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TEMPERED RADICALISM REVISITED: BLACK AND WHITE WOMEN MAKING SENSE OF BLACK WOMEN'S ENACTMENTS AND WHITE WOMEN'S SILENCES

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CONTENTS

This paper follows two intertwined journeys–our interpretation of data about Black and White women's careers and concerns and our exploration of our own standpoints and relationships as Black and White women. In our first reading, the data spoke of Black women's efforts to make change, address racial inequality, and "lift others as you climb"–and White women's comparative silence. We trace our dialogues among us as we made sense of this interpretation and its implications for us as Black and White women, particularly Black and White women working collaboratively and concerned deeply about change. This paper moves between our dialogues, which were intense and ultimately full of "ahas" for us, and our continued peeling of the layers of meaning in the data. The process is never complete– we invite you to follow our journeys thus far and to chronicle your own so that the learning continues**.**

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This paper tells the story of bringing together not only a promising concept and a rich dataset but also two pairs of long-standing research collaborators–two Black women and two White women. We narrate our project and our process in an intertwined way. The data are about Black and White women's engagement with hierarchy and injustice at work. Much was at stake in how we each read the research data, which was played out as we discovered what was at stake in our relationships with one another. We include our own connections, disconnections, assumptions, and discoveries during our process. Interpreting the data allowed us–indeed, pushed us–to hear leitmotifs from how we interpret our own lives and opportunities. As we read and re-read the data and our own evolving interpretations of the data, there were echoing words from other people who stand on our shoulders and whisper in our ears. What was instinctively obvious in the data? When were we appreciative, critical, off-base in reading the data about the women's experiences? Who had the standpoint from which to say?

These questions arose, in tentative asides and passionate outbursts, all along the pathway to where we are now, a way station if not an endpoint. We have found some interpretations that we can each and collectively hold in a way that honors at once what is shared and what is distinct in our experiences and viewpoints. In some aspects, our hard-won readings of the data echo theories that are already afoot in the literature, but now we feel these ideas in our bones and in the spaces between us. We narrate the journey chronologically, sharing the ideas and data as they were on the table at a particular point, the conversations they occasioned, and then the rewrites, reinterpretations, and new conversations that followed.

This paper evolved into a reflexive ethnography of our own community of practice: the work researchers do in finding stories in the world, reading and interpreting them, bringing theories and concepts to bear, sharing the result with audiences both skeptical and receptive, and learning about our own connections in the process. Working together, we surfaced the process of how social scientists write about lives. We surveyed the contested terrain of interpreting what those lives mean, where we think they celebrate an ideal or fall short of a hope. The terms "enactments" and "silences" in our title are suggestive of the distinction between making a difference versus colluding, the former praiseworthy and the latter suspect. These were terms whose meanings we peeled and pulled and plied as we worked. We worked in the spirit of Hertz's (1997:15) description of a reflexive ethnography:

> *To be reflexive is to have an ongoing conversation about experience while simultaneously living in the moment. By extension, the reflexive ethnographer does not simply report "facts" or "truths" but actively constructs interpretations of his or her own experiences in the field and then questions how those interpretations came about. . . . By bringing subject and object back into the same space (indeed, even in the same sentence), authors give their audiences the opportunity to evaluate them as "situated actors."*

The act of writing this paper became a microcosm of the very concept we were studying–Black and White women's separate and sometimes linked experiences at work. We became situated actors in the very phenomenon we were attempting to understand.

This paper was an opportunity to bring together the concept and illustrations of "tempered radicalism" (Meyerson and Scully, 1995) with a rich empirical dataset on one hundred women's life narratives (Bell and Nkomo, 1998). Tempered radicals are "individuals who identify with and are committed to their organizations and also to a cause, community or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of their organization" (Meyerson and Scully, 1995: 585). They are radical in their desire to change the status quo and tempered in the way they have been toughened by challenges and anger at injustice; they are nonetheless determined to work from inside the system with enough tempering to influence the organizational mainstream. Tempered radicals are people who are disheartened by feelings of fraudulence and loss as they try to fit into the dominant culture. Some leave the mainstream, while others silence their complaints and surrender their identities; tempered radicalism is the middle course, sustaining membership along with commitment to change. A balancing act for tempered radicals in the workplace is whether to defer their commitments until they have climbed higher (but risk "selling out") or to engage their commitments sooner (but by not "fitting in" they risk never ascending to a level from which they can make more profound changes).

In a study of women's lives and their use of agency at work, Bell and Nkomo (1998) built upon the concept of tempered radicalism and presented examples of women using tempered radicalism as one of several strategies for handling their rage against race and gender based injustices. Bell and Nkomo present and contrast the life histories and workplace challenges of Black and White women. We were particularly interested in using these data to understand more deeply how Black and White women enact tempered radicalism with respect to race and gender.

The idea began with a conversation in the fall of 1996, which is one of several we will recount.[1] In particular, we recount the ones that we revisited as part of our own folklore and ongoing sense-making. We do not recount an exact transcript of the words, but our recollected words.

> EB: *The data in our study on how the women respond to and think about racism and sexism really seem to fit well with the tempered radical concept that Deb and Maureen have written about. When I presented the findings from our study at the ASA meetings, the response was very good. I think we need to write a paper. It would be nice perhaps to work with Maureen to write the paper*

> SN: *Fine idea. I think the tempered radical concept has a lot of promise.*

> EB: *It would be good to have a White woman involved in our work at this point. I'm thinking this because of the reactions some White women have had to our claiming the authority to study, analyze, and interpret the experiences of White women. This happens even though White scholars have been studying and interpreting the lives of*

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[1]   We identify the speaker within the subtext by initials: EB=Ella Bell; DM=Debra Meyerson; SN=Stella Nkomo; MS=Maureen Scully.

Black folks all the time. But I do wonder how a White woman would interpret our data. Would she see the data as we see it?

SN: *Well, I don't know. I fear a lot of White women may become very defensive–try to defend "their" group. Many people assume White women are experts on gender. Our data reveals a picture of a group of White Women who are not experts on gender or even conscious of sexism. I don't want to fight anyone over our data.*

EB: *Maureen can hang. I think she'll understand. She might not see what we see in the data but we would certainly be able to talk about our differences in perception. Maureen and I worked together at Sloan. We lived through the MIT experience. She's not a passive bystander. Maureen understands what racism and sexism look like. She knows how the stuff gets enacted. We've had some very candid conversations about our MIT experiences.*

SN: *Well, I'll trust your judgment about her. I don't know Maureen as well as you do. But my interactions with her have always been good. I do like her.*

EB: *I'll call her to see if she is interested.*

She was very interested, and Ella and Maureen spent an afternoon at the blackboard outlining many promising areas of overlap. Maureen and Deb had always wanted to extend the paper empirically; Maureen broached the subject of bringing Deb into the collaboration. Ella, initially and after further consultation with Stella, was reluctant, not knowing Deb and recognizing the sensitivity of the project. Maureen equivocated, but felt a strong loyalty and a sense that the opportunity to work on race issues in extending tempered radicalism was too precious not to share. The initial framing was that it was Ella and Stella's data so they were doing the inviting; several negotiations about membership resulted in an agreement that Deb would participate, which took until spring of 1997. The first meeting, by a mix of design and chance, was a hybrid solution: Ella, Stella, and Maureen spent five days in the summer of 1997 in North Carolina probing the data and coming up with interpretations, with periodic calls to Deb in California. We share the "founding story" of our group because, like so many myths of founding (Martin, Feldman, Hatch, and Sitkin, 1983), it came back in later layers of retelling.

In this section, we describe our initial reading of the data at that first gathering. What initially jumped out was an apparent disjuncture: Black women embraced, discussed, and experimented with pushing forward their visions for radical change with respect to race and gender injustices, while White women were relatively silent on these injustices, rarely expressing a desire for changes and frequently expressing more individualistic career concerns. In other words, it appeared that Black women instinctively acted as tempered radicals, while White women did not. Poring over the data and deeply engrossed in the many stories, our three-person cross-race research team was agitated and excited by this finding and curious to probe the cultural reasons for this disjuncture.

The first pass through the data was meant to identify different types and modes of tempered radicalism and thereby refine and extend the theory. Using Black women's various and textured enactments of tempered radicalism animated this project. We sorted and wrote up the Black women's stories and inductively generated the headings of internally versus externally oriented tempered radicalism, which appeared to be distinct in their focus, sensibility, and tactics. We found these categories helpful in thinking about the mechanisms and locus of tempered radicalism and also in sorting White women's experiences. A detailed description of the Bell and Nkomo (1998) research project and dataset can be found in Appendix 1.

Of special significance for our project here is the goal of the Bell and Nkomo (1998) study to fill in the silences in the management literature on Black women's experiences. The study on which this paper draws–"Life Journeys of Black and White Women in Corporate America"–is an effort to make explicit the barriers faced by Black women managers when compared to White women managers. There is a growing body of literature on women in management, yet it has primarily concentrated on the experiences of White women (Bell, Denton, and Nkomo, 1993). Therefore, much less is known about the effects and intersections of race and gender–as well as class–on the status of women in management positions (Bell and Nkomo, 1998). Hence, one goal in gathering the data was to begin to fill this void through the investigation of the life courses and career experiences of Black and White women employed in private sector companies. This dataset is particularly appropriate for investigating tempered radicalism, because it includes responses from women about how they perceive their identities and struggles at work as well as their links to family and community.

From the beginning, then, the question of "whose voices and whose silences" gave impetus to the project. In the pages of management journals, White women's voices had drowned out the voices of women of Color. In the world of literature, Tillie Olsen has mourned this loss of relatively oppressed women's voices:

> *Tillie Olsen's groundbreaking essays of the 1960s and 1970s, published together in* Silences, *mourn the losses to literature that result when a writer's individual life-circumstances deny her the means or opportunity to fully and freely practice her craft. These silences, as Olsen eloquently demonstrates, are legion, and each represents our loss* (Adam, 1994: 130).

At first it seemed surprising that the concept of "tempered radicalism," from the pens of White women, could apply so richly to a range of Black women's life and workplace experiences. The tempered radical paper referred to people with a wide range of identities who were potential or actual tempered radicals; quotations reflected on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and their intersections. But re-reading the paper surfaced new questions about "whose voices."

