“My walk has never been average”: Black tradeswomen negotiating intersections of race and gender in long-term careers in the U.S. building trades

by

Roberta Suzette Hunte

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

ABSTRACT

This narrative inquiry explores how Black tradeswomen negotiate the intersections of race and gender in their long-term careers in the U.S. building trades. Much of the literature on women and minority groups in the trades has focused on the success, or lack of success, of these groups in apprenticeship programs. To my knowledge, none has collected rich data focused on the long-term retention of Black women in the trades, nor has any discussed the personal, interpersonal, and institutional strategies this non-traditional group uses to continue working in the construction industry. This study draws on theory and empirical studies from the fields of Peace and Conflict Studies, Black Studies, Gender Studies, Labor Studies, and Psychology to provide a nuanced analysis of the systemic nature of Black tradeswomen's struggles for gender and racial equity within the workforce, and elucidates the personal, interpersonal, and institutional strategies these women have developed to continue in this field.

In-depth interviews conducted with fifteen tradeswomen revealed how they described and made sense of (1) their experiences of entering the trades and how their experiences in the trades changed over time; (2) barriers to their continued success as tradespeople; and (3) the skills and knowledge they developed to sustain themselves professionally. Findings include recommendations for interventions at the levels of pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, foremen, and higher to support the retention and promotion of Black tradeswomen in the industry. Tradeswomen highlight the necessity of combining anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles to promote greater inclusion of non-

traditional workers. Black tradeswomen illuminate the importance of the cultivation of self-esteem and personal networks on and off the job as mitigating factors in a microaggressive work environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe this dissertation to my advisor, Jessica Senehi. Jessica, thank you for sharing with me the value of storytelling, and for having faith in me throughout my doctoral program. Thank you for our many long distance phone conversations. You encouraged me to think broadly and to remain curious about the world. I have grown as a scholar, an activist, and a person because of you.

I also give thanks to committee members Esther Blum, Yatta Kanu, and Susan Chase. Thank you, Esther for being a mentor and a friend. Your presence in my life has been grounding and encouraging. Thank you for including me in your community with meals, late night conversations, and cups of tea. Yatta, thank you for your consistency, critical mind, and support from the beginning of my degree. Susan, thank you for your feedback and valuable insights. I am so glad to have had such a supportive and knowledgeable committee. I learned so much from you all.

Thank you to the tradeswomen who shared their narratives with me. Thank you for telling me about your lives and your inspiring work. You are very special to me. Thank you to my grandmother, Roberta Wilson, my great aunt, Susan Strange, and to my mother, Patricia Hunte. You have taught me to dream and to be resourceful. I am grateful for my family in Virginia and in Barbados who have supported me throughout this process. Love to my sisters, Grace and Veronica Hunte, and Amber Hayes for bringing laughter to my life. Special thanks to my mother-in-law Sue Pool for help through this process as well.

Finally, thank you and deep appreciation to my partner, Dan Pool. Your delicious meals, card games, and jokes brightened my days. Your keen eyes and computer skills have helped me complete this project. Thank you for juggling my moods and encouraging me to keep smiling.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Black tradeswomen past, present, and future.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

My interest in the experiences of Black tradeswomen began when I worked for Ready Tradeswomen[1], a women-focused pre-apprenticeship program. Pre-apprenticeship programs offer community-based education classes that teach basic construction skills to non-traditional students and prepare them to apply for entry-level construction careers. As a career counselor I helped hundreds of women from different socio-economic and racial backgrounds decide if pre-apprenticeship and the trades were appropriate for them. Few women of color entered our pre-apprenticeship program. Among the questions frequently asked in the office were: How do we get more women of color to enter our program? How do we help them complete the program? How do we help them enter apprenticeships? How do we support them to stay in the industry?

During the two and a half years of my employment I began to run a support group for tradeswomen of color. This group was for experienced tradeswomen of color to talk about their concerns, support each other, and to laugh. The small group had a core of a few Black women and a handful of Latinas and Native American women. The Black women in this group shared many painful stories of mistreatment on the job, under-training, and struggles to continue working. I heard some similar stories from the other women of color, but none as disturbing as the day-to-day experiences of the Black women. From these experiences I began to ask myself what was different about the experiences of Black women from those of other women in the trades?

---

[1] Pseudonym

Ready Tradeswomen held support groups, social hours, and conferences to bring long-term tradeswomen together to talk about their experiences. I remember a conference panel where two women of color and two White women shared their different experiences in the trades. The purpose of the panel was to address the various career paths of tradeswomen. Most of the women talked about how much they liked their careers and the story of their career. The one Black woman on the panel, Sheila[2], had a different story than her fellow panelists. She talked about racial and gender discrimination in her apprenticeship and struggles to receive adequate training. Her story did not celebrate being a tradeswoman. It was starkly realistic. The sixty women in attendance were mostly White women and only a handful of women of color. Audience members and the panelists were a mix of long-term tradeswomen, apprentices, and women considering the trades.

Sheila's story was met with diverse reactions. Some women of color and some White women told her to toughen up, and that everyone had it hard. Some White tradeswomen in the room were surprised that racism was such a painful reality for some tradeswomen of color. Some White women felt that as women everyone shared a common difficulty on the job: men. Some Black women corroborated her story by sharing similar experiences. Some Black women felt her difficulty was personal to her and not indicative of the industry. Some in the room were silent.

[2] Pseudonym

The women present did not dispute what Sheila said, nor that the racism and sexism she experienced was wrong. The dispute in the room was about how to frame the issues and respond to the discrimination: (1) Is it is one's responsibility to have the strength to endure and transcend? (2) Are the racial issues secondary to tradeswomen's gendered struggle for empowerment? (3) Should tradeswomen start talking about the issue of race for Black women? (4) Would talking about race divide the movement? (5) Does talking about the challenges women face undermine women's ability to stay in the industry?

Sheila's story was a challenge to the tradeswomen movement to develop its capacity to talk about race and gender in the trades. Her story was met with resistance. From this experience I was left with the questions: What is the experience of Black tradeswomen? Does their experience differ from the experiences of other women of color and White women? If so, how do their experiences differ?

During my employment I attended a conference of women-focused pre-apprenticeship programs from around the United States held by the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor in the Pacific Northwest. The conference represented different organizations that had varying success at helping women transition into trades careers. Staff of pre-apprenticeship programs shared similar difficulties around funding; the difficulty of pushing contractors to include women in their hiring practices; and the challenges of working with low-income women to balance employment, training, and family responsibilities. At one point I asked the others how they were addressing the needs of women of color in their organizations. My question was met with a pause, a

moment of reflection, and a few comments that women of color were having a hard time making it in the industry. No one clearly articulated the experiences of women of color as a group or as compared to White women.

As a career counselor I encouraged women to enter the trades. Because the field provides opportunities for high wages, benefits, and a pension, construction is an attractive option for people who have a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate. Training is on the job, and a college degree is not required. However, it became clear to me that the trades ceased to be a viable pathway out of poverty if women were not able to successfully enter those jobs and continue to earn higher wages over time. I noticed as staff of a pre-apprenticeship program we were pushing to recruit women into the trades, but in terms of retention and promotion, women as a group were struggling. Among women of different racial groups, some fared better than others, with White women succeeding the most.

I began to wonder what specific information pre-apprenticeships need to deliver to better prepare women of color to enter the trades. I also wondered what it is like to be a woman of color in the trades, and what is unique about the different experiences of Black, Native American, Asian, and Latina women. The limited research on tradeswomen of color creates difficulty in identifying and understanding the separate or converging influences of racism and sexism in their experiences. The ways in which racism and sexism intersect in women's lives can be difficult to tease out. However doing so is crucial for personal empowerment and for social change.

Women of color can speak of the complicated ways in which racism and sexism impact their lives. Black feminists were the first to bring forward the concept that Black women's lives were influenced by the intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality (Collins, 1989; A. Davis, 1981; hooks, 1981). The concept of intersectionality has been used to show the structural, political, and representational obstacles that women of color face which are uniquely shaped by their racial, gender, and class identities and the historical context of the various identity groups they represent (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional analysis has been picked up widely in the Women's Studies field and is arguably one of the field's greatest contributions to the academy (McCall, 2005).

As a Black woman myself, I suspected that the experiences of women of color in the trades were not necessarily monolithic. For example Black tradeswomen may share some experiences of discrimination with Latina tradeswomen, but also have different experiences that are specific to being Black tradeswomen. We come to know the distinct nature of different group experiences when these distinct groups speak for themselves about their lived realities. Within my research, I have narrowed my focus from women of color, in general, to Black tradeswomen's narratives of their long-term careers in the trades. Studying the long-term career experiences of Black tradeswomen offers insight into how Black women experience racism and sexism at various points in their careers. A longer ranged focus can offer insight as to their strategies for addressing oppression, and the efficacy of these approaches. This study focuses on the voices of Black tradeswomen who have been in the U.S. building trades for six to thirty years and to address the

question: How do Black tradeswomen continue long-term careers in the U.S. building trades?

Black tradeswomen's wisdom can help develop interventions at the grassroots level that strengthen the recruitment and preparation of Black women for trades careers. At the level of advocacy groups, these stories reveal the ways Black women's voices are marginalized within efforts towards racial equality in the trades and within the tradeswomen's movement. These stories can contribute to the development of a stronger political agenda that merges anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles in the trades and offer best practices from bosses and institutions regarding the retention and promotion of Black tradeswomen. Often the voices of Black tradeswomen are absorbed by other voices, predominately those of White women or Black men in the trades. This study seeks to create a forum for the voices of Black tradeswomen to be recorded for reflection.

Additional research questions for this dissertation are: What can we learn from the strategies Black tradeswomen use to negotiate race and gender in non-traditional work? How does this deepen our understanding of intersecting social identities in non-traditional labor? How does intersectional analysis advance our understanding of individual responses to structural violence? This dissertation focuses on the skills and knowledge that Black tradeswomen acquire as they progress in their careers. These women are racial and gender minorities in a career sector that has not historically accepted women or people of color. Further, this study highlights Black tradeswomen's collectively unique experience of racism and sexism.

My narrative inquiry is designed to ascertain how Black women understand their experience. These questions framed my investigative conversations: How do Black tradeswomen describe their experiences in long-term trades careers? Once they have made it through apprenticeship programs, what kinds of challenges and hardships do they experience on the job? How do they respond to these challenges? How have these responses changed over time? How do they feel their presence has contributed to the building trades; to the advancement of women; to racial equity? How have they expressed their various identities in their work?

Black women throughout United States' history confronted the relationship between White dominance and male superiority. Core themes of Black tradeswomen's struggles include awareness of race and gender discrimination as intersecting experiences of oppression (Collins, 1989). Immersion in Black American culture creates a distinctive experience and a worldview that cannot be shared by anyone who is not Black and female in the United States (Collins, 1990). However this does not necessarily mean that this consciousness will be held by all Black women and will be articulated as a collective voice.

Black Feminist Thought, developed from an Afro-centric epistemology, is a way for Black women to claim self-definition and empowerment. It is derived from the use of concrete experience as the basis of meaning; the use of dialogue to assess knowledge; an ethic of care; and an ethic of personal responsibility (Collins, 1989). Black Feminist Thought recognizes a need to replace denigrating images of Black women with images of their own choosing; holds belief in Black women's activism in family, work, and

community; and is sensitive to sexual politics (Collins 1990). It is an opportunity for Black women to define their reality, shape a new identity, name their history, and tell their stories; thus supporting Black women to define themselves and ensure they will not be defined by others (Lorde, 1984). It is an act of empowerment and resistance to oppression (hooks, 1989). The theoretical lens of Black Feminist Thought provides an analytical tool to theorize how cultural identities of race and gender impact Black women's lives, in the case of this study the lives of Black women in the trades.

The lack of representation of women and people of color in the United States' building trades is an issue of economic justice, as well as one of race and gender equity. To eradicate this imbalance requires recognizing the complex interplay of racism, capitalism, and sexism in our society (A. Davis, 2000). Steps towards addressing social inequity include understanding more deeply the experiences of Black tradespeople and supporting their success. However, the struggles of Black tradespeople are a part of the broader human rights struggle of people of color, women, and working class folks for their human rights to work, and for fair wages, health, and well-being[3]. This struggle addresses the structural violence of inequitable policies, practices, and cultural ideologies that impact the viable opportunities of marginalized groups in the United States (Galtung, 1969; Lane *et al.*, 2004; Optow, 2001; Weigert, 1999).

This study highlights the intersections of racism and sexism in the trades which occur at the level of institutional practices and policies, and at the level of interpersonal

[3] (U.N. General Assembly, 1948)

dynamics. Studying these intersections provides insight into how intersecting identities impact people's success in non-traditional labor. This provides information that is pertinent to the construction industry, to workforce development professionals working with potential and non-traditional construction workers, and to labor advocacy groups. Recommendations from this study are beneficial to Black women and to all women in the trades. These recommendations also benefit men of color, and offer practices to ensure a more efficient and safe workplace. Studying intersectional identities deepens the discussion of power and agency in workplace conflict.

This study is relevant to the Peace and Conflict Studies field as we deepen our scholarship on the interplay of intersecting identities and individual responses to structural violence. Peace and Conflict Studies offers frameworks to conceptualize how people engage in conflict on the personal, interpersonal, community, national, and international levels. My interest is to connect some theories from Peace and Conflict Studies with Black Feminist Thought. Black women develop strategies to address racism and sexism as impediments to their progress in the workplace, and their strategies to address everyday racism (Essed, 1990) are acts of conflict resolution which offer individual responses to structural inequity. This approach will be theorized within a nested paradigm (Dugan, 1996; Lederach, 2006) as it addresses the structural nature of the systemic conflict that promotes occupational segregation, and the ways individuals navigate a complex and challenging work environment.

Sheila's story from the tradeswomen conference mentioned earlier inspired me and fueled my efforts to do this study. Through this study I am creating a space for Black

tradeswomen to talk about their experiences as a basis for developing understanding, knowledge, and theory about racism and sexism. This narrative study seeks to understand the strengths of Black women, and to tease out ways their efforts can be enhanced. Further, in understanding the experiences of Black tradeswomen as a human rights struggle, I intend to identify and analyze the structural and cultural obstacles that Black tradeswomen face in order to inform policy, social services, and actions.

WOMEN AND WORK: INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, GENDER, AND CLASS

The struggles of Black women in the trades are linked with the workplace struggles of Black people against racism and women against sexism. Black tradeswomen's experiences are at the intersections of racial and gender equality. Racist and sexist hiring practices result in an industry that has remained predominately White and male. Black tradeswomen negotiate everyday forms of racism and sexism throughout their careers.

