

DISCRIMINATION HAPPENS WITHOUT EFFORT:
HOW BLACK WOMEN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGERS NEGOTIATE
DIVERSITY ISSUES IN A CORPORATION

by

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(Under the Direction of JUANITA JOHNSON-BAILEY)

ABSTRACT

Black women human resources managers exist on the margins of organizational power structures, possessing neither race or gender privilege nor positional status. They are understudied in academic research where their issues are often subsumed under those of White women or Black men. They work in a field that has been described as a “corporate ghetto” where they are often assigned responsibilities relating to diversity.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiated diversity issues in a *Fortune* 1000 corporation. Two research questions guided the study: (1) how do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment? and (2) how do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure? Semistructured interviews were conducted with six Black women human resources managers who worked at a corporation from 1987 to 2007. All of the women had responsibility for developing, communicating, and/or enforcing diversity-related policies and programs.

The researcher, who was also a participant in the study, was interviewed by the professor supervising this study.

Three themes emerged during data analysis: *Negotiating the Vagaries of Commitment to Diversity, Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization, Using Black Women-Specific Work Strategies*. The findings indicated that participants worked without a corporate commitment to diversity and therefore developed creative ways to continue their diversity work; that the participants were outsider-insiders, negotiating racism and dealing with isolation and hostility; and that participants were confident without being threatening and while staying true to their personal values.

Two conclusions were drawn from the findings: (1) the Black women human resources managers used a strategic approach to doing corporate diversity work that was informed by their common experiences of gendered racism, and (2) the Black women human resources managers maintained a delicate balance between their personal desire to be and to appear confident and their professional need to avoid being typecast as stereotypically threatening Black women. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are offered.

INDEX WORDS: Adult Education, Black Feminism, Black Feminist Thought, Black Women, Black Women Human Resources Managers, Black Women in the Workplace, Black Women Managers, Case Study Research, Critical Race Theory, Diversity, Ethgender Prejudice, Gendered Racism, Human Resource Development, Human Resource Management, Racism, Sexism

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the Black women human resources managers doing diversity work in corporate America. Be true to yourself. Be who you are.

Be who you are.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As companies seek multicultural populations as targets for their goods and services, they look to leverage the talents of leaders who can help them understand how to reach and appeal to these populations. Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, diversity has become a business imperative for many American companies (Roberson, 2006). Companies have implemented policies and programs to promote the recruitment, development, and advancement of women and people of color (Thomas, 2005; Thomas, 1990). Today major corporations such as Aetna, American Express, Avon Products, and PepsiCo are led by people of color, while White women head Kraft Foods, Rite Aid, Western Union, and Xerox. The websites of these organizations indicate that they value and embrace diversity in a number of ways.. The advance of women and minorities in the corporate world was mirrored in society at large during the 2008 presidential campaign season, when a White woman and a Black man fought to become the nominee of the Democratic party. The election of America's first Black president was a feat many Black people never thought they would see in their lifetimes.

However, despite indications of corporate progress in diversifying workforces and promoting employees without regarding to sex or race, and despite the presidential election, women and people of color continue to struggle to overcome the effects of racism and sexism in the workplace (Hacker, 1995). White men still dominate the top positions in most companies, representing 73.5 % of chief executives and 52.1% of all officials and managers in the workforce (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). Sex and race discrimination were the most commonly filed charges with the Equal Employment

Opportunity Commission, averaging 35.3% and 31.1% respectively of the total number of charges filed during the past five fiscal years (U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2006).

The persistence of complaints about race discrimination is an indication that while overt racism may no longer be tolerated in major corporations, more subtle forms of racism have arisen that are not easy to eradicate. Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, and Vaslow (2000) suggest that modern racism can surface in organizations when business justifications for discriminatory actions are provided by legitimate authority figures. They give the example of Shoney's Restaurants, whose chief executive officer (CEO) ordered managers to reduce the number of Black employees and hire more attractive White women. The CEO believed that profits could be enhanced by matching the race of customer contact employees to the race of the customers served. This business justification for discriminating against Black employees was given by the most authoritative person at Shoney's – its CEO. Therefore, it is not surprising that 75% of Shoney's Black employees were in low-paying jobs where they had no customer contact (Brief et al., 2000).

Aversive racism is another modern form of racism. In this case, people who embrace egalitarian values and perceive themselves as not prejudiced also have unconscious negative feelings and beliefs about Black people (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Aversive racism operates in subtle ways that allow people to maintain their self-image as non-discriminatory. Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) investigated the self-reported racial prejudice of Whites and evidence of bias in their selection decisions over a ten year period. They found that while self-reported ratings of racial prejudice declined over the

ten years, evidence of bias in selection decisions persisted. When job candidates' qualifications were good, the White participants rated both Black and White candidates equivalently. However, when the candidates' job qualifications were moderate, White applicants received more favorable selection decisions than Black applicants. Dovidio and Gaertner labeled this behavior "in-group favoritism" (p. 318) and suggested that a mediocre White candidate, as an in-group member, was more apt to receive the benefit of the doubt than a Black candidate with similar qualifications.

Human resources professionals are often responsible for developing, communicating, and enforcing policies designed to ensure that the workplace is free of discrimination and that employees are selected and promoted on the basis of skills, abilities, and accomplishments. Sometimes, however, there are conflicts between a company's espoused commitment to diversity and its actions when faced with the reality of diversity. Companies that hire women and minorities in entry-level positions might fail to promote them at the same rate or to the same level as White men (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). Powell and Butterfield (1997) studied the effect of race on promotions to senior management in a federal agency. Although race was not found to have a direct effect on the promotion decisions made, it indirectly influenced the promotion decisions through two job-relevant variables: employment in the hiring department, and years of full-time work experience. Minority applicants were significantly less likely to be employed in the hiring department than White applicants; however, they had significantly more years of work experience. Powell and Butterfield speculated that hiring managers might have been more comfortable promoting from within their own departments, which was a clear advantage for White applicants. The authors also suggested that hiring managers may

have perceived Black employees' longer length of service as a sign that they had reached a career plateau, whereas the lesser experience of White employees indicated that these workers were on a fast track to senior management.

In other cases, Black employees may experience treatment discrimination, which occurs when members of a particular group do not receive the rewards, resources, or opportunities to which they are legitimately entitled based on job-related criteria (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). Caver and Livers (2002), for example, suggest that Black managers may be offered positions as assistant directors even when they are qualified to be directors. In their study of the effect of race on organizational experiences, job performance evaluations, and career outcomes, Greenhaus et al. concluded that "it is possible that the predominantly white supervisors used race rather than work-related cues in assessing the managers' job performance" (p. 80).

I am interested in the experiences of Black women in corporate America because before I entered my doctoral program, I spent more than 25 years working in three major companies in a variety of human resources positions. My responsibilities encompassed both human resource management, which includes recruitment and selection, performance management, and compensation and benefits (Cummings & Worley, 2005); and human resource development, which includes career development, training, and organization development (Watkins, 1989). Over the years I observed that the companies' espoused human resources practices were often inconsistent with their actual practices. In several instances I found that when White men who made significant financial contributions to the company were found in violation of policies prohibiting sexual harassment, the sanctions they received were not as severe as those levied against

less influential White men and men of color. In another case I left a job because my boss, the vice president of human resources, made adverse decisions regarding severance pay for displaced workers that were counter to the company's espoused policy of fair and equitable treatment for all employees.

Research Problem

Human resources is an area where many people of color work (Giscombe & Mattis, 2003); Fernandez (1999) refers to such areas as corporate ghettos and suggests that Blacks are often assigned diversity-related responsibilities. Black people who do diversity work face a dilemma: how can they reconcile their responsibilities to develop, communicate, and enforce human resources policies related to diversity, fairness, and equitable treatment in the face of company actions that range from insensitive or unfair to offensive or illegal? Furthermore, how do they stay true to their personal and cultural values "without being totally assimilated into the dominant white culture" (Bell, 1990, p. 462)? For Black women human resources managers this dilemma is particularly acute because as both Black women and human resources managers they exist on the margins of the organization's power structure. Unlike Black men, they do not benefit from male privilege, and unlike White women, they do not benefit from White privilege. Therefore, they must negotiate their way through the corporate thicket differently.

Research indicates that dealing with conflicts between their personal identities and professional responsibilities can take a toll on Black women, affecting their physical and mental health (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Sagrestano, 2004) as well as their personal and family relationships (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004). It is reasonable to surmise that these effects can be especially severe for Black women human resources

managers, who are privy to corporate actions that conflict with a commitment to diversity and who may themselves experience the racism and sexism that diversity policies are supposed to alleviate.

The cost to corporations of Black women human resources managers' struggles to negotiate conflicts between personal identity and professional responsibilities can be high: absenteeism, a loss of productivity, and turnover (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Robinson & Dechant, 1997). The cost of turnover includes not only the expenses of recruiting and hiring a qualified person to fill the opening but also the opportunity cost of having a position vacant for several months. There is a need for research organizations understand how Black women human resources managers negotiate the difficulties of implementing diversity policies and programs in corporate America.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiate diversity issues in a *Fortune* 1000 corporation. Two research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment?
2. How do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?

This study is informed by the work of scholars who operate from a theoretical perspective of Black feminism, which addresses issues of race, gender, class, and color from the perspective of Black women (Collins, 1986; Johnson-Bailey, 2001). Black

feminist scholars believe that mainstream feminism has erroneously assumed that Black women experience gender differences in the same way that White women do (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; hooks, 1994). Dissatisfaction with mainstream feminism led some Black women scholars to develop a point of view that is “grounded in a way of knowing and interpreting the world that [does] not use White middle-class male/female experiences as the norm” (Willis, 2000, p. 46). Black feminist scholars, while not espousing the point of view that all Black women are alike or experience oppression in the same way, do believe that Black women make meaning and interpret the world around them in ways not reflected by mainstream feminism. Black feminist scholars also suggest that traditional studies of Black history, family, and life have too often focused on Black men, while Black women have been denied recognition for their roles in shaping historical events and their contributions have been relegated to the margins (White, 1995). Therefore, Black feminist thought provides an appropriate lens through which to view and interpret the experiences of Black woman human resources professionals employed in a predominantly White corporation.

This study is also informed by the scholarship of Du Bois (1903/1965), who wrote that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line” (p. 221). Du Bois suggested that Blacks in America live double lives, one as Black people subjected to the evils of racism and the other as Americans living in a land of limitless opportunities. Similarly, Black women in corporate America operate in two worlds: the predominantly White male culture at work and their own culture at home. Each of these cultures has its own norms and expectations about the social roles of women and the behaviors that make Black women successful at work are not necessarily effective or desirable behaviors at

home. This bicultural life (Bell, 1990) leads Black women to become proficient at shifting, or changing their behavior or attitude to suit the cultural context (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Finally, this study draws from critical race theory, which posits that racism is a normal, permanent fact of life in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Wing, 1997); by extension, racism can be seen as a normal, permanent fact of life in American corporations. Racism is a system of racialized oppression (Feagin & McKinney, 2003) that is rooted in a society's structure and reflected in the privileges and hardships experienced by different groups (Andersen & Collins, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). McIntosh (1993) describes White privilege as an invisible container of unearned benefits and suggests that White privilege operates in such a way as to maintain its invisibility, to keep its beneficiaries ignorant of its presence, and to preserve its existence. Similarly, in the corporate world, White privilege operates invisibly to maintain White supremacy. Bonilla-Silva (2001) asserted that the interests of White people in America are in preserving the status quo, while Blacks and other people of color fight to change their position in the system as well as the social, political, and economic arrangements that privilege Whites. Macalpine and Marsh (2005), in a study exploring Whiteness and power in organizations, were "struck by the intractable and enduring nature of the organizational power structures and shocking inequities they perpetuate in our society" (p. 429).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because Black women, who represent 6% of the workforce (Catalyst, 2006) but only 3.5% of officials and managers (U. S. Census

Bureau, 2003), are an understudied population (Bell & Nkomo, 1999, 2001; Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Fassinger & Richie, 1994; Richie et al., 1997; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). Nkomo (1992) asserted that the small but growing body of knowledge about women in management is based primarily on the experiences of White women. Berdahl and Moore (2006) reported that when sex-based prejudice and discrimination are studied, the experiences of White women are most commonly explored; when race-based prejudice and discrimination are investigated, the experiences of minority males are most frequently the focus.

According to King (2007), the experiences of White women and Black men are assumed to be generalizable to Black women. King points out that “it is mistakenly granted that either there is no difference in being black and female from being generically black (i.e., male) or generically female (i.e., white)” (p. 18). Nkomo (1992) calls this faulty generalization. An example of faulty generalization can be found in a study by Ragins, Townsend, and Mattis (1998). They conducted a national study of CEOs and executive women in *Fortune* 1000 companies and their perceptions about the glass ceiling and strategies for breaking it. The race of the women is never mentioned, nor is it acknowledged that minority executive women might have had very different experiences in the workplace and consequently needed to develop quite different strategies for attacking the glass ceiling.

This study adds to the literature in the field of human resource development by illuminating issues of race and gender in the workplace. It explores how racism and sexism operate invisibly in corporations because they are deeply embedded in organizational systems and structures.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiate diversity issues in a corporation. The research questions that guided this study are (1) how do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment and (2) how do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure.

This review examines the literature about Black women in corporate America. This is an important topic because Black women represent a strong and growing part of the U. S. labor force. Their representation is expected to grow from 5.8% in 2002 to 7.0% by 2010 (Catalyst, 2004). First I present a brief overview of the current status of Black women in corporate America. Then I discuss workplace obstacles faced by Black women.

The Status of Black Women in Corporate America

While Black women represent 6% of the total labor force (Catalyst, 2006), they are a rarity in management and at the executive level of American corporations (Catalyst, 2006; Meeks, 2005). They comprise 4.4% of professionals, 3.5% of officials and managers, and less than 1% of chief executives (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). Black women hold only 1.9% of the more than 5500 seats on the boards of directors of *Fortune* 500 companies (James & Wooten, 2005). They represent just 1.1% of the corporate officers in *Fortune* 500 companies and comprise less than 1% of the top earners in these corporations (Catalyst, 2006). The reasons for the limited presence of Black women in management and at the executive level have not been studied in depth because Black

women are an under-researched population (Bell, 1990; Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Fassinger & Richie, 1994; Richie et al., 1997; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999).

It is difficult to obtain detailed industry information about Black women in the workplace, particularly Black women managers. The U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005) produced a data book about women in the labor force; however, the industry information provided does not include a separate breakdown for Black women and the occupation information is not separated by industry. The data available showed that among all Black women, the greatest number – more than 3 million – work in the education and health services industry, followed by the wholesale and retail trade industry with slightly more than 900,000 women, and the leisure and hospitality industry, with 677,000 women (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). It is interesting to note that the retail trade industry, which includes both store and non-store retailers, was home to the highest number of top women earners and top women executives in Catalyst's (2006) survey. It should also be noted that Catalyst's survey did not provide separate statistics for Black women earners and executives.

These statistics and the difficulty of obtaining additional information support the idea that despite more than 40 years of Civil Rights legislation and affirmative action programs, and despite decades of corporate commitment to cultural awareness, managing diversity, and advancing women and minorities, very few Black women have been appointed to lead American companies. As one Black woman human resources director stated:

Corporate America does not recognize that African-American women have been strong leaders throughout their lives and have innate survival

and leadership skills. Harriet Tubman, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Rosa Parks have rocked the world. (Catalyst, 2001, p. 10)

In the next section of this chapter, I review the literature about obstacles Black women encounter in the workplace.

Workplace Obstacles Facing Black Women

Research that focuses specifically on the experiences of Black women in corporate America is scarce and of relatively recent vintage (Alfred, 2001; Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Bell & Nkomo, 1999, 2001; Fassinger & Richie, 1994; Richie et al., 1997). In a ground-breaking study about executive women and the glass ceiling, only three of the 76 women executives interviewed by Morrison, White, Van Velsor and the Center for Creative Leadership (1987, 1992) were Black. Thomas and Gabarro (1999), in their study on Black executives in corporate America, acknowledged that there were too few Black women participants to make any conclusions about their experiences. If research on Black women in academia and in the professions is included, the literature is still limited (Beach-Duncan, 2004; Bova, 2000; Howard-Vital & Morgan, 1993; Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell, 1998; Ray, 2007). Table 1 lists the most common obstacles identified in studies published since 1990. Each obstacle is discussed separately.

Glass Ceilings vs. Glass Escalators

One of the most commonly cited obstacles that women of all racial and ethnic groups experience is the *glass ceiling*, a transparent barrier that keeps them from moving into the executive suite despite stellar qualifications and professional accomplishments (Barrett, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey, 2003, 2004; Catalyst, 2004; Inman, 1998; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Phelps & Constantine, 2001). For Black women, however, this

barrier has been more aptly described as a *concrete ceiling*, which is denser than glass, is not transparent, and cannot easily be shattered (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004). It has also been suggested that Black women face a concrete wall that conceals them and their accomplishments from the organizational mainstream. Black women must first climb over this wall before they can begin to tackle the glass ceiling (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Phelps & Constantine, 2001).

Table 1

Workplace Obstacles Facing Black Women

Obstacle	Studies
Glass Ceilings vs. Glass Escalators	Barrett, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey, 2003, 2004; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Budig, 2002; Catalyst, 2004; Hultin, 2003; Inman, 1998; Maume, 1999; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Phelps & Constantine, 2001; Williams, 1992
Lack of networks	Barrett, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 1998, 1999, 2004; Richie et al., 1997
Lack of mentors or sponsors	Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Bova, 2000; Catalyst, 1999, 2002, 2004; Chandler, 1996; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Howard-Vital & Morgan, 1993; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell, 1998; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2005; Phelps & Constantine, 2001
Negative stereotypes	Barrett, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey, 2003; Bell, 1990; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004; Johnson-Bailey & Tisdell, 1998; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Sagrestano, 2004
Isolation and hyper-visibility	Barrett, Cervero, & Johnson-Bailey, 2003; Catalyst, 2001, 2004; Chambers, 2003; King & Ferguson, 2001; Richie et al., 1997
Challenges to authority and credibility	Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004

Another phenomenon that affects the careers of women from all racial and ethnic groups is the *glass escalator*. This term, coined by Christine Williams (Budig, 2002), describes the smooth and rapid rise to management positions experienced by men who work in predominantly female occupations (Budig, 2002; Hultin, 2003; Maume, 1999;

Williams, 1992). Many men employed in female-dominated occupations consider their “minority” status as a bonus when hiring and promotion decisions are being considered (Hultin, 2003; Williams, 1992). Men’s fast-track ascension results in higher wages and jobs with more prestige (Hultin, 2003). One reason for their success might be that men who enter female-dominated occupations bring their gender privilege with them (Williams, 1992). Black women, lacking gender or race privilege, find it as difficult to step onto the glass escalator as they do to crack the glass ceiling.

Lack of Networks

The concrete wall that conceals Black women from the organizational mainstream also prevents them from being included in important company networks (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Informal networks provide opportunities for coworkers to get to know one another outside of the work environment; the personal relationships that can lead to mentors or sponsors often develop from such informal interactions. However, Black women are much less likely to be invited to join these informal networks (Barrett et al., 2004; Catalyst 1999, 2004). Even when networking is an essential function of the job, Black women are excluded, as this artist exclaims: “I had a partner who did not want me in her private home when she was having professional parties, where I was the assistant on the show!...Any policymaking parties I would be totally alienated from” (Richie et al., 1997, p. 140). As a result of such exclusion, Black women are less likely to receive important information that would help them in their jobs and are more likely to miss out on development opportunities. One Black woman manager stated:

Access to opportunities is easier for white women because they share informal experiences with the power structure (live next door to each

other, kids go to the same schools, husbands/brothers are head of something, etc.) as well as interests in activities like golfing...Networking is a game that not everyone plays; somebody has to ask you to play. But you have to recognize that there's a game being played in the first place.

(Catalyst, 1998, p. 11)

Lack of Mentors or Sponsors

Mentors provide both career and psychosocial support to their protégés, while sponsors focus on career support (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Exclusion from networks makes it difficult for Black women to find either mentors or sponsors in the organization. Because most people tend to choose mentors and protégés from their own racial or ethnic group (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004), the scarcity of Blacks – or more specifically Black women – in senior positions reduces the number of mentors available for Black women. Cross-sex and cross-racial mentoring present their own set of challenges, particularly when White men mentor Black women (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Phelps & Constantine, 2001). The heritage of slavery, with its images of White male owners sexually exploiting Black women slaves, lingers in the minds of mentors and protégés alike (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). This is a significant issue because research indicates that the protégés of White male managers earn considerably more than those mentored by White women or by people of color (Dreher & Cox, 1996). Unfortunately, Black women may be viewed by White men as high-risk protégés (Bierema & Merriam, 2002).