> EB: *Maureen, both Stella and I are perplexed, and frankly bothered, by how much you and Deb draw upon and claim the histories, experiences, and voices of Black women to build your conceptualization and analysis of tempered radicalism.*

> MS: *I don't really think that's a fair reading of the paper. We draw on our own experiences explicitly in the paper, and we include lots of groups, not just by gender and race, but people who are tempered radicals with respect to sexual orientation or class.*

> SN: *You seemed to be discovering something "new" in that paper, a revelation: White women are tempered radicals. But then I recently read the paper again, and I remember thinking, why are White feminists always appropriating our struggles, our texts, and our history? Don't they have their own? I don't want to come across as pushing territorial boundaries, the point isn't proprietary ownership but drawing on voices of the "other." Your paper also uses gays and lesbians as tempered radicals, taking their stories. I feel like the sentiment evoked in a line from Ntozake Shange's play,* For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enough, *"someone came along and took my stuff."*

> EB: *Why turn to our "sheroes"[2] for tempered radicals? The paper evokes the texts and experiences of bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Pat Hill Collins, Anita Hill, and Barbara Gilkes. You appropriate and valorize Black women's voices and experiences, but the experiences of White women are invisible and not celebrated. This amazes me because you're talking about White women as tempered radicals but you can't find any in your history or mythology.*

> MS: *Wait a minute. Our very first quote, which sets the tone, is from a White woman. But let me see . . . I'm counting. . . . Hmmm. I see what you mean, we do use disproportionately many Black women's voices. But aren't you just turning upside down an old problem? Haven't White feminists been criticized for* not *including Black women? Think of Audre Lorde's famous open letter to Mary Daly for ignoring Black women's icons. Are you setting us up to never get it right?*

> EB: *It's not that you shouldn't include Black women. I'm not saying that, but it's the exclusion of White women that makes it problematic. I think you and Deb really need to think about who you referenced and why. Why our voices? Whose experiences personify tempered radicalism? Where are the voices from White women's history and literature? Why are they missing?*

In the opening section entitled "Who is the Tempered Radical?", Meyerson and Scully (1995: 585) call on the words of Linda Smircich, also a White woman, but then turn readily to the words and examples

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[2] The term "sheroes" is used to make female heroes explicitly gendered as part of their power.

of Black women and men for illustration. The paper uses a number of examples and identities, but draws on Black women's words and experiences more than any other single demographic group and draws heavily from Black feminist writings to articulate the theory. The paper explicitly points out that women of Color in professional positions have articulated most explicitly the tensions of tempered radicalism, in part, because their history is marked by their struggle with multiple and linked injustices. While the use of Black women's voices opened a window for collaboration, it also emerged as an area of tension.

The original crafting of the paper was full of fresh readings of both the theory and data and some humble "ahas" about race. We present below the first set of women's stories that we culled.

A. LOOKING FOR TEMPERED RADICALISM

Based on the women's narratives, we found that the women practice two forms of tempered radicalism: 1) internally oriented tempered radicals channel their efforts toward social change within their work organizations; and 2) externally oriented tempered radicals direct their energy toward working in the community for change. Some high level women are able to meld these modes, persuading their companies to devote money or employee time to community causes. As will be illustrated, the internal and external expressions were different for Black and White women.

1. Black Women: Expressions of tempered radicalism

a. Internal focus

Two women's stories bring the internal struggles of a tempered radical to life.

Patricia Triggs's story. Patricia works as a director level strategist for a Fortune 100 consumer products company. "I play a number of roles in this company. One is helping Black people get ahead and trying to help anybody out of a bad situation in this company. Another role I play is making sure money from this company keeps going into the Black community. Money is allocated to the Black Graduate Consortium. I make sure the Director of the Consortium meets with the Chairman of this company to ensure that there is a relationship between them and us. I make sure we buy tables at fund-raising events for the Black community. The further up I go, the more I will push for these kinds of corporate contributions."

Patricia leverages her advancement into the capacity to make change: "I also play a role in creating policies in this company that will work for the betterment of Black folks even without the White boys realizing what they are doing. I actively work to make things better. When I am asked my opinion, I vocalize it. When I have an opportunity to push for something that is good for Black people in my company, I move right ahead and jump on it. I feel no guilt. I feel very pleased to be able to help fulfill what I consider my obligation as one Black person who has been allowed to slip through the cracks for whatever reasons. I'm the "little Black bitch on 28." I mean, there aren't but so many of us and it helps to know who I am."

She continues, "it also helps being a Black woman and not a Black man. A White man's ignorance doesn't allow him to feel as vulnerable to a Black woman, so he'll let you through the cracks and give

you that promotion, figuring that, "she is never going to hurt me because she can't get my job. She can't outdo me." A White man's perceived sense of confidence remains intact with a Black woman. But their ignorance allows me to out do them every time."

Karen Brown's story. Karen works at a Fortune 100 company as a senior level human resources executive responsible for corporate recruitment, strategic planning, and compensation benefits for all national and international divisions of the company. Recently, her company went through a merger that resulted in downsizing. The company laid off a very successful and well qualified Black man as part of the downsizing effort. A subsequent reorganization in Europe resulted in a White European man being tapped to fill the position the Black man had just held, a position that had supposedly been eliminated. Karen felt strongly that they should not bring the European man to the U.S. for this position and urged Susan, her manager, to talk with a senior manager.

According to Karen, "I said to Susan, 'Absolutely not–the roof is going to come off this building. I can't support it at all.' Two days later, she (Susan) comes back from having her talk with the senior manager. He absolutely has to bring this guy here. I (Karen) said, 'Put him in Finance, put him someplace. I don't care where you put him. Find a job for him outside the company. But do not bring him into this job.' Finally, Susan calls me and says, 'Karen, they're going to announce the filling of the position on Friday.' I thought about it all weekend. On Monday, I called her and I said, 'Susan, I've thought about this. I've tried to work this out with you, but it's not working. I cannot support this move at all, on any level, not only professionally, but I can in no way support it personally.' I told Susan it was very vulnerable for the company. We could have ended up with a lawsuit, and he would have had a very good case."

Karen was balancing her commitment to the company as an insider with her strong sense of injustice over this move. She was also aware of her accountability to the Black community. As she explains, "I told Susan I have to look the Black Professional Association in the face, and I'm going to have to answer the questions in the BPS meeting, not these other people making the decision. It ruins my personal credibility. Susan comes back with, 'Well, I'm going to have to help you work this out.' I said, 'Susan, you know me real well and you know how I think through things. I've thought this out every way possible. I have tried to work it out. I can't work it out. There is nothing that gets me there. You never heard me say that before.'"

Patricia and Karen each appeared to have two goals that reflect more generally the objectives of Black women who try to make change from within: to make the company more receptive to hiring people of color, and once they are on board, to make the quality of work life better for minorities in the company. Women who act as internally oriented tempered radicals are frequently in upper management positions within their companies. They try to use their positions and relationships with people in power to leverage support, broker resources, and influence policies affecting minority employees as well as the African American community more generally. In doing so, even internally focused women build bridges between the affluent corporate community and the African American communities that are struggling for survival.

b. External focus

The internal focus, using membership within a traditional system to forward both internal and external goals, is closer to the original formulation of tempered radicalism. The data revealed a more explicitly

external focus, which has less to do with enabling advancement and reaping increasingly more power to leverage corporate resources; it is explicitly community-focused and perhaps less vulnerable to being deferred until later in a career.

Julia Smith's story. Julia is an executive level manager in a Fortune 100 company within the financial industry and the highest ranking Black woman in the company. Julia serves on the Board of the Studio Museum, a premier showcase for African American art. She believes that serving on the Board fits into what she likes to do. She said, "I've always enjoyed art, and I've never been particularly talented enough to do anything with the creative side. But certainly bringing a business sense to a museum that is situated in our community is important today. Our kids in New York don't have a whole lot else."

While serving on boards of cultural institutions has been a long-standing and even conservative pathway to the elite (Ostrower, 1995), what distinguishes women like Julia as tempered radicals is the political and social agenda that shapes their choice of how, why, and where to give their service. Many of the Black women interviewed for the study lend their expertise to organizations with limited human resources and little technological savvy. They also bring to the non-profit their affiliation with a prestigious corporation and sometimes the capacity to contribute services for a limited number of company hours.

Shawn White's story. Shawn worked in the entertainment industry and had recently become the president of a small spin-off company that is owned by the parent company where she began her career. Shawn recognizes her responsibility in trying to improve the destructive dynamics that exist within Black communities. As she describes her concerns, "Until Black people are educated, about our history and traditions, until we start reducing inequality, our own children will be on the outside; . . . we will never gain the economic power and social strength to move ahead."

Shawn is very specific in expressing how she will contribute and how she links the personal and the political, "The only way that I can really help other people is to make myself as strong as I possibly can. The reason you make yourself as strong as possible is not to depend on other people economically, because if you do, you will constantly be at their mercy. I have no intention of being at anyone's mercy. So in order for me to give back to the community, I have to be as strong as I possibly can. I see myself funding a school, getting my friends together, forming a network of people that not only raise money but who directly finance the operation of the school. We pay a teacher $60,000 to educate ten Black kids. We start from there, start with a teeny weenie base and expand from there."

Shawn has a clear agenda, though, like many tempered radicals, she may have to defer her radical objectives until later. However, because she so clearly articulates her agenda, she is less likely to let it disappear as she advances. This distinction seemed like it might be a fruitful difference between Black and White women's expressions.

The data suggested that even those women who did not feel they had the power to advocate within the company for racial justice found ways to channel their commitment to service at the grassroots level. Some targeted their involvement to meet a specific need that they felt was particularly troublesome, such as programs for inner city youth or senior citizens. Much of this work is done during weekends and nights, particularly for women in lower to middle managerial positions such as Eliza, who may have less capacity to redirect the corporation's resources; she nonetheless links her project to the work world inasmuch as it enhances young people's career aspirations.

Eliza Washington's story. Eliza spends every Saturday morning and Thursday night at church counseling a youth group. "I'm really involved in that, and it takes a lot of planning. When I stopped doing it for about two years, I missed the kids. Some of them now have started working, and they come back. They take me to dinner and say neat little things that you introduced them to years ago. You say what you can say, you reach who you can reach. You get comfortable with the idea that my job is to plant the seed and God will do the growing."