Good jobs enhance people's lives by decreasing poverty; by providing adequate housing, transportation, access to healthcare; and by providing a sense of purpose and well-being. Racism at the institutional and individual level can negatively affect the health of Black people in the United States (D. Williams, 1999). The combined factors of racial discrimination and lower socioeconomic status contribute to higher rates of disease among Black people and limited class mobility. Continuous exclusion from adequate sustainable employment has contributed to the racial wealth divide in the United States as communities of color struggle to get a financial foothold and build assets for generational wealth.

Racial wealth disparities in the United States were exacerbated in 1944 when the GI Bill afforded White GI's college tuition, career counseling, and low interest FHA and VA home loans in the newly created suburbs. These loans were the first of their kind. Black GI's did not receive these benefits. Blacks were shut out of the suburbs and not able to accumulate wealth through home ownership. This set up dual housing markets, one White, one Black, which continue to affect the present racial wealth gap (Brodkin,

2003). This racial segregation of neighborhoods and of schools has had long-term limiting effects on the educational, employment, and homeownership opportunities of Black people today. Black people in the United States continue to live in segregated communities with high concentrations of poverty and crime.

The percentage of unemployment among the Black community remains twice that of Whites, and joblessness continues to be an ongoing issue among African Americans (Austin, 2011). Economic justice is a vital part of human security. Hence supporting women and men of color to remain in the trades is politically significant as it is a process of poverty reduction. Understanding how Black women experience structural and cultural barriers and navigate them, successfully or unsuccessfully, provides insight into the efficacy of interventions that seek to address these inequities. Movement towards economic justice and racial and gender equality in the trades requires analysis of the structural and cultural barriers that limit the success of women and minorities[4] in these careers.

EFFECTS OF STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY ON BLACK PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

Peace researcher Dugan (1996) developed a "nested paradigm" combining peace research and conflict resolution to address both the immediate and systemic nature of conflicts. A "nested paradigm" approach is a useful way to theorize how people may be actively engaging in acts of conflict resolution to change their circumstances. Dugan developed a way of conceptualizing conflict that focuses on the systemic nature of conflict, and simultaneously acknowledges the agency of groups as they attempt conflict

[4] In this study minorities refers to Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans.

resolution strategies or initiatives to improve or advance their position. Hence the nested paradigm positions the individual groups as part of a subsystem that is "nested" within systems of overarching macrosystem ideologies and institutions, whose policies affect the actions of the subsystem in direct and indirect ways (Dugan, 1996). Lederach (2006), in his application of the nested paradigm, notes:

> The nested paradigm underscores the need to look consistently at the broader context of systemic issues. It suggests, however, that at the subsystem level we can experiment with various actions that promise to connect "systemic" and immediate "issue" concerns (p. 59).

Deep analysis of systemic conflict needs to examine the interplay of the social forces of demographics, religion, history, psychocultural factors, and politics. Byrne and Carter (2002) offer a social cubist analytic framework that examines the interconnection and interdependence of these social forces and addresses how they work together to create self-reinforcing patterns of conflict behavior. An understanding of Black women's presence in the trades takes into account:

- the interplay of population demographics;
- the history of Black people in the trades and the United States more broadly;
- how racist and sexist cultural ideologies interplay with institutional policies to limit the employment of Black people in the United States;
- how changes in the political climate of the United States have hindered and advanced Black people's progress;
- how personal psychological and cultural factors contribute to Black women's recruitment, retention, and promotion in the workforce.

Oppressive systems which privilege dominant groups over subordinate groups are supported at the macrolevel of ideologies, values, customs, attitudes, and laws of society, and at the microlevel of the individual within their interpersonal interactions and the various communities through which they move (Brofenbrenner, Friedman, & Wachs, 1999).

The experience of Black women in the trades is not separate from the broader struggles of Black people in the United States. Systemic racism underscores the U.S. economic system and is the basis of the racial wealth divide in the United States (Feagin, 2000). Differential treatment and relative deprivation create systems of rank disequilibrium and contributes to a sense of self-righteousness within groups and individuals. This experience of oppression causes an escalation of aggression both among the parties being oppressed and within the oppressor group to maintain social control (Galtung, 1964). The interplay of oppressive systems creates a structural violence that kills the oppressed slowly over time as opposed to direct violence which kills directly (Galtung & Hoivak, 1971).

Structural violence prevents people from meeting their basic human needs (Galtung, 1969) and normalizes inequality. It limits access to social and economic resources such as education, wealth, healthcare, public institutions, adequate social services, and housing (Optow, 2001). Weigert (1999) describes structural violence as preventable harm where there was no specific actor committing the violence. This violence results from the inequitable distribution of resources and misuse of power. It is embedded in societal structures. The focus on the actors responsible for preventable harm can miss the “macro-level entities such as state and federal bureaucracies, health

institutions, social environments, and social and health policies that form the context in which disproportionate illness and death occur" (Lane *et al.*, 2004; p.320) .

Structural violence is maintained through cultural violence, that is the aspects of culture that are used to justify structural and direct violence (Galtung, 1990). Cultural violence can be seen in the manifestations of ideologies that privilege a dominant group over a marginalized group. Three functions of stigma and prejudice, which are manifestations of cultural violence, are: (1) exploitation and domination (keeping people down); (2) enforcement of social norms (keeping people in); and (3) disease avoidance (keeping people away) (Phelan, Link, & Dovidio, 2008).

The interplay of racism, sexism, and classism within a capitalist economy contribute to the segregation of Black men and women in lesser skilled lower wage jobs (A. Davis, 1981; Glenn, 1992; hooks, 1981). These systemic forces have maintained the racial wealth divide in the United States, as lack of work contributes to poverty, an inability to support one's family, and the disproportionate representation of minorities in prison. The "feminization of the workforce" (Taylor and Kennedy, 2003) and the "changing complexion of the workforce" (D.W. Sue, Parham, & Santiago, 1998) are happening across the United States with 75 percent of those now entering the workforce being women and racial/ethnic minorities (D.W. Sue & Sue, 2008). People of color, though increasing in population size, continue to be underemployed and unemployed compared to Whites. Since 1960, rates of unemployment within Black communities has been twice that of Whites (Fairlie & Sundstrom, 1999). Women make up 46.5 percent of the U.S. labor force (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009), and continue to be concentrated in

lower paying occupations and receive less wages than their male counterparts within the same occupations.

The poor showing of minorities in apprenticeship has been attributed to discriminatory practices of predominately White union workers (Berik, Bilginsoy, & Williams, 2008), and the racialized exclusion of Black men from blue collar jobs and the White networks that supply those trades (Royster, 2003). High incarceration rates among Black men and low high school graduation rates impact the number of Black people qualified to enter highly technical construction careers such as electrical work and plumbing. One third of Black men in the United States have experienced incarceration in their lives, and 50 percent of Black male high school dropouts will go to prison (Pager & Anderson, 2008). This segregation fuels a sense of abandonment and disconnection with mainstream society and education among young people (Anderson, 2008). Many Black people are unprepared to compete in the present workforce due to changes in the global economy that have caused a decrease in the opportunities for low-skilled labor, and historic racism that has denied blacks access to education and training (Wilson, 1999).

Menial employment that is dirty, inconsistent, under paid, physically demanding, and unchallenging has been a feature of employment for Black men in urban areas of concentrated poverty since 1967 at the time of Liebow's study of Black men in Washington, DC, and continues today (Wilson and Anderson, 2008). Wilson and Anderson describe a new urban poverty with a substantial number of Black adults unemployed, underemployed, disengaged from the workforce, or having never held a job. Though the decreased demand for low-skilled work has often affected Blacks more than Whites, low-skilled workers across racial and ethnic groups have been affected by this

economic shift. Not being hired for these jobs creates ripples through the community. Lack of success in the job market can cause people to become resigned and abandon their search temporarily or completely (Liebow, 1967). Liebow makes this assertion in 1967 and it remains relevant today.

Both living in an impoverished neighborhood and racial discrimination affect the hiring of minorities in the United States. Some literature on poverty assumes that spatial and social isolation contributes to poverty and that bringing projects to an area and hiring from the local community will interrupt this. However, in a case study of a section of Brooklyn, New York, Kasinitz and Rosenberg (1996) asserts that even when jobs are located in African American communities these jobs are filled by the employer's social networks, not local folks. Residents living in impoverished areas are discriminated against because of where they live. However, it has also been found that in low income communities where African Americans and Whites coexist, less educated Blacks are still hired at a lesser rate than their less educated White counterparts (Hellerstein, Neumark, & McInerney, 2007). Even when jobs are in the community, Whites continue to be hired in disproportion to Black people.

On average, Blacks live closer to major road construction jobs, and yet are consistently not hired to work on these jobs (Cohn & Fossett, 1996). In addition, many inner-city residents lack access to information about jobs in the suburbs, and there is a breakdown in the informal job-information network (Wilson, 1996). When Blacks move to the suburbs they are disproportionately concentrated in predominately Black areas with the lowest socioeconomic profile, thus limiting their access to jobs in more affluent

predominately White suburbs (Harris, 1999). Although Blacks are applying for jobs in White suburbs they are still facing labor-market discrimination (Turner, 2008).

The Black population is better educated today than it was in the 1960s (Austin, 2006). However education alone is not enough to improve the economic chances of Black people. Austin (2011) notes that for the educational advances of Blacks to improve the economic position of Black people, those advances need to happen at a higher rate than Whites.

As more people are travelling for employment, having a car has become more a necessity for employment. Yet, the reality for many African Americans living in urban areas is an inability to afford a car and reliance on public transport. High rates of police surveillance in urban areas of concentrated poverty also means that more people of color run the risk of being pulled over and losing their licenses and vehicles. In terms of construction, this cancels many Blacks out of construction jobs as having a license and being able to get to remote jobsites are key features of the industry.

LOCATING THE INTERSECTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN

Feminist standpoint epistemology posits that the social location of women gives them access to understand social phenomena that directly relates to their particular experience of gender (Longino, 1993). Standpoint theory was introduced in the 1970s by feminist thinkers and developed from the Marxist epistemology that people acquire knowledge through engaging with their circumstances to meet their needs. The subjugated are most knowledgeable of the various ways that they are oppressed. Standpoint theory stresses the necessity of developing research from women's everyday

lives, and comparing this to the dominant culture's concepts of women's lives. In doing so the researcher develops stronger accuracy in theorizing women's lives (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Standpoint theory has been widely debated by postcolonial, post-modernist, and feminist thinkers around the limitations of knowledge claims and the broader categorization of women. Not all women have the same experience. The Black feminist standpoint speaks from the American Black women's experience. Black women offer a *situated knowledge* that speaks to the realities of being subjugated by race, gender, class, and heterosexism. Knowledge is socially situated, meaning it is difficult for someone who is not a Black working class woman in the trades to know what that experience is. Situated knowledge notes that the object of knowledge, in this case Black women, is both an actor and agent in their experience (Haraway, 2008). Listening to marginalized groups offers greater perspectives on ways of knowing.

Black Feminist Thought, developed from an Afrocentric epistemology, is a way for Black women to claim self-definition and empowerment. Black Feminist Thought is derived from the use of concrete experience as the basis of meaning; the use of dialogue to assess knowledge; an ethic of care; and an ethic of personal responsibility (Collins, 1989). It recognizes a need to replace demeaning images of Black women with images of their own choosing, a belief in Black women's activism in the family, work, and community; and is sensitive to sexual politics (Collins 1990). This approach is an opportunity for Black women to define their reality, shape a new identity, name their history, and tell their stories; and thus supports Black women to define themselves and

ensure that they will not be defined by others (Lorde, 1984). Self-definition is an act of empowerment and resistance to oppression (hooks, 1989).

Black women throughout U.S. history have dealt with the interrelationship between White dominance and male superiority. Racism and sexism -- despite differences of sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, and class -- are common threads among the experiences of Black women. A core theme of Black women's struggle is an awareness of the experience at the intersection of race and gender oppression (Collins, 1989). The shared experience of work, family, and immersion in African American culture creates a distinctive experience and a worldview that cannot be held by someone who is not Black and female. However, in the face of oppression, different women choose different ways to respond. Some may choose activist roles; some may accept what happens and internalize negative messages presented to them. The Black women's consciousness will not necessarily be held by all women and articulated as a collective voice:

> Being Black and female may expose African-American women to certain common experiences, which in turn may predispose us to a distinctive group consciousness, but it in no way guarantees that such a consciousness will develop among all women or that it will be articulated as such by the group (Collins, 1990; p. 158).

Angela Davis (2000) posits that because Black women have experienced gender and racial oppression and exploitation within capitalism, a political agenda for the liberation of Black women requires engagement in anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-capitalist struggles. Crenshaw (1991) developed the concept of intersectionality to show the structural, political, and representational obstacles women of color faced in regards to

violence against women. She found the distinctive vulnerable position of women of color was often missed in discussions of violence against women as feminists tended to pick up the issue as a "women's issue."

Further, anti-racists tended to focus on the historical stereotyping of Black men as rapists of White women, rather than focusing on the intra-race violence of Black men towards Black women. Hence an intersectional approach was necessary to address the unique experiences of women of color, and to limit the ways they are marginalized in discourses for their liberation: "At this point in history a strong case can be made that the most critical resistance strategy for disempowered groups is to occupy and defend a politics of social location rather than to vacate and destroy it" (Crenshaw, 1991). Black women's standpoint is both that of women and of Black people. A resistance strategy must speak to both of these identities simultaneously. Black women theorize their experience with an intersecting analysis of race, gender, class, and sexual identity. This experience is different than that of White women and men of color, as it is impacted both by the experience of sexism and racism. Crenshaw (1991) said:

> The need to split one's political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of color and white women seldom confront. Indeed, their specific raced and gendered experiences, although intersectional, often define as well as confine the interests of the entire group (p. 1252)

Intersectional analysis challenges the additive approach to analyzing groups' experiences of identity oppression. For example with an additive approach it can be thought that Black lower income women are in "triple jeopardy" in light of class, race, and gender oppression. In short, in an additive analysis, social inequality increases

exponentially with each stigmatized identity. This idea is problematic as it posits that these identities are experienced as separate, independent, and summative (Collins, 1995). Further people can simultaneously be members of a privileged and subordinate group, therefore ranking groups proves ineffective. How can an individual with multiple identities identify which one is solely responsible for their oppression (Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003)? It is impossible to isolate and rank identities.

Intersectionality offers a lens to understand changes in social location (Hulko, 2009) and the complex causality of identities as they relate to context (Hancock, 2008). One's social location changes depending on their circumstances. Identity oppressions are not necessarily equal. In one instance race may be targeted more than sexual identity; in another sexual identity may be targeted over race.

