensitivity due to racism, sexism, or some other ism.

These dynamics of self-protection and protective hesitation set in motion a dance of weariness and wariness among black and white women. For both groups, costs are associated with silence. As Fanning noted, "Black women fear letting White women in, so they build a wall. White women fear being seen as racist, so they don't fight to get in. Thus things stay as they are." There were consequences for our team of not speaking out and letting fear silence us. The white women experienced the feeling that silence kept them alone and farther from that "warm blanket" that the black women had wrapped around themselves. For the white women, silence also meant that they could not locate each other. Fanning wondered "if I didn't speak up because I was worried that if I were skeptical or disagreed, it would be disregarded as a result of my white privilege or innate racism.... But I feel like I am not getting a true sense of my feelings in relation to other white women because I am not speaking up and neither did it appear the majority of white women in our group were." For black women, the silence implied fear or uncertainty among the white women regarding a discussion of race. Proudford noted that white women's silence also left black women with "the familiar feeling of black women taking the lead during the conversation about race."

Beyond the conversations of our small group of black and white women, silence has larger implications for professional relationships between black and white women in general. From the fear of speaking comes silence and loneliness, where no one truly can be wrapped in a warm blanket. Silence inhibits women

from forming relationships, which in the professional realm means white and black women are missing out on potentially strong alliances. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) describes the Borderlands as being "physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory... where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy." Silence in the face of race does not allow black or white women to inhabit the Borderlands. In fact, when black and white women are separated from one another, through the dynamics of protective hesitation and self-protection that accompany fear and silence, our ability to act as allies and supporters for one another is hindered. It is challenging to go to the mat for the sister whom you do not fully know—we are not able to vouch for one another in crucial ways.

Making Friends, Forming Allies

> *I knew of no intimacy, no deep closeness, no friendship between Black and White women. Though never discussed, it was evident in daily life that definite barriers separated the two groups, making close friendship impossible.*
>
> —hooks (1994, p. 94)

As our discourse evolved, we discovered a significant challenge to forming relationships between black and white women at work. Namely, the white women appear to be more interested in forming relationships with their black peers than the reverse. The black women in our group were unanimously uninterested in forming friendships with white women at work. In contrast, the white women wanted at least to make alliances with black women, if not form full-fledged friendships with them. In addition, the white women were shocked to learn that black women were not interested in forming cross-race friendships, and some were quite hurt to learn how one-sided the desire for friendship was.

Digging deeper, we turned to the question of allies, wondering if black women sought white women as allies in their organizations. Again, the answer was no. In fact, many of the black women had had such negative experiences in the past—being used, ignored, or insulted by white women—that they did not form alliances with white women at work. Furthermore, the reality is that in the majority of organizations in the United States, white men hold the most significant positions of power. Given this, black women, like white women, turn to white men as allies to help them navigate their careers and progress in the organization's hierarchy. In fact, many of the black women felt that they were competing to some extent for access to white men's power. The white women, on the other hand, were more likely to take their access to white men for granted. Hurtado (1989, p. 834) underscores this competition for access to white men, "The conflicts and tensions between White feminists and feminists of Color are viewed too frequently as lying solely in woman-to-woman relationships. These relationships, however, are affected in both obvious and subtle ways by how each of these two groups of women relate to White men." Our

differential relationship to white men has implications for our relationships with one another. As Hurtado (1989, p. 843) notes, "White men use different forms of enforcing oppression of White women and women of Color. As a consequence, these groups of women have different political responses and skills, and at times these differences cause the two groups to clash."

As we thought more about how to breach this divide, we began to wonder about an alternative way to think about it. Rather than seeking strategies to help black and white women want to become friends, we realized that making connections with each other is important. By associating with each other in our organizations, we build strength for ourselves, each other, and the organization. So it is essential to consider the obstacles preventing white and black women from really bonding, both personally and professionally, at work. We identified two major hurdles to making this connection. First, both black and white women face risks when forming friendships with one another, though those that blacks encounter are greater. The second hurdle can best be described as a subtle power shift that we observed occurring in black/white women's friendships, leaving both parties in unfamiliar territory. Understanding how these barriers manifested for ourselves and our black/white counterparts is crucial if we are to move forward together.