These women talked about their own fortune in making it through the cracks of White power, and their responsibility to provide opportunities for others who were less fortunate.

2. *Tempered radicalism as an identity*

Another thing struck us about the Black women's narratives. If you asked these women if they saw themselves as tempered radicals, they would probably say "no." They would tell you that caring about other people, having a social obligation, having a racial obligation, and speaking out against injustice are just parts of everyday life.

Jane Moore's story. Jane is Vice President in a major Fortune 100 company. In charge of domestic marketing, she has a lot of power and authority. When asked, "Do you see a role for yourself in the Black community?" she responds with an intonation of slight sarcasm, "that seems a little too highfalutin to me!" She continues, "I can see doing a little bit of what I can when I can, taking two weeks once a year to teach and be a mentor at a Black college, talking with educators, working with One Hundred Black Women, things like that I can do when I can. I try to help as much as I can."

Jane Moore would not call herself a tempered radical. It is notable that Meyerson and Scully, the two White women who named "tempered radicalism," experienced and conceptualized the stance as a significant, challenging, tenuous, and relatively special phenomenon. Perhaps this depiction developed because its occurrence is indeed rare and difficult to sustain for White women. When looking more closely at the words of Black women, tempered radicalism does not appear like a striking and noteworthy identity. It is part of their long history and everyday experience, so taken-for-granted that it does not merit a "highfalutin" name. Even as Black women describe the artful ways in which they work from inside the system, it is not so much a strategy over which they agonize as a natural mode.

As we will discuss later, the choice not to be a tempered radical is not so available to Black women. However, the choice not to be a tempered radical is apparent when looking at the White women in this study, bringing with it both the luxuries and burdens of choice.

3. *White women: Where are the tempered radicals?*

a. Internal focus

White women's stories about internal engagement are less directly about the action they take than about trying to make sense of the injustice–and whether it really is such–in the first place.

Jean Hofbrau's story. Jean holds a senior level management position in the cosmetics industry. Her company has brought in a "diversity" consultant. Jean got involved in a Diversity Task Force as part of a broader corporate effort and because the related training programs fit with her job responsibilities. When asked if she sees a role for herself in improving race relations, she jumped in with, "I'm working right now on sort of an executive committee of the task force on managing diversity." She goes on to explain her vision for this work, "My aim is to bring to life for employees an appreciation of diversity that goes beyond race, color, sex–a diversity of approaches, a diversity of right brain/left brain, operational/creating, nurturing/managing, leading/following." She looks forward to this work: "It will be a very interactive and fun sort of thing, too, because I think that what makes a corporation strong is a diversity of skills and talents and approaches to problems that cuts across any kind of color or sex. I think it's going to be very exciting, because it's really taking the whole idea of diversity to a much higher place."

Jean has experienced sexist treatment in her corporation that might give her grounds for anger. She tells the following story. On more than one occasion, she remembers being told "not to use my hands when I speak." She tells of a time when she was confronted in a demeaning way. "I remember going into a meeting with a senior level White male. Two of my assistants were also in the meeting. We had met to discuss a pretty significant problem that would require action. We were in discussion, and I was animatedly describing a solution to a problem that he had presented. I was using my hands as I spoke. He went over to the drapes on the window and removed the tie-back. He came over to me and tied my hands together. Then he said, 'Jean, let's see if you can talk now.' I was a senior officer and my subordinates working with me were in that room. So how I reacted was affected by that. I didn't want to embarrass him for being so dumb. I immediately locked my jaw and pretended that I wasn't able to pronounce my words with my hands tied together in order for everyone to laugh. I rather they laugh at me, because I didn't really [want them to] laugh at him, since he was actually the one making the mistake. I wanted to protect him for that."

Instead of reacting with rage to this inappropriate humiliation–so resonant of rape and tying women up and silencing them–she tries to lighten the situation and protect the senior man. Later, we address this particular loyalty of White women to the patriarchy; we kept coming back to this story with deeper readings.

In the preceding passages, Black women appealed to the deep roots of the problem in society. Jean defines her vision as "higher," soaring above the painful landscape of racism, sexism, and oppression. She focuses on diversity in cognitive style. While interesting, it neutralizes the deeper culturally and historically laden dimensions of diversity like race and gender.

In other examples of their role in race relations, White women sometimes describe how they counter racist and sexist jokes.

Linda Butler's story. Linda holds a position as a vice president in a large utility company. She confesses that she doesn't expect "that I will ever take an active role, but I do feel that I don't like to see people discriminated against. While I sometimes don't jump down somebody's throat for making an ethnic remark, I do let them know that I don't

appreciate it. I think it's a put-down. So while I'm not going to go out and march for civil rights or anything, I think that in my own rather quiet way I let people know where I stand. . . . I don't know whether or not they respect me for it or not. I don't really care."

Going through the White women's stories in this order begs comparisons to the Black women's stories. Quiet, behind-the-scenes tempered radicalism is one mode of expression, anchoring one end of a much bigger continuum of types of tempered radicalism. Linda accepts some minimum of risk. Her disclaimer about "not marching for civil rights" suggests a more personal and local concern about issues. It contrasts with Karen Brown's concern with the careers of others and Patricia Triggs's concern with making policy changes. Linda's mode is reactive and personal.   In another example, a White woman does tackle hiring policies, but returns to an individualistic approach in her frustration over the stubbornness of cultural change.

> **Joanna Killer's story.** Joanna is a middle level manager in an international financial services company. "I was interviewing undergraduates, recruiting them. And I don't know if it was planned, but I think I had every minority applicant on my roster. I had many Black undergraduates that I was interviewing. I could tell from their resumes they were Black if they were involved in the African American Cultural Society of various groups they had worked with. I remember feeling very frustrated in that, out of all of them, I could only get one person back to the company for an interview. I thought some of it was just cultural bias. I thought the people I interviewed had a lot of good qualities, but they just weren't as 'prepped,' in, you know, [the company's] kind of a preppie culture. I remember discussing this with a recruiter and saying, for my area I could take these people, but they were going into another area. So that was the frustration. I kind of argued with the recruiter and didn't kind of get beyond that."
>
> She goes on to wrestle with the complex question of "fit" and whether to change the individual or the company. "I also knew they weren't going to fit into the company's culture. Actually my impulse at that time was that I wanted a half an hour with these people to coach them, you know, to get them into the company's culture, because I thought I'd have more success in changing the individual than in changing the whole culture. Part of the challenge I'm looking at now is trying to affect at least a small piece of the culture."

Her approach exemplifies the tempered radical's search for "small wins." At the same time, it highlights a concern from the tempered radical paper that small wins, instead of aggregating toward greater social change, can become ends in themselves. The change agenda is too tempered.

b.   External focus

Joanna Keller was also the only example in the dataset of White women's externally focused tempered radicalism. She talks about being a lesbian and belonging to a professional network for gays. Her involvement is both personal, political, and professional at once.

> *I'm involved in a variety of gay rights groups. I'm president of a professional network for gays. . . . It's a confidential group, obviously, so that people will join. They take a confidentiality oath that they won't say who else is in the membership,*

because not everybody is "out" in the open. Particularly, I think, out of a group of about 250, there are like 5 people who are "out" in their jobs.

The above story stands as a notable exception among the White women. The majority of the White women who participated in externally oriented programs did not speak of their involvement in terms of a collective identity or a cause. Most viewed community involvement as a "civic duty" or extracurricular activity, rather than a moral obligation to raise the prospects of an entire community or challenge an oppressive social system.

That Joanna speaks differently of her involvement may have much to do with her being a lesbian. Her sexual orientation may heighten her experience and understanding of discrimination. We will discuss more fully the sources of her tempered radicalism and the importance of her as an exception for understanding possible sources of tempered radicalism for White women that break the silence.

B. SUMMING UP: OUR INTERPRETATION THUS FAR

The first draft posed the central contrast between Black and White women that emerged from the women's stories in the dataset– Black women enacted tempered radicalism and White women did not. We described this contrast as follows.

Black women interviewees express tempered radicalism in the cool and calculated means by which they channel their commitment and focus their intent to make a positive difference by uplifting the Black community. They are committed in ideals and action to the struggle to eliminate oppression, but tempered by working within the confines of the corporate world, which is not accustomed to the emotional expression of frustration. Most of them have proven they know how to play by the rules of the game to get ahead in their companies. In doing so, they have learned ways of tempering their anger.

They are radicals simply by their presence as minority women in the corporate world, insofar as they represent a contradiction to the status quo and the canonical White male manager. Also, they are radical in the sense of generating a new vision of what it means to be "race women":

A race man refers to any person who has a reputation as an uncompromising fighter against attempts to subordinate Negroes. The race woman is sometimes described as forceful, outspoken, fearless, a great advocate of race pride, devoted to the race, and one who studies the conditions of the people (Drake and Cayton, 1993: 394).

We looked for parallel evidence of White women's tempered radicalism on race and gender injustices, but found few examples in these data. While White women might have concerns that would make them tempered radicals, they do not express nearly the same degree of anger or frustration about sexism in the workplace as the Black women do about racism and its intersections with sexism. They wrestle with how to play along and do not rock the boat. Even in their modest moves like not laughing at a sexist joke, they are cautious and concerned about career implications. White women do not have a discourse about righting injustice in society that underlies talk about pragmatic moves at work.

While the central point of our first draft was this striking contrast, the first draft also contained the rudiments of Figure 1. We had begun to speculate that tempered radicalism might not be so polar in its nature and enactment. As good social science practice, it always helps to look at the "off diagonal" cells. So we asked: What about Black women who are not tempered radicals, and what about White women who are tempered radicals? What forces might influence or inhibit tempered radicalism for each group? Including these as at least conceptual possibilities to look for and understand, we generated the four cells of Figure 1. Our next move would be to flush out the factors in these cells, to understand why Black women did tend to enact tempered radicalism and why White women tended not to.

This summary and analysis to this point gave us the stimulus materials for our next meeting as a foursome. Deb, who had been in on the conversations, would be joining us for the first time. We each had time to reflect on the draft. We figured we would assign each of us to write up some of the factors to flesh out Figure 1 and complete our analysis, but it turned out we were jumping the gun. There was more work to be done.