Society struggles to address the complexity of discrimination that is informed by multiple systems of bias. Crenshaw (2000) demonstrates the double bind Black women experience in bringing legal claims of racism and sexism. Antidiscrimination lawsuits by Black women often are dismissed as the legal system has failed to accept an intersectional analysis of the unique experience of Black women. In Crenshaw's analysis of four anti-discrimination lawsuits she found that in claims of racism Black women were expected to have a claim that would encompass Black men, and in claims of sexism their experiences were to hold for White women as well. This analysis nullified the discrimination claims of the Black women plaintiffs.

Gender, sexuality, and race are socially constructed concepts. Intersectionality is an analytic framework for examining how these constructs interrelate to limit or advance the life chances of individuals based on their multiple identities. Hancock (2008) writes a

future trajectory for intersectionality research is the study of "individual-institutional reforms" (p.28), meaning a study of the interrelationship between personal agency and institutional change. Hancock notes that social change cannot happen without both individual and institutional shifts. Similarly Cuadraz and Uttal (1999) advocate for intersectional analysis that seeks to contextualize individual experiences within an intersectional framework that takes into account the cultures, ideologies, and systemic policies and practices that contribute to the realities of social inequality. Burack (2004) states that this type of analysis provides a re-historicized analysis that is contextual and explores the connection between social and political relationships.

Intersectionality makes a contribution to the field of Peace and Conflict Studies in our study of identity, agency, and conflict. It can serve as a way to understand the experiences of marginalized groups within identity-based conflicts. It can also develop our conceptions of peace as intersectional experiences contextualize the realities of structural violence in people's lived experience and the ways they seek to address these conflicts. As we conceptualize a more just and peaceful society, focusing on the intersectional experiences of marginalized groups can help us understand the limits of our conceptions of peace. Hearing the voices of Black women, for example, can help foster a revitalized Black identity politics that is conscious of the significance of race, gender, sexuality, and class as it relates to social movements. This can serve as both a vehicle for greater empowerment of Black women, and can foster broader coalitions with other groups whose experiences overlap with that of Black women (Collins, 2005).

FROM THE MACRO TO THE MICRO: NEGOTIATING EVERYDAY RACISM AND SEXISM

To develop my understanding of the ways individuals are affected by their various identities and the ways they resist, succumb, or transform identity oppressions I draw on Barsky's (2007) capacity-building for conflict resolution framework. Oppression happens at the institutional level and at the level of the individual. Individuals negotiate oppression differently depending on their social location and the various identities they hold. A capacity-building approach (CBA) to conflict resolution is a strength-based approach to help prepare individuals to work collaboratively with others and to increase personal buy-in, motivation, and resources to participate in conflict resolution processes more effectively (Barsky, 2007). This approach was developed by social workers in their work with groups and individuals in conflict. However, this approach can be adapted to assess the ways individuals develop their personal capacity to address conflicts in their environments.

With Dugan's (1996) "nested paradigm," a capacity-building approach to conflict resolution is a way to understand how people manage structurally intractable conflicts such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, and the impact of these conflicts on personal well-being. These capacities are: physical, spiritual, psychological, and social.

Within CBA, physical capacity is determined by how individuals address issues of housing, transportation, sustenance, and immediate medical needs. Having a job that pays a living wage can help people meet their physical capacities. This can have a direct effect on the psychological capacity of individuals to address challenges in their lives. Employment is a key component of community development and community well-being (Austin, 2011). Psychological capacity may address people's self-efficacy, the ability to

accomplish a certain task or mission, and resilience. Resilience is the ability to respond positively to situations in the face of stressful circumstances (Bonanno, 2004). Resilience is thought to be fostered by protective factors such as creative thinking, hope, problem-solving skills, humor, and an easygoing personality (Alvord, 2005; Ong, Bergeman, & Biscontim T.L, 2006) and emotional intelligence, the process of perceiving and understanding one's own emotions and those of others (Matthews et al., 2006).

Social capacity in terms of CBA is the ability to access and use one's personal networks, support groups, advocacy groups, and social networks. Accessing these is a place of strength for constituents and counters isolation. Spiritual capacity is the way people make sense and meaning of their lives and situation. Questions of spirituality can help connect one with a sense of purpose, vocation, and meaning. A strong spirituality can help people deal with difficult situations and limit the harm of harsh environments. Spirituality has been at the center of the experience of Black people in the United States, and a key site of consciousness-raising within the Civil Rights movement. In Pennington's (1999) study of Black women who opt out of the workplace, she discusses the relationship Black women have with spirituality as one of divine connection to vocational calling, to a sense of self, and to a greater purpose for existence. In an interview with hooks (1991), West said of Black people and spirituality: "One of the reasons we believe in God is due to the long tradition of religious faith in the Black community [...] If you are serious about Black struggle, you know that in many instances you will be stepping out on nothing, hoping to land on something" (p.8).

At the heart of a capacity-building approach is the cultivation of self-esteem in the face of adversity. Self-esteem is an experience of competence in managing life's basic

challenges and a sense of being worthy of happiness (Branden, 1994). Self-esteem is the combination of self-efficacy and self-respect. Self-efficacy is confidence in one's ability to master challenges and change. Self-respect is confidence in one's right to be happy and confidence that personal achievement, success, friendship, respect, love, and fulfillment are appropriate and attainable. Self-esteem, Branden writes, is based on six pillars: personal integrity, self-acceptance, living consciously, self-assertion, self-responsibility, and living purposefully.

Racism, sexism, and homophobia can tear down one's sense of self-esteem. When individuals internalize these negative images of themselves as truth they inflict further harm on themselves. This internalization of racist ideologies is part of structural oppression (Fanon, 1965). Of self-esteem hooks (2003) writes: "Without self-esteem people begin to lose their sense of agency. They feel powerless. They feel they can only be victims" (p. xii). Black people can create positive self-esteem when they resist the internalization of racist ideologies.

Further, hooks (2003) advocates the development of a critical consciousness as a crucial component of positive self-esteem. Critical consciousness is the ability to be aware of one's environment and to act accordingly (Branden 1994). While she finds that most Black people are conscious of living in a racist world, hooks (2003) writes "critical consciousness is at work when we are able to utilize our knowledge of this reality in ways that circumvent racist exploitation and oppression" (p. 70). She describes positive self-esteem for Black people as acknowledging the reality of racism in one's life and working to challenge racism.

This consciousness has within it the practice of self-acceptance, self-reliance, and personal responsibility, as components of an anti-racist struggle. This understanding of self-esteem is developed in response to multiple systems of individual, institutional, and cultural oppression. hooks (2005) discusses Black women's self-recovery as a key component of political liberation. She discusses self-recovery as the process of understanding the many ways racism, classism, sexism, capitalism, and homophobia undermined group's personal and collective self-determination; and the application of this knowledge to work towards personal healing and wellness.

Black women's experiences of discrimination based on race, gender, class, and sexual identity are at times distinct from each other, and at times overlapping. To more aptly understand the ways these behaviors come together in overt and subtle ways on a daily basis, Sue (2010) developed the concept of microaggressions. Sue defines microaggressions as: "Commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to people of color" (p. 29).

Microaggressions come in the form of a) microinsults, which are often unconscious communications that are rude, insensitive, and demeaning of one's race, gender, or sexual orientation; b) microassaults, which are usually conscious, explicitly demeaning aggressions against one's race, gender, and/or sexual orientation in the form of discriminatory acts, violent verbal, nonverbal or environmental attack and its purpose is to harm the intended victim; and c) microinvalidations, which are communications which exclude, nullify, or negate the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of a person of color, woman, or sexual minorities (Sue, 2010). All of these serve the function of

maintaining an oppressive and exclusionary system that promotes the stigmatization of people in groups. Sue writes: "Microaggressions not only demean and harm targeted individuals and groups, but they also affect the quality of life of people of color, women, and LGBTs" (p. 209).

Microaggressive themes that combine both gendered and racial microaggressions and are applicable to the experience of Black tradeswomen within this study are 1) the undermining of the intelligence and competence of Black tradeswomen based on their race and gender; 2) professed color blindness on the part of their White colleagues that race is not an issue; 3) less common in my data, but still important is the assumption of criminal intent; 4) experiences of sexist and heterosexist language that degrades women and LGBQ folks; 5) the denial of individual acts of racism, sexism, and heterosexism; 6) being treated as a second class citizen, or less than the dominant group; 7) battling traditional gender roles and stereotyping; 8) sexual objectification; and 9) the assumption that it is abnormal or wrong to be gay (Sue, 2010; p. 32-34). The power of microaggressions is that they are often invisible to both the perpetrator and the victim.

Targeted groups may find that their identity as a Black person, or as a woman, among other identities, may cause them to experience stigma. Microaggressions towards their targeted identity, or particular combinations of identities may result in their facing a stereotype threat that undermines their intelligence and the ways their performance is perceived and appraised by their superiors. In the face of stereotype threat (Steele, Ebenhardt, & Fiske, 1998), individuals may seek to over-excel in arenas where their group is not highly represented and distance themselves from negative images of their group. For example, a racial microaggression in the workplace is that Black people report

being tracked and only considered for certain jobs and tasks in the workplace -- such as support services, personnel, human resources, community relations, and "Black products" departments -- instead of top decision-making positions (Sue 2010). Such tracking is based on conscious or unconscious assumptions of inferior intelligence or skills.

RACISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Negotiating racism may cause Black women to experience psychological health consequences, including disconnecting from one's personal identity and taking on a definition of self from the oppressor (internalized racism); depression; eating disorders; low self-esteem; lowered life satisfaction; hatred of one's self and one's racial group; intense feelings of rage, powerlessness, paranoia, and anxiety; estrangement from friends and family; disaffection with one's own language, history, and culture; and finally separation from one's humanity (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Sue, 2010). The experience of the physical health consequences of racism among Black people include constant vigilance, bodily arousal, and depletion of resources contributing to medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, respiratory problems, cirrhosis of the liver, obesity, and diabetes (Carter, 2007; Clark et al., 1999).

Racism depletes the psychological, spiritual, and cognitive energies of Black people. Sue (2010) describes this phenomenon as race-related fatigue. Racism can engender a racial mistrust of members of the dominant group. Extreme racial mistrust makes it impossible at times for Black people to work or live in areas with high concentrations of White people. Cumulative race-related trauma can have the same

psychological and physical effects as exposure to a hate crime. Racial microaggressions can be felt more intensely because of their historical significance. Race-related trauma carries symptoms such as hyper-arousal, nightmares, and emotional fluctuations (Sue 2010).

Now that Jim Crow segregation laws are illegal in the United States, acts of blatant racism, such as racial slurs, are less common. However the institutional, cultural, and interpersonal effects of racism continue. Color-blind racism is the new racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Collins, 2005). Color-blind racism is the phenomena of people acting in ways that support racial inequity while saying that their behavior is not racist behavior. An example of color-blind racism is on the construction jobsite when all of the racial minorities are let go, and employers may say racism is not present on the job. If racism were truly not present, there would be a measure of diversity in who was laid off. Color-blind racism is the crazy-making practice of continually telling people race has nothing to do with an experience while continuing the practice of conscious and unconscious behaviors that promote racial discrimination.

A component of color-blindness is aversive prejudice or racism which states that racism may not manifest in outright hostility, but rather more as discomfort and avoidance of stigmatized groups by the dominant group (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Aversive racism is present when individuals state that they believe in equality and continue to hold unconscious racist attitudes and beliefs towards people of color (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). Aversive racism has both situational and ideological components. With aversive racism, there is a situational ambiguity where Whites may be more likely to help Blacks and Whites

equally in one-to-one situations. However, in a group, Whites are more likely to help Whites and assume that someone is helping the Black person. The ideological ambiguity of aversive prejudice manifests when a philosophical ideology is used to justify discriminatory practices. Aversive prejudice also manifests in the shifting criteria of who qualifies for positions. For example, employers may say no qualified candidates from minority groups applied. However, a critical question in this regard may ask, “What does it mean to be qualified?” and “Who is qualified?”

In the realm of work, microaggressions occur at the levels of recruitment, retention, and promotion (Sue, 2010). Therefore, Black women workers deal with a myriad of challenges. Women report the racist and gendered microaggression of not receiving a job interview when their names are Afrocentric sounding, and being told that the position is filled when employers see them in person (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Extra job training has not necessarily yielded greater employment opportunities for Black women as many report being retrained and not finding employers willing to offer them job opportunities to apply their skills.

In their study of Black women, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) note that invisibility syndrome is present in the lives of Black women. An invisibility syndrome occurs when the talents, abilities, and character of Black men are not acknowledged or valued by the larger society (Franklin, 1999). This invisibility allows White coworkers to be blatantly insensitive, racist, sexist, and hurtful, and can mean that Black women are continually given menial tasks in a predominately White workplace (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Often, in workplace recruitment, retention, and promotion there is a denial of racism or discrimination. For example employers may say they invite women and people of color to apply to their workplace. However, this invitation may not be followed with wide advertisement of the position or targeted outreach to ensure a diverse pool of applicants. The result is that the pool of applicants is not diverse, and that the person hired is the same racial demographic as the employer. In short people of color may not hear about job openings in order to apply. When they do apply they are often overlooked for the position.

A color/gender-blind message in workplaces is a message that all employees are the same. Race, gender, and sexual orientation are minimized and disregarded. This approach focuses on similarities, shared goals, and a group identity that is unsupportive of difference. Within this color/gender-blind approach the group identity is determined by the dominant group (Sue, 2010). Within the trades this color/gender-blind rhetoric has been picked up by White male workers to undermine affirmative action goals to bring more women and people of color into the industry. For women and minority groups difference and its impact on the way they are treated in the workplace is a reality that has to be negotiated. In a trades culture, for example, a color/gender-blind message communicates to a Black woman that she is to assimilate to a White male workplace that is not willing to talk about difference.

A latent ideology in a color/gender-blind approach is a belief in the meritocracy. This is based on the notions that individuals have what they have because they worked for it and have received no personal or structural advantage to attain their position, and that the experience of all social groups is the same. However, this approach fails to

acknowledge the institutional and cultural protection of White workers, which have contributed to the racial wealth divide in the United States.

In the trades, this idea of sameness is often put forward by employers. Organizations may not realize that their ideas of effective leadership and the subsequent behaviours are culture bound (Sue, 2008). Hence the contributions of non-dominant group members can be dismissed or rendered invisible. Color-blind philosophies build mistrust among people of color as they are indicative of an unexamined racist edge on the part of the employer. Employers who intentionally promote valuing multicultural diversity and difference tend to be more welcoming of targeted minority groups (Purdie-Vaughns, Davis, Steele, & Ditlmann, 2008). True multiculturalism must show diverse people at all levels of the organization (Sue, 2008; Sue, 2010).