During our conference call, the black women agreed that building relationships with their white counterparts in the workplace poses significant hazards. One colleague mentioned, "One strike you're out; for black people, one mistake and it's hard to recover." The white women had difficulty visualizing these risks and found their existence surprising. Scully said, "I just realized as I was writing this that I am not exactly sure what the feared risks look like in detail." Our discussions revealed that black women's lack of trust of white women is deeply embedded. Black women are taught at an early age to beware of white women/people; they also have a host of experiences to support the wariness. As Scully stated, "The black woman, necessarily aware of the risks of opening up to friendship at work, may scan the scene to see how the white women relate to each other. Will a white woman be a loyal ally? Let's see how she relates to other white women. Will a white woman stick up for me when the going gets tough? Let's see if white women have each other's backs." It is clear that white women hold the power in the professional realm, which was reinforced by Scully's statement, "The corporate world is a white woman's world." That realization, coupled with the existing wariness, speaks volumes about the level of risk black women perceive in building friendships with white women. As a result, black women focus on their professional lives while in the workplace and form "invisible fences" as a form of protection from the perceived risks. In some cases, white women are either completely unaware or unconscious of how these factors dictate the actions of black women in the workplace. "White women see Black women as distrusting and distant. Black women, however, see themselves as occupied with a unique set of concerns that White women will not understand" (Proudford, 2002, p. 2).

The gains of women are really the gains of white women—the "whitewash dilemma" (Betters-Reed & Moore, 1995). Black women feel the pressure of having to work twice as hard to prove themselves and advance in their careers. The frustration of seeing their hard work primarily benefit white women exacerbates the risks of forming cross-race friendships. Additionally, literature on workplace social networks (Combs, 2003) has shown that informal social networks (reactions to opportunities and problems of the work environment) are imperative to career advancement. However, Combs stated, "The Catalyst (1999) study reports that 40 percent of the African American women surveyed stated that their advancement is inhibited by a lack of informal networks and social systems in the workplace" (Combs, 2003, p. 385). Black women do not perceive white women to be supportive or helpful in the workplace; the perception is that white women are self-focused and only interested in advancing their own careers.

LaRoche's personal experience reflected that perception. "Over time I saw that the woman [a senior white woman] was only interested in her career. She did nothing to bring up other women or support them; all of our projects benefited her and we got no capital back from them. I began to feel used. Slowly our relationship deteriorated and she moved on to others that could help her." White women do not extend the professional channels to black women; in turn, black women are less likely to allow white women into their personal realm.

Black women are concerned about the potential threat to their career should they allow white women into their world. The perceived risks can manifest themselves in different ways depending on the organization, but they will most certainly make the black women's jobs more difficult or threaten their job security. This lack of trust, due in part to past experiences, has created uncertainty about white women's actions if the invisible fences are removed. Seeing the benefits of cross-race relationships is difficult for black women, because they do not perceive their white peers as allies in their career advancement, though the white women have more power in the professional realm.

Although some white people may be reluctant to admit it, they face risks in reaching across race as well. When white women confront issues of racism, they risk repercussions from other white people (Bailey, 1998; Segrest, 1994). Many white people are consciously or unconsciously invested in protecting their racial privilege. They might find it threatening to see other white people working to break down (rather than maintain) barriers between white and black women. In this era of 360-degree reviews and upward and downward feedback, white women might feel that reaching out to black women at work poses risks to their careers. In fact, one white woman in our team experienced this sort of backlash as a result of initiating a conversation about race in her job. Afterward, someone anonymously contacted her calling her a "race traitor," because in that person's opinion, as a white woman her allegiance should be to other white people first.

White women also face the risk of exposing their own privilege and racism when they form friendships with black women. As Hunt described it, "Because

whiteness and privilege are a part of me in ways that are not apparent to me, I'm afraid sometimes to speak because my privilege and racism will surface unknowingly." Scully added another perspective, "What we did not mention, and again is rather taboo, is that... in subtle ways, we check out whether a black woman might be amenable to connection or will lecture us about our racism."

In our conversation, we observed an unexpected power shift between black and white women. Although white women hold infinitely more power than their black peers in the professional domain, in interpersonal relationships, black women hold the power to accept or reject white women's friendship. As Blake-Beard stated,

> in the relational dance that happens between white and black professional women's personal relationships, the power dynamic is different. I feel as if black women have this power to withhold their friendship and connection. Two caveats are that they withhold because they may have been burned in the past, or they just got the message, "You can't trust white people," over and over again passed on from lips of great grandmother to grandmother to mother. The second caveat is that this withholding is not without cost to the black woman.