The lack of an influential mentor or sponsor means Black women are less likely to have someone to help them hone their professional skills, advocate for their

advancement, or push to get them assigned to high visibility projects (Bova, 2000; Catalyst, 1999; Chandler, 1996; Palmer & Johnson-Bailey, 2005). This is a critical barrier because many CEOs believe having an influential mentor was a significant factor in their career advancement (Catalyst, 1999; Howard-Vital & Morgan, 1993). One Black woman described the benefit of having a mentor this way:

In my company, my career advancement has been directly tied to whether I had a mentor. In my 24 years, I have had three upper-level managers guiding and coaching me. At this time, I have a mentor who is aware of my career goals. I feel confident that I will advance to a higher level with his help. (Catalyst, 2002, p. 13)

Negative Stereotypes

Negative stereotypes can fuel the difficulty Black women experience in finding mentors or sponsors as well as the challenges they face to their authority. In one study, 80% of the Black women surveyed said they had been personally affected by negative racist and sexist stereotypes (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003); in another, 56% of Black women reported they faced stereotypes such as being confrontational in their workplaces (Catalyst, 2004). Black women have often been portrayed as physically strong, verbally aggressive, and sexually wanton (Bell & Nkomo, 2001); other negative stereotypes characterize Black women as authoritarian, militant, and hostile (Bell, 1990). These stereotypes can make men uncomfortable, and as one woman stated, “men who are used to thinking of women as sexual partners or as potential relationships really don’t know how to deal when they’re presented with an intelligent, opinionated, forceful woman. It is very awkward” (Bell & Nkomo, 2001, p. 151).

Stereotyping can also lead to increased stress and decreased job satisfaction (Sagrestano, 2004) as well as unwanted scrutiny and unfair workloads. Howard-Vital and Morgan (1993) found that in the academic community “predispositions about African American women often translate into long work hours with heavy workloads performed in front of scrutinizing eyes” (p. 5). A Black woman manager described the effects of stereotyping this way:

When [you] are trying to move up, [you’re] trying to change perceptions, which is very difficult because those perceptions are hundreds of years old. You’ve got to work harder. You’ve got to be there longer, and there are unspoken rules about the time you come in and the time you leave (Catalyst, 2004, p. 14).

Isolation and Hyper-Visibility

Isolation is a stressor for Black women in predominantly White corporations (King & Ferguson, 2001). Negative stereotypes and exclusion from networks can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Richie et al., 1997). Chambers (2003) found that Black women felt lonely because “for some part of the day, they were in a sphere where no one, or almost no one, shared their perspective as black and female” (p. 116). One area where feelings of isolation are particularly acute is in meetings; Black women often feel invisible when they express ideas that fall on deaf ears until a White male expresses them (Barrett et al., 2003; Catalyst, 2001). As one woman stated:

Early on I remember doing things like being in meetings with all men and throwing out ideas and not having them listen to them. Then the idea would be picked up by some male, and it was a great idea. I’ve seen that

happen and it's happened to me. I've also seen where I have made a certain statement and it's been challenged. Unless it's cosigned by somebody it's not taken as truth. (Catalyst, 2001, p. 43)

Kanter (1977), in her ground-breaking work on men and work in American corporations, reported that women who were the only female in their work group (“tokens”) encountered hostility from male coworkers and had their work scrutinized more frequently. Being a token results in hyper-visibility, where one’s actions are subjected to more scrutiny than those of majority employees. One woman lamented, “If my colleague is not at his desk, it’s just assumed that he’s busy. But if I’m not there, people will think, ‘Did she leave early today?’ We’re not given the benefit of the doubt” (Catalyst, 2004, p. 13). Another Black woman noted,

When it comes to down time, and everyone is shooting the breeze, you have to be very cautious if people are watching you. You need to make sure you're the first one to break away to go and do the work. (Catalyst, 2004, p. 13)

Challenges to Authority and Credibility

In more recent studies, challenges to the authority and credibility of Black women in corporate America have surfaced as barriers (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004). Challenges to Black women managers’ authority are intertwined with visibility and scrutiny and may be rooted in stereotypes that Blacks are not as competent as Whites. This leads to questions about Black women’s credibility. A number of Black women managers believe that White colleagues perceive them as underqualified (Catalyst, 2004). Many reported that their authority had been questioned by people with whom they

interact, including bosses, subordinates, peers, and customers. Some found that their qualifications were questioned, as when a Black woman working in a technical area noted that her colleagues were surprised to discover that her technical background was extensive and included some engineering (Catalyst, 2004). Another woman had a new boss appoint a male peer to be over her and check up on her work (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

The High Cost of Workplace Obstacles

As a result of the continuing presence of obstacles in the workplace, many Black women question their company's commitment to the advancement of women and minorities. A number of Black women believe that they have not achieved the financial recognition nor the level in the organization that they should have, based on their talents, skills, and accomplishments (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Women have higher turnover rates than men and Blacks have higher turnover rates than Whites (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). If talented Black women leave their companies because they are discouraged by barriers, the cost to the organization is great in terms of knowledge loss, recruitment and selection expenses, and the learning curve of a new employee.

All of the women of color in one study (Catalyst, 1999) said affirmative action, "a set of legislation and regulations that support principles of remedying past discrimination through the hiring, advancement and retention of qualified women and minorities" (Barrett et al., 2004, p. 88), was more helpful earlier rather than later in their careers. Affirmative action can be a double-edged sword that opens doors and provides opportunities but leaves Black women vulnerable to perceptions that they were hired simply because they were Black, not because they were qualified (Barrett et al., 2004). Many Black women believe that diversity policies have not been effective in creating

inclusive work environments and that company policies are not effective in addressing racism (Catalyst, 2001). Black women managers were more likely than other women of color to believe that their chances to advance to the senior management level were declining, in spite of diversity policies and practices (Catalyst, 2001). According to a Black woman who worked in the airline industry:

They [leadership] don't think we are serious about wanting to advance professionally. Many of them are struck with stereotypes in their minds that we should be satisfied working for a large corporation that provides good benefits and end it at that. It wouldn't occur to them to ask us.

(Bova, 2000, p. 11)

The stress engendered by trying to overcome workplace obstacles and working in environments that are unwelcoming or hostile can lead to heightened psychological anxiety, ill health, and crippling self-doubt (Bell, 1990; Ferguson & King, 1996).

Racism and Microaggressions

The hostile job experiences that Bell and Nkomo (2001) refer to as “daily doses of racism” (p. 140) have the effect of humiliating Black women managers. These subtle acts of racism, also called microaggressions, are “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are ‘put downs’ of blacks by offenders” (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001, p. 60). The Black women Bell and Nkomo (2001) interviewed told stories of “being mistaken by whites as secretaries, as assistants, or as anyone other than the manager in charge” (p. 141). What was frustrating for them was that many of these humiliating or offensive incidents are not perceived by Whites as racist. In one situation, a Black woman who was a principal consultant was attending her firm’s annual partner

luncheon. After a White partner from Europe asked her several times about serving lunch to the consultants, it dawned on her that he thought she was there as a waitress. He turned bright red when she told him that the consultants did not serve lunch to each other. When the woman later spoke to the head of her office about the incident, he first told her that she was mistaken about what the European partner meant, then said the European partner must have been joking, and finally opined that the European partner would have said the same thing to the head partner's wife.

The idea that Whites are less sensitive to racially-charged incidents is supported by McIntosh (1993), who eloquently states that "White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks" (p. 31) that White people not only take for granted, but are taught not to recognize as privileges. McIntosh identified many ways that White privilege operated to her advantage, including "If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live" and "I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me." (p. 32). This is particularly significant to Black women who relocate for career purposes because, as one stated,

As an African American family, we had more things that we had to think about in relocating our family to a new community. You can't presume as a black family, moving into that neighborhood, that someone's going to be as willing to watch your little black children as [they] may be to watch little white children (Catalyst, 2004, p. 7).

Bell and Nkomo (2001) found that racism was such a daily fact of life for the Black women in their study that one said, "I've had some tough situations in my company because of racism, not blatant, but the normal kind" (p. 143). The "normal" kind of racism was described by a Black woman senior manager at a retail company as incidents that occurred in everyday conversations and meetings. Another woman reported being in a meeting where the head of corporate communications said he did not know why the company advertised in Black newspapers because Black people did not read.

An example of a more serious dose of racism, one which also demonstrates how sexism and racism intersect, was related by a woman in the Bell and Nkomo (2001) study who was the highest-ranking Black women manager in an investment banking company. She went to an off-site business meeting where she was the only Black woman. At the end of the meeting, she was asked by four white male colleagues to join them at a bar for drinks. She reluctantly did so because she believed it would demonstrate her commitment to the team. What happened next stunned her:

Everybody gathered around the bar for drinks. The five of us were standing in a circle. One of the guys said to me, "My, this was a good year for you; you did like 187 percent for the year." I said, "Yes, I had a good year." Then one of the other guys looks me right in the face and jokingly says, "You little black bitch." I couldn't believe what he'd said. I'd been called a black bitch before, but not in my work environment. But this was a peer. This was a business environment. This was where people were supposed to be professional. (p. 142)

What was even more devastating to the woman was that none of the other men said or did anything.

Biculturalism

Racial incidents such as the ones describe above can undermine women's self-confidence and job performance. However, to be successful, Black women executives must learn how to cope with racism and sexism at work. This can mean modifying their personal communication style or their appearance to make the Whites around them feel comfortable (Catalyst, 2001, 2004). When they leave work, however, they enter a culture that often has a completely different set of expectations about behavior and appearance. This phenomenon is called "biculturalism," described by Bell (1990) as "a dynamic, fluid life structure that shapes the patterns of ... social interactions, relationships, and mobility, both within and between the two cultural contexts" (p. 462). Bell gives an example:

In some instances, the woman cannot gain support without encountering additional pressures to conform in yet another way. For example, a black woman who is actively pursuing career advancement may be told by her spouse that she is becoming too aggressive or that she should be more attentive to family responsibilities (p. 460).

The behaviors that make Black women successful at work are not necessarily effective – or desirable – behaviors at home. This leads to a phenomenon called "shifting" (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003), a term used to describe how they change their "outward behavior, attitude, or tone, shifting 'White,' then shifting 'Black' again, shifting 'corporate,' shifting 'cool'" (p. 7). The women behave in one fashion at work in order to meet corporate expectations and to avoid negative stereotypes, and behave

differently outside of work to avoid being accused of losing their roots, acting “White,” or being too demanding (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst 2004). A human resources director for a manufacturing company had this to say about shifting:

Years ago, there was a lot of pressure to assimilate. From seven in the morning, ‘till seven at night we became an extension of white America. Then we’d go home, and depending on where we lived, we’d become black again. Regardless, on Friday night ‘till Sunday night we’d become black again, and then on Monday morning – when that alarm went off – we assumed a different identity. (Catalyst, 2001, p. 9)

Some women become so accustomed to shifting that they can “adopt an alternate pose or voice as easily as they blink their eyes or draw a breath – without thinking, and without realizing that the emptiness they feel and the role they must play may be directly related” (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 7). Some Black women are able to manage this shifting quite easily. Chambers (2003) interviewed middle class Black women who said “they felt as much at home in Harlem as they did on Park Avenue, as comfortable in South Central as they did in the South Pacific or South Africa” (p. 84). These women had achieved a good deal of success in predominantly White work environments and were secure in their identities as Black women. As Chambers points out, “it wasn’t that they weren’t aware that distinctly black worlds and white worlds still exist, but they didn’t value one over another. They never seemed to doubt their right to be wherever or whomever they wanted” (p. 84).

For other Black women, however, continually shifting to meet the needs and expectations of others has serious consequences (King & Ferguson, 2001). The “inability

to manage role sets” (Gregory, 2006, p. 361) can be an obstacle for Black women who aspire to senior management positions, where most will encounter few people like themselves. For many high achieving Black women, the strain of trying to meet both job and family expectations can lead to relationship problems; Black women in professional and management jobs are less likely to be married than Asian, White, or Latina women (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Catalyst, 2004). Among the Black women interviewed by Bell and Nkomo (2001), 35% had never been married and 20.6% were either divorced or separated. In contrast, 29.4% of the White women in the study had never been married and only 8.8% were divorced or separated. Catalyst (2004) found that significantly fewer Black executive and professional women were married (52%) than either Asian women (71%) or Latina women (65%).

In addition to the relationship difficulties described earlier, shifting can result in a variety of physical and mental health problems, including hypertension, obesity, and depression (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; King & Ferguson, 2001). Depression in Black women is often overlooked or undiagnosed because the term covers a wide range of symptoms from a temporary blue mood to chronic feelings of sadness, sleep disorders, and a loss of interest in people and activities that persists over a period of time (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Black women are very skilled at ignoring their own feelings and needs while constantly giving to others. Historically, Black women have been less likely to seek professional help for depression because of the stigma associated with mental illness and because depression is associated with White people (Chambers, 2003). Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) call this the Sisterella Complex, because like Cinderella of folklore, Black women sometimes work “tirelessly, sometimes masochistically, to

promote, protect, and appease others” (p. 124). Black women often put the needs of their families and others before their own needs; Nichols and Tanksley (2004), in a study of Black women who returned to school to earn a terminal degree, found that although the women said they had support from their families, they were still responsible for coping with the health problems of family members and finding dependable childcare.

The Outsider-Within

The feeling of emptiness that some Black women feel may be a result of being outsiders within, a term describing the status of individuals who are socially located on the boundary between two groups of unequal power (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Collins, 1999). According to Merton (1972), “Insiders are members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specified social statuses; Outsiders are nonmembers” (p. 21). As outsiders, women are marginalized and oppressed within the male-dominated culture; however they are insiders through sisterhood, or the similarity of life experiences and social roles they share with other women (Olson & Shopes, 1991). Blacks in corporate jobs often face occupational segregation, being channeled toward jobs in human resources, public relations, community relations, and affirmative action (Maume, 1999), that may provide visibility outside the company but seldom lead to the executive suite. In a study of outsider-insider status in academia, Thomas, Mack, Williams and Perkins (1999) found that outsider status was positively associated with race and negatively associated with academic rank. Thomas et al. (1999) concluded that “there may be a number of career shattering costs to integrating one’s personal and cultural identity and one’s research program” (p. 65). This may help to explain why Blacks might

deliberately conceal their activities in community, religious, and nonprofit organizations from their employers as a strategy for career success (Hewlett, Luce & West, 2005).

This section of the literature review has examined the status of Black women in corporate America and discussed obstacles Black women face in the workplace. The next section of this literature review presents an examination of critical race theory and its relevance Black women who work in predominantly White corporations.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory traces its beginnings to critical legal studies and the reaction of Black legal scholars to increasingly conservative court decisions that began to stall and even reverse the progress Black people had achieved through Civil Rights legislation. In this essay I will discuss the genesis of critical race theory, four basic tenets of critical race theory, and the application of critical race theory, including critical White studies, to organizational settings.

The Genesis of Critical Race Theory

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of great social upheaval during which legislation was passed that profoundly affected the lives of Black people in America. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Executive Order 11246 issued by Lyndon Johnson in 1965, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 were the result of efforts by Civil Rights workers to end segregation and racial injustice (Kivel, 1995; Thomas, 2005). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, Civil Rights litigators found that legal remedies for discrimination and racial injustice were becoming difficult to obtain. Legal scholars began questioning if legislation could produce sustained societal reform (Crenshaw,

Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Taylor, 1998). Thus, in the late 1970s, was born critical legal studies (CLS).

Critical legal scholars, dissatisfied with both conservative and liberal interpretations of law, committed themselves “to exposing and challenging ways American law served to legitimize an oppressive social order” (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xviii). Marxist and New Leftist law professors, students, and practitioners, most of whom were White and male, organized conferences on critical legal studies. Pulling from Marxist and critical theory to uncover hegemonic practices in the passage and interpretation of laws and in legal education, CLS scholars also built on the work of Legal Realists from the 1920s and 1930s, who tried to demonstrate that interpretations of labor reform laws of the time were neither neutral nor objective, but reflected social policy (Crenshaw et al., 1995). CLS aimed to transform legal education by re-presenting the law as political, subjective, and discretionary rather than apolitical, objective, and rational.

Eventually hundreds of law professors, students, and lawyers became engaged in “the construction of left legal scholarship and law school transformation” (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xix). By the 1980s, a small but growing number of legal scholars and students of color were participating in the CLS conferences. They were dissatisfied with the liberal Civil Rights legal discourse, which posited that litigation and enforcement of Civil Rights laws would eventually transform society, despite evidence to the contrary. The appeal of CLS was its critique of the law and legal education in America and their role in maintaining unequal power relations in society. However, the scholars and students of color began to grow restive at the dearth of critiques about the role of race and

racism in the law and legal education. Their concerns were spotlighted in the CLS conference of 1986, which was organized by feminist legal scholars who had successfully introduced critiques of patriarchy into CLS discourse. The feminist scholars invited the scholars of color to facilitate concurrent sessions addressing issues of race. In these sessions the scholars of color began interrogating the hegemony of CLS, asking “what is it about the whiteness of CLS that discourages participation by people of color?” (Crenshaw et al., p. xxiii). Predictably, this question caused consternation among the White CLS scholars. However, the sessions helped crystallize points of difference between CLS scholars and scholars of color and became the foundation for a workshop on critical race theory (CRT). The workshop, organized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, and Stephanie Phillips, attracted 35 scholars who coined the term “critical race theory” while developing a scholarship situated at “the intersection of critical theory and race, racism and the law” (Crenshaw et al., p. xxvii). This workshop was the beginning of the CRT movement. CRT scholars attempt “to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and . . . work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination” (Matsuda, as quoted in Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). CRT explores how the systems and structures of White supremacy that subordinate people of color have been created and are maintained in American society as well as how to change the relationship between the law and racial power (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

A key figure in the development of critical race theory was Derrick Bell, a former Civil Rights litigator who was a professor at Harvard Law School. Bell began teaching a course on racism and American law that illuminated the fallacy of the idea that law was

color-blind (Crenshaw et al., 1995). After Bell left Harvard, students demanded that the administration hire a teacher of color to continue Bell's classes in constitutional law and minority issues. Harvard demurred, indicating that (1) there were no Black legal scholars of sufficient stature to join Harvard's faculty, (2) that having a highly qualified White professor teach Bell's constitutional law classes would be better than having a mediocre Black one teach them, and (3) there was no need for a special course on racial issues because these were covered in constitutional law and employment discrimination classes. However, the administration did bring in two Civil Rights litigators to teach a three-week course on Civil Rights legislation. The student activists boycotted this course and instead, aided by professors of color from other schools as well as sympathetic professors from Harvard, organized "The Alternative Course" to continue Bell's work in critically examining the way race is treated in the law. This course "simultaneously provided the means to develop a framework to understand law and racial power and to contest Harvard's deployment of meritocratic mythology as an instance of that very power" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xxi). The Alternative Course attracted many of the professors and students who have become known as the founders of the CRT movement, including Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, and Mari Matsuda (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Taylor, 1998). CRT has grown to embrace the studies of Latina/o and Asian scholars, critical race feminism, critical white studies, and gay-lesbian-queer issues as well as critical race practice and activism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

This section of this essay has traced the genesis of CRT from its beginnings in critical legal studies to its development by student activists and Black legal scholars to its expansion beyond Blacks to include critical race feminism, critical white studies, gay-

lesbian-queer issues, and Asian and Latina/o scholars. In the next section I will discuss four basic tenets of CRT.

Basic Tenets of Critical Race Theory

One of the basic tenets of critical race theory is that racism is a normal, permanent fact of life in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Wing, 1997). Racism can be defined as a system of racialized oppression (Feagin & McKinney, 2003) that is rooted in a society's structure and reflected in the advantages and disadvantages experienced by different groups (Andersen & Collins, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Race is a social construct rather than a biological fact (Andersen & Collins; 2004; Landry, 2007); racial categories are created and characteristics are assigned to members of each category, usually by the dominant race. These classifications change over time to reflect the society's prevailing notions about race and to support the privileging of one race over others (Fredrickson, 1997; Landry, 2007; Omi & Winant, 1994; Sanjek, 1994).

CRT posits that White privilege is so ingrained in the political and legal systems and structures of American society that it is nearly invisible (Taylor, 1998). McIntosh (1993) describes privilege as any unearned benefit or asset that is accorded on the basis of being born with a certain characteristic or into a certain class. McIntosh (1993) further suggests that White privilege operates in such a way as to maintain its invisibility, to keep its beneficiaries ignorant of its presence, and to preserve its existence. Similarly, Bonilla-Silva (2001) asserts that the interests of White people in America are in preserving the status quo even as Blacks and other people of color struggle to change their position in the system as well as the social, political, and economic arrangements that privilege Whites, a phenomenon Lipsitz (1998) calls the possessive investment in whiteness.

Whiteness can be defined as “a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being White (Kivel, 1995, p. 17).

A second tenet of critical race theory is that the experiential and social context of racial oppression are critical elements in any assessment of the relationship between race and legal discourse, and for understanding racial dynamics in society (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 1998). Bell (2000b) tells a story of giving a lecture about the ways in which Black people have been used to enrich White American society and suggested that if Black people had not existed, America would have invented them, to which an audience member shouted, “Hell man, they did invent us” (p. 71). The listener’s comment reflects the belief that race is a social construct, not a biological principle (Andersen & Collins, 2004). However, although racial classifications are socially constructed, the consequences of being assigned to a particular classification are quite real; the result of being classified as something other than White leaves Blacks subject to exploitation and violence (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Feagin & McKinney, 2003; Fredrickson, 1997; Kivel, 1995). Bell (2000a) further suggests that “even those whites who lack wealth and power are sustained in their sense of racial superiority by policy decisions that sacrifice black rights” (p. 7).