In a study of Black women in various work environments, Hughes and Dodge (1997) state that Black women working in predominately White environments report more discrimination than Black women in predominately Black or more integrated workplaces. The presence of institutional discrimination and interpersonal prejudice are key indicators of job quality as opposed to other stressors such as poor supervision, heavy workloads, and mundane work (Hughes & Dodge, 1997). Workplace bullying causes emotional distress and has a negative impact on the work productivity of employees of color. Workplace bullying manifests in overt and covert acts of racism that include racist jokes, rudeness, neglect, isolation, and unfair treatment (Sue, 2010). The combination of microaggressions peer-to-peer and supervisor-towards-subordinate combined with microaggressive organizational policies and practices create a toxic organizational culture and climate that can result in minority groups feeling so psychologically distressed that

they leave the workplace (Sue, Lin, & Rivera, 2009). Microaggressions from supervisor-to-employee cause people to leave the workplace more so than peer-to-peer microaggressions (Sue, 2010).

Black women working in the service industry, and semi-skilled and unskilled labor report more institutional discrimination than Black women in more skilled professions. However, both groups report similar instances of interpersonal bias (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Tokenism or being one of a handful of Black employees leads to a heightened stress to perform and prove one's worth (Reskin, McBrier, & Kmec, 1999). Tokens are more visible and are harshly judged. Black women also report struggling to judge whether they are being discriminated against because of their race or gender or if it is a personal complaint in the workplace (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

SEXISM IN THE TRADES

Manifestations of sexism in the U.S. construction industry include slurs, derogatory language, wrongful termination, violence, a disregard for safety concerns, patronizing behavior on the job, a hostile work environment, stereotyping, lack of sanitary facilities, and accusations of reverse discrimination (Health and Safety of Women in Construction workgroup, Occupational Safety and Health Administration & Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, Department of Labor, 1999; Oregon Consortium, 1996; Padavic, 1991b). Sue's (2010) definition of gender microaggressions can offer a useful way to think about sexism in the trades. Gender microaggressions can happen between men and women both within and across racial groups. Sue (2010) writes:

> Similar to racial microaggressions, gender microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal or behavioural indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative gender slights and insults that potentially have a harmful impact on women. […] Gender microaggressions are often visited upon women by well-intentioned men who themselves may be unaware of the role they play in inflicting psychological harm on their female counterparts, in restricting career and job choices, in creating a lower standard of living for them, and in perpetuating inequities in employment and health care (p. 164).

Byrd in her research on tradeswomen, (2007) describes manifestations of sexism in the trades as part of a "culture of disrespect" that targets women in the industry. This culture is destructive to both men and women in the trades. The following is discussion of the major contributing components to this culture of disrespect: patriarchy and rigid masculinity, disregard for women's safety; violence, and day to day sexism that reminds women they are not wanted on the job.

Patriarchy and Masculinity: The presence of women in the trades challenges a rigid masculine gender identity that is tied to a concept that well-paid, physically challenging, and dangerous work is the domain of men. This manifests in hostility towards female "interlopers" (Padavic, 1991b). This places a high toll on women and makes it hard for them to stay in the trades as women feel a constant need to prove themselves on the job (Eisenberg, 1998). This notion of masculinity is steeped in patriarchal notions of male-dominance, heterosexuality, and control. The culture of the trades is defined by male bonding and the notion that women are different to men (Applebaum, 1981). The subordination of women is kept in place by the use of economic control, threats of violence, and homophobia (Pharr, 1988).

Gender stereotyping has changed little over time. Sex-role stereotyping, like racial stereotyping, has the effect of causing women to disengage from fields where they are under-represented. Women also face the threat of being stereotyped, and can internalize negative conceptions of the self put forward by stereotypes. Prescriptive stereotypes (how behavior should be), descriptive stereotypes (ideas about how they are), and rigid gender-role beliefs are geared towards the control of women (Fiske, 1993). Descriptive stereotypes put forward false concepts about women, such as women are emotional, illogical, and sensitive. Prescriptive stereotypes state how women should think, feel, and behave (Fiske & Stevens, 1993).

Microaggressions that are geared towards how women should behave are highly destructive. Women on construction sites report being punished by male colleagues for being on the jobsite (LaTour, 2008; Schroedel, 1985). Contractors are complicit in keeping women out of the trades when they implicitly or explicitly hold the stereotype that women cannot do "such difficult work." When employers hire only a handful of token women, and these women do not succeed, it reinforces the stereotype that women simply do not want these jobs. Some employers may say that women do not work hard or fast enough to meet productivity and that their physical stature is a liability as they may be more prone to injury (Byrd, 2007). Such beliefs carry the gendered microaggression that women are second class citizens, and do not deserve the same opportunities, benefits, or privileges as men.

Tradeswomen also experience sexist humor among their male colleagues. Sexist humor serves to (1) play out gendered stereotypes, (2) make fun of and demean women, (3) foster socially inappropriate behavior towards women, (4) culturally condition men

and women to sex roles, and (5) reinforce cultural ideologies of men as superior to women (Eckman & Friesen, 1982). When this humor is sanctioned on the jobsite, it sends the message to women that they are not wanted. When women speak up, they may be met with privileged resistance from males who say women are forcing them to change.

Safety: In the studies of tradeswomen, researchers find that a hostile workplace, limited access to sanitary toilets, lack of protective clothing and ergonomically correct equipment, and limited on-the-job training were significant issues that negatively impacted women's ability to safely perform their jobs (Health and Safety of Women in Construction Workgroup, Occupational Safety and Health Administration & Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, Department of Labor, 1999). A hostile work environment is a safety hazard as it results in people not receiving adequate training, which leads to on-the-job injuries, carelessness, being unwilling to take adequate safety precautions, and direct violence such as purposefully dropping hammers on a woman walking past (Schroedel, 1985).

Further, women have reported being "tested" by their male coworkers and asked to lift more than the men would normally lift alone. This kind of behavior contributes to injuries and prohibits people from asking for help when they need it. A tradeswoman says: "Women injure themselves more than the men because they refuse help, and they are not allowed to ask for help, and it's a much bigger deal if a woman asks for help" (Health and Safety of Women in Construction Workgroup, Occupational Safety and Health Administration & Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, Department of Labor, 1999, p. 7).

A lack of sanitary facilities is a common feature on the jobsite. Most construction sites use portable toilets. It is now mandated that men and women have separate toilets on jobsites. Men and women express dissatisfaction with dirty facilities or lack of toilets. However, women report working in areas where the toilet facilities for women are inaccessible or it takes an inordinate amount of time to get to the facilities (Eisenberg, 1998). Some women opt out of going to the bathroom at work, or only using the bathroom off site during their lunch breaks. This is problematic as it puts strain on one's kidneys and can lead to urinary tract infections. For women who are breastfeeding and menstruating, this is a compounded problem as there is not an adequate place to address simple bodily concerns. Privacy is also a concern on jobsites where women report that their toilets have been marked with peepholes, and some toilets have no tops and can be seen from above (Applebaum, 1999).

The trades are beginning to use more ergonomically correct clothing, protective gear, and tools. Attention to safety is positive for all aspects of the construction trades (Byrd, 2001; Byrd, 2007). People with smaller hands or less-upper body strength can now perform the tasks required. Further, the more common use of pallet jacks and lifting devices helps preserve workers bodies and limits injuries. Unsafe equipment and ill-fitting safety harnesses are hazardous and have jeopardized the health and safety of women (Health and Safety of Women in Construction Workgroup, Occupational Safety and Health Administration & Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, Department of Labor, 1999). Unfair expectations to lift more than is required has contributed to women leaving the industry (Chicago Women in Trades, 1992).

Violence: Violence is a mechanism of social control. It is used to maintain unequal power relations and limit a person's sense of autonomy. The presence of violence, of which sexual harassment is a tool, undermines women's confidence. The fear of violence is an indicator of gendered and complex power relations (Koskela, 1997). Sexual objectification is a gender microaggression that reduces women to physical appearance and/or sexuality. Sexual harassment is common on the jobsite. A *USA Today* newspaper report of female construction workers found that female construction workers had the second highest rate of sexual harassment complaints per 100,000 employed people (Health and Safety of Women in Construction workgroup & Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, 1999). Complaints included being asked for sex, being stared at constantly, having pranks played on them, having men expose themselves to them, the spreading of rumors, inappropriate touches, working around pin-ups of soft porn, unwanted sexual remarks, rumors about their jobs being linked to sexual favors, threats of physical harm, and having people make assumptions and comments about their sexual preference (Chicago Women in Trades, 1992; Health and Safety of Women in Construction workgroup, Occupational Safety and Health Administration & Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, Department of Labor, 1999).

Moir *et al*. in their review of the literature on tradeswomen (2011) asserts that the culture of machismo, limited supervision on the job, and working in small, dark work spaces renders women vulnerable to sexual harassment on the construction site. Denissen's (2010a) ethnographic study of tradeswomen's experiences of sexual harassment states that tradeswomen negotiate their tolerance of sexual harassment based on their perception of threat in the workplace. Women are forced to weigh whether to

speak out against sexual harassment and jeopardize their ability to be on the job with tolerating harassment. Tradeswomen might initially try to address the unwanted behavior one-to-one and attempt to maintain good relationships on the job. Tradeswomen tend to respond more assertively to sexual harassment when the behaviors escalate, become personal, or a third party supports their experience. Women tend to use informal responses to manage these challenging interactions. Denissen (2010a) writes:

> Informal responses are not a substitute for sexual harassment law, but informal responses can be effective tools for responding to unwanted sexual conduct when combined with more strongly enforced sexual harassment laws (p. 323).

Black women experience sexual assault and harassment in the workplace, and African American women living in poverty are more likely to experience sexual harassment than their White peers (Wyatt & Riederle, 1995). Further, Wyatt and Riederle (1995) state that White women are more likely to report instances of sexual harassment than their Black peers. Black women have continually been affronted with stereotypes of hyper-heterosexuality of Black women, the stigma of an “inherent” biological Blackness, and notions of the angry Black bitch which stigmatizes Black poor and working class women as aggressive, undisciplined, and unruly (Collins, 2005). The rape and sexual harassment of Black women by White men has been a feature of racism in the United States throughout slavery and the Jim Crow era (Wilkerson, 2010). Black women during this time received little to no legal recourse when sexually violated. Though Black women today have more legal rights to bring legal action against perpetrators of sexual harassment a history of institutional neglect and the negative stereotyping of Black

women as responsible for the attacks continue to limit the effectiveness of the Black women who do speak out against harassment.

Byrd (1999) writes: “Some women, afraid of being labeled lesbians or feminists, refuse to associate with other women on the job, or join in with their male co-workers in spreading rumors about other women workers” (p 15). This internalized sexism also results in women’s participation in lateral violence one to another. Many women may not want to acknowledge that they deal with gender discrimination at all in the workplace and work very hard to become asexual in the workplace (Rosener, 1995). This survival tactic also contributes to maintaining the status quo hence, a component of organizing with tradeswomen is to address internalized sexism and women’s relationships with each other.

Day to day sexism: Across the board, first- and second-term construction apprentices are at the greatest risk for injury due to inexperience in such a fast paced environment where accidents can happen quickly (Williams, 2008). Entry-level apprentices, are given the least appealing, most routine jobs. There may be a period of hazing as well. However, for women, this period and experience may go on indefinitely, resulting in some women quitting because they become exhausted with the environment (Ferguson & Sharples, 1994). This reinforces negative stereotypes that women did not like the work. However, the gendered microaggressions of being treated as invisible and second-class on the jobsite contribute to women’s departure from the workforce. When women are only given women light work, they are not trained as well-rounded construction workers.

Glick and Fisk (1996) put forward the idea of benevolent sexism as opposed to hostile sexism. Both types of sexism shared common stereotypes of women; however, benevolent sexists had more paternalistic ideas of women. Benevolent sexism held up notions of males as female protectors and women as admired for their roles as wives and mothers over other roles. Benevolent sexism appeared innocuous; however, it was based on idealized stereotypes of women that are both controlling and harmful.

Women in the workplace also face the denial of the reality of sexism. This experience, similar to color-blindness, serves to invalidate women's experience of sexism. It is steeped in notions that sexism is a thing of the past and women have achieved advantages over men. This denial may blame the victim and trivialize the sexist incident (Sue 2010). This denial of sexism can be on the part of employers saying, "There is no sexism here," and on the part of individual males who may deny their sexism. Aversive sexism operates in similar ways to aversive racism.

Sue (2010) asserts:

> One major speculation is that overt sexists are not the ones who contribute to inequities in employment, healthcare, and education, or to the detrimental psychological consequences experienced by women, but rather well-intentioned men, who believe in sexual equality and would never consciously or deliberately discriminate. As men, we have been culturally conditioned through a socio-political process that denigrates the importance of women, objectifies them, and views them as inferior beings. On the other hand, we may hold conscious beliefs of equality between the sexes, yet at another level also hold unconscious or hidden biases and negative attitudes toward women (p. 176-177).

Isolation for women on the jobsite means they are not part of the network of men on the job. At times women consciously shy away from fraternizing with their male colleagues due to fear of being stereotyped or exposed to sexist jokes. However, sexism

in the trades can also manifest in men refusing to work with tradeswomen (Chicago Women in Trades, 1992). Failure to connect with the network on the job can mean that women are not carried to the next job. Limited connections on the job also result in inadequate training. Women also report having few mentors on the job. The presence of mentors can help reduce isolation, improve performance, and protect women from some of the adverse effects of sexism on the jobsite (Arvidson, 1997).

SUMMARY

To more deeply understand the experiences of Black tradeswomen it is important to explore the theoretical literature around Black women and work, and the literature on women in the building trades. I am specifically interested in how Black tradeswomen navigate and make meaning of their trades careers. Research has been done to collect the stories of tradeswomen and to hear their experiences of life on the job (Byrd, 1999; Eisenberg, 1998; LaTour, 2008; Martin, 1997; Price, 2007; Reith Schroedel, 1985). This research has examined the barriers for women in blue-collar careers and charted the presence of these pioneer women in the trades. However, we remain with the reality that the number of women coming into the trades in 2011 has shrunk when compared to women's entrance into the trades in 1980. We are also faced with the reality that the racial wealth divide between Black and White America is growing with Black Americans experiencing disproportionate economic losses from the current economic recession, which began in 2007, when compared to their White counterparts (Austin, 2011**).**

Present cultural and structural oppression in the trades has a historical context. The following chapter seeks to provide a historical context of the experiences of Black

men in the trades and the tradeswomen movement. An understanding of the social dynamics of oppression, coupled with historical context helps frame Black tradeswomen's contemporary experiences.

STRUGGLES FOR EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN THE TRADES

Apprenticeships are a gateway to the trades and have historically been the entry point for women and people of color into formal construction careers. The 1937 Fitzgerald Act established the federal and state certification standards which created the modern apprenticeship system. The U.S. government's involvement in apprenticeship is low. The government helps develop, monitor, and establish apprenticeship programs; sets certification and training standards for apprentices; and promotes equal opportunity and affirmative action goals (Glover & Bilginsoy, 2005). Trade unions represent 20 to 25 percent of the construction workforce, with most of this work comprising commercial and public projects (Center to Protect Worker's Rights, 2002). Unions have supported the creation of a trained pool of skilled workers through their investment in apprenticeship.