Scully reinforced this power shift with her observation that "in the interpersonal realm, it is white women who are 'proving themselves.'"

Keeping this power in perspective, however, is important. As Scully put it, "In the whole scheme of life, it is just an eye-dropperful of power." However, we need to consider this power shift to understand the challenges white and black women face in making connections with one another. White women often feel they need to prove themselves to black women—prove that they "get it" and understand their own privilege. As a result, they can appear to be overeager in their attempts to connect with black women (Wilson & Russell, 1996). Black women, on the other hand, perceive so many risks to friendship with white women, that they can come off as uninterested and undereager to make connections. This creates a cycle in which white women fear rejection and either stop trying to connect or never even start, which reinforces black women's perceptions that white women are indifferent or don't value their contributions, personally or professionally.

A double bind results from this dynamic. Black women keep white women at a distance to protect themselves in the workplace, but it has a significant impact on all women. Turnbull stated, "having relationships at work is risky because performance is tied to success. If it goes awry, the cost is hefty. However, not having relationships at work is also risky, because it diminishes the effectiveness of women in the workplace and prevents us from unleashing our power as a group." We inhibit ourselves from being a stronger, more influential group in the workplace. Furthermore, maintaining the invisible fences exhausts black women. It requires a daily effort to take protective measures, and this diminishes personal effectiveness. We can learn so much from each other and

have incredible resources to share to support everyone's career advancement. Blake-Beard shared a powerful visual of the impact of the double bind.

> An image of black and white women walking on parallel paths, each with obstacles and hurdles in the way... At some places, the paths are actually close enough so that one could jump out and reach the other. But she doesn't because she is scared she is going to fall into the gap—it doesn't matter that the gap is only three feet; she's been conditioned to know that to jump is a sure way to pain.... This image makes me so sad—because in fact, there are times when the black woman could really use the white woman over there on her parallel path. Sometimes, the white woman could use a tip or strategy from her black counterpart. So they can't share important information, strategies, and support with one another.

Early in our process, the team talked about the benefits of working with the opposite race; the responses were positive, encouraging, and powerful. We talked about "the additional perspective gained from interacting with a woman of the opposite race. There was a focus on what could be learned, what she would learn about herself, and access gained to that world." Yet instead of working together, black and white women turn to white men as the logical allies. This means women of both races are competing for the same allies. Overall, organizational effectiveness continues to decline because women are working in a disjointed way due to cross-race divides. As the workforce becomes more diversified, strong cross-race relations are becoming imperative. Organizations will not be able to succeed without drastic improvement in this area.

To break the cycle, we need to create a world where white and black women share the power in professional and personal realms. They each bear burdens as members of their individual groups. Yet they also bear a collective burden as women. Given the competitive nature of organizations, particularly at higher levels, black and white women must start making connections and easing each others' burdens early in their careers. Doing so will allow them to build a bridge between white and black women, so that when they—we—get to those high levels, we can pull each other up instead of shutting each other down. Understanding the risks and barriers to building those friendships is crucial to overcoming them.

INSIGHTS FROM OUR COLLECTIVE WISDOM

One of the most powerful aspects of this project was the opportunity to be with one another and to learn from and draw on our collective wisdom to understand and posit conditions for successful support of relationships between black and white women. We found from our research, our experiences, and the literature that several practices support white and black women in their efforts to connect with one another.

Entering the Space: Declaring Our Intentions

Because of the history between black and white women, one thing that we acknowledged early on was the importance of our willingness to enter into this work with one another. Because of the way the invitation was expressed and the identity of the person issuing it, we started from a basis of willingness to engage and consider trust that rarely accompanies cross-race relationships in organizational contexts.