A third tenet of critical race theory is interest convergence, which posits that White people will tolerate the activities of Black people in obtaining racial justice only when these activities converge with and promote the interests of Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Wing, 1997). As an example, Bell (Dudziak, 2000) suggests that *Brown v. Board of Education* would not have been decided in favor of

desegregation had not there been a convergence between the foreign policy interests of the government and the interests of Black people in desegregation. The U. S. Justice Department filed an amicus brief arguing that desegregation was in the national interest because it would demonstrate to the world that the free democracy in America was “the most civilized and most secure form of government yet devised by man” (Dudziak, 2000, p. 107). Some CRT scholars question whether Civil Rights legislation is actually designed to improve the status of Black people or rather serves as a governor to regulate the speed of racial progress so as to avoid the destabilizing effects of too-slow change as well as the discomfort of too-rapid change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

A fourth tenet of CRT is that since cultures construct social reality in ways that promote their self-interest, it is necessary to construct different realities that reflect the experiences of Black people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Wing, 1997). A technique used by CRT scholars to challenge racial oppression and White hegemony is storytelling (Wing, 1997), in which “the myths, pre-suppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture about race and that invariably render Blacks and other minorities one-down” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. xvii) are exposed. Counter-stories specifically focus on telling the tales of people who are marginalized by White society and are used to “shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). One of the best known examples of a counter-story is Bell’s (1992) “The Space Traders,” in which aliens from outer space offer the U. S. government materials to solve all financial, environmental, and energy problems; in exchange, they want to take all American Blacks back to the aliens’ home planet. Eventually Americans vote to accept the Space Traders’

offer and all Black people are rounded up, stripped down to one undergarment, and sent in chains to the Space Traders' ships, thus leaving the country in the same manner as their African ancestors had arrived. Bell (2000a) noted that when he asks audiences how they think Americans would vote on the Space Traders' offer today, "rather substantial majorities express the view that the offer would be accepted" (p. 7).

This section of the literature review presented four basic tenets of CRT: (1) racism is a normal, permanent fact of life in American society, (2) the experiential and social context of racial oppression are critical to understanding racial dynamics in society as well as the relationship between race and legal discourse, (3) White people will tolerate the activities of Black people in obtaining racial justice only when these activities converge with and promote the interests of Whites (interest convergence), and (4) since cultures construct social reality in ways that promote their self-interest, it is necessary to construct different realities that reflect the experiences of Black people. In the next section I will discuss the application of CRT to organizational settings.

Critical Race Theory Applied to Organizational Settings

Forty years after the passage of Civil Rights legislation in the 1960s, one might argue that Black people have made a great deal of progress in corporate America. Corporate America has made diversity a business imperative, asserting that managing diversity will help companies address changes in the demographics of the workforce, increase productivity and profitability, and decrease discrimination (Grimes, 2002). Company websites commonly include statements of their commitment to diversity and highlight the companies' placement on *Fortune* magazine's annual list of the Best Places to Work for Minorities and other accolades received for having diverse workplaces.

There are Black men and women leading major organizations such as American Express and Young and Rubicam (Meeks, 2005), and they are represented on the board of directors of 67% of *Fortune* 500 companies (James & Wooten, 2005). The percentage of Black officials and managers in the workforce increased from 6.8% in 1998 to 7.7% in 2003 (Wilcher, 2005).

However, when these statistics are considered within the larger context of the current status of Black people in America, the overall picture is far from rosy. While Blacks comprise 13% of the U. S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), they hold only 43 or 8% of the seats in Congress (Amer, 2005). In 2005, 26% of Blacks in the civilian labor force were employed in management, professional, and related occupations, compared to 36% of Whites; conversely, 24% of Blacks were employed in service occupations compared to 15% of Whites (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006). Of the more than 5500 seats on boards of directors of Fortune 500 companies, only 449 (8.1%) are held by Black men and women; one third of Fortune 500 companies have no Black directors (James & Wooten, 2005). According to Census 2000 EEO Data, Blacks comprise only 6.3% of officials and managers and only 7.6% of professionals (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003) in the civilian workforce.

Critical race theory provides a lens through which to view these inequities in organizations. As noted previously, CRT posits racism is a normal, permanent fact of life and that White privilege is ingrained in the systems and structures of American society, operating invisibly to maintain the status quo and in such a way to keep its beneficiaries ignorant of its presence (McIntosh, 1993; Taylor, 1998). In the corporate world, White privilege also operates invisibly to maintain White supremacy. Macalpine and Marsh

(2005), in a study exploring whiteness and power in organizations, were “struck by the intractable and enduring nature of the organizational power structures and shocking inequities they perpetuate in our society” (p. 429). Although Macalpine and Marsh worked with organizations in the United Kingdom, they described these organizations as “overwhelmingly White at the top” (p. 429) which is certainly consistent with U. S. Census 2000 data that 89.5% of chief executives and 82.7% of officials and managers are White (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). Macalpine and Marsh asked groups of Black and White employees to discuss what it was like being White in their organizations. They found that Whites had difficulty finding the words or language to talk about race and could only talk about whiteness in opposition to blackness. They concluded that “silence about whiteness masks white power through normalizing whiteness, thus sustaining the power and identity of the white person and preventing white people recognizing their power” (p. 446).

Organizational studies in the United States have also demonstrated that whiteness is an invisible norm. Grimes (2001) examined scholarly organization studies literature and found that whiteness was taken for granted, that writers used racially stereotyped examples to illustrate points in articles that were not about race, and that distancing language was used in talking about affirmative action so that the words “Black” and “White” were never mentioned. In a later study Grimes (2002) examined diversity management literature aimed at practitioners. She found that White writers unconsciously constructed and reconstructed White privilege in many of the articles. Blacks and other minorities were not at the center of attention and were often depicted in subordinate roles. In one instance a photograph of a company’s employees showed a White man dressed as

a manager while a Black man was dressed in work clothes and wore a hard hat. In cases where racial differences were acknowledged, writers re-centered whiteness by presenting the behavior of White people as more normal or more important (Grimes, 2002). Cox and Nkomo (1990) conducted a review of research published in 20 major academic journals in the field of organizational behavior and human resources management from 1964 to 1989; they found that only 201 articles – less than two percent – focused on race or minority groups and that race as a variable appeared even less frequently toward the end of the time frame. Nkomo (1992) suggested that much of the scholarly research on organizations was rooted in a Eurocentric view of society and that research questions from alternative paradigms were silenced.

Critical race theory examines how concepts about merit “function not as a neutral basis for distributing resources and opportunity, but rather [as repositories] of hidden, race-specific preferences for those who have the power to determine the meaning and consequences of ‘merit’” (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xxix). In American companies diversity plans and strategies are often built upon “cultural myths that support diversity resistance” (Thomas, 2005), two of which are the myth of meritocracy and the myth of the colorblind ideal (Thomas, Mack, & Montagiani, 2004). The myth of meritocracy is based on the American cultural norm that anyone can be successful if s/he works hard enough. This myth assumes that ability and effort are the keys to material success, and that those who do not achieve such success have not worked hard enough or long enough. White stereotypes about Black people, such as that Blacks are lazy, complain too much, or prefer to live on welfare (Feagin & McKinney, 2003), feed the perpetuation of the myth of meritocracy. The myth of the colorblind ideal assumes that all people are equal

and therefore everyone should be treated the same; diversity action plans and strategies are based on “race-neutral” policies do not appear to favor any one particular race. CRT illuminates how both of these myths ignore the historical effects of racial oppression and exclusion as well as the reality that White privilege confers unseen advantages on White people. “By relying on merit criteria or standards, the dominant group can justify its exclusion of Blacks to positions of power, believing in its own neutrality. CRT asserts that such standards are chosen, they are not inevitable, and they should be openly debated and reformed in ways that no longer benefit privileged whites alone” (Taylor, 1988, p. 123).

According to the principle of interest convergence, “white elites will tolerate or encourage racial progress for minorities only if doing so also promotes white self-interest” (Wing, 1997, p. 3). Lipsitz (1998) describes how past federal labor laws, ostensibly designed to protect the rights of all workers, have instead privileged Whites and maintained the possessive investment in whiteness regarding employment. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 protected the rights of workers to organize, but the American Federation of Labor objected to including a provision in the law that would have prohibited racial discrimination by unions (Lipsitz, 1998). In the same year, the Social Security Act was passed to provide a security net for older workers, but it did not cover farm and domestic workers, who were primarily minorities (Lipsitz, 1998). Affirmative action practices that benefit primarily White people, such as hiring preferences for veterans and admissions preferences for the children of alumni of prestigious universities, are not considered unfair advantages (Kivel, 1995). Corporate welfare policies such as unlimited deduction for interest on corporate debt and foreign tax

credits benefit large, predominantly White corporations but are not seen as items of preference (Kivel, 1995). As Lipsitz (1998) states, “apparently, advantages only carry a stigma when people of color receive them” (p. 222).

The rise of “reverse discrimination” lawsuits supports the notion that White interests in employment laws have diverged from those of Blacks. In *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*, the Supreme Court overturned a collective bargaining agreement that was an attempt to redress past discrimination and to prevent the loss of all minority teachers because of budget cut-backs; under the agreement some senior White teachers would have been laid off before more junior Black teachers. The Supreme Court ruled that the collective bargaining agreement violated the constitutional rights of the White teachers and indicated that the decision was a “‘color-blind’ defense of the principle of seniority” (Lipsitz, 1998, p. 43), thus demonstrating how the myth of the color-blind ideal operates in legal decisions. A more extreme example of using Civil Rights legislation to support a reverse discrimination claim occurred in the *City of Richmond v. J. A. Croson*. In this case, the City of Richmond, after determining that White contractors received 99.33% of the city’s construction business, passed legislation setting aside 30% of construction contracts for minority-owned businesses. The Supreme Court ruled that the set-aside violated the constitutional rights of White construction contractors. The Court did not consider evidence about systematic discrimination in the construction industry in general nor the fact that minority contractors in Richmond, whose population was evenly divided between Whites and Blacks, received less than 1% of all construction contracts (Lipsitz, 1998).

If cultures construct social reality in ways that promote their self-image, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the social reality in predominantly White American corporations supports and promotes Whites. As we have seen, the literature in organizational studies ignores or marginalizes the issues of Black people. Further, Feagin and McKinney (2003) suggest that many White leaders in America seem to discount the seriousness of racism and have contributed to the generation and dissemination of stereotyped views of Blacks as well as the weakening of programs and laws that attempt to redress past discrimination. An example of this can be seen in *Etter v. Veriflo Corporation*. In this case, the California Court of Appeals ruled that although frequent racist epithets were directed at Etter, a Black man whose White supervisor called him and other Black employees “Buckwheat,” “Jemima,” and “boy,” these insults were not severe or pervasive enough to entitle Etter to legal protection under either federal or state employment discrimination laws (Feagin & McKinney, 2003).

CRT uses counter-stories to challenge this kind of institutionalized and legally sanctioned racism. Derrick Bell’s (1992) “The Racial Preference Licensing Act” is an example. It describes a law that allows employers, owners and managers of housing units, and proprietors of public facilities, to apply for a license to discriminate by excluding people on the basis of race and color. The Racial Preference Licensing Act was intended to reflect racial realism; it did not assume the existence of racial tolerance but rather it would:

boldly proclaim its commitment to racial justice through the working of a marketplace that recognizes and seeks to balance the rights of our Black citizens to fair treatment and the no less important right of some Whites to

an unfettered choice of customers, employees and contractees. (Bell, 1992, p. 47)

The intent of this counter-story is to challenge both Whites and Blacks to re-examine their views about segregation, integration, discrimination, and other Civil Rights issues, and to think about the effect on society if such a law were passed and enforced.

Conclusion

Critical race theory offers a framework to understand race and racism in organizational settings. The racism that is a normal and permanent fixture in American society is also prevalent in American corporations. Frederickson (1997) describes a racist society as one that “functions like a private club in which the membership conceives of itself in a certain way and excludes those who do not fit in” (p. 55). Census data indicate that Blacks have been excluded from the highest levels of organizations; they represent only 2.3% of chief executives and only 6.3% of officials and managers (U. S. Census Bureau, 2003). The near-absence of race in both the academic and practitioner-oriented organization studies literature centers whiteness as the norm or the standard against which Blacks are measured and found wanting, according to the myth of the meritocracy. Critical race theory and the principle of interest convergence help to illuminate the recent success of reverse discrimination law suits decided by increasingly conservative courts that are blind to institutionalized racism in the law. Counter-stories like “The Racial Preference Licensing Act” (Bell, 1992) can be employed to make visible the institutionalized nature of racism and to help construct different social realities that reflect the experiences of Black people. CRT’s examination of the experiential and social context of racial oppression can be applied to organizational settings to demonstrate how

myths such as the color-blind ideal and the meritocracy privilege White people and limit or constrain opportunities for Black employees. And finally, CRT will inform my study by helping me to generate knowledge about Blacks, who have been marginalized, silenced, and disempowered by traditional research methodologies, thereby giving voice to Blacks and turning the margins into “places of transformative resistance” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 37).

Chapter Summary

This literature review examined the workplace obstacles faced by a growing portion of the American workforce: Black women. Their representation at the higher levels of corporate America is not proportionate to their representation in the workforce or in the population. Black women face many obstacles that hinder their ability to reach the senior management level and some who do succeed pay a high cost in terms of feeling isolated, doubting their abilities, and having difficulty maintaining personal relationships and good health. Research about Black women in corporate America is very limited and the much of research does not appropriately address the cultural context in which Black women experience both sexism and racism.

There is a need for research that focuses specifically on the experiences of Black women, examining how they negotiate the sexism and racism that still reside in corporate America. By understanding how racism and sexism affect the careers of Black women, companies can begin to create more inclusive work environments and eliminate barriers that prevent Black women from achieving their full potential in the pursuit of organizational objectives.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiate diversity issues in a *Fortune* 1000 corporation. Two research questions guided this study:

1. How do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment?
2. How do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?

The study used a qualitative research design, specifically a case study method. According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research is an umbrella term for forms of inquiry that illuminate the meaning of social phenomena while minimizing disruptions of the natural setting of the study. Case studies are one of many research strategies that come under the qualitative research umbrella (Berg, 2007; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Janesick, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). This chapter describes the research design, sample selection criteria, data collection methods, data analysis strategies, validity and reliability, and biases.

Design of the Study

There are many definitions of case study research. In his book, *Case Study Research in Educational Settings*, Bassey (1999) devotes an entire chapter to exploring the question: what is a case study, and concludes that there is no overarching definition. Yin (2009) defined a case study as an in-depth, empirical investigation of a phenomenon and its contextual conditions, particularly when there are no clear boundaries between the

phenomenon and the context. Stake (1995) suggested that case study is “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). Stake’s definition seems applicable to my study because I was interested in describing how Black women human resources managers make sense of their experiences doing diversity work (the activity) in a corporation dominated and controlled by White men (the circumstances).

Case studies are particularly appropriate for answering questions of how or why a particular social phenomenon operates (Yin, 2009), and for examining integrated systems (Stake, 1995). This case study was meant to describe how Black women human resources managers who worked in a corporation during a 20-year time span negotiated issues of diversity. The social phenomenon I wanted to understand was the operation of racism and sexism within a corporate context and their effects on Black women human resources managers who were responsible for developing, communicating, and enforcing diversity policies.

Case studies can be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods (Yin, 2009). I chose a qualitative approach because I wanted to develop a holistic understanding of a particular situation (Janesick, 1994). Qualitative research seeks to answer questions by examining social settings and the people who occupy those settings (Berg, 2007). Merriam suggests that qualitative research is rooted in the philosophical assumption that “reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (p. 6). In this study I explored how Black women human resources managers constructed reality in an environment where they were both racial and gender minorities.

Sample Selection

My sample for this study was a nonrandom, purposive one (Berg, 2007; Merriam, 1998). A purposive sample requires researchers to use “their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent the population” (Berg, 2007, p. 44). Merriam (1998) asserts that purposeful sampling begins with the establishment of selection criteria for inclusion in the study. These criteria should be consistent with the purpose of the study and assist the researcher in identifying subjects from whom the researcher can learn the most.

The purpose of this study was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiated diversity issues in a corporation. To be selected for participation in this study, the participants had to: (1) self-identify as Black women, (2) have been employed in a human resources management position in a specific *Fortune* 1000 company during the 20 years from 1987 to 2007, and (3) have had responsibility for the development, communication, and/or enforcement of diversity-related policies. The time period was significant because it represented a point in the company’s history when a critical mass of Black women was employed in human resources management positions and the bond among them was fairly strong. This bond was augmented during annual meetings of human resources managers from across the company, during which the women could receive social support and validation of their struggles to maintain their cultural identities in an environment that was inconsistent in its treatment issues related to diversity (see Denton, 1990, for a discussion of bonding relationships among Black professional women). In addition, the corporation underwent several significant organizational changes during the specified time period, including (1) a restructuring that

affected every operating group and (2) the development and dissemination of a corporate mission and vision statement that included explicit statements about the company's position with regard to diversity.

Merriam (1998) suggested that the number of participants interviewed for a research study depends on the phenomenon being studied, the questions being asked, and the resources available to support the study. I interviewed five Black women who met the selection criteria and I was the sixth participant in the study. I am personally acquainted with all of the Black women who worked in human resources management positions from 1987 to 2007 and I had direct working relationships with several of them. By choosing participants whom I knew for this study, I was able to build upon rapport that had already been established to gain a much deeper and richer understanding of how these women negotiated their personal identities as Black women working in a White male dominated corporation. No incentives for participating in this study were offered, but the interviews were highly interactive and reciprocal, based on the common history I shared with the other participants. Johnson-Bailey (2001), who also had a common history with her interviewees as a Black reentry woman, noted that her interviews were both reciprocal and dialogic; the participants collaborated with her in the research process, asking her questions, giving her advice, and occasionally changing the direction of the interview. This procedure is consistent with principles of feminist research, which treats interviews as non-hierarchical give-and-take exchanges where the interviewer is "prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (Oakley, 1981, p. 41).

Because I am a Black woman who served in several human resource management positions in the target company during the time period selected for the study, and because I had responsibility for developing, disseminating, and enforcing diversity-related policies, I met the selection criteria for the study. Therefore, I was a participant. My interview was conducted by my major professor, who also collaborated with me to interpret and present my personal experiences. Many feminist researchers include autobiographical information in their research studies as a form of self-disclosure and some include their own narratives as a form of self-study (Reinharz & Davidman, 1992).

Theoretical Frame

Berg (2007) states that “methodology cannot be examined in a vacuum” (p. 4). Data collection is inextricably linked to the researcher’s motivation for choosing a particular topic to study, the way the study is conducted, and how data analysis is approached. Black feminist ideology and critical race theory are two theoretical frames that informed the selection of my topic and my approach to data gathering and analysis.

Black feminist scholarship has been marginalized in the general academic environment (hooks, 1994) and the issues of Black women have not been adequately researched in the field of human resource development (Bierema & Cseh, 2003; Brooks & Clunis, 2007). King (2007) provides four tenets of a Black feminist ideology: (1) a declaration of the visibility of Black women, acknowledging that being both Black and female gives Black women a special status in our society; (2) an assertion that Black women have the right to self-determination; (3) a challenge to the “interstructure of the oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism both in the dominant society and within movements for liberation” (p. 37); and (4) a presumption that Black women are powerful

and independent subjects, in contrast to the more usual scholarly depiction of Black women as victims. Black feminist scholars acknowledge that although Black women make meaning of their lives and interpret their world in ways that are different from those of White women, it does not follow that all Black women experience race and gender oppression in the same way. I chose to study Black women so that I could contribute to an inadequate body of literature and to give voice to a distinct population with experiences that are different from those of White women or Black men.

Critical race theory also provides a theoretical frame for this study. My research study raises issues of race, gender, and power relations in a corporate environment that may challenge or offend members of dominant groups. However, in keeping with a critical race theoretical frame, I view racism as a permanent fact of corporate life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Taylor, 1998; Wing, 1997) and White privilege as operating invisibly to maintain White supremacy in the workplace (Macalpine & March, 2005; McIntosh, 1993; Taylor, 1998). As I collected and analyzed data, it was with an understanding of the institutionalized racism inherent in corporate and academic settings that has resulted in the marginalization of Black people and the devaluing of research by and about Black people.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Simpson, 2000).). When researchers collect and analyze the data, they can immediately respond and adapt to changing circumstances (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Qualitative researchers generally rely on three methods for collecting data: interviewing, observation, and document

analysis (Berg, 2007; Janesick, 1994; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). For this study I collected data through interviews and documents.

Interviews

Interviewing is the tool most frequently used by qualitative researchers (Glesne, 2006; Merriam & Simpson, 2000) because it offers scholars opportunities to learn about things they cannot see and to explore alternative explanations for phenomena they do see (Glesne, 2006). The interview has been defined in many ways: “a way of finding out about people” (Oakley, 1981, p. 32); a “person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another (Merriam, 1998, p. 71); and “a purposeful conversation, usually between two people...that is directed by one in order to get information” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). In the following section I present a brief overview of interviewing as a tool used by qualitative researchers.

The traditional view of interviewing as a tool for social scientists is based in positivism, a theoretical perspective that applies the scientific method to the social sciences (Scheurich, 1995). Positivist researchers believe that “the truth is out there” and that it can be revealed by testing hypotheses. The interview was viewed as an oral survey where the researcher maintained a pleasant but professional manner, asked a few questions to establish rapport, then proceeded to ask a set of pre-established questions which the interviewee was expected to answer (Oakley, 1981). Researchers were cautioned against becoming too friendly with participants and against answering questions posed by the interviewees so as not to bias the interview. Context, such as the race or gender of the interviewer and interviewee, was not an important factor in interviewing (Scheurich, 1995).

As social scientists moved away from positivism and began to embrace other theoretical perspectives, such as feminism and critical theory, their views about the research process changed. Interpretivists embraced a constructivist epistemology rather than the objectivism of the positivists. According to constructivism, “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 2003, p. 42). From a constructivist point of view, there is no one universal truth waiting to be discovered. Instead, there are multiple realities that are constructed and interpreted within social contexts. There is no such thing as bias because there is no separation between the interviewer and the interviewee, and research findings are created as a result of the interaction between the two (Guba, 1990; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992). Interpretivists, therefore, seek “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 2003, p. 67).