Figure 1
Sources of Tempered Radicalism: Influences and Inhibitors for Black and White Women

RACE		
	Black Women	**White Women**
Influences that Promote Tempered Radicalism	*Many Cases:* Sense of injustice Collectivism & giving back High biculturalism	*Few Cases:* Experiences of being "other" Collective action opportunities Multicultural social identities
Inhibitors that Diminish Tempered Radicalism	*Few Cases:* Flat racial identity Isolation Low biculturalism Over-armoring	*Many Cases:* Faith in meritocracy Individualism Monoculturalism Seductions of membership

IV.   THE FIRST FULL GATHERING

Just prior to a meeting of all four of us at the 1997 Academy of Management annual meeting in Boston, Deb and Maureen had a chance to chat.

DM: *Maureen, I have some real issues with the draft, especially the sweeping conclusion that White women are not tempered radicals. Where are you in this paper?*

MS: *That's what the data said to me. I'm not happy to see that White women don't take up the banner. But that's how it looks to me. I think White women have to take a serious look at themselves. We let ourselves and each other down. The 2X2 Figure leaves an open space for White women who speak up, but we don't have straight White women in there.*

DM: *Well, tonight should be interesting. I'm not happy coming in with the role of outsider and critic. My first instinct is to go along with these conclusions because I assume that they, as Black women, have a deeper understanding of race and oppression than we do. My knee jerk reaction is to defer to them. But we have thought about this and studied this for years. I do have voice here, and I don't think it is OK simply to defer here. I'll listen, but I don't agree with these conclusions. I barely know Ella and have only met Stella once or twice. I just don't understand how you got to this position, Maureen.*

MS: *Well, it is interesting, don't you think, that our paper relies so heavily on the voices of Black women. It's some homework we could do, maybe find the White women feminists historically, even if we don't see them around us today. And as for the group, you're fully part of this project, you know.*

That evening:

DM: *I read the draft of the paper you three drafted last month and I have some concerns. I don't agree with the conclusion that White women are silent about injustice, that White women aren't tempered radicals. We were the ones who conceptualized the tempered radicals. We're White women. And we know a lot of other White women who have acted and we based our claims on extensive interviews and observations of White women, as well as women of Color. Maureen, where are you on this? How can you say that White women don't behave as tempered radicals?*

MS: *I read the data this way. It's not that I'm "caving." I think that White women are silent in comparison to Black women. For myself, I guess I'm feeling that I haven't been as radical in my work as I could be. Which is not to say that I exactly "fit" in my organization either.*

DM: *Are there ways to go about it, to make it work there?*

EB (standing up, yelling): *Who are you Meyerson? Where have you been in all of this that she has been through? How dare you tell her she should do more. Why haven't you been doing more for her? And, who the hell are you to come in and challenge our data? You cannot tell me what is in my data; the White women are silent!*

DM (in tears, but firm): *If you want me to play the role of bad White women or if you want me to represent all the White women who have let you down in different ways, I won't do that. I knew I was going to come into this group representing all the White women who have not stood up, who have let you down. I was terrified to enter this room, afraid that there would be room for only one good White woman in this party– that the only way for me to be OK was to go along and silence my own views. I won't do that. I'm not going to play the role you've put me in; you've got me wrong. I'm fine pulling out of this if that's the role you want me to play.*

EB: *I don't know you that well, but you are certainly carrying the voice of White women in this room right now. And don't you tell me what's in our data.*

DM: *But I have seen my data. I've done lots of interviews. And the White women are not completely silent in my data.*

EB: *But we are not using your data; we are using ours. And Maureen has also seen these data. And, I'm telling you the White women are silent on injustice.*

MS: *Deb, I get the sense that you feel like I'm a race traitor. That I've switched my views.*

EB: *Maureen, what are you talking about? How can you say this after you have seen the data? This is not the time to sit on the fence.*

DM: *I just see it differently. I think we should look at the silence you found among White women and unpack it. What looks like silence may not be silence. It may be a different way of acting. We should at least look more closely at the silence and try to understand what it is, why it is, and why we may see it so differently*

MS: *It does seem to me to be silence. But we could unpack it and try to look more closely at what it is.*

We took a walk to cool down and reflect on what just happened. More was at stake than theory, data, and social science. It was our craft, but also our identities and years of culture and history. Stella surfaced the friendship dynamics and deep echoes of belonging and rejection, and we had a collective "aha" moment.

SN: *This happens all the time. Black girls are always abandoned by their White "friends" once their real friend–"another White girl"–comes along and asks, "Will you play with me?" I remember this all the time when we played as children. Ella lost it because she perceived Deb's question to Maureen as a tug of war–who was Maureen going to side with? Would Maureen abandon us? There's a lot of baggage here that has little to do with you, Deb.*

DM: *But I feel like Ella was accusing me of not supporting Maureen in her career. I am astounded because I saw myself as encouraging Maureen, that I had been supportive of her. I'm not comfortable going forward.*

EB: *Deb, I'm not asking you to pull out. But I don't appreciate the position you're putting Maureen in and how you've come into this "all knowing." You accused Maureen of selling out the White women. Do you think we put some kind of spell on her? I'm not asking you to leave. But we are going to have to struggle through this.*

We had sketched some of the factors that would make Black women more likely and White women less likely to engage in tempered radicalism. These were the sources–influences or inhibitors–of tempered radicalism that filled in the cells of Figure 1. At this point, we agreed to play them out more fully, trying to fill in the cell on White women's sources of tempered radicalism and give this possibility an open reading.

As an aside, we eventually came to reconsider the very silence itself. But for now, we were reconsidering the factors that explained White women's silence and sometimes overcame it, rather than revisiting whether silence was the precise problem for which to be seeking sources.

The contrasting portraits suggested by our first reading of the data pivoted on the asymmetry between Black and White women. In our next rewriting, we explored the nature and sources of this difference. Workplace systems put strong inhibitors on all employees against being tempered radicals. Why is it that Black women by and large can, and almost instinctively do, persist in their advocacy and resistance? Why is it that White women apparently succumb to conformity pressures? In this section, we discuss the influences and inhibitors, again weaving in explanations and examples from the data.

A. INFLUENCES ON BLACK WOMEN'S TEMPERED RADICALISM

At the root of Black women's tempered radicalism is a sense of injustice. Black women see inequities and do not resort to denying or softening them. Why is this the case? Black women were raised up in a culture of resistance that has its genesis in the subordinate status of the African-American community brought on by racism, classism, and sexism. Subordinate groups have consistently struggled to find ways to resist and fight systems of oppression to overcome dominance. Historically, Black women in particular were encouraged and prepared to resist, wherever possible, the constraints the larger society sought to impose on them (Shaw, 1996: 38).

The culture of resistance was a powerful imprint on the women's identities. Collins (1990) broadly defines the characteristics of the culture of resistance as a legacy of struggle for family and community, an ethic of caring, self-definition, an oral tradition, and a dialectic of oppression and activism. While parents were the main socialization agents in preparing their daughters to cope and benefit from the culture of resistance, there were other forces too. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, "Black institutions of higher learning . . . stressed the development of Black and female leaders who would return to their communities and serve as successful examples of the 'bootstrap' philosophy while working to provide similar opportunities for others" (Shaw, 1996: 35). Higher education institutions reinforced the idea of social responsibility.

At the very heart of the culture of resistance was the women's homeland–the way of life within the Black community. Teachers, neighbors, shopkeepers, and ministers are the people of the homeland. Black women's families joined with people in their homelands and gave them unconditional love,

armored them to go out to do their best in the White world, encouraged them to be achievement oriented, and told them stories of their people's painful struggles to achieve racial equality. A resounding theme through the Black women's narratives was that they were expected to use their talents, skills, and education in order to give back to their homelands, especially to those who were less fortunate. It was an educated Black woman's duty, regardless of her social position in the community, to honor these "practices of commitment," which are "patterns of loyalty and obligation that keep the community alive" (Bellah et al., 1985: 154).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Black women in our sample have a strong sense of injustice. Discounting injustices is a very individualistic approach. The Black women in this study frequently cite their deep inter-connectedness with their communities of origin–their homeland–and their nested circles of community inside and outside the corporation. The shared historical experiences of Blacks as a group in the United States and their ability to relate readily to others' plights enables them to see–and thereby want to tackle–structural sources of inequality. Retaining a collective identity keeps Black women connected even as they ascend the corporation in what might otherwise become an individualistic quest for mobility. Their personal mobility is experienced as part of the mobility of their whole group. The adage that "you lift as you climb" is very salient to the Black women managers. Julia Smith talked about the importance of "giving back," deeply rooted in her family legacy.

> *I spend time away from my job doing volunteer work in the community. That's really motivated, essentially, by the fact that my family has always–at least for the last two generations that I know of–been involved in the community. My mother and dad were models of people who always said, "You've got to give something back. You cannot be content just to rest on your laurels." My grandmother and grandfather, as a matter of survival and support and sort of deep religious conviction, always gave something back to the community. Their need to contribute is motivated very much by an understanding of racial dynamics in the United States, the fact that Black folks are only as strong as their weakest link. It is this belief that has generated a family tradition.*

Julia explained with pride that, on holidays, her grandfather provided small bonuses for his workers and made sure that each of their families received a ham, which made him one of the most respected Black men in the county.

This constellation of factors from their Black cultural context intersects with their jobs in the White world of work. Bell (1990) calls the process by which a Black woman culturally compartmentalizes the two worlds "bicultural life structuring." Black women with bicultural life structures build dynamic and fluid life structures that enable them to move back and forth between the Black and White cultural contexts in their lives. Often this process is intentionally chosen by a woman. Such a life structure permits a woman to hold on to her African American rootedness without being totally assimilated into White society. While there are similarities between the two cultural contexts, there is also a world of difference. Each cultural context was developed by vastly different socio-historical conditions that contribute to each one having its own set of social requirements, values, and behavior patterns that make demands on the women. Having a bicultural life structure can be a source of empowerment. It

enables a woman to draw on resources, traditions, and belief systems from multiple cultural contexts, thereby giving her a

sense of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual wholeness. Biculturalism also gives Black women suppleness at dealing with duality that is a hallmark of tempered radicalism.