Hunt visualized our beginning conversations and the ensuing bonds that we built with one another as a "circle of trust" (see Figure 8.2). She identified three components that contributed to building relationships across dimensions of diversity—respect, communication, and relationship. Because no particular entry point into the circle exists, breaking in is challenging. Respecting people allows one to trust them enough to enter into relationship. Communicating with them should engender additional respect, trust, and so on. All three elements (respect, communication, and relationship) seem to be necessary (based on our responses) to build trust. A way to overcome the barriers to the creation of a circle of trust is to focus on a common objective or passion. Many of us described our positive relationships with black/white women within the context of a pursuing a common purpose. In those relationships we respected each other and communicated effectively. We moved beyond the visible differences to another level that enabled us to learn from and trust each other. Fanning put

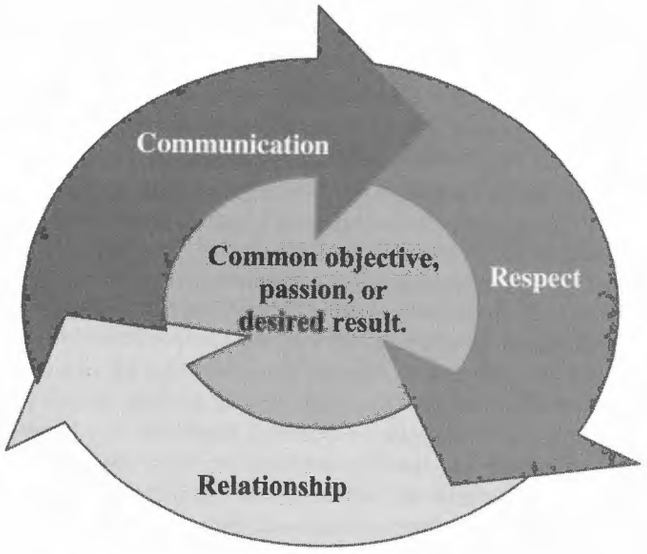

FIGURE 8.2. Circle of trust.

this insight into concrete terms: "I will force myself to leave my comfort zone and talk about race in terms of differences, similarities, and opportunities. [I will] engage people to consider learning from past experiences to form stronger interracial relationships."

Working Together through Our Differences

Our tendency in doing this work as black and white women is to focus on our similarities. But rather than suppressing our differences as black and white women, we can also learn from them. Holvino (2005) suggests that the four skills enabling white women and women of color to work together are inquiring and disclosing, asking difficult questions, making differences explicit (confronting), and showing support and seeking common ground. Our group used each of these skills to build our strong connections. We started with inquiry; at each stage of our research, we asked and answered questions posed by our group. And our group responded immediately with a level of disclosure and sharing that we each recognized as a rare, invaluable invitation. In reaction to one of our early group conference calls, Porter shared her response, "I'm impressed by how open each one of us was, including sharing some difficult moments, personal challenges, and, for many of us, self-doubt." We also asked one another difficult questions. When we recognized the pattern of black women being very vocal and the white women being more muted, we challenged each other to unpack this dynamic. What did we learn about ourselves individually and as a community as we looked at differences between black and white women in the modes and frequency of communication?

Once differences are examined and confronted, black and white women can shift their attitude toward each other. LaRoche wrote, "I have been humbled and thrilled to know that there are white people in the world who look at race on a [regular] basis. . . . These four women have permanently altered my view of white people and what it means to be white."

Attending to the Structural

Holvino (2005) is unequivocal in advocating for acknowledgment of the systemic and societal dimensions of difference. Though it is important for black and white women to be able to connect with one another on an individual level, really working across differences requires more than this micro-level discourse. If we act as advocates, allies, and mediators for one another, we also will need to acknowledge structurally supported differential treatment. For black and white women to be committed to working together, we must also be willing to interrupt dynamics of institutionalized racism and sexism when we see this particularly virulent combination bearing down on our sisters. Blake-Beard was recently a participant in a train-the-trainer session on a particular experiential process for group work. When she raised an issue about how she, as a woman of color who is a trainer, might need to interact with this process using different tools than the white male facilitators at the front of the room, her questions and concerns were summarily dismissed. The dismissal, which is a common occurrence but no less painful, was only bearable because a white woman in the room took up her question, challenging the white male facilitators. Although this white ally also was dismissed, she had stood up—she had identified herself as an advocate willing to address the very systems that benefit her as a white woman. Both white and black women will need to take action and move beyond the traditional bystander role that we often take in cross-race interactions. A measure of courage and willingness to take risks is necessary as black and white women act as advocates, allies, and mediators for one another. As Segrest (2002, p. 221) says, "birthing such new structures will require both great patience and great impatience."