Because this study uses Black feminism as a theoretical frame, I believe it is beneficial to situate this study within a feminist perspective on interviewing. I then briefly discuss issues that should be considered when Black women interview other Black women.

A Feminist Perspective on Interviewing

Feminists believe that the world is patriarchal, that women’s voices are marginalized and that their ways of understanding and being in the world are undervalued. Feminist researchers reject the positivist view of interviewing as a one way-data collection technique that focuses on maintaining control of the interview, remaining

detached from participants, and searching for an absolute truth (Glesne, 2006; Lieblich et al., 1998; Minister, 1991; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Oakley, 1981). Rather, it is understood that both interviewers and interviewees bring “considerable conscious and unconscious baggage” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 249) to the interview process; this baggage shapes and influences both the asking and answering of questions.

However, one of the major criticisms of mainstream feminism is that it generalizes about all women without regard to the fact that the experiences of women of color and working class women are different from and unequal to those of middle class White women (Olson & Shopes, 1991; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992). For example, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule’s (1986) foundational study of women’s ways of knowing has been critiqued as not representative of poor women or women of color. Feminist scholars who have worked with women who were not middle-class and White have identified how differences other than gender affect women’s lives. Luttrell (2007) reported that White and Black working-class women experience exclusion differently. Steward and Phelps (2004), as Black women academicians, found that their perceptions about hierarchy, supervisor-supervisee power differentials, and need for empowerment were very different from those of the 13 White women who participated in a supervision and training work group of a conference on the advancement of women.

Considerations When Black Women Interview Other Black Women

Black women scholars who interview other Black women do so as outsider-insiders or outsiders within. According to Merton (1972), “Insiders are members of specified groups and collectivities or occupants of specified social statuses; Outsiders are nonmembers” (p. 21). Black women scholars are insiders through the similarity of life

experiences and social roles they share with other Black women as members of a marginalized and oppressed group. However, they may be perceived as outsiders by virtue of their membership in the prestigious occupational category of college professors. Black women's shared history of race, class, and gender oppression shapes their ways of knowing and interpreting the world (Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Willis, 2000). However, all Black women do not experience these types of oppression in the same way. Issues such as educational attainment, income, and skin shade divide and separate Black women (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). It would be a mistake for a Black woman scholar to assume that other Black women will openly embrace her research agenda and willingly participate in her research study simply because they share the common experience of being Black women in a predominantly White world.

Johnson-Bailey (1999), a Black feminist scholar, conducted a study of Black reentry women. She describes how she had to negotiate some participants' negative perceptions about her social class and biases about her light skin during her interviews. Although the issues of class and skin color were discussed directly, sometimes in a confrontational manner, such discussions were uncomfortable and filled with awkward silences, tears, and averted glances. In contrast, discussions of race and gender were positive and provided bonding opportunities.

In my study, although the participants all worked in the same company, our jobs were in different parts of the organization, our reporting relationships varied based on the organizational structure of our division, and our responsibilities differed based on the requirements of our respective business groups or units. I did not presume that we would

all interpret our experiences in the organization in the same way, or that we would have the same feelings about our experiences or about the company.

Interview Process

I conducted five semistructured interviews (Merriam, 1998) with the participants using an interview guide (see Appendix A). The professor overseeing this research interviewed me using the same interview guide. Semistructured interviews are in the middle of a range that extends from completely unstructured, where only topic areas are identified and no specific interview questions are prepared in advance, to wholly structured, where both specific questions and the sequence in which they will be asked are identified in advance of the interview (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). I identified topic areas and prepared questions that invited participants to tell stories about incidents I anticipated would be “of deep and abiding interest to [them]” (Chase, 1995, p. 2).

Chase (1995) draws a distinction between soliciting reports and soliciting stories, based on who has the responsibility for the significance of the narrative. If the participant determines how meaningful situation is, he or she is more likely to tell a story with rich details rather than give a factual report that may be missing emotional content. Chase further suggests that “our task as interviewers is to provide the interactional and discursive conditions that will arouse [the participant’s] desire to embrace that responsibility” (p. 12). To encourage storytelling rather than reporting, interviewers should phrase questions in everyday language and ask about the participant’s experiences, thoughts, and feelings (Chase, 1995). My interview questions (see Appendix A) were designed to elicit storytelling. I used language I thought would be familiar to the

participants and would encourage them to describe their feelings about the experiences they chose to discuss.

All study participants received a letter with details about participating in the study (see Appendix B). Each signed a Participant Consent Form (see Appendix C) and completed a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). Each interview lasted 1-2 hours and was audiotaped using a digital voice recorder. The voice recordings were downloaded to my personal computer for transcription, then erased from the digital voice recorder. I personally transcribed the recording of the interview as soon after the interview as was practical. Each transcript was typed in a double-spaced format with line numbers to assist with the analysis of the data. I sent each participant a triple-spaced copy of the interview transcript and invited her to make corrections, revisions, additions, and clarifications. After all revisions were made and the transcript was finalized, the voice recording on my computer were archived on a flash drive and deleted from the computer.

Documents

Document analysis is important in qualitative case studies because documents can help explain the contextual conditions of the case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Documents can include written materials such as memos and reports as well as physical and visual items such as posters and badges (Merriam, 1998). Documents have the advantage of being unobtrusive, stable, available for repeated viewings, and specific as to names, dates, purpose, and references (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009).

Case study data can be gathered from sources that include archival records and physical or cultural artifacts (Yin, 2009). In this study I collected and analyzed many types of documents, including statistical reports, memos, newsletters, downloaded web

pages, policy statements, performance review forms, and training manuals. These documents, drawn from different times and different business divisions, portray the company's definition of and commitment to diversity during the 20 years of the case study.

Field Notes

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), field notes are the “written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (p. 119). Field notes are critical to the researcher's ability to produce the thick, rich descriptions that are the hallmarks of qualitative research. They should include the date, time, location, and purpose of the field experience. Descriptive field notes should provide an accurate and detailed record of what happened in the field while reflective field notes are the researcher's subjective musings on subjects such as mistakes, fears, prejudices, reactions to the field experience, and hunches about the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998).

I used a lined notebook to record field notes. During the interviews I made brief notations about aspects of the interview that were not captured by an audiotape, such as the participant's tone of voice during the interview. Following each interview, I recorded notes about things that happened during the interview (such as interruptions) and any remarks that were made before and after the recorded portion of the interview. My field notes also included my perceptions about patterns that were emerging in the data collected as well as my own feelings about the interviews and my analysis of what occurred, what mistakes I made, and what I should do differently in subsequent interviews. This is important because Bogdan and Biklen (2007) assert that by recording

field notes that include reflections on their subjectivity, qualitative researchers can guard against their biases.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research is an inductive process, seeking to build theory through the analysis of many pieces of data collected from different sources. Data analysis is “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that you accumulate to enable you to come up with findings” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 159). To prepare for data analysis, researchers should organize their data into manageable units, code and synthesize the data, then search for patterns that help explain the phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I used the constant comparative method outlined by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) for analyzing my data. This approach to data analysis requires the researcher to code units of meaning, select units for analysis and compare the selected unit to other units of meaning, then group together the units that have similar meaning or create a new category if there are no other similar units of meaning.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) recommend coding all data sources and making copies to use in data analysis; originals should be locked away for safekeeping. I followed these recommendations. I transcribed the audiotape of the first interview, secured the original in a locked file, and then read a copy of the transcript, separating and coding units of data to create data chunks; I followed the same process for each subsequent interview. I then went back to the first interview, cut the data chunks into strips, and grouped the strips by similar codes. I compared and contrasted the data chunks in the first interview to those that emerged in the second, making notes of similarities and

dissimilarities. As patterns emerged I developed comprehensive categories and sorted the data chunks into those categories. I continued to work with the data in this way I reached the point of saturation, when I determined that I had “exhausted the dimensions of the categories” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 75). From the categories I identified three themes that reflected the overall sense of the data. Finally, the data chunks were color coded and sorted into the themes.

Validity and Reliability

Merriam (1998) states that “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 198). In quantitative research studies, validity refers to the extent to which researchers are actually measuring what they intend to measure while reliability refers to the extent to which the researcher’s findings can be replicated by others (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). In qualitative research, however, these concepts are viewed differently. Qualitative researchers focus on demonstrating that their findings are trustworthy; that is, that they are credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable (Hittleman & Simon, 2006).

Validity

In qualitative research validity focuses on the credibility (internal validity) and transferability (external validity) of research findings. Internal validity is concerned with how well research findings match reality. However, as Merriam (1998) points out, “one of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured, as in quantitative research” (p. 202). Merriam explains that because qualitative researchers use themselves as instruments of

data collection and analysis, “interpretations of reality are accessed directly through their observations and interviews. We are thus ‘closer’ to reality than if a data collection instrument had been interjected between us and the participants” (p. 203).

There are several strategies qualitative researchers can use to enhance the internal validity or credibility of their findings (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). For this study I used three strategies. First, I used triangulation, where I relied on multiple sources of data to cross-validate my findings. Next, I performed member checks, where I gave my interpretations to the research participants and invited their perspectives. Finally, I used the strategy of peer examination, where I discussed emerging findings with other researchers.

External validity refers to transferability, or the extent to which the findings are generalizable to other situations. According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), qualitative researchers most commonly focus on reader or user generalizability. Readers should be given enough “rich, thick description” (Merriam, 1998) to be able to judge how closely the research situation matches their own, and therefore to judge how transferable the findings are. My case study provides an abundance of description about the company and the Black women human resources managers who work there, set against the backdrop of societal changes stimulated by the Civil Rights movement and employment-related legislation. Later in this chapter I provide a Bias Statement that will help readers understand my point of view as the principal researcher as well as a participant in the study.

Reliability

For qualitative researchers, reliability is the “fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 40). Merriam and Simpson (2000) suggest three ways researchers can provide evidence of reliability: triangulation, peer examination, and an audit trail. I have already discussed triangulation and peer examination. The audit trail is a detailed description of “how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). I followed Maykut and Morehouse’s (1994) recommendations: the original transcripts and those from my initial coding have been stored; my field notes on data collection and analysis were recorded by hand in a notebook; and the unitized data, sorted by the categories I used during data analysis, has been preserved.

Bias Statement

Because the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research, and because data analysis occurs throughout the research process, it is critical for researchers to be aware that their interpretations are shaped by their own “conscious and unconscious assumptions and orientations” (Scheurich, 1995, p. 241). What follows is a discussion of my background as well as events and actions that influenced my conceptualization of this study and how I analyzed the data I collected.

As a Black woman who spent more than 25 years working in corporate America, I have a personal interest in the experiences of Black women in predominantly White organizations. I spent all of my corporate years in human resources, working as a recruiter, a career counselor, a trainer, an internal consultant, and a department manager.

Looking back over my corporate career, I see myself as a *tempered radical*, someone who is “determined to work from inside the system with enough tempering to influence the organizational mainstream” (Bell, Meyerson, Nkomo, & Scully, 2003, p. 383). I thought it was more effective to make changes from within the system rather than from the outside.

Throughout my career, I investigated complaints of unfair treatment and witnessed how White employees who engaged in unprofessional and/or inappropriate behavior were sometimes treated more leniently than Black employees. I also observed both subtle and explicit forms of sexism and racism directed at Black women in the organizations in which I was employed. One company I worked for hired two White men and then a White woman from outside the corporation to direct its human resource development (HRD) function. Although none of these employees was successful in the job for more than a year or two, the fourth time the position was vacant, the company again went to the outside to recruit a manager. I had been in the department for several years as an internal HRD consultant and had a track record of success as well as the respect of my peers in the department and of managers in the business divisions with whom I worked. However, senior management did not consider me a candidate for the position because I did not have management experience. They hired a White woman who was not very successful in the job. She also left after a year or two.

Having worked in three different large corporations, I have direct experience with how corporate culture affects human resources practices. But even in situations where espoused human resources practices were generally aligned with actual practices in a culture that was supportive of diversity, I found that minority employees were subjected

to more scrutiny and to more serious disciplinary actions than White employees. Part of my job as a human resources manager was to surface this inequitable treatment and recommend more equitable actions. However, in companies that valued loyalty and compliance with corporate norms, being a Black woman who spoke against such norms came with a price in terms of performance evaluations and career opportunities.

Chapter Summary

This qualitative case study was designed to illuminate how Black women human resources managers negotiate diversity issues in a *Fortune* 1000 corporation. The two research questions that guided this study were (1) how do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment, and (2) how do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure. The study was informed by Black feminist ideology and critical race theory.

I conducted semistructured interviews with five women who met the criteria for participation: they self-identified as Black women, they were employed in a human resources management position in the target company during the years from 1987 to 2007, and they had responsibility for the development, communication, and enforcement of diversity-related policies. Since I also met the criteria for participation, the major professor overseeing this research conducted an interview with me as a participant.

Data were collected through interviews and documents. I used the constant comparative method to analyze my data and employed multiple strategies to enhance the validity and reliability of my findings, including triangulation, peer examination, and rich, thick description. The chapter concludes with a statement of my personal biases.

CHAPTER 4

PROFILES OF THE TOLSON COMPANY AND THE PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this case study was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiated diversity issues in the Tolson Company. The study covers 1987 to 2007, a 20-year period during which the company's approach to managing diversity issues went through several transformations. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment?
2. How do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?

In this chapter I profile the Tolson Company, a *Fortune* 1000 company whose 2007 revenues were in excess of \$2 billion. I include a description of the company and a history of Tolson's diversity initiatives and activities. Later in the chapter I profile the participants, six Black women human resources managers who worked for the Tolson Company from 1987 to 2007. These women – Chloe, Mary HR, Nia, Roxy, Tina, and Donna, this researcher – had responsibilities that included developing, implementing, communicating, and/or enforcing diversity-related policies, programs, and strategies.

The Tolson Company

This section provides an overview of the Tolson Company and its history with regard to diversity. I situate the company's diversity initiatives against a backdrop of legislation prohibiting discrimination and describe the shifts in Tolson's approach to diversity from affirmative action in the early 1980s to its current focus on inclusion. I

show the contribution of Tolson's human resource professionals to developing, communicating, and implementing Tolson's diversity initiatives. This detailed information is provided to set the stage for Chapter Five, in which I present my findings and the experiences of the Black women human resources managers who participated in this study.

A Brief Description of the Tolson Company

The Tolson Company is a highly respected diversified media company whose roots were established more than 100 years ago. It is headquartered in a large metropolitan city. In 2007 Tolson employed more than 10,000 people across the United States and has operations in Europe and Canada. Over the years the company, its divisions and its employees have won numerous media industry awards. Tolson prides itself on fair treatment of employees and it frequently appears on lists such as America's Most Admired Companies (*Fortune* magazine), Best Places to Work for GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered) Equality (Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index), Top 500 IT Innovators (*InformationWeek* magazine), and Top 30 Companies for Executive Women (National Association for Female Executives).

Pictures of Tolson's corporate officers and members of its board of directors can be found on the company's website. Of 31 corporate officers portrayed in January 2009, ten are women – eight White (26%) and two Black (6%). There appear to be no minority men at this most senior level of the company. Among the 15 board members are five White women (33%) and two minority men (14%) – one Black (7%), one Hispanic (7%). There appear to be no minority women serving on the board.

Federal Legislation That Shaped the Tolson Company's Diversity Activities

Tolson's diversity activities from 1987 to 2007 were shaped by legislation enacted in the 1960s and 1970s, a time of great social movements for Civil Rights and Women's Liberation. The laws passed during this time had provisions that prohibited retaliation by employers against workers who complained about unlawful employment practices, filed a charge of discrimination, or participated in an investigation of discrimination or unlawful employment practices. Tolson's human resources policies and diversity initiatives were designed to keep the company in compliance with the various laws and to reflect its philosophy about the fair treatment of employees.

Employment-Related Legislation

Executive orders are legally binding directives issued by the President of the United States. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925 prohibiting discrimination by government employers and federal contractors. In 1963, shortly before his assassination, President Kennedy urged Congress to consider developing legislation that would protect the rights of American citizens against discrimination in voting, public accommodation, and public schools.

A few years later, with a good deal of support and encouragement from President Lyndon B. Johnson, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, commonly referred to simply as Title VII, prohibited discrimination in hiring, promotion, termination, pay, benefits, job training, and other aspects of employment, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was also established by Title VII to accept and investigate charges of illegal employment discrimination. President Johnson signed

Executive Order 11246 in 1965. It not only prohibited discrimination by federal employers and contractors, it also required entities with 50 or more employees and at least \$50,000 in government contracts to create affirmative action plans for promoting the employment of members of the protected categories named in Title VII.

As a government contractor, Tolson was required to comply with all of this employment-related legislation. A key piece of compliance was the production of annual reports sent to the EEOC. These EEO-1 reports indicated the race, ethnicity, and gender of workers in certain job categories identified and tracked by the EEOC, including Officials and Managers, Professionals, Technicians, Sales Workers, Service Workers, Laborers and Helpers, and Administrative Support Workers. This reporting process gave rise to the term “the numbers game” because some managers made their numbers look better by incorrectly categorizing employees based on company job titles rather than EEO-1 job category descriptions. Other managers reported overall favorable numbers by hiring minority workers for lower level jobs.

In addition to this employment-related legislation, other laws passed in the 1960s and 1970s affected Tolson’s approach to diversity. These laws focused on discriminatory practices in pay as well as those based on age. A law prohibiting discrimination against disabled persons that was enacted in 1990 had a significant effect on Tolson’s operations, as did a medical leave protection act passed in 1993. Brief descriptions of these laws are presented below.

Equal Pay Act

The Equal Pay Act (EPA), which was enacted in 1963 to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, prohibited discrimination in wages paid to men and women who

work in the same company performing duties that are substantially equal in skill, effort, and responsibility. In practice, the EPA is most often applied to women who receive lower pay than men for doing similar work, regardless of job title. At Tolson, addressing a complaint of pay discrimination involved division and/or local human resources managers and the corporate compensation staff. The process could include examining the job descriptions and employment records of all employees in a particular job family, looking at their length of service, performance ratings (if available), skills, training, and merit increase history. The employees' pay would be compared to the fair market pay for the position in the local area as established by external salary surveys maintained by the corporate compensation staff. If it was determined that some employees were not being paid fairly, salary adjustments were made.

Age Discrimination in Employment Act

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) was passed in 1967 and prohibited discrimination against people who were 40 to 65 years old. The range of protection provided by the ADEA was extended to age 70 in 1978 and the upper age limit was abolished in 1987. One of the effects of the ADEA was to eliminate mandatory or involuntary retirement for most workers. Based on this, the Tolson Company informed its managers that they could no longer ask about employees' retirement plans. However, by examining reports provided by human resource information systems project managers, division human resources representatives could help managers identify positions for which the incumbent was within three years of normal retirement age and develop staffing contingency plans.

The Americans With Disabilities Act

The Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), enacted in 1990, prohibited discrimination against qualified applicants who had a physical or mental impairment that substantially limited one or more major life activities, had a history of such an impairment, or were perceived to have such an impairment. As a result of the ADA, employers were required to provide reasonable accommodation to disabled employees and were prohibited from requiring pre-employment physicals. They could not ask if an applicant had a disability or about the existence of a past disability. All human resources professionals at Tolson had to become familiar with the provisions of the ADA and set up procedures for their divisions and units through which employees could request reasonable accommodation. Managers' initial reactions to the ADA were predictably negative. Attitude surveys and employee relations audits revealed that managers were afraid that they could be forced to hire a person with a history of back problems who would then miss a lot of work or take advantage of the company's short- and long-term disability benefits. Managers also feared that it would be costly to provide reasonable accommodations. The corporate human resources staff developed guidelines and a training program for managers that described what they should and should not do with respect to the ADA. Corporate, division, and local human resources professionals delivered this training to all managers, who were encouraged to call their local or division human resources representatives whenever they received a request for accommodation.

Family and Medical Leave Act

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) became effective in 1993. It required employers to give employees up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave within a 12 month period

for the following reasons: to take care of the employee's own serious health issue; to take care of an immediate family member with a serious health condition; for the birth and care of a newborn child; or for the adoption or foster care of a child. Leave could be taken intermittently if necessary; for example, to cover medical treatments or inpatient surgery. As permitted by the FMLA, Tolson required employees to use all available paid leave – personal days, sick days, vacation days, short-term disability – to cover as much of the 12 weeks as possible. As with the ADA, managers were given guidelines and training on the provisions of the FMLA and encouraged to contact their local or division human resources representatives whenever they received a request for FMLA leave.

Diversity Initiatives at the Tolson Company

Tolson's early approach to diversity reflected compliance with these laws, particularly with regard to affirmative action in hiring. Over the years, the focus shifted from simply hiring women and minorities to ensuring equal access to training and development, fair and equitable pay, promotional opportunities, and nondiscriminatory work environments. Awareness and appreciation of other cultures became part of Tolson's diversity initiatives in the late 1980s. During the 1990s Tolson's senior management team created a company-wide definition of diversity and charged the human resources professionals with establishing programs to identify and develop talented minorities and women for senior management positions. In the 2000s the company began moving toward creating inclusive environments for all employees. A consistent thread running throughout the years is the production of the government-mandated annual EEO-1 report. In essence, the affirmative action numbers game never disappeared. In next section I describe the history of Tolson's diversity initiatives from the mid 1980s to

the late 2000s. The time frames overlap because change comes slowly and ideas about women and minority employees do not transform simply because new diversity programs are implemented.