Several of the Black women who construe their lives biculturally perceive the White world as a hostile, unsupportive, and emotionally taxing environment. As a result, they talked about being on guard in their interactions with White people. As Karen Brown explained:

> *When I am around White people, I am a lot more aware and alert about everything that is going on around me. I mean, my antennas are coming out of the back of my head, out of my ears, out of my feet. But when I am around my people, in my community, my antennas are relaxed. It takes so goddamn much energy away to survive and make it through this stuff. The White people I work with will try to swallow you up if you let them. They really don't give a shit about you, in their eyes you are not worth anything. It's hostile–the White world treats me with hostility and indifference.*

Their biculturalism fosters the women's tempered radicalism, because they remain committed and identified with their communities and the issues and struggles against injustice. When they are treated as outsiders, they tend to make social and structural attributions for their exclusion, rather than personal. Their rage against the hostility they encounter means they do not have the luxury of ignoring inequality. At the same time, their ability to develop strategies for working in White-dominated organizations poises them to work for justice in their work lives. They can become the savvy insiders who enact tempered radicalism.

B. OBSTACLES TO BLACK WOMEN'S TEMPERED RADICALISM

While there was a strong tendency, nurtured by many influences, for Black women to be tempered radicals, there could also be obstacles. Even as we explore inter-group differences, it is important to keep the intra-group portrait sufficiently nuanced that we can see and learn from the exceptions.

A flat racial identity can be an inhibitor to Black women's tempered radicalism. In his model of Black racial identity development, Cross (1991: 190) explains that Blacks who have less salient racial identities "do not deny being Black but the 'physical' fact is thought to play an insignificant role in their everyday lives." According to Cross (1991), this low salience has two main behavioral manifestations. One manifestation is a predisposition to accept a blame-the-victim analysis and to focus on ways to assimilate into the system. Consequently, Black women with a low racial identity are less likely to oppose the system. They would be less attuned to issues of discrimination and oppression. Workplace inequities would be attributed to a lack of initiative, motivation and other personal factors rather than to injustice. The second manifestation is a lack of identification with the plight of the broader Black community. Unlike the Black women who felt a deep interconnectedness and sense of responsibility for uplifting the race, Black women with a flat racial identity would not identify with this role.

Within the context of their families and communities, Black girls learn to armor themselves against racism and negative stereotypes. The elements of armoring include being vigilant for racism, not being provoked into reactions, not letting one's guard down, finding positive expressions of identity in role models, and developing courage (Bell and Nkomo, 1998). Some women may deal with the assaults of racism by "over-armoring." Their acquired vigilance keeps them from fully engaging in multi-racial settings to buffer themselves from likely insults. Without some degree of engagement, they do not develop the insider strategies of tempered radicals.

While Karen Brown expresses above how taxing it is to shift gears to operate in the White world, she nonetheless engages this biculturalism and spans two worlds. In contrast, some women may find the process so taxing that they do not develop bicultural life structures. Without dual citizenship in these two worlds, they do not fit the profile of tempered radicals. In these three related instances–isolation, over-armoring, and low biculturalism–the women may either retreat from the battles of the civil rights movement or find their own political means of involvement in the civil rights movement outside the workplace.

A silence in this part of the explanatory framework is that this would be the cell in Figure 1 that would theoretically contain Black women's "selling out," a possibility that did not appear in the dataset nor was it broached in our conversations. Later, we see that this potential parallel to White women's "selling out" or collusion is not a symmetric possibility, because Black women are not invited into the opportunity structure in the same way in the first place. The few Black women who are not tempered radicals are in lower positions and more beleaguered about what to do, while almost all the upper level Black women engage the passions and possibilities of tempered radicalism. Our interpretation of Black women's silence is gentle, recognizing the heavy burdens of oppression and the limited possible responses. Our interpretation of White women's silences, which follows, is more critical. At this point in our reading, we were engaging the idea that White women had the chance to do more, so their silence seemed deafening and their failure to act was a lost opportunity for beneficial social change. Our analysis expresses disappointment with White women.

C. OBSTACLES TO WHITE WOMEN'S TEMPERED RADICALISM

A number of overlapping factors conspire to inhibit White women from acting as tempered radicals on issues related to race and gender injustices and, even more fundamentally, from developing the consciousness that would make salient these systemic injustices. Two of these inhibitors, meritocratic ideology and a culture of individualism, are difficult to separate; we discuss them together. Later, our group came to "the seduction of membership" (Hurtado, 1989) as a focal idea, but not yet in this rendering.

The meritocratic ideal in the United States promises that people who contribute effort and ability will be rewarded with advancement and income. References to "the land of opportunity" abound, brought to life by images of employees who rise from the shop floor to the management suite. To the extent that people believe there is plenty of opportunity, they approach the workplace as the site of individualistic competition to get ahead (e.g., Scully, 1996).

The corollary to the belief in meritocracy is the idea that people who do not get ahead have only themselves to blame for displaying inadequate effort and ability. Middle and upper level White women readily collude in individual attributions and blame themselves for not fitting in or for being deficient in some requisite skill set (e.g., Martin and Meyerson, 1998). Reinforced by the ethic of individualism, the widespread meritocratic promise makes it more difficult for employees, especially privileged employees, to see systematic obstacles to opportunity, which results in "blaming the victim" (Ryan, 1971). A persistent vocalization of racism involves White people ascribing Black people's slower economic advancement to individual traits rather than to structural factors (Steele, 1992).

As long as the workplace is perceived as a fair game, there is less of a driving urge to make changes. The quest becomes how to play the game artfully and credibly, rather than how to contest the game. From this position, the self rather than the system becomes the target of change (Della Fave, 1980; Kolb and Meyerson, 1999; Scully, 1996). It is tempting for White women to believe in meritocracy and to follow the individualist course that this ideal prescribes. The mentality of "I'll show them" is based on the belief, and hope, that talent will triumph in the end and that hard work will ultimately be recognized and rewarded. As cases of individual White women advancing to the top are made salient, the promise appears to be born out, even if, as Kanter (1977) long ago observed, women at the top can block as much as enable other women's advancement.

The White women in the sample were raised to embrace meritocratic opportunities. Jean Hofbrau explains how clear this message was for her in her family.

> *I was brought up with a spirit that there was nothing I couldn't accomplish, that I had all the qualities I needed if I were willing to work hard. There was nothing I lacked. My job was to understand that I was capable. I might need to work. I might need to focus, but the capability was there. I was expected to make it!*

Her upper middle class upbringing provided her with the resources and cultural capital that would bolster her success. However, these structural sources of privilege were not central in her story. She focuses on the importance of talent and hard work, traits that will ultimately enable her to attribute her success as much to herself as to her structural privilege. Even when Jean does allow that privilege has something to do with success, she continues to emphasize hard work as the crucial factor. To push against the systemic injustices of corporate life as a tempered radical, Jean might have to look at privilege in a way that would be uncomfortable for her story of herself.

Interestingly, several Black women in the sample also describe an upbringing that exhorted success in the meritocracy, but with a subtly different spin. Whitney Hamilton describes how: "My parents gave me the feeling that I could do whatever I wanted in the world, as long as I put forth the effort." Her family summer vacations followed the U.S. Open, where her father was one of the few Black men to play, and were "his way of showing his children there were no limits." These utterances might well come from true believers in meritocracy. However, the spin was that this achievement for Black daughters would be a radical challenge to society's racist restrictions, almost daring the system to hold them back. Black women's advancement shakes up, rather than confirms, the cherished meritocracy.

They approach the meritocracy by simultaneously getting on board and critiquing it. This approach is more likely to undergird

tempered radicalism than the approach of White women who were raised only to get on board, without a dose of skepticism about the veracity of meritocratic promises.

D. INFLUENCES ON WHITE WOMEN'S TEMPERED RADICALISM

The experience of being "other" on some dimension might awaken White women's tempered radicalism. The discussion so far has focused on race as the primary axis, but there are multiple intersections among other dimensions of social identity, such as class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Dual cultural citizenship and an understanding of oppression can arise from many of these layers of identity. A White tempered radical, Joanna Keller moves between a heterosexist professional world and a gay personal world, trying to build bridges between the two through the gay professional network to which she belongs.

She can speak to the caution her gay identity requires and the risks of being "out" in a homophobic society. At the same time, she can speak to her White privilege, perhaps more clearly than most White women because her gay identity lets her see the interplay of disadvantage and privilege (McIntosh, 1988). She answered richly an interview question about what she cherishes about being a White woman, including a frank acknowledgment of privilege. This question stymied the other White women.

> I think I like having the fact that my race isn't an issue. Most places that I go, it's not something I need to worry about, you know, getting racial slurs or anything like that. I guess also–and in essence if one is looking at the power structure–having access to White men, having race not be an issue in those relationships.

She also speaks to the emptiness that comes from Whites' lack of collectivism. What bothers her about being White is:
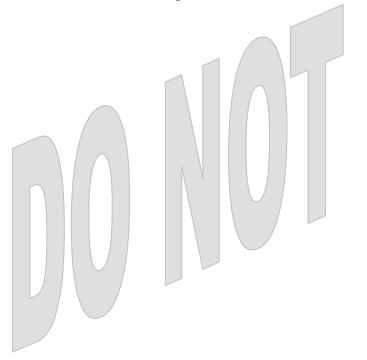
> I don't really feel any sort of community being White. I don't have any ethnic tie in my background, so there's no kind of ethnic community. And I really kind of wonder what my life would've been like if I wasn't gay, because I think there's a real strong gay community. But otherwise, I would view myself as being very empty. I guess in some ways, I don't know what it would be like not to be part of some sort of minority group.

This passage reveals the importance of her bicultural stance–as a gay woman in a heterosexist culture– for her conscious way of being a tempered radical in her organization.

Another source of tempered radicalism might be participation in a collective experience, such as belonging to a women's group at work. Women's caucuses in the workplace, often dominated by White women, offer opportunities for women to share stories about common situations and sometimes shift their attributions from individual to systemic causes of inequality (Scully and Segal, 1996). "So it's not just me," is a common refrain. These gatherings are good examples of what McAdam (1988: 134-

135) has defined as a micro-mobilization context–"a small group setting in which processes of attribution are combined with rudimentary forms of organization to produce mobilization for collective action." White women's participation in these groups can lead from them from being skeptical about women's "whining" about injustice to their own "flowering feminism" (Segal, 1996). While collective experience can be a source of tempered radicalism, it is still a fairly limited occurrence. One of the puzzles of the social movement literature is that mobilization experience begets further mobilization; the first moment or experience of mobilization, which sets collective engagement in motion, can be a rather idiosyncratic or chance factor. Thus, while a collective experience is a promising source of tempered radicalism, it is not a panacea as an explanation.