The U.S. apprenticeship system has been a site of civil rights struggle for people of color and women. Men of color gained entrance into formal apprenticeships through the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent legal and community organizing efforts to bring more men of color into high wage unionized jobs. The civil rights advances of men of color in the 1960s and 1970s, specifically the efforts of African American men, laid the legal groundwork for women's entrance into the apprenticeship system in 1978. This chapter offers an overview of the apprenticeship system and a discussion of the organizing efforts of African American men and the tradeswomen movement.

APPRENTICESHIPS

The U.S. construction industry is divided into three sectors: (1) private commercial construction, for example, building large skyscrapers, (2) private residential

construction, and (3) public works construction, for example, building roads and infrastructure. Residential construction is largely the domain of smaller private contractors. This work is not as well paid as that of commercial or public projects, and tends to be unstable as projects may be short in duration and inconsistent. However, this sector is an anchor of the industry and is heavily connected to the economic health of the U.S. economy (Byrd, 2007). Private commercial and public construction is the domain of large firms, capable of competing for projects ranging from $5 million to $50 million, and some smaller emerging small businesses capable of handling projects worth $50,000 to $100,000. The domain of union apprenticeships is largely that of public works construction.

U.S. construction contractors invest in apprenticeship on a limited basis; significantly less than their international counterparts. This is partly due to worker mobility and the cyclical nature of the work, and partly because community colleges tend to focus on workforce development for the industry (Byrd, 2007). Union contractors pay into joint union-management training trusts, and take their workers from the union hiring halls. The union training centers provide journeymen continuing education, and national and international trade-specific journeymen certification. Non-union apprenticeship programs are funded by signatory contractors who commit to taking apprentices from their apprenticeship program. With a tradition of training built into their structure, unions provide 70 percent of apprenticeship training in the United States (Center to Protect Worker's Rights, 2002).

Trades careers are highly sought after, the wages are high, and the entry requirements appear deceptively easy -- all that is required is a high school diploma or

graduate equivalency certification and a driver's license. For the more mathematically technical trades, such as Electrical and Pipefitting, extra math and science courses may be required. The apprenticeship application process can be challenging, with preference given to people with trades-related experience. Upon entrance into an apprenticeship, apprentices are expected to work for an employer who is registered as a training agent for their trade. Each year the apprentice is expected to complete about 2,000 work hours. If they are able to work regularly, apprentices -- whose starting hourly wage is about sixty percent of the journey wage -- receive a pay increase every six months or so until they complete the program and receive the journey-level wage.

In union programs, apprentices join the union upon entering their apprenticeship. Having joined the union, an apprentice agrees to only work for union contractors within their trade. If caught working for a non-union contractor, a union member will be put out of the union and lose their accrued benefits. Union wages run from $12 to $35 plus benefits and pensions. Non-union wages may be substantially lower, and do not necessarily include benefits. Skilled tradespeople earn from $550 to $800 per week (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

Apprentices work closely with a journeyperson to learn aspects of their trade and also attend classes for weeks at a time to learn more of their trade. For many apprenticeship programs, training earned through apprenticeship classes can be applied to an associate's degree in construction science. Upon completing apprenticeship programs, which generally run between one and five years, apprentices *turn-out* or *journey-out* and receive their journeycard, a license of their matriculation. This card means that they can work anywhere in the United States and earn the top wage for their trade.

Apprentice retention rates in union programs are markedly higher than are recorded in non-union apprenticeship programs (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2003; Bilginsoy, 2007). Unions tend to put apprentices to work on both prevailing wage and private jobs, ensuring a greater skill rotation. The Davis-Bacon Act came into effect in 1931 and stipulates that all federally funded contracts over $2,000 pay their workers "prevailing wages" that follow union scale wages and provide benefits. Prevailing wage work incentivizes contractors to employ apprentices on their crews. White unions have historically benefitted from the enforcement of Davis-Bacon requirements. Though civil rights leaders shy away from addressing Davis-Bacon as a discriminatory law in a briefing paper Bernsetin (1993) asserts that Davis-Bacon was passed with discriminatory intent to protect the wages of Whites and the continued enforcement of Davis-Bacon has a discriminatory effect on Blacks today. Work on Davis-Bacon projects is attractive as it is well paid. Workplace discrimination may mean it is difficult for women and people of color to get on those jobs.

Apprentices may leave apprenticeships because (1) the apprentice becomes dissatisfied with the trade or their training agent, or the training agent decides to terminate the apprentice; (2) the necessary skills have been acquired and more training will not benefit the applicant; or (3) the completion of a certain number of classes and on-the-job training hours, thus apprentices journey-out of apprenticeship and receive their journeycard (Williams, 2008). An apprentice may quit because they can earn more money outside of apprenticeship in the trades or in another industry, or the journey-wage is not high enough to warrant completing apprenticeship. For many people, the money may be an attraction to enter the trades but good wages may not outweigh the negatives

of working in a hostile environment or dissatisfaction with the nature of the work over the long-term. High start-up costs, union dues and fees, transportation issues, and childcare costs also contribute to people opting out of the industry due to lack of foundational support (Williams, 2008).

Berik, Bilginsoy, and Williams (2008) state that, on average, apprentices completed two thirds of the 8,000 training hours required to turn-out of apprenticeship. On average, men completed 80 percent of their training requirements, and women journeyed out at 56 percent of their training requirements (Barron, Black, & Loewenstein, 1993). These statistics speak to gender inequities in the training of women and men in apprenticeships. Men tend to receive longer apprenticeship training than women. This gender inequity means that apprenticeships are investing more in tradesmen than they are in tradeswomen. Women may be passed quickly through their apprenticeship thereby undertraining them for the trade. For women becoming a journeyperson prematurely can mean that their skill development is not equivalent to their rank. This can make women vulnerable on the job –- they can be easily dismissed as ineffective or pigeon-holed into lesser skilled jobs.

Hispanics' apprenticeship performance tends to be commensurate with Whites. The differential in apprenticeship graduation rates between Whites and Blacks remains large (Bilginsoy, 2007). These statistics combine the graduation rates of men and women. Women and men of color tend to register in larger apprenticeships, with a concentration in the foundational building trades of carpentry and laborer although they tend to fare better in smaller apprenticeship programs. However, Black women may leave the trades and be unlikely to earn the same high wages that they could during apprenticeships.

There is no evidence to support the notion that people who are leaving the industry are qualified to gain entry into high-skill White collar jobs (Berik, Bilginsoy, & Williams, 2008)

BLACK MEN IN THE TRADES

Until the 1960s, the majority of the construction workforce was almost entirely White males. Nepotism had a part in ensuring that apprenticeships were passed from father to son or to nephew. The friends, brothers, in-laws network, commonly called the FBI, has contributed significantly to the culture of the trades as predominately White male, with generations of families working in the industry. Both union and non-union employers refused to hire workers who would not be readily accepted by existing workers, thus perpetuating prejudice and an exclusive workforce (Byrd, 2004, 2007).

In the antebellum South Blacks worked in the trades as both skilled and unskilled labor. The development of unions during this time served to limit the presence of Blacks in industrial organizations and kept them in menial positions (Applebaum, 1999). European immigrants benefitted from unionized labor and sought to keep people of color out of White controlled unions and off union jobs. This practice relegated Black men to low-wage, unskilled labor positions. At the turn of the century Blacks were in segregated unions, earned low wages, and were excluded from skilled trades. Segregated unions also served to limit the bargaining power of Blacks within unions (Hill, 1989). However, segregated unions did provide a forum for Black men to control their finances and organize.

Applebaum (1999) in his anthropological study of the construction industry writes of White resistance to the advancement of racial minorities in the trades:

> Contemporary racial patterns of employment are the consequence of the white working class establishing its turf and unwilling to give it up or sacrifice any of it to advance the interests of minority workers. This is why changes in racial employment, as represented by affirmative action and other programs, is so bitterly resisted and why job inequality is so deeply rooted in certain industries, particularly the construction industry (p.154).

The 1960s Civil Rights movement began to challenge racist hiring practices and the discriminatory apprenticeship application process excluding people who did not have experience. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 meant that the building trades could no longer exclude men of color from apprenticeships, and was initially drafted to protect the civil rights of Black men. The introduction of women as a protected status from workplace discrimination was included in the legislation at the last minute as way of derailing the legislation (Moccio, 2009). As in the case of the suffrage movement, women's entrance into the trades followed that of men of color.

African-American civil rights groups, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League group, led efforts to promote affirmative action requirements and bring minority men into apprenticeships despite fierce opposition from unions including the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations). Civil rights struggle, legal processes, and direct action in the 1960s and 1970s were responsible for the increased numbers of men of color in the trades (Moccio, 2009).

In general, men of color make up 20-24 percent of the construction workforce. Racist and sexist hiring practices continue to limit the presence of women and people of color in the trades. Though the numbers of Black men have increased in the trades they have yet to reach parity with their percentage of the general population. For example Applebaum (1999) states that construction grew in New York from 1980 to 1990, but covert exclusionary practices meant Blacks had less share of the job market than they did in 1980. Union political power to limit the effectiveness of affirmative action measures and the informal hiring and training practices of White networks continue to limit the advancement of Blacks in the trades (Applebaum, 1999). Price in her study of the racialized hierarchy of workers on highway construction projects in three major U.S. cities (2002) notes a higher concentration of White men and women in higher status, less physical trades and a concentration of Blacks and Latinos in lesser status, physically demanding trades (p. 102). Blacks remain overrepresented among laborers and underrepresented in the skilled trade.

Black trade unionists have fought hard for interracial unionism and the protection of working-class conditions. Needleman in her study of Black trade unionists in the steel industry (2003) states:

> The African American struggle was key to the establishment of seniority rights, promotional opportunities, and whatever fairness still exists in the U.S. workplace. Like the black soldiers in both wars, they fought on two fronts and raised the sign of the double V: victory at home and abroad. In the case of steelworkers, the double V stood for victory against racism, in the workplace and in the union (p. 241).

Within the trades there are some groups which developed an organizing agenda for economic and racial justice such as the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), the Senior Constituency Group of the AFL-CIO, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC). Such organizations provide advocacy, networking, and education supports for Black tradespeople. Different trades also have various advocacy groups for people of color and women such as the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus (EWMC) within the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). Hispanic and Black tradesmen started the EWMC in 1974 to advocate for more representation of people of color in the trades. With the entrance of women into the trades, women became active members of EWMC.

WOMEN IN THE TRADES

In 2010, women made up 47 percent of the U.S. labor force. Of those women only 0.9 percent were employed in natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). Nationally, women's share in the construction trades from 1989-2003 was at 2.4 percent with women's representation concentrated in the ten largest trades. The combined participation of Black women and Latinas in the trades has never surpassed 0.5 percent (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2006).

The passage of Title IX in 1972 meant high schools could no longer label wood shop, automotive, and other trades-related classes as "boys-only." With pressure from the women's rights movement, apprenticeships were legally forced to open for women in 1978 with the signing of an Executive Order by President Jimmy Carter (Glover, Harlan, & Steinberg, 1989). This Executive Order mandated that female participation be counted

as a protected status on federally funded construction projects. Federal law stipulated that after 1980, contractors would hire women as 6.9 percent of the workforce on federal construction jobs and mandated that contractors would maintain a harassment free workplace.

In 1980, during Ronald Reagan's presidency, the women's movement into the trades came to a halt with the administration's affront to the affirmative action measures fought for by civil rights activists and women (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2001). His office removed the oversight of the inclusion of minority men and women into apprenticeship programs from the jurisdiction of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC). He also gave industry boards control over their own compliance, thus severely limiting the effectiveness of antidiscrimination legislation (Moccio, 2009). By 1990, women represented 4.5 percent of the construction workforce, and were concentrated in the largest ten trades (General Office of Accounting, 1992). Though now legally accessible, discrimination and social barriers result in an important and lucrative employment sector that is virtually "off-limits" to women.

Unions have not had a clean history of inviting and retaining women and men of color (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2002; Berik & Bilginsoy, 2006; Bukowski, 1999; Bukowski, 2001; LaTour, 2008;), yet they remain the best vehicle for women to operate successfully in the trades (O'Farrell & Moore, 1993). Nationally, women in unions have fared better in the trades than non-union women. That said, unions have been slow to address sexual harassment, hazing, and racism. From 1995 to 2003, women were twice as likely to be enrolled in union apprenticeships over non-union programs. Women were more likely to successfully complete union apprenticeships (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2006). Thirty-two

percent of women complete union apprenticeships, versus 43 percent of men. Sixteen percent of women complete non-union apprenticeships, versus 27 percent of men.

Union sponsorship is not sufficient to incorporate women into the construction trades, though it is necessary. Policy and behavior changes on the part of unions, government, and contractors were necessary to bring more women into the industry and to improve their working conditions said Berik and Bilginsoy (2001, p. 321). Black men and White women in union programs share similar rates of completion. Whereas Black women report the lowest numbers for completion (Berik and Bilginsoy, 2006).

Once dispatched, women continually report experiences of isolation, sexual harassment, endangerment, and poor training from male co-workers (Martin, 1997). Black women may experience greater danger on the job than other women, and are exposed to greater disrespect and slurs (Eisenberg, 1998). Barring cultural and structural barriers, single lower-wage earning women are more open to entering the trades (Padavic, 1991a). However, the inflexibility of construction careers means women trade childcare concerns for higher wages. Black women seem to have stronger kinship networks to help with childcare needs than their White counterparts. Construction culture is persistently male, and gives little credence to childcare concerns (Briggs, 1974). Further women report being deterred from entering due to fears of lack of acceptance by male coworkers (Denissen, 2010b)

The beginnings of unions softening to the presence of White women and men of color may be due to legal suits brought against them, or as realization of the need to be more demographically diverse in order to sustain the union. In her ethnographic study of the tensions around race, gender, and organized labor in the trades, Paap (2008)

highlights how ideologies of colorblindness and the denial of sexism and racism limit the effectiveness of union leadership to be responsive to matters of discrimination or harassment at work. Union representatives find themselves pressured by the traditional White male worker who feels victimized by any concessions made to include people of color and women in the industry. This divisive tension limits the ability for the creation of interracial, gender inclusive, class-based solidarity within unions. Paap (2008) states:

> On a most basic level, these divisions clearly prevent the class-based solidarity that will be essential to reviving the American labor movement. White women, white men, and men and women of color must see their interests as unified through the union if they are going to work for the union. As it currently stands, it appears that none of these groups see their interests adequately addressed. (p. 389)

Black trade unionists from the steel industry strategically used internal coalition-building within unions to push for workers' rights and the inclusion of people of color into the industry (Needleman, 2003). This strategy of internal coalition-building within unions is necessary for the long-term success of unions.