Mid 1980s to Early 1990s – An Affirmative Action Focus

In the early to mid 1980s, most of Tolson's diversity efforts were centered on the affirmative action hiring of minority candidates. A visible sign of the company's position on affirmative action was a statement that appeared on all employment advertisements indicating that Tolson was an Equal Employment Opportunity employer. The company did not ascribe to a quota system but managers were encouraged to recruit and hire minorities. Hiring was done locally in the business units, most of which did not have onsite human resources managers. Instead, the controller was responsible for local human resources matters. Division level human resources staff helped with minority recruitment efforts. There was no central point for coordinating the company's efforts with respect to affirmative action; each division operated independently and there was very little contact among human resources professionals across divisions.

During this time the leaders of nearly all of Tolson's business divisions and units were middle-aged, Christian, heterosexual White men. The direct reports of these leaders were also middle-aged, Christian, heterosexual White men, with a few exceptions. The business unit leaders were important people in their local communities and they moved in circles composed of other powerful White men. There were few women and almost no minorities in management positions in the business units. The minority employees who were hired were generally clustered in lower pay, lower status jobs that offered little

opportunity for advancement. In the absence of a succession planning process, those tapped for developmental opportunities and promotion were generally White men.

Open Door policy. In the mid 1980s corporate human resources project managers spearheaded a major revision of all company handbooks. The revised handbooks outlined a complaint resolution process called the Open Door policy. This policy encouraged employees to bring their questions, concerns, and issues to the attention of anyone in a management position in their business unit. Employees were not required to speak to their immediate supervisors or their manager's manager. Where there were local human resources managers in place, employees could lodge complaints with the human resources manager rather than with a line manager. Otherwise, they could write to the division human resources director or managers, or to the division president. Finally, employees could write to the corporate vice president of human resources, the president of the company, or the chairman of the board. Addresses for these executives were printed in the handbooks.

Under the Open Door policy, all complaints were to be thoroughly investigated, usually by local or division human resources staff, or by a manager not involved in the situation. Following the investigation, the division human resources director, in conjunction with corporate employee relations or labor attorneys, would determine if the complaint had merit and if so, what actions were needed to address the problem.

Attitude surveys and employee relations audits. Another avenue employees could use to raise concerns was through an employee attitude survey process Tolson implemented in the early 1980s as part of a union avoidance strategy. Through the attitude survey nonunion employees could anonymously give their opinions about issues

that affected their work life, such as pay, poor working conditions, and supervisors. The surveys were administered by corporate human resources project managers in the nonunion locations on a three year schedule. About 15 months after the survey, the corporate human resources project manager returned to the local unit and conducted an employee relations audit, during which approximately 25% of the employees at the location were individually interviewed. They were asked about progress in resolving issues raised in the survey and about any new concerns that might have arisen.

The attitude survey consisted of (1) a forced-choice questionnaire that measured employee opinions on 15 factors such as supervisor-employee interpersonal relations, communication, working conditions and equipment, opportunity for advancement, employee benefits, and fairness of pay; and (2) an open-ended questionnaire inviting employees to use their own words to answer questions. To maintain the anonymity of the responses, the corporate human resources project manager mailed completed survey forms to a consulting firm for processing. The consultants prepared a detailed report that included percentile rankings for the factors measured by the forced-choice questionnaire and verbatim transcriptions of the write-in comments. A corporate human resources project manager prepared an executive summary of the findings and presented recommendations for addressing issues. After being approved by the director of human resources, the executive summary report was sent to the vice president of human resources, the president and human resources director of the division, and the head of the local business unit. The corporate human resources project manager worked with a division human resources representative and the business unit's management team to develop action plans to address concerns and issues. The business unit leader then

presented the survey results and action plans to the employees at the location. Division human resources representatives were charged with monitoring the progress on the action plans.

Late 1980s to Mid 1990s – Transitioning From Affirmative Action to Diversity

As indicated by EE0-1 reports from the time, the Tolson Company was making progress in hiring minority employees. However, these reports as well as attitude surveys and employee relation audits revealed that most of these employees were clustered in lower status, lower pay jobs with limited chances for challenging assignments or developmental opportunities. The company's focus began shifting from simply counting the number of women and minority employed to examining what jobs women and minorities held and what could be done to move them into higher level positions. This change in focus stressed that "different" did not mean "inferior" and that differences were valuable attributes that could be harnessed to increase productivity and profitability. One outcome of the shift in focus was the introduction or revision of formal performance management processes throughout the company. All performance management programs included some form of performance planning and performance appraisal; some also included performance monitoring. The goal of these programs was to ensure that all employees understood their performance and development goals for the year and received written feedback on their performance at the end of the year.

Valuing differences was an important transitional step between the affirmative action and diversity approaches. In valuing differences training programs, managers were encouraged to confront their own biases and to strive to appreciate each individual employee for his or her talents, skills, and abilities. In some locations, differences were

celebrated through potluck lunches, where employees brought in dishes representing their cultural heritage. Other locations held arts and crafts shows in which employees could introduce others to their ethnic and cultural traditions in art.

The shift toward diversity and valuing differences was also sparked by the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in the early 1990s. Under FMLA a small number of male employees began asking for time off to bond with their newborn, or to take care of a sick wife or child. Traditionally, it was women employees who took leave for these purposes; men who did so acted against gender role expectations. In employee relations audits some men reported being afraid to request FMLA because they did not wish their managers and coworkers to think less of them. The ADA required managers to reexamine their assumptions about who was qualified to perform the essential functions of a job, to reconsider which job functions were actually essential, and to think about what kind of reasonable accommodation would allow a disabled person to perform the essential job functions. The company's FMLA and ADA training for managers addressed how managers should deal with negative employee perceptions about coworkers who used FMLA leave or requested a reasonable accommodation under ADA.

Late 1990s to Late 2000s – Broadening the Focus to Managing Diversity

In the late 1990s Tolson's senior leadership team, having experienced some turnover related to retirements and voluntary separations, began a series of meetings with an external consultant to come together as a group. The outcome was a new mission and vision for the Tolson Company which included a five-year BHAG – big, hairy, audacious goal. The senior leadership team then convened a meeting of the top 200 executives in

the company to introduce the goal, mission, vision, values, core purpose, and a set of expectations about the behavior of employees, called the Guiding Principles*. Several of these principles were related directly or indirectly to diversity: embrace diversity; information is power – share it; and treat each other with honesty, respect, and civility. The senior executive team also presented a definition of diversity as differences and managing diversity as a process for helping employees achieve their full potential in the pursuit of corporate goals.

Each division was charged with taking the corporate definition of diversity, operationalizing it for the group, and developing a diversity action plan. Corporate executives set an expectation that the diversity action plan would include incorporating the Guiding Principles into each group's performance management process. Human resources representatives worked with division leaders to create the action plan, introduce it to all employees, and develop training for managers about managing diversity.

The senior vice president of human resources held a meeting with all senior human resources managers to discuss how the human resources community could support the new mission, vision, goals, and Guiding Principles. From this meeting several initiatives were developed and cross-division human resources teams were created to implement the various programs. One was a succession planning process that involved identifying the most critical senior management positions in each division and determining the availability and readiness of potential successors. The pool of successors had to include both women and minorities and development plans were created for all employees designated as ready for promotion within three to five years. These

* The name has been changed to protect the identity of the company.

development plans were implemented by the employee's manager and monitored by the division's senior human resources manager.

Late 2000s to Present – Beyond Diversity to Diversity and Inclusion

Building on the earlier definition of diversity as simply differences, Tolson now defines diversity as inclusive of people with different experiences and from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures, as well as diversity of opinion and thought. The Guiding Principles have been revised and now include more company-focused behavior such as safeguarding the company's reputation and assets, achieving results, and focusing on customers.

In 2006 Tolson hired a vice president for diversity and inclusion to develop and lead the implementation of diversity and inclusion programs. The company's website features a diversity and inclusion link, which takes readers to web pages that describe the company's stated commitment to diversity, of its internal and external diversity-related activities, and diversity awards it has won.

Profiles of the Black Women Human Resources Managers

In this section I present profiles of the participants, the Black women human resources managers who worked at the Tolson Company between 1987 and 2007. The women worked at the corporate, division, or local level of human resources operations. Demographic information on the participants is presented in Table 2. I begin with my own story because as a corporate-level employee I worked with each of the other women on corporate, division, and/or local human resource programs and diversity initiatives. I was also a line manager with responsibility for implementing diversity programs in two corporate units.

Table 2

Demographic Information on Participants

Participant Name ¹	Level of Unit Where Employed	Current Age Range (Years)	Current Marital Status	Children Yes (#) or No	Highest Level of Education at Time of Employment	Total Years of Corporate Experience	Racial Self Identification	Type of Interview
Donna	Corporate	50-59	Divorced	No	Bachelor's	28	Black	Face to Face ²
Chloe	Division	50-59	Married	Yes (2)	Juris Doctor	30+	African American	Face to Face
Mary HR	Division	50-59	Divorced	Yes (2)	Some College	18	Black	Telephone
Nia	Division	50-59	Divorced	Yes (1)	Master's	13	Black	Telephone
Roxy	Corporate	50-59	Single	Yes (1)	Master's	27	Black	Telephone
Tina	Local	50-59	Single	No	Bachelor's	29	Black	Telephone

Table Notes:

¹. All participants' names except the author's are pseudonyms.

². This interview was conducted by Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, the supervising professor.

Donna

In 1986, I was hired as a human resources project manager in the Corporate Division of the Tolson Company. Prior to joining Tolson, I had worked at Merrill Lynch and Company, a diversified financial services corporation, for 11 years. I had five different jobs at Anton Bryant with responsibilities ranging from nonexempt and executive recruitment to training and executive development. In my first diversity-related assignment I provided administrative support to a task force examining challenges and obstacles faced by Black account executives. I helped the chair develop recommendations and wrote the task force's final report. I also created a development planning process and form for branch office managers to use in developing talented account executives for management positions. Special emphasis was placed on identifying and developing women and minority employees, who were very rare in branch management positions.

I was hired at Tolson by a Black woman who was the director of human resources at the corporate level. In this role she oversaw employee relations, human resources policy development and communication, employee handbook development, and training. She was promoted to vice president of human resources in a different division of the company before my start date. Her replacement, whom I met on my first day, was a White man who had no experience working in a large corporation. He quickly became known in the company for his "ready, fire, aim" tendency to take action without knowing all the facts. He was not able to help me learn Tolson's culture or the parts of the job that I had had no experience doing. I relied on my two peers, a White male and a Black female who had been at Tolson for several years, to learn the job. The White male left

shortly after I arrived because he thought he should have been promoted to the director's job.

In my role as corporate human resources project manager I conducted attitude surveys and employee relation audits as described in the previous section. I would call local business unit leaders to schedule a survey or audit. When I arrived on site, some managers were better than others at disguising their surprise that I was a Black woman and that they had been expecting a White woman. These managers did not expect a Corporate Division employee to be Black nor did they expect someone who spoke the way I did to be Black. Black employees, however, often made a point of telling me how good it was to meet me and were very candid in their audit interviews.

I became the human resources manager for the Corporate Division in 1994. This was a new position created after a survey conducted by diversity consultants indicated that corporate employees distrusted management, received little feedback on their performance, and believed that the same White men kept getting promoted into jobs that no one knew existed until the announcement of the promotion appeared. I was responsible implementing policies and programs to address issues raised in the survey. I worked with a diversity task force composed of the heads of corporate departments (all White men), an employee relations attorney (a Black man), and an employee communication manager (a Black woman). The chair of the task force was the corporate secretary (a White woman). She made progress reports to the president of the company while I made progress reports to the vice president of human resources. The task force developed a three-year action plan to phase in various diversity initiatives.

In 1997 I became the human resources director for a processing center that was a subsidiary of the Corporate Division located in a different state. At that point I was reporting to a White man who had been hired as the senior vice president of human resources, following the mutually agreed-upon departure of the Black woman vice president. When the processing center's human resources manager, a Black woman, resigned and sent a letter to Tolson's president, the senior vice president sent me to the processing center to investigate the allegations of racism she raised. It was determined that the processing center needed a stronger human resources manager and I was offered the job. Most of the employees at the processing center had been hired from outside the Tolson Company and one of my immediate priorities was to bring Tolson's policies and procedures to the center. I counseled managers about employee relations issues, worked with them on diversity action plans, and got employees involved in improving working conditions.

I described myself as a short Black woman who believes that people should be judged by what they do and not by what they say, and that a person should be able to make a mistake without having it reflect badly upon a whole group. I am willing to stand up for what I believe is right no matter what it costs me. I left in 2000 to pursue a graduate degree and career opportunities away from the corporate world.

Chloe

Chloe was a human resources manager in Tolson's Newspaper Division from 1985 to 1993. She traveled extensively because the division's business units were located in more than ten states scattered across the country and most did not have local human resources managers. Her responsibilities were to conduct training, including diversity,

conflict resolution, and performance management training; to investigate complaints of harassment, discrimination, and other unlawful employment practices; and to follow up with business unit managers on action plans created as a result of attitude surveys and employee relations audits. She coordinated the annual performance review and merit increase process and prepared various reports, including EEO-1 reports, for her manager.

When Chloe first started working at Tolson, the word “diversity” was not used. Instead, people talked about affirmative action – identifying and hiring minority candidates for various jobs. When the company began moving away from the numbers game, Chloe and her colleagues began talking to managers about creating inclusive work environments in which all employees could feel comfortable being themselves. She introduced the concept that differences in the work place should be embraced rather than avoided, and that when different perspectives were brought to the table, better solutions for addressing business problems could be generated.

Chloe described herself as direct, energetic, and a voracious learner. She had strong personal values about honesty and integrity that she would not compromise for anyone or any job. She characterized this stance on integrity as making her a Lone Ranger. People often did not want to hear what she had to say, and there was no one in her division who could offer her support or just serve as a sounding board for discussing difficult issues. For Chloe, being in human resources meant not making friends and being a Black woman meant feeling like an outsider within the halls of management. As a result, she felt lonely and alone.

Chloe left Tolson after a search firm contacted her about a job as vice president of human resources at another company. Chloe decided to take the interview because she

was tired of being the Lone Ranger and feeling unsupported by her manager. She eventually accepted an offer because the chairman and the president of the company were especially interested in her ideas about managing diversity. They promised her a substantial budget with few strings on how she could spend it.

Mary HR

Like Chloe, Mary HR worked in human resources for Tolson's Newspaper Division. She was hired in the early 1980s to fulfill an affirmative action goal. Mary HR served in two human resources capacities during the time period studied. She started her career with Tolson as the administrative assistant to the vice president of human resources for the Newspaper Division and was later promoted to human resources manager. In both positions she had extensive contact by phone and in person with managers and employees from the different business units about a variety of human resources issues. She was promoted because she had good judgment, an innate ability to engender trust and communicate with employees at all levels, and the credibility to talk frankly about diversity issues.

Mary HR described herself as a hard worker who is concerned with being fair and helping the company to be fair in its actions. As a human resources manager, Mary HR's responsibilities were conducting training, investigating employee complaints, and following up on action plans after attitude surveys and employee relations audits had been conducted. She also managed aspects of the annual performance review and merit increase process. Her travel schedule sometimes affected her personal life because she was a single mother, trying to maintain a work/life balance. She believed her manager, a minority man, saw her as less than devoted to the job when she could not work overtime

or asked for time off to spend with her children. He did not understand that his having a wife at home allowed him to work long hours and travel frequently.

When the Newspaper Division moved its headquarters to a new state, Mary HR took the separation package rather than relocating. She was somewhat discouraged about the pace of change within the division regarding diversity. In her view the media industry as a whole lags behind more progressive industries in demonstrating a commitment to changing the structures of the organization that perpetuate the status quo and keep women and minorities from reaching the executive suite. Mary HR has moved to a different state and now does consulting and training.

Nia

Nia came to the Tolson Company in 1994 after a successful career in the government. She was the first human resources professional hired for Tolson's Broadcast Division. As a staff of one, she provided all human resources support for 900 employees scattered across six locations. As the division grew and added more employees, Nia was promoted to vice president of human resources with a staff of two.

One of Nia's earliest priorities was to create a diversity training program for the management team in each business unit and at the division level. Nia and Donna, this researcher, worked together to develop a half-day workshop that was delivered throughout the division. The program was successful in raising awareness about differences in the workplace. Additional actions were planned to achieve the goal of having more minorities and women in leadership positions.

Nia described herself as a person who finds ways to bring hidden talent to the attention of management. She believes that an organization can move toward excellence

by identifying high-potential employees and helping them develop to their maximum performance levels. Some White managers assumed that developing minority employees would require extra effort that would cut into the managers' already thinly-stretched time. Nia soon discovered that these managers were not sure how to work with people who did not look like them or did not share their cultural backgrounds. Therefore she spent a good deal of time counseling managers about the barriers to advancement faced by women and minorities and advising them how to fast-track the development of people who had not the opportunities granted to White men. She also taught employees how to evaluate their own performance and how to talk to their managers about development needs.

Nia worked for Tolson until her division was sold and her job abolished. She is now the vice president of human resources in another diversified media company that lags behind Tolson in its efforts to address diversity issues. Nia is using all of her experiences at Tolson to develop a comprehensive diversity action plan for her new company.

Roxy

Roxy was a human resources manager in the Corporate Division from 1994 to 1997. She reported to the director of human resources, a White woman who Roxy thought was not very effective. This manager was replaced by a White man who was almost equally ineffective and tried to involve Roxy in his difficulties relating to his boss, a Black woman who was the vice president of human resources. Roxy was new to the field of human resources when she joined Tolson. Her main responsibilities were conducting attitude surveys and employee relations audits and investigating complaints of unfair or unlawful treatment. She viewed me as a mentor who helped her learn the

corporate culture and how to handle business unit leaders who were resistant to the survey results.

Roxy described herself as a person of integrity with strong Christian values. She does not believe in compromising her values in order to climb the career ladder. Because she grew up outside the United States, Roxy speaks with an accent. People sometimes find it difficult to place her accent. In many cases, when talking to her on the telephone about scheduling an attitude survey, business unit leaders thought she was a White woman possibly from the United Kingdom. Then when she visited a business unit for the first time, managers and employees were quite surprised to see that she was a Black woman. However, Black employees were very proud that one of “their own” was in a position to make sure their concerns and issues were brought to the attention of management at the local and division levels.

Roxy believed that many local managers gave lip service to addressing complaints of discrimination or unfair treatment. Although much of Roxy’s work was in business units in the South, she encountered resistance to addressing diversity issues in all parts of the country. She often had the feeling that managers simply went back to their old ways of operating as soon as she left the building. Roxy found it frustrating that she could not follow up to ensure the resolution of complaints. That responsibility rested with division human resources professionals, who worked with the local management to carry out the action plan Roxy recommended.

Roxy left the Tolson Company because she did not see any career growth opportunities for herself. Through her membership in professional organizations she was exposed to high-performing companies that had progressive human resources policies

and offered the kinds of programs that helped women and minorities rise to senior levels of responsibility. She joined a financial services company where she works in executive development and is very happy.

Tina

Tina is the local human resources manager for a business unit of the Newspaper Division located in the Southeast. She started with the Tolson Company in 1994 and is the only participant still employed at Tolson. Tina has responsibility for all human resource-related activities in her location, including diversity and inclusion. She reports to the head of her business unit but has a dotted-line reporting relationship to the vice president of human resources for the Newspaper Division.

Tina described herself an aspiring Christian who challenges her own biases and tries to suspend judgment about people. As a Black human resources manager hired to work in a predominantly White business unit in the South, Tina was greeted with suspicion when she started, not because she was Black or because she was a woman, but because she was from human resources. In the minds of the managers at her location, human resources managers were police officers coming to take them to task for not treating their employees fairly or for failing to comply with company guidelines. In addition, there were internal candidates for the human resources manager position who resented that the company hired an outsider who also happened to be Black.

Tina feels isolated from professional colleagues both internally and externally; like Chloe she often feels lonely. Internally she has few opportunities to build a sense of community with other local, division, or corporate level human resources managers. The cohesion created by annual meetings of the entire human resources community dissipated

over the years as travel budgets were cut and the meetings eliminated. Eventually, only the senior human resources managers – those who were managed the division or corporate human resource functions – were invited to attend meetings. The local human resources managers in Tina’s division attempted to keep in touch with one another via teleconferences conducted by the vice president of human resources but these teleconferences could not take the place of face-to-face meetings for creating a sense of community or shared purpose.