Acknowledging Our Simultaneity

As we worked together, we were cognizant of and sensitive to the multiple identities that each one of us brought to our interaction. Holvino (2005) describes this aspect of working across difference as simultaneity. "Simultaneity means that we each belong to many social groups at the same time, which complicates our identities and the fluid quality of our advantages and disadvantages within same-race and same-ethnicity groups and with other racial and ethnic groups" (Holvino, 2005, p. 4). Our multiple identities add another layer of complexity to the task of building relationships between black and white women. For example, to the extent that black women are not aware of their complex identities, they may speak from a "race" perspective; conversely, white women may be aware of other identities and thus see themselves in that context, although rarely from a race perspective. Proudford explains how multiple identities have affected her perception of connecting with white women.

> I was also thinking about our complex identities as we talked. For example, I am from a middle-class background. That influences what I do, how I do it, etc. It feels fine to me to "own" that. People from a working-class background might get quite frustrated with me because I don't always "get" class in the same way they do . . . thinking about myself in this complex way helps me connect to white women. Our conversation helped me take that complexity seriously.

CONCLUSION

We see the distinctions identified between black and white women as critical, a creative and necessary force for change. Holvino (2005) notes that the most effective way for women to achieve power, support each other, and make our organizations better is by engaging our differences both within and across

race. We need to be able to both build on our similarities and not be afraid to step into our differences.

But engaging these differences is not easy work—or as Bell et al. share (2003, p. 410), "there are no easy papers on race." Our team definitely found this statement to be true; working virtually underscored the challenge of this collaboration. The process in which we engaged was marked by tense silences, hard questions, and tender vulnerabilities—a challenging translation of the issues that hurt and heal us. As Lorde (1984, p. 127) notes, "for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who are our allies with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies."

Through analysis of our conversations (those held through electronic means and via conference calls) and the literature review, we identified several critical factors that get in our way and that enable us—the ties that bind and separate. The factors that separate us include challenging intergroup and intragroup dynamics, fear, and silence. Those that bind us together are processes of building a circle of trust to hold challenging conversations, taking risks in transforming our working relationships to friendships, and identifying allies and advocates across race. We entered this dialogue with one another from a place of hope—as Porter said, "by staying silent we just feed into the cycle of distrust, fear, and misunderstanding. I realize now that the risks of trying to connect and being rejected are much less significant than the risk of never connecting at all."

REFERENCES

Anzaldúa, G. E. (1987). *Borderlands: La frontera—The new mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

Anzaldúa, G. E., & Keating, A. (2002). *This bridge we call home: Radical visions for transformation*. New York: Routledge.

Ayvazian, A., & Tatum, B. D. (1994). *Women, race and racism: A dialogue in black and white. Work in Progress #65*. Wellesley, MA: Stone Center Working Paper Series.

Bailey, A. (1998). Locating traitorous identities: Towards a view of privilege-cognizant white character. *Hypatia, 13*(3), 27–42.

Bell, E. L. J., Meyerson, D., Nkomo, S., & Scully, M. (2003). Interpreting silence and voice in the workplace: A conversation about tempered radicalism among black and white women researchers. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 39*(4), 381–414.

Bell, E. L. J., & Nkomo, S. (2001). *Our separate ways: Black and white women and the struggle for professional identity*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Betters-Reed, B., & Moore, L. L. (1995). Shifting the management paradigm for women. *Journal of Management Development, 14*(2), 15–30.

Blake, S. (1999). At the crossroads of race and gender: Lessons from the mentoring experiences of professional black women. In A. J. Murrell, F. J. Crosby, & R. J. Ely (Eds.), *Mentoring dilemmas: Developmental relationships within multicultural organizations* (pp. 83-104). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Breines, W. (1996). Sixties stories' silences: White feminism, black feminism, black power. *NWSA Journal, 8*(3), 101–122.

Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.

Catalyst. (2004). *The bottom line: Connecting corporate performance and gender diversity*. New York: Catalyst.

Combs, G. M. (2003). The duality of race and gender for managerial African American women: Implications of informal social networks on career advancement. *Human Resource Development Review, 2*(4), 385–405.

Connolly, M. L., & Noumair, D. A. (1997). The white girl in me, the colored girl in you, and the lesbian in us: Crossing boundaries. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. C. Powell, & L. M. Wong (Eds.), *Off white: Readings on race, power and society*. New York: Routledge.