Having an "other" social identity or an experience of collective participation are possible influences on White women's tempered radicalism, but not entirely satisfying as explanatory influences. As stories, they left Deb and Maureen continuing to puzzle, because neither quite explained how our own personal experiences led us to shape and name the idea of tempered radicalism; our class and ethnic identities did not hold easy answers either. Ella and Stella continued to wonder where the White women "sheroes" were. Thus, while our shared understanding of tempered radicalism was enhanced by playing out its influences and inhibitors to this point, it was clear that the conversation was not finished.

The above set of factors was honed over a few months. We agreed to meet again to discuss the paper, in the spring of 1998. Our jumping off point was whether we had done a good job in explaining why Black women enact tempered radicalism and White women do not. But our conversation re-routed the journey. We began to ask whether the apparent silence of White women really represented collusion and a failure of tempered radicalism.

> DM: *I still don't agree with the punchline of this paper and am uneasy about the tone. It sounds like being gay or "other" or in a group is the only thing going on that pushes White women to speak up. Maureen, we developed these ideas out of our own experiences as White women who felt completely alien in the business school. It was our sense of misalignment in that environment and then our desire to do something that enacts our deviant politics that defined our experience.*

> EB: *The Black women in our study would not frame it as misalignment. To feel some type of misalignment, you have to feel like you can fit in the first place–there is some basis upon which to align. The Black women felt like house guests in their corporations . . . like visitors, often times uninvited ones. So for them social change is rooted in a different phenomenon, from a different place. Maybe this point needs to be made one more time. The White women felt that it might at least be possible for them to be welcomed members in their companies.*

> SN: *Black women are not fooling themselves to believe they can become part of the "club." Black women know for certain it's not going to happen. We know we are visitors and that the visit can be cut short very quickly.*

> DM: *I see what you are saying and I see the difference. But what are we trying to do in this paper? Let's step back. Is our purpose to shame White women? I'm not sure what good that will do. Or are we trying to explain what we see and perhaps raise the consciousness of White women?*

> MS: *Shame may not be bad as a stage in developing consciousness. Maybe shame is a strong word for saying that White women need to look at their privilege. It gives them–gives us–a lot of political capital to use. Why not be humble with respect to what we can learn, particularly from Black women's experiences? Why do we have to be defensive on behalf of White women?*

> DM: *Here's an example of a White woman doing something. I have a White woman in my dataset who describes how she managed to put 30 percent of the women in her department onto a flexible schedule. This was not sanctioned by company policy and she did not do this with an eye toward radical change and she probably would not call herself a change agent. Yet, I would call this tempered radicalism. She has in fact planted the seeds of change. I think what we do by calling a behavior like this "tempered radicalism" is provide a political grounding for these actions; we provide a bigger picture of how her small acts to do what she feels is appropriate are also acts of resistance. The political context of actions may not be as obvious to White women and they therefore may be reluctant to think of themselves as tempered radicals. This goes back to the individualism.*

EB: *Wait a minute! With all this talk around slavery and racism it occurs to me we used the term "tempered radicalism" in a different context. Acts of tempered radicalism for us were when a Black woman or a White woman took up the baton against race or sex discrimination in their organizations. We were not looking at other types of change. Who took on the cause? Who took the charge of making organizations more equitable? That's how we used it in conjunction with our data. Then that makes a big difference. It doesn't surprise me that White women were not in the forefront of advocating for racial equity.*

SN: *Perhaps we are getting stuck because we're conceptualizing it as a dichotomy—either you are a tempered radical or not a tempered radical. Perhaps it is a continuum? Isn't our paper positioning the women in relation to one another. White women's tempered radicalism pales in comparison to that of Black Women. Is that the gist of this paper?*

DM: *No. It may be that the oppression Black women experience is obviously political while White women experience oppression in this depoliticized, individualized way. So, it may be that the Black women's oppression fuels explicit resistance, while White women's oppression may quell their resistance, or at best force it to be more tempered, behind the scenes and invisible.*

MS: *That does take us back to the original idea of tempered radicalism. One of the messages of the paper is that it hurts women who are trying to make a difference when people think they're doing nothing. But the very nature of behind-the-scenes work is that it will tend to be invisible. And sometimes it has to be invisible to be effective, not to rock the boat too hard or generate backlash. Even still, it's all the harder to tell when invisible means savvy change agents and when invisible means doing anything. If we praise the invisible, do we give White women credit for more moral courage than they're exercising?*

SN: *We really do need to frame this around Aida Hurtado's argument—White women are subordinated by "seduction" and Black women through "rejection" (Hurtado, 1989). I think it gives women different voices or no voice. In our data the Black women were really outspoken about being on the edge, on the margins and how they might as well speak up. Why "sell out," in the words of one woman in our study, and end up "sold down the river?" They used slave language and metaphors. I always remember the famous quote in Hurtado's paper about an old Black woman by the name of Nancy White who grew up in slavery living and witnessing its brutality. It goes something like this: The White woman is the White man's dog, and the Black woman is his mule. As long as the White woman remains obedient and faithful, she is treated well. The Black woman is subordinated through force and abuse. She goes on to say that neither one is treated like a human being. The point is both White women and Black women suffer oppressions, just a different form.*

MS: *Different oppressions but the same oppressive effect. No wonder it's hard to build coalitions of Black and White women.*

The group had another collective "aha" when the relevance of Hurtado's (1989) work on seduction and rejection struck us. Each of us had previously read her work and had intellectually grasped its importance for organizational theory. What was interesting here was not just its conceptual relevance,

but the way Hurtado's terms and ideas got our group out of a stuck place. We *felt* its relevance. The idea of seduction enabled us to break a cycle of critiquing and defending White women's apparent silence–and revealed what was behind the concomitant cycle of defensiveness and anger in the group's work. The idea of rejection showed the powerful depth of hurt behind Black women's pushing back on the system. Taking this study as a reflexive ethnography of our own practice, we can see now that we were more deeply stuck in a question over whose interpretation and standpoint had legitimacy. Our dialogue had been fraught with language like "deferring," "caving," and "who are you to say this." We were at the intersection of theory and experience. Anger and defensiveness made new sense.

VII. RE-INTERPRETATION: THE MEANING OF SILENCE

Invoking Hurtado's (1989) work, we decided it was worth looking more closely into the nature and meaning of White women's apparent silence and to try to differentiate silence from forms of voice that may be heard on the surface as silence. We ask here, is silence really silence? We shift from explaining silence to problematizing the ontology of silence.

A. THE SEDUCTION OF MEMBERSHIP

White women are more fully invited into the corporation, so it is harder to push back and decline the privileges. This is the essence of seduction. One of the White women in the sample directly articulated this relative ease of membership. Linda Butler observed:

> *We're a traditional company, and up until the 1970s, we had no Black people at all in the management position. I think it's been easier for me, because I was a White woman. I was accepted better. They're used to dealing with me or my type.*

The prospect of belonging may be difficult to resist (Hurtado, 1989). Linda Butler's account shows how she is at once aware of her privilege, but also insistent that everyone is expected to pay the price of membership. She goes on to speak about her stoicism in hanging in there to win the presumed rewards. She tolerates rather than contests discrimination.

> *I guess I just accepted that's the way it was and it was up to me to change those people's perceptions of women and what we could do. As a result, I've probably been harder on myself, because, you know, I'd rather die before I cry. Because I don't want them to say, "Look, a woman can't handle it–that's what happens when you put her into a position of power."*

When the prize is big enough and likely enough, White women remain in the game and contort themselves to fit in. They swallow any hurt: "I'd rather die before I cry."

Reframed in this way, small moves may take more courage than at first it appears. To refuse the prize before engaging in activism is a big hurdle to leap. In *Paradise Lost,* John Milton (2000) distinguishes between two types of virtue: the path of good chosen by those who have never been tempted and the even harder path of good chosen by those who face and renounce temptation. To the extent that temptation is dangled more fully in front of White women in the corporation, their renunciations, even if small, may take more courage than we accord them in an account of their silence.

In addition, by being closer to the center of power, White women might have better access to knowing which small moves poke the system and ramify politically. We wondered whether what looked like silence might be a series of clever small moves, whose near invisibility is part of their artful avoidance of attention and backlash. Behind-the-scenes activities–such as recruitment activities, lobbying for work/family support, or small experimentation with alternative work arrangements–may help to create the infrastructure for change. Because White women are more likely to feel and be like insiders, they

may be more inclined to assert their agendas in quiet processes than in explicit efforts to challenge the status quo. A simple act like contradicting someone in a meeting may not seem a radical move, but it might pack unexpected punch.

Its punch comes partly because of White women's historical and cultural relationship to White men, who expect them to be docile. White men who expect White women to be compliant and Black women to be militant might be more shocked by small gestures of resistance coming from White women. Subtle tempered radicalism can have its place. Big outcomes can arise from small causes (Weick, 1979).

White women's relationship to patriarchy is qualitatively distinct from Black women's relationship to White men and patriarchy. These histories enter into everyday lives and shape the nature of oppression experienced by Black and White women. White women are subordinated through their insider relations to White men and the price of trying to please White men, their intimates, to gain approval, love, and security, and to remain insiders (Hurtado, 1989). In contrast, Black women historically have been owned and raped by White men, and thus their subordination comes not from seduction, but rejection or degradation–from daily reminders that they do not belong.

White women can look at the patriarchy and see people who look like their fathers, husbands, and brothers. They understandably expect that good behavior–not making waves–will be rewarded with safety, approval, and even love. It is hard to rebel against their own. It may be particularly difficult for White women to remain in the tempered radical's ambivalent stance toward the status quo–and toward White men and patriarchy. This stance requires a sense of self that resists White men (and White male standards) and fundamentally depends upon them. And this dependence runs deep.

In contrast, Black women do not look up the corporate hierarchy and see many people who look like their fathers, husbands, or brothers. In fact, the encouragement they took from their fathers is more likely to fuel their rebellion against the corporate patriarchs, rather than quell it. In the examples of Black women, they cannot help but encounter two worlds. They know the Black community of their origin, and they learn about the White community as a matter of necessity and survival. With some buffering and distancing, Black women might manage to become adeptly bicultural, but this is not an effortless place to be. In contrast, White women can easily remain monocultural–blind to the rituals, language, and assumptions of any group other than their own. Without experiencing this dual perspective as an imperative, it would be more difficult to develop empathy, to move from individual accounts to systemic, structural explanations and to connect to the commitments of tempered radicals.