Externally, Tina has no contact with the local chapter of the professional organization for human resources managers. When she first came to the area, she attended a meeting only to find that the chapter members were angry that the Tolson Company had hired someone from outside the local area who, to add insult to injury, was a Black woman. Tolson was considered an employer-of-choice and most of the local human resources professionals would have welcomed an opportunity to work there.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I profiled the company and the Black women human resources at the heart of this case study. The Tolson Company, a *Fortune* 1000 company headquartered in a large city, generated more than \$2 billion in revenue and employed more than 10,000 people in 2007. Tolson’s commitment to diversity was influenced and shaped by federal legislation enacted in the 1960s and 1990s. In complying with this legislation, Tolson revised its approach to diversity several times during the 20 years covered in this case study, from 1987 to 2007. Starting with affirmative action, Tolson transitioned through valuing differences and managing diversity and now is moving toward diversity and inclusion. This most recent iteration includes addressing issues

related to the traditional differences of race, gender, and ability, but also embraces differences of thought and opinion. The six participants are Black women human resources managers, including myself, who worked for the Tolson Company from 1987 to 2007. The participants all had responsibilities that included developing, implementing, communicating, and/or enforcing diversity-related policies, programs, and strategies. Two were employed in the Corporate Division, three in the Newspaper Division (two at the division level and one at the local level), and one in the Broadcast Division. At the time of employment, all had had at least some college and three held advanced degrees. Presently, only one is married; three are divorced, and two are single (never married). Each faced challenges as a Black women doing diversity work in a corporation led by White men. One is still employed at Tolson.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Black women human resources managers who do diversity work face a dilemma: how do they reconcile their responsibilities to develop and enforce human resources policies related to diversity when they have personal knowledge of a company's inconsistent actions with regard to diversity issues? The purpose of this case study was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiated diversity issues in the Tolson Company, a *Fortune* 1000 company headquartered in the northeastern United States. The study covers the years 1987 to 2007, a period during which the Tolson Company's approach and commitment to diversity fluctuated. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity and inclusion policies in a corporate environment?
2. How do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?

In this chapter I present the findings of my study. After analyzing the data collected, I discovered three themes that capture commonalities in the experiences of the six Black women human resources managers: (1) *Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity*, (2) *Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization*, and (3) *Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies*. In Table 3 on the following page I present an outline of these themes and the associated categories and subcategories that emerged during data collection and analysis. I discuss each theme in detail, drawing on my data analysis to

describe the Black women human resources managers' experiences. I conclude with a summary of the chapter.

Table 3

Data Display – Themes With Associated Categories and Subcategories

Themes	Categories and Subcategories
I. Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity	A. Working Without a Corporate Commitment B. Finding Creative Solutions 1. Using a Diversity Champion 2. Finding Cost-Free Alternatives
II. Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization	A. Operating as an Outsider-Insider 1. Dealing With Isolation And Hostility 2. Working Without Emotional Support B. Negotiating Racism
III. Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies	A. Being Confident Yet Nonthreatening B. Being True to Personal Values C. Negotiating Relationships With White Male Executives

Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity

The first of the three emergent themes is *Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity*. There are two categories associated with this theme: Working Without a Corporate Commitment and Finding Creative Solutions.

Working Without a Corporate Commitment

The first category associated with *Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity* is *Working without a corporate commitment*. Mary HR captured the sentiments of all the participants with her statement, "I just sort of believe within [the company] it was just a lot of lip service and really no passion or commitment."

All of the women believed that the company's commitment to diversity was shallow, especially in the years when affirmative action was the company's focus. Tina commented that in her business unit:

[Diversity] is not considered a problem. And I think because our numbers [of minority employees] are so good, compared to our community, [management] is thinking that there's no real issue. I'm thinking that [the business unit leader] is probably thinking: "we don't really have any issues." But we do have some issues. We had some last year, and I shared that with him. I tried last year to work on that, in an indirect way, to try to get his attention before it grows to become more problematic.

Roxy, from her perspective as a corporate human resources manager, said,

I just think it was not a big deal for the [company] in terms of making sure that that people of color were represented in senior management ranks. I don't think it was an issue for them, I don't think it was something they paid attention to or cared about really because I don't see where they made any conscious effort to do that.

There were no written policies or goals regarding diversity at the Tolson Company until the late 1990s. In the absence of such policies, there was no requirement that managers participate in diversity-related activities. Business unit leaders who ran profitable operations could refuse to allow diversity training or attitude surveys (which often brought diversity issues to light) in their units with impunity. Chloe suggested that "...the people who drive the revenue, the people who make the money, the top sales

people, the top sales managers – [they] get to drive the show sometimes.” Roxy noted that the business unit leaders were often very powerful members of their local communities and were used to doing things their own way:

... the feeling to me was that these were little gods in their towns. When you would go to a restaurant people would, everyone would just about bow to them, and they were where they were and no one was going to move them. Nothing was going to happen. There was no consequence for any behavior.

The absence of policies or guidelines meant there were no standards governing the behavior of managers, who sometimes spoke or acted in offensive or illegal ways. Mary HR lamented that “having a president who continued to refer to women as ‘dear’ was very offensive and no matter who, even within the Human Resources department, shared with him that it was inappropriate, it didn’t change his behavior.” Chloe told a more painful story of offensive behavior directed at her by the influential leader of a profitable business unit:

[The business unit leader] proceeded to refer to me as a nigger, in a staff meeting. ...Now this is in the [Tolson Company] in 1990. [The business unit’s human resources manager] wrote a letter to the chairman of the board [of the Tolson Company] – I didn’t even know that I had been referred to that way – and copied me and [the president of the business division] on the letter. And in this letter she said very specifically what he had said. Well, I expected the company to step up and do something. They didn’t do anything. They did something very

superficial....

Chloe's dissatisfaction with the company's response led her to threaten to file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):

Well, I had to threaten them to say boo to me because no one said anything. They knew I was copied on the letter because they saw my name on the letter. So [her manager, the division vice president of human resources] kind of just waited for me to come and say anything, say something. He came and said that [the president of the division] was working on it, and a week or so went by, and nobody said anything.

Chloe ultimately received an apology from the president of the business division and another from the business unit leader. To Chloe, the latter apology was "too little, too late:"

He started to say he was sorry. I hung the phone up. I do remember that. I didn't let the conversation continue. I said you are what you are and no apology is needed. And I hung up the phone. So I think they kind of, they came back and ... [the division president] was very compassionate and apologetic but you know, it is what it is. [The business unit leader] said what he said and there was nothing really done.

The women all thought that the company's commitment to diversity was severely tested during times of financial difficulty. Reductions in the budget for training and

development and for associated travel costs typically affected minorities more than Whites, because, as Nia noted,

...one of the ways in which an executive grows is by participating on project teams and getting exposure to senior management through meeting and conferences, some at workshops, so as travel was curtailed, was cut back, the group of people that would be selected to go to these conferences or to the executive briefings or to workshops or to AMA organization meetings or to network conferences and meetings or any place where there is going to be an opportunity for growth through knowledge and transfer of knowledge, fewer people are going to that and the people excluded are typically women and minorities.

All six Black women human resources managers also believed that because the company's commitment to diversity was shallow, accomplishments related to diversity were limited. Sometimes senior executives would support only those diversity initiatives that furthered their personal diversity agendas. When I was the manager of human resources for the corporate staff, I met with a member of Tolson's senior management team who told me of his commitment to gay and lesbian causes (Note: All quotes from me as a participant in this study are taken from the interview conducted with me by the methodologist for this dissertation):

He had a big interest in gay and lesbian issues and every invitation he got to speak at a gay, lesbian, bisexual affair he was there. ...I think that was his way of being liberal, you know. He wasn't going to be liberal enough to push for the Black or the Hispanic or the Asian

agenda but he would push for the gay and lesbian issue. He told me that he couldn't just wave a magic wand and get rid of racism at [the Tolson Company].

In Nia's division and in the processing center where I worked, managers were required to have diverse hiring pools, which meant they had to consider at least one woman and one minority for all open positions. However, managers learned to play a version of the affirmative action "numbers game" once they discovered that they could satisfy the diverse pool requirement by simply interviewing one minority woman. Nia pointed out that:

...of course you could have a diverse pool but that did NOT mean that the hiring manager would select a diverse candidate and make the job offer to a diverse candidate. But 90% of those pools were diverse.

During her three years with the company, Roxy noted that there was a persistent absence of women and minorities in leadership positions, despite affirmative action recruiting and diverse hiring pools:

I didn't see any changes in terms of diversity, in terms of changes in people's jobs or roles. I didn't see any of that, in any of these [local newspapers], for people of color, or for women, much less Black women. I just didn't see that. And I think the people of color, maybe it was because they were just so far down on the totem pole that it would just be too many steps to advance them. But I didn't see that. What I do recall, the changes I recall, were changes that were minimal, esoteric,

things like fixing a broken vending machine. But real changes? Where people would have positions of influence? I never saw that.

Finding Creative Solutions

The second category associated with *Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity* is *Finding creative solutions*. Mary HR commented that “organizations that have diverse work places have them because the people at the top were committed to making that happen – walk the talk. And it takes time, it takes effort, it takes a lot of training.” In the face of a wavering corporate commitment to diversity, all of the Black women human resources managers had to find creative ways to confront diversity issues and to bring fairness and equity into all workforce decisions. Two strategies they employed were *using a diversity champion* and *finding cost-free alternatives*.

Using a Diversity Champion

The participants were in agreement that finding a manager to champion diversity efforts was a strategy for success. Chloe’s statement captures this succinctly: “I think all diversity programs need an owner, and that owner needs to be at the top of the organization.” When I was the human resources director at the central processing center, our managers were tempted to play the same “numbers game” with diverse hiring pools as the managers in Nia’s division. However, the vice president of technology, to whom the president of the processing center reported, was determined to increase diversity at all levels. As Donna, this researcher, stated in her interview,

We had a technology vice president who told me that the technology people at the [central processing center] were going to get on the

diversity bandwagon and they weren't going to just have diverse pools, they were going to have diverse hiring or he would want to know why. So that was a person who was going to put some teeth behind it, he wasn't going to sit back and say well I can't change a 100 year old institution. Now maybe you can't change a 100 year old institution overnight but if you stand up and say I can't do it at all then you're right, you won't do it at all.

Donna, this researcher, drew on the support of the vice president of technology to convince the technology director at the processing center to promote a Black woman into a management position and train her for the parts of the job she did not know. Previously, the technology director had hired a White man from the outside and asked the Black woman employee to train him for the parts of the job he did not know.

Tina, like Donna, tried to get her manager, the business unit leader, involved in her diversity efforts. Her previous manager had not only made attendance at diversity training mandatory, he had also conducted the training himself. Her current manager, however, seemed more focused on his own survival as a newly promoted business unit leader than he was on diversity. Tina said,

I can't tell you his position quite honestly about diversity, other than he seems like a really nice guy, you know. But he is has just been focusing on surviving and anything the diversity committee is willing to do or anything like that he is all for it. I tried to get him to become more involved in the committee, to speak with the committee, to have him on the agenda to talk about diversity goals and his position – he didn't

show. And I truly believe that that had more to do with self management issues versus lack of interest, you know what I mean?

The managers Nia worked with, like Tina's current manager, had a low level of interest in participating in Nia's programs, but their lack of engagement had a more malicious basis. Nia encountered racism in trying to get the business unit leaders from her division – all White men – to sign up for a three-day executive development program. She explained that,

They assume whatever reason I have convened them for is a waste of their time. They assume that this is not going to be something of significance or interest to them because I am Black. And I am pulling together something and it's certainly not going to be competent or relevant or a productive use of their time.

Nia got the business unit leaders to attend the program by getting the president of the Tolson Company to participate. Once the business unit leaders found out that the company president would be in attendance, they cleared their schedules and made their travel plans. The development program was judged a great success by the business unit leaders. Nia reported that one manager sent her an email that said:

Nia, I did not think this training was going to be productive or worth my time. I want you to know I have never enjoyed training so much and I've never benefited so much from training as [the program] you put together.

Finding Cost-Free Alternatives

During times when the Tolson Company encountered financial difficulties, it instituted cost-saving measures such as eliminating travel and imposing hiring freezes. These measures affected the ability of the Black women human resources managers to continue their diversity programs and initiatives. Both Tina and Nia spoke of finding no-cost ways to continue their diversity initiatives.

For Tina, diversity recruitment and talent retention were priorities that suffered under budget cutbacks:

[I] go out there and try to network, make sure that we have good recruitment sources when we're able to hire. See, we haven't even been able to hire but my thinking is you still need to network and still try to figure out what's going on and what are some good resources identity or find talent. But we've been in a hiring freeze so that's kind of slowed down. But I continue to search online and try to find new resources and develop networks in the community.

For Nia, providing development opportunities for minority managers was a priority that suffered when her division eliminated the budget for travel:

We were told no travel, okay? We were told no one could travel to anything. Now if I have a diverse person that's in an all-White city or an all-White state, there's not going to be a mentor there to help that person. He's not going to get exposure to the kinds of things that are necessary for growth. So yes I defied management – I went out looking for a way around [the travel restrictions]. I found three programs that

would pay everything. They would pay for the travel, they would pay for the hotel, room and board. The only thing we would have to do is to provide the person and commit to the time away from the business unit. So I submitted the applications and made recommendations for four people from our business units, and they were accepted. It was only after they were accepted that I told management that I had followed this process and taken this initiative.

In Chloe's case, because there was no set budget for human resources programs, including diversity initiatives, she found herself "asking for [money for] every little program." She commented, "I had to beg for that money." It was not until she left Tolson that she had the pleasure of being given a budget to spend any way she saw fit.

Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization

The second theme I identified from my data analysis was *Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization*. There were two categories for this theme: *Operating as an outsider-insider* and *Negotiating racism*. All of the women in this study experienced the duality of being *outsider-insiders*, of simultaneously operating from the margin as well as the center. Their positionalities, or the visible and invisible markers of their public and private identities (Bierema & Thomas, 2008), as managers, Blacks, women, and Black women governed how they viewed themselves, how they conducted themselves, and how others viewed them.

Operating as an Outsider-Insider

The first category under the theme *Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization* is *Operating as an outsider-insider*. There are two subcategories: *dealing with isolation and hostility* and *working without emotional support*.

As human resources managers, the Black women in this study were insiders in that they were privy to confidential information such as salaries, merit increase amounts, the number of women and minorities in particular positions, and how the company handled allegations of unfair, offensive, or illegal behavior. They developed, communicated, and enforced human resources policies designed to make the workplace fairer and more equitable. Their advice was sought by many unit, division, and corporate leaders and their recommendations held authority. Mary HR was pleasantly surprised at the amount of respect she had earned as an administrative assistant and how that respect carried over to her new role as a human resources manager:

I think after the promotion became a reality, I feel that I had nothing but support really, from everyone within the organization. I was even surprised with the amount of respect I received from publishers to department heads and yes, these are people that I had developed relationships with from an administrative perspective throughout the years, but I was pleasantly surprised at the amount of respect that was given to me as an individual, once I stepped into [the manager's] role. I'm not saying the respect wasn't there before, but again I was just

pleasantly surprised at how everyone was just very open and supportive to the new role that I stepped into.

Likewise, Donna, this researcher, stated: “I thought we had a really good management team. We got along well, they respected me, if I said something they believed me, they took my advice.” For Nia, it was delightful to have the respect of both her boss and her boss’s boss:

Well first of all, I think it’s really great that both [her boss] and [her boss’s boss] recognized that if I brought something to their attention it was of merit and should certainly be looked into. And I was thrilled that that was their response. I would have been devastated had they both just disregarded that.

Tina and Chloe mentioned the satisfaction of working with business unit leaders who were visible supporters of diversity initiatives. Chloe, who worked with business unit leaders throughout the Newspaper Division, remembered that,

There were innovative managers and [one business unit leader] was very concerned about inclusion. So it didn’t take much to give [the business unit leader], and he would go with it, because he wanted his [business unit] to have that diversity and the people to have that knowledge.

However, as Black women working in a predominantly White corporation, the same participants in this study who were insiders were also outsiders. Their social status located them on the boundary between two groups of unequal power – Whites and

Blacks, women and men, Black women and Black men, human resources managers and business unit leaders.

In discussing times when she felt like an outsider based on her race, Roxy said:

Well, you know what, there were many of those times and it was mostly when I would go out with the [business unit leaders] to restaurants, or to their country clubs. And I felt very much an outsider because first of all, I was the only person of color, usually... And I would get stares and looks from people. I remember going to the country club with these [business unit leaders] for lunch and, and they would introduce me as being from Corporate. I would get stares, stares that were either inquisitive or just strange, like "What are you doing here?" And the stares would come not just from the White people but from the Black people who were serving. It was not unfriendly coming from the Black people; I think it was more surprise. But I remember feeling uncomfortable in these situations.

For Donna, this researcher, being confronted with evidence of the Old Boy's Network in her division brought home her what it meant to be an outsider:

I guess [it was] in that job at Corporate, when I was sitting around this table of these White men who were running the Corporate departments and how scared they were; how they couldn't make decisions; how they had been in these jobs for so long that they had forgotten how to do them. And I – it wasn't so much that I felt like an outsider, it was, I felt like they were they embodiment of racism. That these were older White

men who had risen to their level of incompetence and they were sitting there blocking positions, that there were lots of talented people who could have done those jobs, Black people that I knew who could have done those jobs, who weren't going to get a chance. And I guess that brought home to me in a real way how the Old Boys' Club worked because the guy who was in charge of accounting had these two White guys [working for him] and every time he got a promotion, they got a promotion. And it was having that direct evidence that these people were in their jobs because they were White men and because other White men brought them along that told me more than any of the diversity committees that I sat on in [headquarters city].

Mary HR, like Donna, this researcher, was troubled by signs of the Old Boy's Club in operation among the managers at Division headquarters:

But one time I have to admit that I did feel like an outsider was when the good old boys would all get together and go to Vegas. It was strictly a boy's thing. It wasn't attached to business. It was just to gamble. Not that I really wanted to go and gamble but it was a boy thing. And I just thought it was discriminatory and I thought it was unfair. [They went] every year, and never were any women invited, including their wives, nor were any of the female power players allowed to be part of that group.

Mary HR was particularly disturbed that two Black men went on these trips without protesting the absence of women:

Well, one of the Black leaders said we do go to play golf. And he used golf as a gentlemen-only, ladies-forbidden activity. And he and I would have these discussions – as a Black person do you think you're considered a gentleman? But that was his justification – it was strictly a guy thing, and even if a woman played golf, she still wasn't allowed to be part of the group. He saw absolutely nothing wrong with that as a Black man. I figured it provided sort of a sense of inclusion for them.

Chloe commented about power inequities faced by the most senior human resources person in company, who was a Black woman:

I did not get the sense that [the director of corporate human resources] had the power to make independent decisions about her group, about programs that were implemented, about the way they would be implemented, and who had ownership. I just did not get the impression that she had that power. Now I don't know that for sure, but every time we spoke with her, she always referred to someone else she was getting permission from.

Dealing With Isolation and Hostility

The first subcategory under *Operating as an outsider-insider* is *dealing with isolation and hostility*. The following statement from Tina encapsulates the feeling of isolation most of the Black women human resources managers mentioned: “And I do quite honestly have a sense of aloneness because there's no one to really bounce ideas off of and hope to kind of steer you in another direction.” Chloe expressed similar sentiments:

But what I have found mostly in corporate world, I do think you're a Lone Ranger. I felt very lonely. Not lonely personally, I don't mean personally lonely, but lonely if something happens you don't have that, you know the White male has another White male he can sit down with and say let me tell you what happened. You don't have that person to go to, because you don't see yourself across the organization. You look across the organization there's nobody there that you can go to.

Sometimes the feelings of isolation were related to hostility the Black women human resources managers experienced. Tina described the antagonism that greeted her when she first arrived in her business unit:

And when I first arrived here people weren't too keen about having an HR person – they saw Billy HR as a policeman, you know, somebody who came in and took care of investigations and asked employees questions to fire the managers, you know, that was their perceptions based on their interaction with the regional group. Because they generally showed up when problems came up and that's the way they saw my role. And I got a lot of kickback, I think too some old boy thinking, which was all kind of interesting. I had some interesting comments said to me....I had a statement directed to me that indicated that I was from someplace else, I was not really welcome. I remember at one time [a department head] said, "I guess you're worth it" or "[I guess] it's worth putting people on the street to pay for you" or something like that.

Tina also encountered hostility when she attended a meeting of a professional association:

I remember one HR meeting where I tried to join the local [professional organization chapter]. To this day I don't have anything to do with them. I had the woman who later became president of the chapter say out loud to me at a table, "I don't see why they saw it necessary to go outside this community to go hire someone." I was determined to be professional and I was not going to let her shake me, but that's another thing when you come to these little small communities, Southern communities, you are alone.

For Roxy, traveling in the Deep South was like being a stranger in a strange land.

The hostility she often sensed was confirmed when a business unit leader told her that the Deep South was a dangerous place for Black people:

I remember being very scared because I was in the car with the [business unit leader.] We were driving through this road where these trees were on both sides of the road and I had the picture of this great house and I'm thinking oh, my we're going to drive up to this great white house where there would be some slaves in the field or something and he specifically said to me – I'll never forget it – he said to me, this is a very dangerous part of the country in terms of racism, he said, you're in the deep South and Florida is one of the most racist states. And he said, "Don't worry, because you're right here with me."

Although his words were intended to help Roxy feel safe, they missed the mark; Roxy noted,

“I think I was comforted as long as I was with him. But I didn’t go home with him. So on one hand it was comforting but it didn’t stop me from being scared because I wasn’t with him all the time. And this happened more than one time [and in other places].”

Like Tina, Donna, this researcher, also encountered hostility when she started her new job as manager of human resources for the Corporate Division:

People were suspicious at first because the atmosphere was just so fraught with tension at Corporate. You had really hostile women who came in and challenged me. I guess they sent somebody in as a test case and she complained that she was being discriminated against because she was female. So when I started investigating and talking to her and finding out what the facts of the case were, it fell apart because it wasn’t a real issue. And it turns out she went back and told everybody “well, she’s just a company man and she’s just a yes man and she’s not going to do anything anyway to help anybody.” This was a White woman. I remember going home and crying and thinking what the heck have I gotten myself into? I had a nice job where I was respected, everybody liked me. Even though they didn’t always like what came out of the attitude surveys they knew that I would help them address issues. And now I come to [headquarters city] and all of a

sudden I've become an Uncle Thomasina and a company girl and a person who is not going to do anything.