Dumas, R. G. (1985). Dilemmas of black females in leadership. In A. D. Coleman, & M. H. Geller (Eds.), *Group Relations Reader* 2 (pp 323–334). Jupiter, FL: A. K. Rice Institute.

Dunbar, P. L. (1913). We wear the mask. *The complete poems of Paul Lawrence Dunbar*, New York: Dodd, Mead.

Ely, R. J. (1995). The power in demography: Women's social constructions of gender identity at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 38*(3), 589–634.

Eng, P. (1999). *Warrior lessons: An Asian American woman's journey into power*. New York: Pocket Books.

Giddings, P. (1984). *When and where I enter: The impact of black women on race and sex in America*. New York: Bantam.

Granger, D. (2002). Friendships between black and white women. *American Behavioral Scientist, 45*(8), 1208–1213.

Holvino, E. (2005). *Commentary #5: Women in organizations: Why our differences matter and what to do about it*. Boston, MA: Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management.

hooks, b. (1981). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1994). Holding my sister's hand: Feminist solidarity. *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Hurtado, A. (1989). Relating to privilege: Seduction and rejection in the subordination of white women and women of color. *Signs, 14*, 833–855.

Hurtado, A. (2003). *Voicing chicana feminisms: Young women speak out on sexuality and identity*. New York: New York University Press.

Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister outsider*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press.

Moraga, C., & Anzaldua, G. (1983). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press.

Poe, R., & Courter, C. L. (1994). Women against women. *Across the Board, 31*(3).

Proudford, K. L. (2002). *Insights #14: Asking the question: Uncovering the assumptions that undermine conversations across race*. Boston, MA: Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management.

Rindfleish, J. (2000). Senior management women in Australia: Diverse perspectives. *Women in Management Review, 15*(4), 172–183.

Segrest, M. (1994). *Memoir of a race traitor*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
Segrest, M. (2002). *Born to belonging: Writings on spirit and justice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
Thomas, D. A. (1989). Mentoring and irrationality: The role of racial taboos. *Human Resource Management, 28*, 279–290.
Thompson, B. (1996). Time traveling and border crossing: Reflections on white identity. In B. Thompson, & S. Tyagi (Eds.), *Names we call home: Autobiography on racial identity* (pp 93–109). New York: Routledge.
Thompson, B. (2001). *A promise and a way of life: White antiracist activism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (2003). Occupational employment in private industry by race/ethnic group/sex and by industry, United States. http://www.eeoc.gov/stats/jobpat/2003/national.html.
Wallace, M. (1979). *Black macho and the myth of the superwoman*. New York: Dial.
Wilson, M. & Russell, K. (1996). *Divided sisters: Bridging the gap between black women and white women*. New York: Anchor Books.

9

Black Women in Management

Ancella Livers

Once asked, the question generally hangs in the air, taking on a life of its own, corrupting the relationships of the past and the future by the sheer volume of assumptions, perspectives, and lack of awareness that are embedded in the words.

"So are you a woman first or black first?"

The assumption is that these aspects of self can be pulled apart, separated as if they have no relationship to each other. Inherent in this question is the belief that one or the other of these characteristics must predominate—race or gender—and the other must necessarily be subsumed. Yet the experiences of women of color belie these assumptions. They are "both/and," not "either/or."[1]

The stories of African American women managers are stories that are born in the nexus of race and gender and tempered in the workplace. They are the stories of both/and as women, black women, slowly find a place in the corporate managerial ranks. In a July 2003 report, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission stated that 195,784 or 3.3 percent of African American women employed in the private sector held official or managerial positions. This percentage shows a change in the number of black women managers from 1990, when 111,318 black women were officials and managers, to 2001 when the number grew to 195,784. Although the sheer number of African American women managers is the largest of all of the female minority racial groups recorded in the report, the percentage of other minority women managers is growing at a faster rate.[2] Furthermore, though it is difficult to find statistics comparing the pay of black and white women managers and those of black male and female managers, annual earnings comparisons indicate that black women earn less than either their white female or black male counterparts. Statistics compiled by the National Committee on Pay Equity show that in 2003 black men earned an annual average of $32,241 compared to white women, who earned $31,169, and black women, who earned $26,965. All three groups earned less money than white males, who earned an annual average of $41,211.[3] This