Tradeswomen groups have been a consistent presence in the industry since women entered the trades in the late 1970s. There are over 50 such groups across the country with varying degrees of membership and political organization. Groups such as ANEW, Chicago Women and Trades, and Sisters in the Building Trades have provided targeted women focused outreach services, construction readiness classes, tool assistance, mentorship for new tradeswomen, and long-term networking opportunities for more seasoned tradeswomen. Such organizations began as self-help groups for tradeswomen to come together to discuss ways of surviving workplace conflict, and some have developed into not-for-profit organizations offering pre-apprenticeship training. Women of color are

represented in tradeswomen organizations. The National Association of Women of Color in Construction (NAWCC) is the only organization in the United States that exclusively seeks to serve the needs of women of color in construction.

My employer Ready Tradeswomen[5] was one such women-focused pre-apprenticeship program. The organization began in 1989 as a tradeswomen support group and in the late 1990s developed into a non-profit organization that provided pre-apprenticeship training for women. Pre-apprenticeship programs developed to integrate, prepare, and support women and men of color to enter the construction trades. These programs provide community outreach and recruitment, case management, employment referrals, placement information, support, and retention services. Pre-apprenticeship programs have received little federal governmental support. In 2004 the Bush administration cut a $1-million grant from the Women in Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Occupations (WANTO) Act of 1992 (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2006). This grant was seed-funding for women focused pre-apprenticeship programs across the country.

Ready Tradeswomen offers a five to six-week pre-apprenticeship program, which runs over three days a week. Between 20 and 40 women begin the program. The program, offered multiple times a year, concentrates on tool familiarization, construction preparedness, safety training, physical fitness, industry site visits, and project based-skill development led by female instructors where women build lasting structures for community organizations. Examples of building projects include fences, laying flooring,

[5] Pseudonym

hanging drywall, and metal-stud framing. Participants also earn industry-recognized certifications to make them more qualified to employers and apprenticeship programs.

Women come to Ready Tradeswomen from varying socio-economic backgrounds, levels of athleticism, education backgrounds, races, and age levels. Women have differing amounts of knowledge about the trades and the apprenticeship system. Some women come because they need a job. Women are referred to the office by various social services agencies working to lift people out of poverty. Some women are post-incarceration and view the trades as one of the few avenues of employment that will accept people with a legal history. Some women long to work with their hands, but have never been given the chance. They feel this women-centered program is their opportunity to at least try working with tools. Some women come to the program because they see themselves as trailblazers within the women's movement. They want to be tradeswomen wielding a jack hammer or driving a front loader. Some women come because they are athletic, hate the idea of working in an office, and have been doing some type of trades work all their lives.

The women who complete Ready Tradeswomen's program are then coached on how to apply for apprenticeship programs and network with potential employers. The recession set in soon after I began my post. It was challenging to place the pool of talent we had at the ready. Employers were not interested in green talent. They were trying to keep existing, talent -- largely White males – working. As a career counselor I realized I needed to be realistic with women about the industry they were trying to enter. The industry has high standards around punctuality, regular work attendance, long hours, and hard manual labor. It also had long periods of lay-offs, bias against women, and lag times

between getting into apprenticeships and actually going to work. Entering the trades could take a few months after our training, or even longer.

Preparing women for entrance into the trades is challenging. Scherwig (2009), in her study of pre-apprenticeship programs across the United States, highlights the challenges of training programs in preparing women to enter the trades. Her interview with Los Angeles based pre-apprenticeship program Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER), spoke of the reality check required for women who enter pre-apprenticeship in hopes of becoming tradeswomen. WINTER reports:

> People come and we are very realistic about the jobs we do not withhold anything we say this is a hard, hard job. If you want to have your earrings on, if you want to have jewelry on, if you're going to be worrying about your hands or your make-up or your hair, you can leave now. If you think this is an easy job and easy money, you can leave now. If you're looking for a job, you can leave now these-are not jobs these are careers – that means you have to invest in time and in learning and in hard work to get to a certain point which is a career. People when we tell them that they look at us like 'what do you mean this is not a job?' – No it's not a job, you want a job go work for Wal-Mart (*large department/variety store*) that's a job, these are careers. So we talk very bluntly about what the careers are – now we'll tell them confined spaces is part of what you are going to do so if your afraid spiders, if you are afraid of dark spaces this is not the job for you. We don't want them to go and apply with the electricians and they have to crawl in that tube right there and then say 'Nobody told me I would need to do this' you know, so we are very frank about what the careers are, so somebody says 'I wanna be a welder', so OK this is the equipment you need to use can you handle that? If your claustrophobic and you have to wear a mask you are not going to be able to do the job (p. 25).

The socialization of women has an impact on their desires to enter this field. Women are not largely socialized to work outdoors in difficult weather, to do heavy physical dangerous labor, or to work in predominately male environments. Women may also internalize these stereotypes, thus limiting the types of careers for which they will

apply. In contrast, young men are socialized towards the trades through exposure to shop classes, an emphasis on math and science, and an expectation that they can perform manual tasks and to think of themselves as physical workers. Further, boys who grow up in construction families are provided the opportunity to learn on the job skills from their family network. As they mature, they are then introduced to people who could potentially hire them.

A number of tradeswomen advocacy and support organizations across the United States have developed outreach and training to youth as part of their programming. To recruit more women into the trades, efforts have been made to introduce girls to construction from middle school on, through career fairs, camps, and trades classes. Trades fairs seek to introduce women and girls to the trades in a practical and affirming setting. Organizations have also developed their youth programming by hosting summer work experiences for youth interested in construction careers. These programs are a way to introduce youth to working with their hands and expose them to the trades as a viable career pathway after high school. Outreach efforts to younger women are important. That said, Scherwig (2009) finds in her survey of pre-apprenticeship programs that the majority of the female graduates from pre-apprenticeship programs who successfully become apprentices are older women. Pre-apprenticeship programs report that younger women are not as willing to negotiate the rigid expectations of commercial construction. Educating young women about the trades may not offer the immediate pay-off that they will enter the trades upon graduation from high school. However, these efforts are part of a long-term strategy to raise the consciousness of the community about trades possibilities and value of women in the industry (Byrd, 2007).

Mentoring has been a strategy used by both pre-apprenticeship programs and apprenticeship programs to help women enter and succeed in apprenticeships. Ashbrook's (2005) study on the recruitment, training and retention of women, and youth of color in the heavy highway trades[6] states that the lack of mentoring contributed significantly to women dropping out of apprenticeships. A 1996 study of the one-on-one mentoring used by the Trades Mentor Network states that the intentional mentoring of women in the trades causes a decrease in their drop-out rates from 50 percent to 12 percent (Arvidson, 1997). Arvidson's study notes that the use of male mentors is a valuable way to cultivate male support of women in the trades. Through mentor training male mentors develop their cultural competency and enhance their skills in working with apprentices.

For many White women, their success in the trades is heightened by their ability to connect with a mentor, usually a White male, who is willing to train them and offer the wisdom of years of experience. This mentor is also able to vouch for the worth of these women as workers, and may at times prevent harassment on the job. Women of color struggle to connect with these types of mentors. Racism limits how well women of color are integrated into the construction jobsite. The women of color who succeed are more able to move between all-White, all-male environments, and among more diverse groups.

[6] Highway trades include Heavy Equipment, Cement Masons, Ironworkers, Carpenters, Laborers, and Electricians.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Despite the advent of government agencies and programs set up to monitor and ensure affirmative action standards and compliance, their success has been limited. Due to budget cuts in the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, construction contractors are rarely forced to uphold compliance stipulations, and many are found to be in noncompliance with federal standards (Bergmann, 2000). Federally funded construction projects are good places for women and men of color to gain on-the-job training hours; however once these jobs are completed many female apprentices struggle to find work, contributing to women's high attrition rate in apprenticeships (Byrd & King, 2001). On federal jobs, women and men of color have been largely brought on to meet compliance goals and have been the first to be let go once the goals had been met (Eisenberg, 1998; O'Farrell, Moore, & Cobble, 1993).

On state and local levels, there have been such efforts to include women and men of color as court-ordered affirmative action programs backed by advocacy groups, and state affirmative action regulations (Berik & Bilginsoy, 2006; Byrd & King, 2001; Price, 2002). Affirmative action programs are necessary to ensure that trained women are going to be hired (Haignere, Steinberg, & Harlan, 1989; Price, 2002). Large apprenticeship committees can cause affirmative action to succeed or fail. For example, the electrical unions are having success bringing in more women and men of color than other trades through concerted consistent efforts towards minority recruitment (Williams, 2008).

Affirmative action measures have been broken into two categories. The first category is focused on enhancing the access of minority and women-owned businesses to federally funded contracts. The second category is focused on hiring requirements of

women and minority workers on federal projects. Neither approach has yielded strong results due to fierce legal and cultural opposition from White contractors and unions (Applebaum, 1999).

Affirmative action was meant to address the discrepancy in the numbers of Blacks in contracting and the trades by removing barriers to the creation of minority-owned businesses, and the underutilization of these businesses. Barriers to the success of minority-owned firms fall into two broad categories: (1) barriers to the growth and formation of companies, and (2) struggles to participate in the government contracting process (Applebaum, 1999). Barriers to the formation of minority-owned businesses are due to (1) lack of financial capital, (2) limited business networks, (3) less education and professional training, and (4) residential segregation. Barriers to minority-owned businesses access to government contracts are due to (1) government reluctant to break large contracts into smaller ones to give smaller firms a chance of competing, (2) allowing majority contractors to waive minority subcontracting requirements, (3) poor screening of false minority contractors, (4) lack of notice about contract competitions, (5) majority prime contractors colluding with majority subcontractors to undercut minority firms subcontracting bids (Applebaum, 1999, pg. 166).

Due to the high cost of litigation and the transient nature of construction work, affirmative action has had minimal effect in the construction industry. Apprenticeship programs and federal contracts are monitored for affirmative action compliance, though very few are held accountable for failure to comply (Byrd, 2007). Byrd attributes the fierce industry competition, the cyclical nature of the industry, and the high attrition rate

of smaller firms as contributing factors to failure of affirmative action enforcement in this industry.

Berik and Bilginsoy (2006) state:

> Without renewed emphasis on the enforcement of affirmative action, in the near future, following the retirement of the current cohort of tradeswomen, the construction trades may revert to their pre-1970s state of being exclusive male occupations (p326-327).

Limited oversight hinders the efficacy of affirmative action measures. Lack of enforcement is due to the nature of the industry, and to a lack of will on the part of apprenticeships, contractors, and federal agencies to abide by affirmative action recommendations. This minimizes the presence of women in the trades.

Moir *et al.* (2011) put forward recommendations to improve the effectiveness of government enforcement of current affirmative action measures to protect women from gender discrimination on the job. Though government has the right to ban contractors from bidding on government contractors due to egregious violations of women on the job, the government has never done so. Moir's work is focused on the advancement of women in the trades. Their recommendations to strengthen affirmative action are effective to increase the numbers of women and people of color in the industry. Moir *et al.* recommend that government (1) make enforcement of equal employment a top priority; (2) bring industry and management on board to promote the economic and social benefits of hiring tradeswomen; (3) increase transparency around the enforcement of affirmative action goals, and (4) clearly publicize the enforcement of upon those who fail to reach affirmative action goals (p. 22). These recommendations do not require legal

change, and would markedly improve the work possibilities for people of color and women.

Moir *et al.* (2011) also put forward recommendations for legal changes to affirmative action that would increase the presence of women and people of color in the industry. They recommend that (1) incentives be given to industry leaders who regularly comply with affirmative action goals; (2) increase the goals for bringing women onto federal contracts with a focus on maximum efforts on the part of contractors as opposed to good faith efforts[7], and 3) require that agencies involved in workforce development be connected to federally funded contractors to ensure that women and people of color get onto jobs.

SUMMARY

Obstacles for women and people of color in the building trades include overcoming structural and cultural barriers to their entrance into apprenticeship programs, conflict in the workplace, and long-term job retention. Working in the trades as a woman is a complex experience. Mastering the trade itself is challenging. Learning to negotiate the realities of racism, sexism, and at times heterosexism further complicates the experience.

This section has sought to provide an overview of the apprenticeship system. Apprenticeships are the gateway for women to participate in the trades long-term. Apprenticeships have been open to women since 1978. With the women's rights

[7] Good faith efforts have meant that employers made an attempt to invite minorities and women to apply with them. Good faith efforts have often been used as a way to avoid fulfilling affirmative action goals. Contractors can say they made an effort to bring in diverse candidates but no racially or gender diverse candidates applied. Good faith efforts do not require community involvement or relationship building with organizations preparing women and people of color for the trades.

movement there was a surge in the numbers of women applying and being accepted into apprenticeships. The pioneering efforts of these women are commendable and were met with extreme resistance from unions, journeymen, and contractors.

Affirmative action is necessary to ensure women and men of color are placed on federally funded contracts. Without affirmative action the inroads women have made in the trades would be even less. Limited contractor compliance, minimal governmental oversight, and weakened affirmative action mandates have hindered the efficacy of affirmative action measures to support a diverse construction workforce. Women and men of color apprentices have fared the best in union apprenticeship programs. However, the success of women and men of color in the trades continues to lag that of White men.

The trades remain resistant to the equal representation of women and men of color in their ranks. Policy measures are necessary, but they fail to address the racist and sexist ideological bias that confronts women and men of color on the job. This bias manifests in subtle and overt ways and limits the success of non-traditional construction workers.

We know that Black women in the trades experience racism and sexism. We do not know some of the strategies Black women use to continue in the trades. We also do not know which of these strategies can be taught to new tradeswomen to better support their success in the industry. The following chapters are Black tradeswomen talking about their construction careers and the ways they have negotiated institutional, cultural, and individual oppression to maintain their jobs. These women will share some of the factors that have bolstered their personal capacity to cope, and to maintain a sense of self-esteem. They will also share how they have worked for structural transformation in the industry. Their efforts may not have radically changed the construction industry in their

areas. However, their efforts point towards recommendations for best practices in terms of the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Black women in the trades.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

INTERSECTIONAL RESEARCH AND NARRATIVE INQUIRY

The methodology for this study is grounded in feminist intersectional research that uses narrative inquiry to collect and analyze data. Feminist theory is based on a criteria of lived experience, dialogue, caring, accountability, race, class, gender, reflexivity, praxis, and emotion (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Feminist research seeks to empower those researched to act on their own behalf (Mies, Bowles, & Klein, 1983; Mies, Cook, & Fonow, 1991), and to validate women's subjective experiences (Oakley & Roberts, 1981). A key assumption of feminist research is that research is undertaken to address a particular situation (Archibald & Crnkovich, 1995). Feminist research emphasizes a more participatory relationship between participants and researchers, encouraging researchers to collaborate *with* participants in the meaning making process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Collective involvement in the ownership of the research process is both consciousness-raising and therapeutic. It connects personal stories with collective context and action. Denborough *et al*. (2006) describe a narrative approach to community work called collective narrative practice. Denborough (2008) describes how communities facing difficulties develop particular skills and knowledge to address the effects of the systemic problems on their lives. Collective narrative practice was developed in the social work field. Denborough (2008) writes:

> [Collective Narrative Practice] make[s] it possible for community members to identify these initiatives, to richly describe them so that the skills and knowledge implicit within them become more visible to themselves and to others, and to

> trace the history of these skills and knowledge so that the ways these are linked to local culture are understood, can strengthen these initiatives in ways that make further action possible (p. 3).