Working Without Emotional Support

The second subcategory associated with the *Operating as an outsider-insider* category is *working without emotional support*. Because of the confidential nature of much of their work, the Black women human resources managers had few confidants within the company. On the other hand, the stressful nature of the work, including dealing with hostility and isolation, meant the women needed to find sources of emotional support – people in whom they could confide or with whom they could share their troubles and doubts. For most of the women, these sources were outside the company. Chloe commented,

I met an African American female that was senior vice president of sales for [a Fortune 500 company], and they are rare. She and I are best friends now. But we started to share our loneliness as we call it. She works for a different company but we could share it because she was having some of the same issues and even though we did not identify with the same company, we identified very closely with not having anybody to talk to. You don't have anyone if something happens and you want to bounce [off ideas]. She bounces things off me all the time. She called me the other day, and she's bouncing things off – what do you think, do you think I'm over-reacting.

Tina found emotional support outside the company, through prayer and through talking to a friend whose situation was worse than hers:

Oh, I just pray. I may talk to a friend, who calls me every single day because his company is going through this but I do more listening than anything because his company is far worse – it's so politically charged. It's incredible.

Mary HR and Roxy were both single mothers who received comfort and support from their families. Roxy treasured a very special gift from her daughter that let her know that her daughter understood the difficulties Black women working in predominantly White organizations faced:

My daughter gave me a pen, a pen from Tiffany, beautiful pen, a few years ago as a gift. It was a Christmas present and I was admiring it. She wrote me a note and she said "Mom, you need to have this. This is the pen Condoleeza Rice uses. You're in corporate America. You need that pen."

Mary HR valued spending time with her children. She was therefore angry when her boss, who was a minority male, demanded that she work long hours, especially at Christmas time. She felt he disapproved of her status as an unmarried woman raising her children alone:

I don't think [he had] a certain amount of respect. He came from a culture where children were raised by a mother and a father ... So I don't think he was really understanding on this point; I think there was a certain amount of devaluing of a woman, especially an unmarried woman trying to take care of the needs of her kids. If I wanted to raise

my children I should have been married, at home taking care of them and the husband should have been out working.

Mary HR also believed that her boss did not support her ambition to advance beyond the administrative role for which she was hired:

I wanted to use tuition reimbursement plan and return to school to get the degree that I thought would have a stronger benefit not only for me but for the company as well. I was constantly told “Don’t worry about your degree. Just work; we’ll take care of you.”

Negotiating Racism

Negotiating racism is the second category under the theme, *Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization*. All the women talked of the racism they experienced while carrying out their responsibilities. Nia observed that “Racism exists everywhere. Don’t ever think that there’s a part of the country where there might be less racism. It just changes shape; it rears its ugly head in different ways.” For five of the six women, racism was more of an issue than sexism. The following statement from Chloe is representative of the women’s perceptions:

Race mattered much more. That’s the way the world is. A lot of time managers or people that you’re working with are not really accepting; they see color. Sometimes they don’t want to pardon you because of that. ... I think it’s very difficult being Black working in a majority White organization. I don’t think you can ever forget that.

Tina's experience was different from that of the other women in that she believed that people reacted to her first as a human resources manager, then as Black, then as a woman:

I think human resources for sure. And African American, and female, yeah, there were a couple of gender issues there. I think definitely HR first. Yeah, because like I said most of their interactions with HR had to deal around problems and that's what they thought I was there for, as a spy of something.

However, none of the women let racism, sexism, or a combination of the two stop them from doing what they needed to do. As Mary HR stated, "I don't think I allowed other people's stuff to get in my way. Did I see some things? Sure I would see it. But did I allow it to affect me? No I didn't." Nia countered sexism and racism by overachieving – by striving to do more, to be smarter, and to be more inventive:

Race and gender certainly had an impact on each and every day in the role, okay? It did not affect my ability to do my job. So the question that I can answer is, "Did race and gender have an impact?" Yes. And it required me to be even more competent, more savvy, more astute, more creative, more innovative. In every competency that most executives have to have just a modicum of capability in, I had to have a superabundance of capability in, because of race and gender. It didn't keep me from doing my job, but because of being a woman, and because of being a Black woman, I had to overachieve.

Donna, this researcher, gave examples of how she used humor and intelligence to negotiate racially-charged situations:

I think, initially, especially when I was traveling to [business units] in the South, when I went around and did employee relations and training on policies and what-not, people would see me and it was like, Oh my god you're Black! Because they talked to me on the telephone and then I'd show up in person and they weren't expecting somebody Black. And I learned to be amused by that. I decided not to let that bother me. And so, I also never let any of the racism that I encountered bother me. And I knew that I could pull out some of my ten syllable words and dazzle them enough that they would eventually forget that I was Black and just start relating to me like they would anybody else. So I don't think that I let my race or my gender be a hindrance.

Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies

The third theme I identified from my analysis of the data is *Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies*. The data for this theme are sorted into three categories representing the strategies: *Being confident yet nonthreatening*, *Being true to personal values*, and *Negotiating relationships with White male executives*. The Black women human resources managers developed these strategies to negotiate diversity issues in a company dominated by White men.

Being Confident Yet Nonthreatening

The first category for the theme *Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies* is *Being confident yet nonthreatening*. As outsider-insiders, the Black women human

resources managers faced resistance in working with White managers who were not convinced that diversity initiatives were beneficial or necessary. Four of the six women described their strategies for appearing confident but not threatening while doing diversity work.

Nia talked about the personal traits she believed were required to overcome this resistance to diversity:

You have to come as the individual who is willing to blaze trails, to do tough things. Throughout my career it's been tough, because management has not wanted to give a nod to anything that had to do with minorities, you know? You really do have to be tough skinned, but also, you have to be courageous. You have to be a risk taker, and you have to have tenacity, and you have to have a lot of self-confidence too.

Tina agreed with Nia that all managers were not interested in diversity-related activities. Tina employed an indirect approach to diversity work with the managers in her business unit:

A lot of people are not interested in [diversity issues], so you have to figure out how can I do this[training] in a way that makes it fun and inviting, and hopefully create an environment where people can talk comfortably about issues of color, issues of race, and all these other sensitive issues. Because we've got to get the right atmosphere, and we don't really have the right atmosphere to talk about anything. So I'm thinking I should start off the [training for managers] on the [performance] review process with talking about unconscious bias and

how it might be influencing workplace decisions. Not just focus on race but on bias in general. Maybe that will be an opportunity to open up the door.

Tina had learned from her earlier years that a less confrontational approach worked best with the managers in her business unit:

The first couple of years that I arrived here I had to make it loud and clear that I was no one's scapegoat; no one could use me as a scapegoat. I am not a yes person. I noticed that when I first arrived, some of the managers, some of the directors who were my colleagues were really uncomfortable with that. And I realized that I couldn't just be outspoken like that because some people are just not comfortable with it.

Donna, this researcher, also used a less confrontational approach to diversity issues. She tried to connect diversity to managers' business needs:

I wanted to make a difference so I figured out how I could make a difference. I'm not a confrontational person, I don't like confrontations. And so I'm not going to be that person who's going to come in and shove something down your throat. Instead, I'm going to try to find a hook; I'm going to try to find some way to appeal to some kind of need that you have. And if necessary, I'll make you feel guilty.

The comments by Tina and Donna, this researcher, illustrate the delicate calibrations necessary to keep the Black women human resources managers from crossing the line from being firm in confronting diversity issues to being threatening. Nia

captured this idea concisely: “I had to be conservative and at the same time be outgoing. I had to be calm and unassuming and at the same time make sure I was able to step forward and speak out when I needed to.” Chloe described a time when she firmly but politely confronted a division executive (her boss’s peer) who had shouted at her in the office:

[The executive] said something to me, just really blasted me one day and I walked away from him. But the next day I went back and I said, “[executive’s name] can I speak to you?” And I said, “You can talk to me in any kind of manner you want, but never yell at me again. Because you can tell me what you want, it doesn’t have to be something that I agree with, but never, ever yell at me. You’re not my father; my father never yelled. You’re not my husband. But if you do, you’re not going like what’s going to come out my mouth.” And he said, “Chloe, when was I yelling? You know, I do that to everybody.” I said, “Don’t do it to me; don’t do it to me. You may do it to everybody else and they may suck it up, but I’m not going to suck it up. You got away with it yesterday. Don’t do it again.” He looked at me, and he was sitting just like this, and he said, “I hear you.” I said, “Do we have an agreement?” He never did say anything. But he never yelled at me again.

Being True to Your Personal Values

The second category for the theme *Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies* is *Being true to your personal values*. All six women in this study told stories indicating how important their personal values were; some described the struggle to hold onto

personal values in the face of organizational pressures while others talked about having limits of how far they were willing to go to support organizational needs.

Personal values influenced how the women implemented the strategy of being confident but nonthreatening. Included under the umbrella of personal values are how the women saw themselves, how they wanted to be perceived, and what aspects of their identities they were willing to make public. Nia talked about her desire, as a Black woman and as a Black executive, to be perceived as an advocate for minority development and growth in the organization. Roxy said, “There’s a certain core part of me that doesn’t change, that hasn’t changed, and perhaps won’t. I don’t see it ever changing.”

Four of the women in this study mentioned personal values that they would not compromise. “Know where the line is” was Chloe’s pithy comment. Tina and Chloe both said they would not lie for anyone or for the company, even if telling the truth put the company in a bad light. For Roxy and Tina, it was their Christian values that were non-negotiable. Roxy said,

I’ve always had strong Christian values, and I don’t remember, or believe, that someone, regardless of who they were, would get me to do something that I thought was unethical or against my Christian values. I don’t recall it and I don’t think I would have done it.

For Donna, this researcher, it was important to always be herself:

Remain true to yourself. My mantra throughout my life, and I told this to I don’t know how many people, has been to start as you mean to go

on. Don't come in there and try to be something that you're not – be who you are. Be who you are.

However, it was not always easy to hold on to all values all the times. Tina discussed her struggle to remain true to herself in a tumultuous or negative environment:

I have been challenged of late about being true to my authentic self and really finding my voice again amidst all of this change or disruption. But I just made a pact with myself last week that I will indeed to continue to be Tina. There's this elitist attitude that kind of permeates this environment. They look at everything through a really cynical eye and it's really easy to get caught up in that. But I refuse to; I just can't do that. It just doesn't feel good to me.

For Mary HR, the demands of her job often compromised her values about family:

What I value is family. And as a Black female, not married, raising two children, I found that my values were constantly being compromised for the good of the company. Having to work too many hours of overtime, not being able to address any of the kids' needs sometimes, because it was expected that I would be able to work. I was expected to work even during the Christmas holidays, because that was salary administration time.

Negotiating Relationships With White Male Executives

The third category under the theme *Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies* is *Negotiating relationships with White male executives*. Being confident yet nonthreatening while holding fast to personal values were strategies the six Black women

human resources managers used to negotiate their relationships with White male executives. It should be noted that, with a strong Old Boy's Network in operation, there were very few female executives in the company. The experiences of the participants in this study illustrate different ways in which male privilege, especially White male privilege, can combine with positional power to operate for good or ill in a corporate environment.

Tina had a good working relationship with her former boss, who used his positional power as the business unit leader to compel the managers to participate in diversity activities. He did not avoid tough discussions about difficult issues relating to diversity. As Tina commented, "We could just put things on the table and talk out loud about them." Donna, this researcher, had built a good relationship with her boss at the processing center. She used the credibility she had established with him to convince him to accept a difficult termination decision made by the senior corporate human resources executive:

[My boss] did not want to terminate these people and I told him he had no choice, he had to. And that was really hard because he was a person that I had worked with when he was [a business unit leader elsewhere]. I had saved his bacon so he and I had a really good working relationship. And I think the strength of that relationship is what finally made this decision acceptable. I mean he had to accept it, but I think because it was me saying it, the decision became more acceptable to him. He didn't fight it I think as much or as long as he would have if it had come from someone else.

In some cases a boss could be an ally in preventing a miscarriage of justice by another senior executive. Nia gave the following example:

I had a senior executive about me who was systematically taking women and minorities out of their jobs and kicking them out of the organization. How bad is that? And that person also had a hidden agenda to get me out of the organization. But that person wanted to only promote and place in positions of prominence people who would support him and do exactly as he wanted. He was in the process of placing one of those people in a job like that, and he and my boss were on their way to make this promotion. I called my boss and I said, "Look I just want you to know there is a problem. I know you're on your way to make this happen, you're on your way to [headquarters city] to give [the boss's boss] the paperwork and get her to sign off on it, but there is a problem." I said, "You know, I just want you to know this. I think it's wrong to move this quickly, and with this person. You may disagree but I thought I needed to put it in your hands." And so the other executive called me and all but cursed me out for doing that, for interrupting, for interfering with the flow of his authority. But the person they were going to get to sign off on this, [the boss's boss], she absolutely would not sign the paperwork. She said "If Nia has a problem with it, I'm not signing it. You need to go and investigate." So the promotion was delayed by 30 days. The other executive was so mad

at me. He already disliked me because I challenged him on all the bad things he was doing but [this time] he absolutely was livid.

In other cases, however, the boss could be a hindrance. Roxy and Chloe were caught in the middle of power games between their bosses and their bosses' boss. Roxy's White male boss reported to a Black woman, and according to Roxy:

He was so afraid of her. He would take me out to tea at the oddest hours, in the middle of the day, and I spent more time listening to his [name of boss] woes than working. I think because I was a Black woman he thought that I would know [how to deal with her] or that she and I were friends. He thought that somehow I could identify with her, or she could with me, or maybe I could influence her, or say something in his favor. He actually asked me to speak well of him.

Roxy refused to take any messages to her boss's boss but she did not know how to stop her boss from taking up her time with his complaints:

I was raised to respect authority and that respect for me sometimes meant that you didn't ask questions, you kind of just did what you were told, ... especially when it's someone very senior and in charge. And that's part of the reason that I spent so much time listening to [boss's name], because he was my boss and I didn't feel I could say to him, "I can't go [to tea], I'm in the middle of something."

Her solution to the dilemma was "to find other times to get my work done and make up my work." The situation made her feel manipulated and devalued: "I think [my boss]

perceived me as someone, as this little Black girl who would do whatever I tell her to do. And I always did.”

Chloe’s boss was a minority man who reported to a White man. Like Roxy, Chloe believed her boss was afraid of his boss. However, it was the White male executive who used Chloe in his power games with her minority male boss:

[The boss’s boss] would call me into his office, call [my boss] in there, and chew [my boss] out in front of me! You know, just brutal stuff. [My boss] was so embarrassed, and I would be embarrassed too. [The boss’s boss] would do that to play games. [He] would come to me and say, “Chloe, come go with me” and I would walk downstairs with him to get a sandwich or something and we would talk about absolutely nothing. But he would do it to agitate [my boss] because he knew [my boss] would be wondering why he was taking me downstairs. So I got caught up in all their little drama.

Chloe encouraged her boss to take action:

I said, “You need to speak up and blast him back. That’s what I would do.” And he said, no, he needed the job, he had a family, and he couldn’t do that. I said, “Okay, but I think if you did that one time it would get him off your back. I would not sit there and let that man harangue me like he does you.” He asked, “What would you say?” And I told him, “I would just tell him to stop doing that in front of my employee.”

Mary HR had the same minority male boss as Chloe; however, she did not have the same kind of relationship. Mary HR attributed her occasional clashes with her boss to cultural differences:

I learned in terms of the cultural conflict that, if we had had an opportunity early on to discuss values, I think the two of us would have learned that we had some commonalities. In fact, it wasn't until years later when we had a discussion that he finally got that me asking for time off to do things with my children that I valued meant as much to me as his wife and he doing things together with their family. It's just that he had the resources to use in different ways than what I had. But years later he was able to say "I now get what you were trying to do."

However, it is clear that her boss benefited from male privilege because he had a wife who stayed home to take care of the children and manage the household, freeing him work long hours and travel frequently with little advance notice. He found it difficult to accept that as a single mother and the sole supporter for her family, MaryHR could not work extended hours on the job or take business trips without notice.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to describe how six Black women human resources managers negotiated diversity issues in a corporation. This chapter presented the findings of the study, organized by three themes that were uncovered during data analysis:

Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity, Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization, and Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies.

In the first theme, *Negotiating the Ups and Downs of the Company's Commitment to Diversity*, the Black women human resources managers reported that they did not believe that the company's commitment to diversity was substantial for the following reasons: there were no written policies regarding diversity until the 1990s; powerful business unit leaders could opt out of diversity training or engage in offensive behavior without suffering any consequences; and financial pressures led to budget cuts that affected minority employees more than Whites. The women in this study were challenged to find creative ways to continue their diversity initiatives in these types of circumstances. They responded by using White male managers as diversity champions and finding ways around budget restrictions.

Counteracting the Effects of Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization, the second theme, captured the difficulties of being Black, being women, being Black women, and being human resources managers doing diversity work in a company run by White men. The women in the study experienced themselves as both insiders and outsiders in the company. While they were privy to confidential (and potentially damaging) information about the company, they were also witnesses to manifestations of male privilege. They felt isolated and lonely, and encountered hostility and racism not only within the company but also in outside settings. However, the women did not let racism prevent them from doing their jobs. They found sources of emotional support with family or with friends outside the company.

The final theme was *Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies*. This third theme has three categories: *Being confident yet nonthreatening*, *Being true to personal values*, and *Negotiating relationships with White male executives*, which represent

strategies the women in this study used to negotiate diversity issues in the company. They walked a fine line between being confident and being threatening in their relationships with male executives, some more successfully than others. Their personal values helped keep them grounded and motivated to continue doing diversity work.

At the end of their interviews, the six Black women human resources managers were asked, “If you had to give advice to your young self, just before you first started working for the Tolson Company, what would you say?” The advice given is a compendium of strategies for negotiating diversity issues in a corporation. This chapter is concluded with a poetic representation (Glesne, 2006) of their strategies, *What Advice Would I Give My Young Self?* The Black women human resources managers’ words were used to create a meaningful representation of our lived experiences:

What Advice Would I Give My Young Self?

What advice would I give my young self?

People will treat you the way you give them permission to treat you.

Be clear about what it is you want.

Remain true to yourself.

You have a voice.

Become more outspoken about the value you bring to the place.

Demand the respect you deserve.

Insure that you are treated equitably.

Spend time getting to know people.

Keep your ears open.

Do a little more research.

Network more.

Document more.

Do more.

It's okay to work harder but it's even better to work smarter.

Be mindful of your mental, social, and personal well-being.

Find somebody to talk things over with.

Stay calm.

Go get help.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiated diversity issues in the Tolson Company, a *Fortune* 1000 company whose 2008 revenues were in excess of \$2 billion. This study covers the years 1987 to 2007, a period during which the Tolson Company's approach and commitment to diversity fluctuated. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies and programs in a corporate environment?
2. How do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?

I chose to do a qualitative case study because I had a special interest in this population, as I was a human resources manager with this company. That interest was supported by the fact that very little research has focused on this population (King, 2003). While the population of Black women human resources managers at Tolson was a small select group, the six women in this study represent 67% of that population. In addition, the data is rich and multi-layered: transcripts of interviews with six Black women human resources managers who worked at Tolson during the specified time period, including this researcher; extensive documents from the Tolson Company, including performance appraisal forms, newsletters, policy statements, and reports; and downloaded web pages from the company's website. My analysis of these data yielded three themes: *Negotiating the Vagaries of the Company's Commitment to Diversity*, *Counteracting the Effects of*

Positionality on Work Life Through Psychological Compartmentalization, and Using Black Woman-Specific Work Strategies. There were categories and subcategories associated with these themes that further explained the phenomena described by the themes. In this chapter I discuss my conclusions about this study and situate the conclusions within the context of the research questions and within the literature. I conclude this chapter with implications for practice and implications/recommendations for future research.

Conclusions and Discussion

I drew two major conclusions from the study's findings: (1) Black women human resources managers used a strategic approach to doing corporate diversity work that was informed by their common experiences of gendered racism, and (2) Black women human resources managers maintained a delicate balance between their personal desire to be and to appear confident and their professional need to avoid being typecast as stereotypically threatening Black women. Each of these conclusions is discussed below.

Conclusion 1

The first research question was "how do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies and programs in a corporate environment?" I concluded that the Black women human resources managers in this study used a strategic approach to doing corporate diversity work that was informed by their common experiences of gendered racism, a combined and intertwined form of both racism and sexism (Essed, 1991). Ransford and Miller (1983) used the term *ethgender* to describe a unique combination of attributes at the intersection of race and gender that cannot be explained by adding the effects of race to those of gender.

The Black women human resources managers in this study experienced gendered racism or ethgender prejudice, defined as the inextricable comingling of racism and sexism (Essed, 1991; Ransford & Miller, 1983). The women spoke directly of their experiences with racism and all but one said they were perceived by others as Black first, then as women. In only a few instances did the participants describe incidents of overt sexism. This conclusion echoes what was found in a large study of African American women by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), who observed that participants gave many more examples of racist treatment than sexist treatment. It can be concluded from this that sexism in Black women's lives operates more invisibly than racism.

Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) assert that Black women have traditionally been more likely to perceive racism than sexism. King (2003) states that the few studies examining Black women's experiences with racism and sexism have indicated that Black women are more likely to perceive racism than sexism. The results of King's (2003) study of African American undergraduates imply that Black women react less negatively and less intensely to gender prejudice than to racial or ethgender prejudice.