In another reading, silence is a rhetorical mask. It hides provocative and independent agency behind passivity and agreeable dependence. Conway (1998) has argued that White women activists, even the most radical of the activists from the nineteenth through the twentieth century, have told their own life stories as romantic fictions, downplaying and, in fact, silencing their own political ambitions and accomplishments. Even activists as accomplished as Jane Adams wrote their biographies with a romantic narrative along the lines of, "I was lost, I was lucky, I met a man, I lived happily ever after." From this perspective, silence is an active accomplishment, a veneer over more ambitious and radical

actions. Whether the White women in this paper's dataset actively silenced their own radicalism is difficult to know. Exploring the possibility that silence might have multiple meanings is not to make an overly strong case that we have explained the silence of these women. Silence and subtlety have their place as political strategies. It would be too simple to place this dignified mantle on all the silences in this data. Sometimes silence is just complicity or co-optation.

Another political meaning of silence is that it is a boycott, using the strategy of exit or absence as morally meaningful, like conscientious objection. Adrienne Rich (1980) describes this stance poetically:

> *Silence can be a plan*
> *rigorously executed*
>
> *the blueprint to a life*
>
> *It is a presence*
>
> *It has a history   a form*
>
> *Do not confuse it*
> *With any kind of absence*

B. WHOSE SILENCE?

At this point we have to ask: Is the kind of silence that Rich portrays the silence of White women–or historically the silence of Black women? The journey of this paper has taken us to this point, discussing the silence of White women. Much more has been written about how the silence of Black women and other women of Color has been forcefully imposed–and sometimes chosen as resistance. This duality of silence–that sometimes it represents an oppressive silencing of voice by outside forces and sometimes it represents a powerful strategy for resistance chosen by women–is revealed in a study (Braxton and Zuber, 1994) of the writing of Harriett Jacobs (1987), who used the pseudonym "Linda Brent" to write her autobiographical story, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Her very act of writing broke a silence imposed by slavery and illiteracy, but her selective silences retained her autonomy. Her subtitle–*Written by Herself*–is the title of Conway's inspired collection of writings by White women and women of Color claiming agency by speaking their lives. Most powerfully, Jacobs broke the silence about White men's sexual exploitation of Black women. In her own words:

> *The secrets of slavery are concealed like the Inquisition. My master was, to my knowledge, the father of eleven slaves. But did the mothers dare to tell who was the father of their children? Did the other slaves dare to allude to it, except in whispers among themselves? No, indeed! They knew too well the terrible consequences.*

The conspiracy of silence is maintained, with the pained collusion of White women as well. Foucault (1990: 101, quoted in Braxton and Zuber, 1994: 146), observed that "silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions." At the same time, power based on silence is also vulnerable to resistance through voice; silence and secrecy "loosen its holds . . . making it possible to thwart it." We refer to such examples because, as Stella's earlier remark points out, the Black managerial women in the dataset often use slave metaphors. And they use voice to shatter the silence. Hurtado's (1989)

analysis traces back to a historical analysis of docility versus enslavement. This historical legacy informs our understanding of tempered radicalism in contemporary organizational contexts.

We draw some lessons as we close this rendering of our paper, realizing that in this process, the lessons are way stations en route to new conversations, debates, and insights. We want to begin by situating the lessons about White women's silences. There are some caveats in reading silences, which ironically can be noisy signals.

First, re-reading silence can sound like apologism for White women. Attempting to convert subtle acts into political moments might be over-reaching. Second, we might expect women who are strategically making small moves in the hope of big impacts to at least be self-aware of this strategy and to describe it. They might explain how they are down-playing or deferring their radicalism as part of a strategy. Black women like Shawn White were deferring their radicalism for a more fruitful moment in their careers, but able to explain it and to keep the vision alive. In these data, we hear no such descriptions of an underlying and self-conscious strategy from the White women. They do not describe how they are waiting for a better, later moment to act, using silence today to make voice possible tomorrow. Self-conscious commitment makes it more likely that the strategy and vision will not wither away in a gradual process of co-optation (Weick, 1981).

Their communities sustained Black women in their work–not just their current community that sustains them, but their community of origin. Memories of childhood kinship networks and inspirational grandparents from years ago were just as much a part of their ongoing community affiliation. The inter-generational passing of the baton focuses their efforts on giving back to a collectivity.

Another lesson is that the attention to White women's silences–which certainly exercised our group– should not drown out the examples from the Black women's varied enactments. It was to harvest these examples that we went into this joint project initially. Black women's tempered radicalism was distinctive in some ways that are interesting for advancing the theory. They did not use the language of benefits and costs. Tempered radicalism was less a considered tradeoff than an inevitability. They spoke, passionately but sometimes just matter-of-factly, about the benefits, from the personal to the political.

Another interesting lesson is about the name and the identity, "tempered radical." Since publishing the 1995 paper, many people have remarked that the name gives them a way to make sense of their own partial authenticity and piecemeal change efforts within organizations. It helped them to think that they were not alone; the name implied a community of like others.

Interestingly, the Black women in this sample do not seem to seek labels and even eschew them. They do not want a "highfalutin" name for what they do. They view their effort to make change on behalf of race and gender injustices as a natural obligation, rooted in their communal socialization. They just do it. It is not some strategy to which they devote a lot of worry over whether they should pursue it or not.

Perhaps the naming and description of tempered radicalism has struck a chord with so many White women precisely because it enabled them to deal with their isolation and doubt, where they lacked community grounding and a taken-for-granted approach to resistance. Giving the experience a name develops a collective consciousness in White women–one of the factors that can jump start political enactment. Black women already have this collective awareness of life on the margin; as Patricia Hill Collins (1990: 12) put it, "Black women remain outsiders within, individuals whose marginality provides a distinctive angle of vision. . . ." The options of "fitting" and "not fitting" are not on the menu for Black women, so they get on with a tempered radical role without the angstful choosing and justifying that weigh down some White radicals and tempered radicals. This goes back to the original problem as it was formulated from a White woman's perspective. The central problem was posed as one of resisting the forces of co-optation.

White women's apparent lack of tempered radicalism provoked us to give both a critical and appreciative reading of their situation. Thus far, we have done an appreciative but not a critical reading of Black women's enactments of tempered radicalism. White women took up more of the air time. But it was from the critical reading that the lessons really derived. What would a critical reading of Black women's experiences look like? What might we learn? How could we broach such a touchy subject in our group? Who would have the legitimacy to speak and from what standpoint? What theories, like Hurtado's (1989), might come to life for us?

In some respects, Black women's enactments look as much "tempered" as "radical." It is their accompanying stories and visions that add the radical slant. Patricia Triggs and Karen Brown are both worried about helping minorities up the advancement ladder, into good positions, and onto the top corporate rungs. When Patricia Triggs says she is "helping Black people get ahead," has the dominant White individualist ethic of "getting ahead" co-opted Black executives, or is she reclaiming the phrase with an alternative spin? A focus on advancement might be complicity with bureaucracy. Does the White "feminist case against bureaucracy" (that bureaucracy is not a tool for curing bureaucracy's historic injustices to women) offer any useful cautions? Does careerism distract from radicalism? Or is Black women's very advancement, as discussed above, a radical act because it storms the corporate castle and permits entry to those formerly denied? The corporation itself can be used to lift a community. But what about Audre Lorde's famous caution, "The master's tools can never dismantle the master's house?" If we dare to do a simultaneously appreciative and critical reading of Black women's tempered radicalism, as we did with White women's silences, there may be more lessons to learn. Black women's enactments deserve to be more than a comparative referent for White women's roles; they deserve more of the sustained attention–and all the animated discussion that goes with it–given to White women's silences.

Tempered radicals flourish with communities and relationships behind them. What about the prospects for affiliations between Black and White women in organizations where they might combine forces to withstand the ups and downs of battling injustice? Why have alliances between Black and White women been so strained? Our analysis of the ways in which Black and White women respond to race and gender injustices may shed some light on their relations.

Black women may feel they bear most of the costs of tempered radicalism–the risks, the emotional drain, and the potential marginalization. They may feel abandoned by White women or reduce their expectations of White women so low that they do not expect comradeship at all. White women may feel they are unfairly chided for their lack of tempered radicalism and may feel that their apparent silence is just a more subtle approach. White women may even feel that their subtle, behind-the-scenes efforts are more effective than a more strident approach.

Some White women are more eager to learn from, appreciate, and adopt approaches tried by their Black colleagues. Their eagerness to learn from Black women can also backfire and widen the gulf in two ways. First, it puts Black women into a tiring and familiar mode of having to do remedial education for White women. Second, it may feel like White women's appropriation of Black women's experiences and insufficient attention to their own stories, as one of our early dialogues illustrates. Somewhere between neglect and appropriation, there is vast room for pluralism and honoring each other's stories.

In this closing section, we offer a more personal take on the relations between Black and White women. We draw from the subtext of this paper and project–our working relationship as Black and White women who care passionately about eradicating race and gender based injustices. We chuckle now at our early idea that this was "an easy paper, just waiting to be written," because the theory and data seemed so tightly tied. We thought it would be straightforward. It wasn't. We figured it would be enlightening. It was.

The process required peeling layers like an onion, finding yet more layers. Here are some layers that stand out memorably for each of us.