These initiatives, or strategies, may not be enough to overcome life's obstacles, but the implicit skills and knowledge acquired are important. Many things may limit a person's ability to move forward in a difficult situation. For researchers, evaluating each step as an act of empowerment offers a more nuanced analysis of people's experience (Dullea, 2006). The sharing of individual stories in community fosters the acknowledgement of the skills, agency, values, and beliefs people use to address their everyday experiences. This sharing provides comfort, and support to participants and mitigates the isolation of challenging circumstances (Denborough *et al.*, 2006). Though this study is not narrative practice, *per se,* the four principles of narrative practice have influenced my research design and analysis. The principles are as follows:

- Listen for the double-storied accounts of the experience. Double-storied accounts are the telling of what happened, and embedded in the narrative are the strategies used to support one's self through the experience. This is an important principle of trauma healing and narrative practice (Mitchell, 2005; White, 2004; Yuen, 2007).
- Acknowledge the possible trauma and challenges of the experiences of the group[8].

[8] Women in this study did not necessarily use the term 'trauma' to describe some of their experiences. However, they did describe challenging experiences which threatened their physical and psychological well-being.

- Connect the individual life experiences of participants with some sort of collective group.
- Offer participants an opportunity to make a contribution through sharing their wisdom with others (Denborough, 2008).

Plots, characters, times, and places inform people's understanding of their lives (Hones, 1998). Chase (2003) states that if we are to maintain that people understand their worlds through stories, then interviews become venues for the exploration of life stories rather than simply answers to researcher-posed questions. She states:

> If we take seriously the idea that people make sense of experience and communicate meaning through narration, then in-depth interviews should become occasions in which we ask for life stories. By life stories, I mean narratives about some life experience that is of deep and abiding interest to the interviewee (p. 274).

The analysis of narratives pays attention to the ways participants put together the sequence of events, the words used, and the cultural references made to authenticate and locate their experience (Reissman, 1993). Narrative research is often viewed as inferior to research that prioritizes group data over individual experiences. However, such research is impersonal and is limited in its ability to explain the complexity of how identities are lived and affected by context and time. Narrative research lends itself to the development of an intersectional analytic framework because it focuses on hearing the voices and stories of participants — individually and collectively — in their time and context (Cole, 2009).

Chase (2003) advocates for an interview style that is relationship-based and easily accessible to participants. This type of interview style must also view the thoughts and feelings expressed by participants as valuable data. Listening to *how* participants feel

about the past is as important as what actually happened. Relationship-building between the interviewer and participants requires making shared meaning of the double-storied accounts of participants. Working with these narratives requires that participants be allowed to respond uninterrupted to basic questions and to establish the context and sequence of a cohesive story (Pennington, 1999).

I was introduced to narrative practice early in my doctoral work. The principles of narrative practice have influenced my understanding of the methodology of narrative inquiry. In my second year of study, I became a career counselor for women considering careers in construction. I conducted regular intake appointments to determine if pre-apprenticeship training was appropriate for them. I heard hundreds of stories about people's lives. I began to use the practices of narrative practice to listen for the double-storied accounts of, first, what happened in individual's lives, and, second, how they felt about what happened to them.

In my capacity as career counselor, I practiced listening and affirming clients by highlighting the strategies that helped them address difficulties in their lives. Within narrative practice, my job as listener was to mirror back to clients the wisdom they shared with me from their stories. In relation to the clients, I was in a position of power as an employee determining their eligibility for a service. However, narrative practice served as a means to share power with clients as they began to tell me the significance of their experiences, and why they had come to the pre-apprenticeship program where I worked. This approach yielded a lot of information that was significant to clients as points of self-discovery, and also developed relationships and respect between us.

Throughout my time as a career counselor, I held in mind the recruitment question: How can I help my clients successfully begin trades careers? Over time, that question changed to one of retention: How can I help tradeswomen stay on the job? I had initially been hired to recruit more Black people to the trades. My job morphed into serving women more broadly as funding for targeted recruitment changed.

Hearing Black women's stories through individual sessions, in groups that I facilitated, in tradeswomen groups, and in passing conversations, I came to realize that Black tradeswomen had double-storied narratives about their experiences. They talked both about what their work environment was like and also about how they navigated that environment. They shared what worked and what did not work on the job. I met some Black tradeswomen who were exhausted from dealing with racism and sexism. They quit or disappeared from our organization. I also noticed that some Black tradeswomen I met felt despair at moments in their careers, and moved through it to continue in their positions. I began to recognize their strategies to address the intersectionality of racism and sexism as a type of everyday conflict resolution.

Intersectionality has been described as: "The interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (K. Davis, 2008). My research design is informed by this definition of intersectionality. Intersectionality is both ambiguous and open-ended since developing an intersectional analytic frame requires assessing intertwined identities. However, this ambiguity is what makes intersectional analysis so able to articulate the differences of experience and the legacy of exclusion (K. Davis, 2008). Researching intersectionality is

challenging and complex. A rigid disciplinary approach may not yield strong intersectional research. Rather intersectionality requires an interdisciplinary approach that can articulate different social identities simultaneously (McCall, 2005).

In Peace and Conflict Studies, applying an intersectional analysis to our work expands our understanding of both individual agency and the complexity of conflict in particular contexts. Such an analysis also helps to develop multidimensional theories on the impact of identities within historical and present contexts on individual conflicts, and the collective ramifications of these conflicts. As we develop theories, we are invited to consider the ways in which workplace conflict is influenced by the broader macrosystem values of capitalism and the exclusionary ideologies that value one group over another.

My desire at the outset of my research was to hear the individual stories of Black tradeswomen who had either completed apprenticeship, or were close to completing apprenticeships, and had managed to work in construction for a minimum of six years. I chose six years because many apprenticeships take five years to complete. Through the knowledge and insights the women shared, I sought to understand the experiences of Black tradeswomen as distinct from White tradeswomen. I asked myself: How do the experiences of Black tradeswomen compare with White women, and with other tradeswomen of color? Through seeking to address this question I became able to articulate Black women's experience of nontraditional work through the intersecting lenses of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

I also struggled to connect the field of Peace and Conflict Studies with Black tradeswomen's experiences. As my data analysis continued, my leading research questions became: (1) What can we learn from the strategies Black tradeswomen use to

negotiate race and gender in non-traditional work? (2) How does this deepen our understanding of the intersections of social identities in non-traditional labor? (3) How does intersectional analysis advance our understanding of individual responses to structural violence (Lane *et al*., 2004; Weigert, 1999) ?

PARTICIPANTS

My employer was supportive of my research and felt it would offer greater insight into the experience of Black tradeswomen. We agreed that I could discreetly approach women by phone within our database about participating in the study. However, I would not disclose with my employer who participated. To respect confidentiality and separation of roles, I only interviewed women I had not counseled in my capacity as career counselor. This was an easy distinction as all of my caseload was new tradeswomen. My contact with seasoned tradeswomen was either in group settings, in passing in the office, or at community meetings.

Initially I phoned the Black tradeswomen I knew and invited them to participate in my study. People were very warm towards me, and agreed to participate. I posted my call for participants on Facebook, and a tradeswomen advocacy group contacted me. The tradeswomen advocate referred me to two interview participants whose stories she had collected. I sent my call for participants to two other tradeswomen groups in different parts of the country. These efforts yielded one participant. Through word of mouth, different interview participants referred their friends to me. In my connections with electricians, I was invited to volunteer with the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus at

one of their conferences. Though I was not allowed to attend meetings, in my volunteer capacity I was able to meet four interview participants from around the United States.

For this study, I interviewed fifteen Black tradeswomen who worked in the Northwest, Midwest, Southwest, and Southern regions of the United States. I initially planned to interview women from two states in the Northwest and one in the South because I had tradeswomen contacts in those locations. However, I soon opened interviews to whomever presented themselves to be interviewed. It became clear to me that the numbers of Black tradeswomen are small, and the number of Black tradeswomen organized within tradeswomen advocacy groups is even smaller.

Only two of the tradeswomen interviewed have not completed their apprenticeships. One is in the process of completing her electrician apprenticeship, the other left her apprenticeship to pursue a career recruiting women and people of color to construction careers. She has also maintained her contractor's license for over twenty years and has managed her husband's contracting business. Ten women have completed formal apprenticeship programs, and work as journeywomen. Cement, Carpentry, Laborers, Sprinkler-fitting, and Electrical trades are represented by these women. Three women have completed trade certifications through their employers. Two women are trained welders and riveters and worked for an arms manufacturer for thirty years. One woman is trained as a utility worker for her municipality and has worked in the logging industry.

Table 1 (next page) offers brief profiles of the interview participants. I have offered their pseudonyms, trade, years in the trades working with tools, highest position

held in their careers, their position at the time of the interview, and their regions while they worked as tradeswomen.

Table 1. A table of interviewees.

Name	***Trade***	***Years in Trade at Interview***	***Highest Position Held in Career***	***Position at Time of Interview***	***U.S. Regions Worked***
Keisha	Carpenter (Bridge Construction)	30 +	Superintendent	Superintendent (20 years with company)	NW, and SW
Z	Carpenter (Commercial)	6	Journeyman Crew lead	Laid off (longest job 1 year)	NW
Shonda	Electrician (Inside Wireman)	30+	Foreman (Commercial Construction); Municipal Planner (Municipal Worker)	Municipal Planner (15 years with Municipality)	NW, SE, and NE
Sharla	Electrician (Low Voltage Electrician)	12	Special Projects lead (Commercial Construction)	Special Projects lead	NW, SW, NE, SE, and MW
Sandra	Electrician (Inside Wireman)	10	Journeyman worker	Laid off (longest job 1 year)	MW
Debra	Electrician (Inside Wireman)	6	Sixth Term Apprentice	Laid off (longest job 1 year)	SW
Wanda Lou	Welder	30 +	Crew Lead	Retired from shipyards after 30 years of service	NW
Grace	Welder	30+	Crew Lead	Retired from shipyards after 30 years of service	NW
Crystal	Laborer	6	Journeyman Crew lead	Laid off (longest job 2.5 years)	NW and SW
Danielle	Laborer	6	Journeyman	Laid off (longest job 1 year)	NW
Darnita	Laborer	10	Journeyman Safety Coordinator, Traffic Control Supervisor, Compressed Air Worker	Safety Coordinator (longest job 5 years)	NW
Veronica	Utility worker and Mill Worker	30 +	Pump Technician	Pump tech (with Municipality for 20 years	NW
Kareema*[9]	Cement Mason	25+	Commercial Contractor	Family Owned Concrete Business throughout career	MW, and S
Patricia	Sprinkler Fitter	20+	Commercial Contractor	General Construction Business owner for over 12 years	NW
Sue	Electrician	6	Sixth term apprentice	Recruiter of minorities for Trades Careers and Contractor	NW

[9] I received special Human Subjects approval to use Kareema Ali's real name in this study. She asked that her real name, and the name of her tradeswomen advocacy group, the National Coalition of Women of Color in Construction, be used in the dissertation.

An introductory letter was prepared and shared with the participants I approached to participate the study. The letter was also circulated to tradeswomen organizations. Participants signed an informed consent form approved through Human Subjects[10]. Participants agreed to sit for a one– to one-and-a- half-hour audio taped interview. Interviews actually lasted from one hour to four hours depending on the desire of the participant to share. My initial interviews were incredibly rich experiences, and I got to know participants more deeply. When possible, I interviewed people in person. The interviews were conducted in my home, at the home of participants, at public locations of the participants choosing, and over the phone. Some driving was required; my longest travel was to a city three hours from my home. Three interviews were conducted via phone as the participants were located in the South and Southwest. I was able to interview one participant who lives in the Midwest in person when she was passing through my city. Two participants asked to be interviewed together as they were best friends. Other interviews were conducted as solo interviews.

Pseudonyms have been used throughout this study in regards to participants' names and anyone they referred to by name or location. When I completed my first draft, I emailed a copy to Kareema Ali, an interview participant, to get her feedback on whether I represented her stories accurately. She was happy with my work, and she wanted her actual name to be used in the dissertation. I obtained Human Subjects approval for this. She participated in the dissertation because it offered a chance for the experiences of Black tradeswomen to be known. She felt that without documentation of the experiences

[10] Invitations to participate and the informed consent letter are in the appendix.

of Black tradeswomen, they remain invisible. She has developed an online radio station that regularly showcases interviews about women of color in construction. She wants to explicitly establish the footprint of women of color in the field as an act of resistance to a workplace that has challenged her right to be there, and to highlight the need for industry reform. She was the only participant who asked for her real name to be used.

Due to the sensitive nature of our discussions, I also offered participants the contact information of a Black woman counselor in my city who offered low-cost counseling and was available to talk with participants via phone. For people living in distant regions, she was a ready resource to talk with them about finding follow-up trauma counseling should they need it. The counselor's services were not used though one participant did mention a desire to begin counseling after our time together. In our interview, that participant explored the aspects of her role as a mother and wife which impacted her career. At points in our interview, she became tearful as she explored aspects of her life she had not discussed before, including the death of a child. Our time together was deeply impactful for both of us. When we finished, she expressed gratitude for having someone invite her to talk about her life.

RESEARCHER LOCATION

In my capacity at the pre-apprenticeship program I attended meetings with union coordinators, apprenticeship programs, and community groups working with women and minorities on poverty alleviation, and minority contractors. My job gave me access to the complex apprenticeship system since I was working with women to enter apprenticeships and counseling them through the experience. To maintain clarity of roles, the women I

interviewed were not women I have worked with directly in my career counseling capacity. I met some of the women I interviewed while attending various meetings in my professional capacity.