White men and minority men benefit from male privilege. Black women, however, possess neither White privilege nor male privilege, as shown in Figure 1. Black women operate from the margin, separate and apart from the organization's main corridors of power (hooks, 1984 & 2000). Privilege operates in such a way as to keep those who are privileged unaware of its existence (McIntosh, 1993). White privilege, described by McIntosh (1993) as an invisible knapsack of unearned benefits, gives advantages to both White men and White women. Both White and male privilege operate to maintain societal power relations where Whites and men have more power than

minorities and women. In addition, the male privilege held by the minority men seemed to trump race and allowed the minority men to be included in a bonding activity from which all women, White and minority, were excluded.

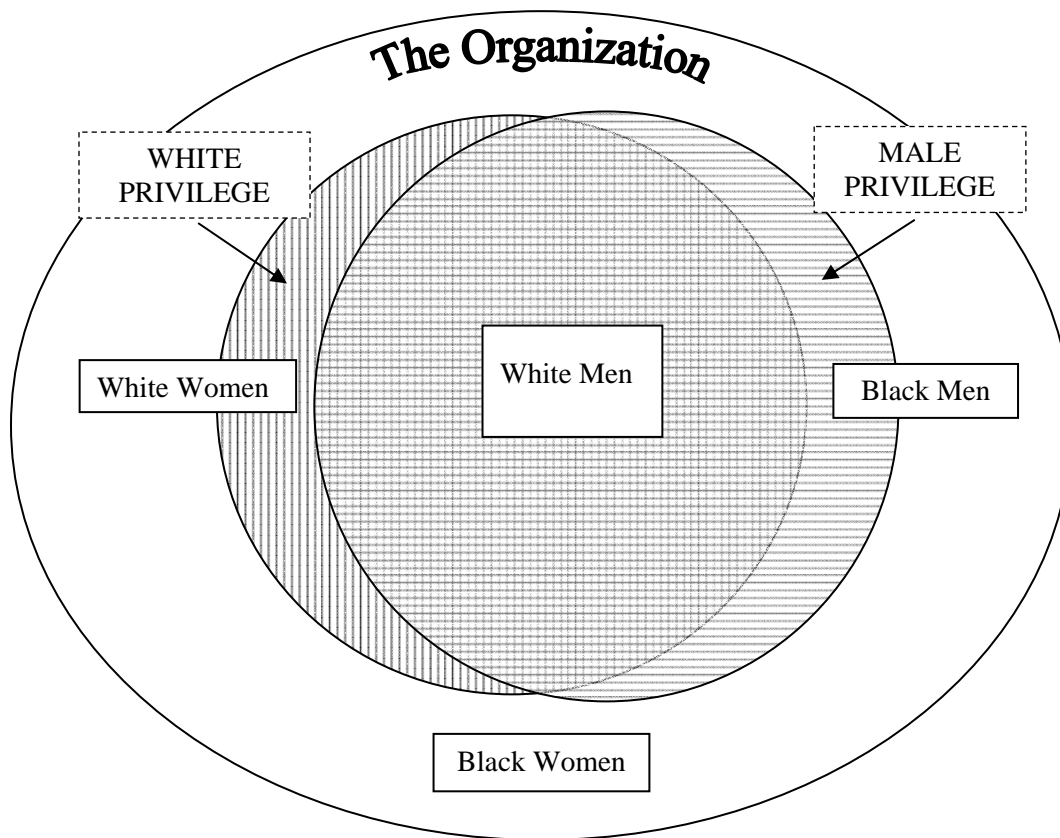


Figure 1. Diagram of race and gender privilege

The Black women human resources managers in this study refused to let racism, sexism, or resistance to diversity stop them from successfully performing their duties. Diversity resistance, like racism or sexism, takes many forms, both overt and covert (Thomas & Plaut, 2008; Bierema & Thomas, 2008). To counter it, the women used White men as champions of their diversity activities and found lost-cost ways to continue their diversity initiatives even when faced with tight financial constraints. Thomas (2006) lists “knowing how to select and use the appropriate action option” (p. 154) a key diversity management skill, one which was highly developed among the women in this study.

Their approach to diversity work was dictated by the situation and they were flexible enough to use different strategies in different situations.

Organizational insiders who are treated as outsiders because they act on their differences and challenge organizational norms and culture can be called *tempered radicals* (Meyerson, 2001). After studying change agents in three organizations, Meyerson (2001) suggested that tempered radicals operate along a continuum of activities selected to fit the situation and their own personalities. *Resisting Quietly and Staying True to Oneself* is at one end of the continuum, where tempered radicals' actions are taken in a nearly invisible manner and are grounded in their desire to be themselves in an environment that may not accept them. In the model offered in this study, action at this end of the spectrum is not designed to effect broad, sweeping changes; instead, only a few individuals are directly affected and the result may be invisible to others.

At the other end of Meyerson's (2001) spectrum is *Organizing Collective Action*. Tempered radicals operate at this end when they intend to fuel broad-based learning and change through highly visible actions that are likely to provoke resistance. Between the two ends of the continuum are *Turning Personal Threats Into Opportunities*, *Broadening the Impact Through Negotiation*, and *Leveraging Small Wins*.

The Black women human resources managers in this study fit the definition of tempered radicals. Overall they were passionate about their jobs and were dedicated and loyal to the Tolson Company. However, they were not blindly devoted to the company. They did not condone or ignore illegal, unprofessional, or unfair conduct. They based their actions on their analysis of the situation and the people involved. The Black women human resources managers took risks, standing up for Black employees and for

themselves, and gently pushed managers out of their comfort zones in confronting diversity issues.

Conclusion 2

The second research question was “how do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?” It was concluded, based on the data from this study, that in order to negotiate the racism and sexism in the corporate environment, the Black women human resources managers maintained a delicate balance between their personal desire to be and to appear confident and their professional need to avoid being typecast as stereotypically threatening Black women.

Roberts (2005) defined professional image as the aggregated perceptions of key constituents of a person’s competence and character. She asserts that constructing a professional image is a vital requirement for navigating interactions with key constituents in an organization and that people expend a good deal of energy to construct positive professional images (Roberts, 2005). They do this by creating personas that reflect desirable qualities, such as confidence and trustworthiness, which elicit approval from important stakeholders. However, stereotypes associated with various social identity groups can affect professional image. The *Sapphire*, the *Mammy*, the *Welfare Queen*, and the *Jezebel* are stereotypes associated with Black women that can negatively affect their professional images (Bell, 1990; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981). Bell and Nkomo (2001) found that among female corporate executives, the *Sapphire* and the *Mammy* were the most common stereotypes held about Black women.

The Sapphire stereotype is a bossy Black woman who is evil; who is angry, authoritarian, and hostile; who complains about everything; and who has a snappy comeback for every statement made to her (Bell, 1990; Bell & Nkomo, 2001; hooks, 1981). In contrast, the Mammy stereotype is a noble, obedient, self-sacrificing Black woman who takes care of everyone but herself (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Collins, 2000). In the workplace, the Mammy is seen as warm and nurturing, as leading with her feelings, and as always willing to help others (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Collins, 2000). A counterpart of the Mammy is the Welfare Queen stereotype, an unmarried woman with children who is lazy, not ambitious, and content to sit home and collect welfare (Collins, 2001). The Jezebel stereotype is a Black woman who is sexually wanton and uses men to get what she wants. In the workplace, Jezebel stereotype can lead men to believe that Black women will trade sex for job advantages such as promotions or plum assignments.

The Black women human resources managers in this study could be categorized as Sapphires based on their righteous anger with the company's wavering commitment to diversity and as Mammies because they acted as toxic handlers, listening empathetically to others and positioning difficult messages for maximum acceptance (Frost & Robinson, 1999). However, they were silent on the issue of sexism, describing themselves as Black first, women second. They were also silent about behavior that could have been rooted in perceptions of the Jezebel stereotype. Their silence does not mean that they did not experience being stereotyped as Jezebels; it could simply mean that the steps they took to avoid invoking the Jezebel stereotype were very successful. This is remarkable given the fact that all but one participant traveled extensively, most frequently to small towns in the

South, often in the company of male bosses or coworkers. Yet no scandal or hint of impropriety was ever associated with any of these women.

Indeed, the women in this study consciously worked to construct positive professional images and avoid being stereotyped. Because they frequently handled highly confidential information, and were sometimes involved in difficult legal cases, they believed it was essential to have a reputation for fairness and competence. That reputation gave the women the credibility they needed to resolve situations that were potentially embarrassing for the company. They drew on their personal values and beliefs to inform their work and guide their behavior. The Black women human resources managers learned to survive and thrive in a predominantly White world while maintaining their rootedness in Black culture. To put it another way, they became biculturally competent. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Barrett et al.'s (2003) research about the career development experiences of Black human resource developers. The participants in that study also used bicultural strategies to navigate between their professional and personal lives.

LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton (1993) describe seven factors associated with cultural competence, including possessing a strong personal identity, possessing knowledge of and facility with the beliefs and values of the culture, ability to communicate clearly in the language of the cultural group, and ability to negotiate the institutional structures of the culture. Bicultural efficacy is the belief that one can be culturally competent in two or more cultures (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993), while biculturalism is a flexible life structure that shapes social interactions, relationships, and mobility within and between two cultures (Bell, 1990).

LaFromboise et al. (1993) suggest that ethnic minorities who develop bicultural competence will have better health than those who do not. The Black women human resources managers experienced stress-related health concerns, but there is no indication that biculturalism was a cause of physical or mental health problems. Instead, the women in this study believed that they could be successful in a predominantly White environment and acted on that belief, which allowed them to negotiate positive working relationships with White male managers who initially were resistant to the idea of diversity or to human resources people “meddling” in their businesses.

In summary, the women had a strong awareness of themselves as Black women but did not project themselves militantly. They learned to speak the technical language of their divisions, appropriately using common buzzwords and acronyms. The women were able to shift between their professional images at work and their personal images outside of work. They found sources of comfort and emotional support, outside the company if necessary, to deal with their feelings of isolation or the fear that sometimes accompanied trips to unfamiliar locations.

Implications and Recommendations

This section offers implications for practice and recommendations/implications for future research. It should be noted that the research concerning Black women in corporate America is meager and that the existing research on corporate America has been generalized to all employees. The findings and conclusions of this study add to the small body of literature in human resource development on Black women in corporate America. The field of human resource development has not strongly embraced research on issues relating to sexism, racism, or discrimination in organizations (Bierema & Cseh,

2003). After examining more than 600 pages of the proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development's annual conference over a five year period, Bierema and Cseh (2003) concluded that very little of the research had used race/ethnicity or gender as frameworks for analysis. This state of affairs has several implications for practice.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study indicate that the way in which violations of corporate diversity policies are handled sends a message about the depth of the company's commitment to diversity. Therefore, this study implies that such policy infractions should be investigated promptly and offenders should receive appropriate sanctions, if in fact real change is desired in the corporate sector. Furthermore, corporations also need to investigate complaints of microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007) and microinequities (Hinton, 2003), giving particular attention patterns of behavior that involve a particular manager or department. Microaggressions and microinequities may not be legally actionable, but this study suggests that cumulative impact of these can poison the working environment and hinder the productivity of Black women human resources managers, and can ultimately drain the company of these women's valuable skills and talents.

This study also indicates that because White privilege operates invisibly, human resources practitioners need to examine programs for evidence of hidden bias and to ensure that the programs are not operating in ways that maintain the status quo.

Succession planning programs, for example, should be scrutinized to ensure that Black women can be designated as "high potentials" by multiple means and not solely by an individual manager who may harbor ethgender prejudice. Black women who are placed

in the “not ready for promotion” category should receive the same developmental opportunities and encouragement as similarly placed White men, and as this study demonstrates, it often takes intervention from human resources professionals to ensure that the development takes place. Mentoring programs should inform potential mentors about the special barriers facing Black women in the workplace and how negative stereotypes of Black women can operate to hinder or undermine cross-cultural and cross-gender mentoring relationships (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). In summary, the results of the study point out that more oversight is needed if corporate America expects full and participation from its Black women employees, as the hegemonic corporate structure which is White male centered is more apt to negatively impact their career experiences.

This study also has direct messages for human resources practitioners, indicating to them that they should also examine the culture of the corporation, particularly its unwritten rules and expectations about success. Unwritten rules such as asking employees to stay late and work weekends to show dedication to the job are detrimental to women who may be raising small children or caring for elderly parents, and may be especially harmful to Black women since they are disproportionately single mothers and caretakers. In addition, expectations about relocation should be informed by an understanding that Black women who relocate to all-White areas face extra challenges, such as finding appropriate housing, because of the continued lack of integration in housing. This does not mean that Black women should be automatically excluded from relocation to all-White areas; rather, it argues for an open dialogue with the women to discuss their needs and how they might be met.

In higher education, courses about human resource development and diversity in the workplace should include a specific focus on social justice issues. Human resource development textbooks should include fuller and richer information on White privilege and the effects of prejudice, sexism, racism, and gendered racism on organizational structures and human resource development programs. This information should be dispersed as appropriate throughout the text, not shoehorned into a separate chapter at the end of the book. Journal articles, proceedings of professional organizations, book chapters, and dissertations address issues that have not been incorporated into core texts and it is recommended that one way to offset this omission is using these readings to supplement course materials.

It follows that professors who teach human resource development courses should not assume that a discussion about the work experiences of White women and minority men is sufficient to provide an understanding of the experiences of Black women and other women of color. The experiences of women of color should be given the same level of attention and importance as those of White women and men of color.

Recommendations/Implications for Future Research

The field of human resource development has not adequately researched issues relating to diverse populations, social justice, or power relations in organizations (Bierema & Cseh, 2003; Brooks & Clunis, 2007). Much of the literature that is published about race appears in books rather than academic journals (Cox & Nkomo, 1990). There is a need for more research on the effects of ethgender prejudice and gendered racism experienced by a growing segment of the U.S. workforce. For widest exposure, this research should be published in scholarly journals as well as presented at conferences.

Graduate students whose doctoral dissertations involve gendered racism or ethgender prejudice should be encouraged to submit manuscripts to scholarly journals.

This study adds to the body of literature in human resource development by providing an in-depth examination of the experiences of Black women human resources managers who do diversity work in a corporation. In doing so, it gives visibility to a population marginalized by race, gender, and organizational status, and sheds light on a social justice issue in the workplace. The findings and conclusions from this study suggest that traditional theories that have been used as frameworks for examining the participation of Black women in corporate America are inadequate in that they are based on the experiences of White women or Black males and incorrectly generalize the data to Black women. In the future, I encourage researchers to use theoretical frameworks that are inclusive of and intentional in their attention to diversity. Black feminist theory may provide such a framework in that it Black women's work experiences are a central theme (Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982) because Black women's lives have traditionally included working outside the home (Collins, 2000).

This study also adds to human resource development literature because it suggests that diversity policies and programs are not enough to eradicate sexism, racism, and ethgender prejudice from the workplace. By themselves, such policies and programs do not prevent inequities in the workplace and therefore are not enough to change the corporate climate or culture (Giscombe & Mattis, 2002). As this study demonstrates, it is the individual behavior of managers that must change and this change must be demanded and demonstrated by the senior executives of the corporation, not human resources managers.

This study focused on Black women human resources managers doing diversity work in one corporation. Future research might focus on the experiences of Black women human resources managers doing diversity work in other corporations and other fields. It would also be beneficial to study the experiences of these women in nonprofit and governmental institutions. Comparing the experiences of Black women human resources managers across industries and organizational settings will help develop a fuller picture of their work lives and help organizations understand how ethgender prejudice keeps women of color from making full contributions to organizational productivity and profitability.

Only Black women human resources managers participated in this study. Additional research is needed on the experiences of other women of color – Latina, Asian American, Native American. Their experiences could provide a foundation for action for eradicating or at least moderating the effects of ethgender prejudice.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW GUIDE

The purpose of this study is to describe how Black women human resources managers negotiate diversity issues in a corporation. The research questions that guide this study are:

- (1) How do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment?
- (2) How do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?

1. Tell me about diversity at the Tolson Company.
2. What were your responsibilities regarding diversity?
3. How would you describe the corporate culture around diversity the Tolson Company?
4. Tell me about a time when you had the opportunity to make a difference regarding diversity at the Tolson Company. What happened, who was involved, what did you do?
 - a. How did you feel about the resolution?
 - b. What did you learn from the experience?
5. Think about a time when the actions of the company conflicted with its philosophy about diversity. What happened, who was involved, what did you do?
 - a. How did you feel about the resolution?
 - b. What did you learn from the experience?
6. Describe a situation where you defied management. What happened, who was involved, what did you do?

- a. How did you feel about the resolution?
 - b. What did you learn from the experience?
7. Tell me about a situation where you faced a conflict between your personal values and something the company wanted you to do. What happened, who was involved, what did you do?
 - a. How did you feel about the resolution?
 - b. What did you learn from the experience?
8. What were your most routine activities? What kinds of things did you spend most of your time doing?
9. How did race and gender affect your ability to do your job? How did race and gender play out in your daily activities?
10. Tell me about a time when you felt like an outsider at work. What happened, who was involved, what did you do?
 - a. How did you feel about the resolution?
 - b. What did you learn from the experience?
11. How did you express your identity in your work life?
12. If you had to describe yourself in two sentences, what would you say?
13. Why did you leave the company?
14. If you had to give advice to your young self, just before you first started working for the Tolson Company, what would you say?

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

Donna Drake-Clark
ddclark@uga.edu

Date

Participant Name
Address

Dear (Participant Name),

It was a pleasure to speak to you today about the dissertation research I am conducting through the University of Georgia. As we discussed, I am investigating the challenges faced by Black women human resource managers who work in a predominantly White corporation. In preparation for this study I reviewed relevant literature in the fields of adult education and human resource development. I found very little literature about Black women in corporate America and even less about Black women in human resources. My study will help expand the knowledge base about how Black women human resource managers function in a predominantly White corporation.

Your participation in this study will include a 1-2 hour audiotaped interview and copies of written documents such as job descriptions or performance evaluations. You will have an opportunity to review a transcript of the interview and to give me feedback on themes that develop as a result of this research. All information you share with me will be confidential. I am enclosing a formal Participant Consent Form which is required by the University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board. The form gives a more thorough description of what the research study entails. If you decide to participate, I will need you to sign this document.

It is my goal to complete this study by May 2009. I will call you within the next 10 days to follow up. In the meantime, if you need to reach me please call (770) 313-4273. This research study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, a professor in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy; she can be reached at (706) 542-6600. Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Donna Drake-Clark, M.Ed.

enclosure

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "DISCRIMINATION HAPPENS WITHOUT EFFORT: HOW BLACK WOMEN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGERS NEGOTIATE DIVERSITY ISSUES IN A CORPORATION" conducted by Donna Drake-Clark from the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy at the University of Georgia (770-313-4273) under the direction of Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy, The University of Georgia (706-542-6600). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to examine the challenges faced by Black woman human resources managers who work in a predominantly White corporation. Three to five women will participate in this study. Specifically, the study will examine:

1. How do Black women human resources managers resolve the struggles of implementing diversity policies in a corporate environment?
2. How do Black women human resources managers negotiate their organizational and personal identities within the corporate structure?

I will not benefit directly from this research. However, my participation will contribute to the body of knowledge about how Black women human resources managers function in predominantly White corporations. I will also have an opportunity to share my perceptions and insights on this topic. Minimal discomforts or stresses are expected. No risks are foreseen as a result of this study.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) Participate in an interview about my experience in a predominantly White corporation, which will last 1-2 hours. The interview will be audiotaped and will consist of questions relating to my experience as a human resources manager in a predominantly White corporation. The audiotape of the interview will be transcribed verbatim. I will have an opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy and completeness. I will also be contacted by the researcher via email and/or telephone and asked to clarify points or provide input on themes that arise from the research. This follow-up activity is estimated to take approximately one hour.
- 2) Provide written documents such as job descriptions, performance evaluations, human resources policy manuals, career development and succession planning materials, and training materials that will help the researcher understand the corporate culture as well as my position.
- 3) Be available for a follow-up interview if needed. This interview will last 30-60 minutes. It will be audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. I will have an opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy and completeness.

I understand that the data collected in this study will be kept confidential and my identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher. No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my prior written permission. I will have an opportunity to choose a pseudonym to be used for research purposes. All audiotapes, transcripts, and written documents will be kept in a locked file cabinet and only the researcher and Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, the major professor of the researcher, will have access to these materials. The audiotapes will be handled and transcribed only by the researcher. The audio files and transcripts will be kept indefinitely to use for future research on the subject of Black women human resources managers who work in predominantly White corporations.

The researcher, Donna Drake-Clark, will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by phone at (770) 313-4273 or via email at ddclark@uga.edu.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Donna Drake-Clark		
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
(770) 313-4273	ddclark@uga.edu	
Telephone	Email	
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

The demographic information below is being requested of all participants in the research study titled " Discrimination Happens Without Effort: How Black Women Human Resources Managers Negotiate Diversity Issues in a Corporation" conducted by Donna Drake-Clark from the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy at the University of Georgia (770-313-4273) under the direction of Dr. Juanita Johnson-Bailey, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy, The University of Georgia (706-542-6600). Your completion of this form is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or stop taking part in the research study without giving any reason, and without penalty. You can ask to have all of the information about you returned to you, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

Name _____

Age Range (check one):

30 – 39 40 – 49 50 – 59 60 +

Marital Status (check one):

Divorced Married Separated Single Widowed

Do you have children? Yes No If so, how many? _____

What is your level of educational attainment? _____

How do you identify yourself in terms of race? _____

How many years of corporate work experience do you have? _____