A. LAYER 1: ASSUMPTIONS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

As much as we tried to stick to our "data," we could not keep ourselves out of it. Our early admission of this and our resolution to try to learn from ourselves resulted in the current format of text and subtext. Early on, when we tried to keep ourselves out of it, we could not do the work. We were burdened by our assumptions about each other, about who we each represented in the world, and about each other's motives for joining the collaboration. Put simply, our assumptions were:

EB: *Deb would feel we had done the work without her. She would be very demanding and controlling. Deb would seek to exert her power/influence in our work. Her presence would be strong and arrogant. She had put me on alert. Before the actual meeting of the whole group, Deb had told me "I've read the paper and I have some concerns. We'll talk about it later!" I felt like I had been summoned and dismissed.*

SN: *Deb would feel that "we" (the Black women) had appropriated a concept she had originated. Maureen was in concert with us about how the arguments of the paper had been structured–that she was not only in full agreement with our findings but that she understood them.*

DM: *I was the unknown and Ella and Stella would be skeptical. I was also going to carry a lot on my shoulders. Since Maureen was the good White woman, I was likely to carry all the shit they had about White women and be those women who have let them down. I suspected they would rather not have me be part of this and I was grateful to Maureen for bringing me in. My reflex was to defer to Ella and Stella, to let them be the experts on oppression. I've done this in the past in the hope of not offending Black women or overstepping in what I claim to understand. But I had a perspective and I was committed to voicing it. If this was going to be a constructive relationship, I had to bring myself into it more fully than I had in past relationships with Black women. I was prepared for conflict. But I was worried. I was also confused about where my long time ally and friend Maureen was in this.*

MS: *Discovering that, though I am a White woman, the Black women's world view made deep sense to me was an interesting experience. I knew Deb was making me the good White woman, the good cop. But really, that was like saying I was the bad White woman, failing to defend my group. It was Ella who had helped me see that when I spoke about sexism in my classes, students reacted like it was to be expected, but when I testified about racism, I saw hackles going up all the time–she's betraying her group! My group needs to work much harder on injustice; I can't help but see that. It felt entirely in the spirit of tempered radicalism to say, not that we already have voice, but that we need to learn more from critical self-analysis. Whose good woman or bad woman would I be? How would I be true to myself? How would I protect Deb without losing what felt like a discovery?*

The baggage of our histories–and the people we carried on our shoulders–weighed heavily when we tried to keep ourselves and our relations out of the work we were doing together. The histories we brought into the room turned out to be complex and weighty. They contained disappointments about times we felt let down in coping with institutional racism and sexism. Some of our disappointments were:

EB*: I was disappointed by what seemed to be a lack of support, a real understanding, by Deb of what Maureen had been through professionally. I didn't see her supporting Maureen.*

SN: *I had seen too many instances of White women in the academy not supporting junior women and minority scholars. I am disappointed they do not use their power to make change. I always viewed it as wasting our power as women.*

DM: *I was disappointed by the readiness to conclude that White women are silent. I see White women doing work behind the scenes, and I was disappointed that this gets coded as silence and that these interpretations will inevitably block relationships between White and Black women. I was deeply disappointed that Ella didn't see my relationship with Maureen and that she was so eager to conclude that I hadn't been supportive. I didn't see it that way at all. I was also disappointed that our attempt to draw on Black women's experiences and research was viewed as appropriation. I was surprised to learn that I was considered to have so much power and influence with which to help Maureen, when I myself have occupied the margins.*

MS: *I didn't get why Deb's support of me, which has always been utterly reliable, was such an issue. My very early disappointment was the reluctance of Ella and Stella to bring Deb into the project. They doubted White women's loyalties to one another, but the paper stalled for almost six months from summer of 1996 to spring of 1997 while I negotiated for Deb's inclusion. I think this disappointment in Deb projects Black women's disappointment in White women as allies, especially if they're the only Black woman in an institution, so their only prospects for immediate sisterhood are White women, who let them down.*

B. LAYER 2: DEFERENCE AND AUTHORITY

White women generally ignore questions of race or defer to Black women around issues of race. Gender is a much more figural and comfortable issue for them. Thus, when issues of race occur, White women may back down, view it as the domain of Black women, or worse, remain silent but seething. The perspectives of Black women are more complex because they live as "outsiders within." Black women live the combined effects of race and gender in their lives everyday. They have to speak in a double voice. It is not race or gender, but always both. White women's tendency not to confront works in two ways: they don't confront injustice head on and they don't confront others' theories of injustice if they are uncertain about their own stance. Their temerity can create distrust and disrespect in both directions. Black women feel abandoned by White women who do not bring their whole selves into a relationship, making it difficult for them to enter authentic and trusting relationships.

We are suggesting that conflict and a willingness to do battle may be a necessary part of building enduring bridges, not just across boundaries of race, but across all sorts of boundaries, particularly those tied to status and privilege. Working across boundaries, acknowledging competition, and owning up to our own baggage is frightening and difficult work. But it may be a crucial component of building relationships that are mutual and generative.

C. LAYER 3: BATTLES AND TESTS, SHAME AND HEALING

We did fight, and hard. What became clear early on, as we brought ourselves and our histories into that room, was that even as motivated and "enlightened" individuals, we enter these relations with distrust, fear, and suspicion. Black women are particularly distrustful of White women and assume that trustworthy White women are few and far between. Black women "test" White women to see if they are trustworthy. Tests may differ. For Ella the test is direct, confrontational, and unnerving. It comes

during initial interactions. To pass the test, White women have to engage in the struggle and not back down. Maureen and Ella connected when Maureen agreed that an incident had to do with race, rather than denying race and conjuring alternative attributions, as White women will do either from ignorance or "making nice." To White women who fail the test, Ella remains cordial but not willing to have a close relationship. Stella's test is subtle. She watches and observes, looking for how White women behave. Consistency and clarity in behavior are important. She gives White women a long rope. But if they fail the test, that's it. She won't interact with them.

Maureen became the good White woman when she had proven herself a worthy comrade in a particularly hostile work setting. And Stella had witnessed the growth and development of the relationship. Deb was the unknown White woman. She had to pass Ella and Stella's tests. Maureen could vouch for Deb but not help her pass the tests without appearing to "sit on the fence" and destroy the budding group cohesion, as an above dialogue illustrates.

White women can only stand firm against injustices and reach out to their Black sisters if their efforts are not born purely out of shame and guilt. While shame and guilt may be an important stage of healing, it is not a sufficient basis of empathy and mutual support. Shame and guilt can motivate action, but the motivation is to eliminate one's own guilt or shame (Steele, 1992). These ultimately self-focused motivations often prevent people from confronting, pushing through misunderstanding, and developing mutually rewarding relationships across racial boundaries.

We cannot be real allies to each other if we cannot live up to our own convictions. This is risky and potentially the most frightening for those White liberals who consider themselves allies in a struggle. To stand up and challenge Black women, particularly on issues of race, is to claim a voice on race. While it is tempting to defer expertise to those who have lived biculturally, White women can't engage until they claim their own perspective, including their perspective on privilege.

D. LAYER 4: THE SHADOWS OF GIRLHOOD

When we bring histories into the room, it is not just the baggage of today, but the stories of our childhood, our parents, and our ancestors. In the room with us, when Maureen began to shift even slightly away from Ella and Stella's position that White women are silent and entertain Deb's position that White women speak differently, were two little Black girls and their White friend. Suddenly, Ella and Stella saw Deb as the other little White girl who comes along to pull her White friend away. How loyal is her friendship to the little Black girls? Is it only as long as no other White girlfriends are around? When Stella raised this interpretation, it was an "aha" moment that we have gone back to over and over again.

E. LAYER 5: THE CORE OF THE ONION

At the core, we realized that the alliances and friendships we ultimately developed grew out of our willingness to bring ourselves into that room, to put it straight, and, most difficult, to do battle with each other, in all directions. This meant letting each other into the shadow side of ourselves, into our fears,

vulnerabilities, and expectations, into our assumptions about each other, and into the baggage we held about what each of us carried. Our time together was filled with tears and laughter.

> DM: *Boy, I have learned a lot in these few hours. Here we are trying to understand what it means to come together as Black and White women. And we have finally been able to have a deep conversation. How rare this is. And how difficult this is for us–and this is our life work! It is amazing how much we miss as women because of what we bring in, even with our intentions. I'm really moved.*

> EB*: (in tears) Part of the pain is wanting to fit in but realizing you can't. So you just decide to do it differently even though you're scared. There's a down side to being a tempered radical. There's a cost both personally and professionally. But that's another paper.*

> MS: *The price of belonging is so high. It makes us try to appear brave and totally in control, so we don't talk about what's troubling us. I had had all sorts of things happening in a marriage that looked idyllic from the outside, but it was months–why?–before I sat down and talked about them with Ella. It was a turning point, but until we were able to be real people for each other, even more than allies at work, we couldn't get to this point of connection.*

> SM: *Isn't it strange how each woman wants the other's life. Black women drive me crazy when they seem to be envious of the privileges White women are getting–like being held up on a pedestal, being beauty queens, able to marry men who can support them. I guess we don't see the price White women are paying for their position. But Black women want to "experience" it as a good thing. What contradictions. It's how oppression gets us to cooperate with our oppression as women.*

We conclude with two simple points. First, this was very hard work. Oppression partly works by maintaining the privilege of White women, keeping Black women resentful of these privileges and White women protective of these privileges. Oppression is sustained in part, because these gulfs are so painful to bridge.

Second, we have learned an enormous amount by doing this work–by letting ourselves come into the room and looking at ourselves in relation to each other and to men. It inspires us deeply to realize how much there is to gain from doing this work, and saddens us to know how rarely it is actually done.

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A. LIFE JOURNEYS OF BLACK AND WHITE WOMEN IN CORPORATE AMERICA

Life history methodology was employed in order to obtain systematic, holistic portrayals of the women's lives. A semi-structured, open-ended interview format that focused on four major life dimensions was employed. These dimensions were: 1) early life experience; 2) education and college years; 3) career entry and development; and 4) personal life sphere. This format allowed for greater exploration of social roles, racial identity formation, and the impact of systems of oppression over the course of the women's lives. Interviews were conducted in two to three sessions, with each session lasting three to four hours. Most life history interviews were eight to ten hours long. Life histories were collected by a race-alike, gender-alike research team. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the "ethnograph" computer program. The analysis presented in this paper draws on the 80 life histories conducted with Black women and 40 conducted with White women. Specific quotations were selected because they best illuminated the themes and patterns found among all the interviews.

Participants in this study were recruited through different professional networks and organizations, as well as referrals from other participants. Selected participants demonstrated a positive motivation for self-exploration, a willingness to share their life experiences, and a commitment to the project by giving their time. Participants lived principally in the Northeast and Southeast regions of the country. A majority of them were born in what Sheehy (1995) identifies as the Vietnam Generation, between 1945 and 1955. However, a small number of the women were from the Me Generation, born in the late 1950s. Participants held jobs in a wide range of industries. A majority of the participants were in middle management positions, although there was a good representation of upper level management.