Over the year in which I collected interviews, I wrote field notes on what I learned about the industry, the apprenticeship process, and some items I heard in my community from community groups working with tradeswomen and tradesmen of color. Such information helped me understand the broader context of the construction industry and the variety of diversity related efforts initiated by the Bureau of Labor, unions, apprenticeship centers, and tradespeople. During this time, I participated on a committee to address the mentorship of non-traditional apprentices by journeyworkers, and was loosely connected to the development of a community benefits agreement to include racial minorities and women in a city green-building initiative. I also attended various networking meetings of tradespeople of color and minority-owned businesses. For the two and a half years that I worked at the tradeswomen organization, my work and academic life were trades focused. To complete my dissertation I resigned from my host organization. I am deeply grateful for my time with the tradeswomen organization. Working there was fortuitous and brought wonderful people into my life. I became connected to my city in new ways.

I do not have a trades background. One participant reminded me of this in a passing comment. She said, “You aren’t a tradeswoman. You can never really know what it is like. We can tell you, but you’ll never really know.” She is right. Throughout this process I have been keenly aware that I am not a tradeswoman. I have been surrounded by them, but I do not know what it is to work on jobsites for sixty hours a week. I am

proud of the women I worked with as a career counselor. I hear tradeswomen's stories and feel pride in their accomplishments. I have seen women's bodies strengthened from their work, and felt joy when I saw women working on the light rail project near my home. In my capacity as career counselor, I would lead groups of women onto major construction jobsites. I developed the language to identify different trades, and talk about how these trades were interrelated in the construction process. I even noticed that when I put on my work-boots, Carhartt workpants, and hard hat, that the way I carried myself changed. I toughened up a little. Still, I am an academic. My hands are soft from typing.

My identity as a Black woman did impact the relationship between myself and participants. Because of our shared race and participation in the tradeswomen movement, there was an immediate rapport between us. Inspired by the guidance of Chase and Bell (1994) I consciously worked to remain objective and avoid guiding people to say what I wanted to hear. As a Black woman interviewing other Black women I had to differentiate my experience of being a Black woman from that of the women I interviewed. Participants would say things such as "You know" when referring to racialized and/or gendered moments; the assumption being that as one Black woman to another, we understood each other. One participant who talked with me over the phone at one point said, "You are Black, right?" My accent and word choice give me away as someone who has lived in predominately White environments for much of my life. My Black identity made her willing to talk with me even though we were both aware that we did not share similar experiences as Black working-class women.

I was reminded that my Black identity is unique to my experiences of race, class, gender, and my own sexuality. I grew up in the United States and in South Africa in a

middle class family. Both of my parents are Black, my mother is from the United States and my father, the West Indies. My life in the United States is working class, though the ways I speak and carry myself are deeply affected by my economically privileged upbringing.

This did influence the ways participants viewed me. During one interview a participant quietly asked me, “Why did you marry a White guy? If my son came home with a White girl, I’d be pissed!” During one interview my White husband dropped me off at the home of one participant. At one point in the conversation the participant felt compelled to tell me: “My son is married to a White girl. And so I have nephews and things. I’ve got it all in my family. That’s nothing strange.” She did not want to offend me when she talked about White people.

At no point was I offended by the honesty of participants, nor was I put off by their suspicion of me and my motives. Their questions about my identity as a Black woman were noted. In our conversations, it became clear to me that it was important for me to listen to their stories and not personalize their comments in terms if my own Black identity. I appreciate the honesty of the people I interviewed. I am honored that participants spent so much time with me. Mies *et al.* (1991) encourage researchers to develop a double-consciousness that identifies with the struggles of those being researched and maintains an awareness of one’s own experiences of oppression or privilege as distinct from the study participants. I sought to maintain this double-consciousness in relation to the tradeswomen I interviewed.

I did notice the limits of my own conceptual development around sexual orientation by how I constructed the study questions. I did not explicitly ask questions

regarding sexual identity. Within the trades, race and gender are openly discussed while sexual orientation is less explicitly talked about -- although homophobic slurs are common in the trades. In terms of my identity development, although I do not identify as heterosexual, for all intents and purposes my marriage to a man causes me to be perceived as such. In short, I did not ask, even though the topic of sexual orientation often came up. As a researcher, my charge is to ask questions well enough to invite participants to discuss other identities that are important to them regardless of whether I ask explicitly about those identities (Lisa Bowleg, 2008), leaving room for people to share the significant intersecting identities present in their experience, regardless of whether or not those identities are significant at the outset of the research.

As a researcher it has been important for me to remain aware of whether my research is truly benefitting those I am researching (Mullings, 2005). Throughout the research process, I have had to check my assumptions of the interview participants, the research process, and myself. Participants were incredibly helpful by giving regular feedback to me about my ideas and analysis. I felt supported by the participants. When I would see some of them in town they would say: “Are you done yet?” and “Whatever happened with that?”

The adage, “To whom much is given, much is expected” rings true from the relationships built between participants and myself. One participant who sat with me for four hours one Saturday morning said: “I’m telling you everything I can, so that you will help me.” Another said at the end of the interview when I asked if there was anything else she wanted to share:

> I don't know what you're planning on doing, but if you're planning on sticking around, I want you to be an advocate and an activist and be that voice out there. Why aren't we seeing people that look like me as foremen? Who can we talk to? Who writes the papers and sets the policy and says what's up?

Another participant approached me about future research on topics relevant to Black tradeswomen. I do feel deeply compelled to use what I have learned from this research to advance the need for greater racial and gender equity in the trades.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data was generated through the collection of interviews and by participant observations. Participant observation in this study included observations I was able to make as a career counselor for Ready Tradeswomen, as a volunteer at a conference for the Electrical Minority Workers Caucus, and as an organizer of support groups for women of color in the trades. The process of collecting interviews, transcription, and analysis has taken me about two years. Over this time participants were in contact with me at various points. I lost contact with six participants due to their changes in phone numbers, health situations, or their work schedules preventing further contact.

I used a loose interview guide in the initial interview. My questions focused on the intersections of identities by examining meaningful constructs such as stress, prejudice, and discrimination rather than relying on demographic questions alone (Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003). Questions were focused on eliciting rich descriptions of the women's work experiences and how they responded to the challenges they faced on the job.

I had originally planned to hold a focus group with interview participants to further discuss the findings from the dissertation. I abandoned this plan since participants already gave their time for the interviews, and for a follow-up discussion of my analysis of their particular interview. Participants expressed some reluctance to sit through a focus group in addition to the interview and follow-up call. To respect participant's time, I shortened my method.

For ethical considerations, I made efforts to check in with participants with follow-up phone calls at different points in my analysis. I contacted nine participants to discuss my first round analyzing their interview transcripts to ensure that I had understood their stories. These phone and in person follow up meetings lasted from one to two hours. Field notes were taken from these meetings. I also contacted people once my first draft of the dissertation was complete. I met individually with four participants to discuss how their stories were used in the analysis of the group as a whole. This was useful for both checking my work for validity, and for honoring the participants' stories. To respect confidentiality, I did not discuss whom I interviewed or specifics of their stories with my employer or the trades community at large. Some of the stories shared were of a sensitive nature.

Participants were offered $25 for participation in the study as recognition of the gift they offered me. Some accepted the honorarium and put it towards their various community projects. Some accepted that I paid for lunch, and some declined the offer. The honorarium was paid for through my earnings. I am now aware that $25 is a meager offering for the high level of engagement I asked from participants in the initial interview and follow up conversations.

Data from interviews, personal observation, and the collecting of communications with participants were coded for themes. My initial interview questions were geared towards gathering the stories of Black tradeswomen in their careers. My leading question was asking how African American tradeswomen described their experiences in long-term trades careers. Some follow-up questions were also posed: Once you made it through apprenticeship programs, what kinds of challenges and hardships did you experience in your careers? How did you respond to these challenges? How have these responses changed over time? How did you feel your presence has contributed to the building trades; to the advancement of women; to racial equity? How have you experienced your various identities in your work?

Close attention was paid to the rich descriptions of experience and strategies used to maintain oneself throughout the experience. In my first round of interview coding, I mostly coded for distinct experiences while getting into the trades, barriers in the trades, and descriptions of strategies to enhance one's physical, social, psychological, and spiritual capacities. A series of sub-codes emerged that spoke more specifically about aspects of these major codes. Listening for the double-stories within the narratives was challenging; stories of racism and sexism, and strategies to address oppression were often told simultaneously.

Bowleg, Huang *et al.* (2003) in their intersectional research on Black lesbians remark that experiences of sexism and racism are inextricably linked, hence few are likely to discuss sexism as a singular experience unrelated to racism. Social location is influenced by history, political events, ideologies and policies. Cuadraz and Uttal (1999) encourage researchers to hold this consciousness in mind and focus on "how social

structures and social history may appear to disappear from the individual's awareness of their influence, yet they never entirely disappear from influencing individual experience and shaping meaning, and vice versa" (p. 71).

This was a challenge, as it required me to pay attention to story threads participants initially dismissed as unimportant. For example, a number of women said that as children, they had been taught by their Black parents to "treat everyone the same." Initially, I dismissed this comment as I was sensitive to White people also making this assertion as a problematic, color-blind sentiment that covers discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. However, when interview participants said this, they were talking about a protective strategy their parents taught them which was geared towards promoting equality and preserving their value as human beings. Intersectional research requires analysis situated in a historical context rather than ahistorically (Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999). Assessing the intersectionality of Black women's experiences requires an analysis of context and history—otherwise we see their lives as individual instances and understand their experiences as common to everyone.

As a researcher, I was challenged to develop my ability to articulate and differentiate experiences of oppression as well as counter-strategies to oppression. I was also challenged to temper my expectations of what it means to "successfully" negotiate oppression. In a number of interviews, participants said "I don't know if I'm giving you what you want," or "Is this relevant?" Initially, I had described these tradeswomen as successful for continuing to work in the trades for six years or more. Some participants appreciated being acknowledged as successful. Others wondered if their struggles to continue working and their doubt whether the trades was for them long-term made them

less successful. They responded to the word “successful” with comments such as, “I don’t think of myself that way,” or, “Are you sure you should talk to me?” I realize now that the term “successful” is a subjective term, and depending on an individual’s relationship to this word, can either shut down or open stories. My use of this word was based on my propensity towards a strengths-based orientation towards life. As a researcher I realize now that careful attention needs to be paid to the wording of questions to avoid reflecting judgment.

Participant feedback was incorporated throughout my analysis. In her research on women in the church, Lawless (1991) advocates for the development of a reciprocal relationship between research participants and researchers. Lawless (2003) discusses “reciprocal ethnography” which is dialogue between the participants and the researcher about the subject matter, the cultural lenses which shape the ways they interpret the findings, and the participants’ thoughts of the researcher within the process. The process of reciprocal ethnography begins with the researcher presenting her findings to the participant. The participant responds, and the researcher is compelled to shift her lens to discern why and how the interpretations are different (Lawless, 1992). My initial follow-up conversation with nine participants about my coding of our interview proved vital in helping to develop my analysis and understanding the significance and interdependence of events. In my follow-up conversations, I asked some of the focus group questions I had prepared to ask the group of tradeswomen.

The process of reflecting back to participants’ quotes they had shared, and my analysis was nerve-wracking for me and empowering for participants. In one of our follow-up conversations, one participant was very quiet while I read excerpts of her story

over the phone. I asked if things were okay. She said softly, “I’m sitting here shaking my head.” She expressed gratitude at having someone listen to her story, and offer reflection on the connection of her experience to others’ stories.

To ensure validity within this study, I sought to develop strong theoretical underpinnings for this research. My research is grounded in an interdisciplinary body of work from Women’s Studies, critical race theories, Labor Studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, Social Work, and Psychology. Tracking participants and the information gathering processes is a further measure of validity (Sanjek, 1990). In this vein I connected with participants throughout the process and regularly asked for their feedback on my analysis.

Bertaux & Thompson (1997) assert that within the method of narrative inquiry, validity is confirmed when enough stories have been collected so no new information has been gained, and negative cases have been sought and accounted for. Once saturation has been completed, then validation of interpretation has been achieved. Within my sample participants shared similarly themed narratives of their work lives. All but two participants had completed her apprenticeship or training period at the time of our interview; one was continuing in the trades, the other became a recruiter for the trades and managed her husband’s contracting business. I acknowledge that there are more stories to be told from Black tradeswomen. I set my net broadly to connect with more tradeswomen from different backgrounds. I struggled to find Black tradeswomen who were not affiliated with unions or tradeswomen organizations. Black tradeswomen who are independent of those networks are hard to access as there are so few of them.

Incorporating those women's stories would be beneficial however I have not found a way to do so.

Initially I had wanted to host a focus group which brought the tradeswomen together to discuss our findings to serve the dual purposes of checking member data and for bringing people together for consciousness-raising. Time constraints prevented this from happening; however, there is some interest among participants to connect in the future. Through the collection of interviews and reciprocal discussion on the actual data collected, its analysis and the research process, I have sought to develop a methodology that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to my investigation (Flick, 1992).

SUMMARY

Towards the end of my research, I was interviewed on a labor radio station about Black women in the trades. I shared the link to the radio show with one of the interview participants. She called me. She said she cried and listened to it multiple times. She said, "You said what I've been saying. We [Black tradeswomen] just want to be heard and treated as equals." Her comment emphasizes the significance of Black tradeswomen's stories, and locating those stories within their particular historical and cultural context. The following chapters are an attempt to organize these stories into a coherent narrative of Black women's shared experiences while moving through the trades. On research that privileges the voices of Black women as experts on their experience, Pennington (1999) writes:

> The theory for how we as researchers can facilitate our understanding of African American women as a research topic should begin with them and their voices as the center. This gives their voices a long-denied privilege, but more importantly, for researchers, it allows the women to be understood in the context in which they

> live, grow, and make sense of their lives [...] by centering research on African American women's voices, researchers can view their perspective of the soil in which they are planted, to start from the ground up (p. 128).

This experience has been rich and meaningful for me. In my mind, all of the participants are highly successful tradeswomen. As you read, their brilliance and the difficulty of the career path they have chosen will become evident.

ENTERING THE TRADES

Women in this study entered the industry in the 1940s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and the early 2000s. With the exception of two women who entered the trades during the Rosie the Riveter era, the Black women studied became tradespeople from the 1970s on. Black women in this study entered the trades through pre-apprenticeships, trades schools, state and non-profit funded workforce recruitment efforts targeting women and people of color, and by word of mouth.

Black women attribute their willingness to choose trades careers to: their love and interest in the work, ambitions for greater financial security, the need to provide for children, dissatisfaction with the corporate environment, and the affirming relationships with parents and other elders who modeled how to successfully navigate non-traditional workplaces for Black people. Entering the trades and maintaining their careers helped develop their physical capacity to be financially self-sufficient. This chapter examines the narratives of Black women's motivations for entering trades careers. I will also examine how race and gender affect their decisions to stay in the trades, reasons for leaving, and reasons for re-entry.

PARENTS AND ELDERS AS TRAILBLAZERS AND SUPPORTS

"MY MOTHER […] ACCOMPLISHED WHAT SHE DID. IT CAN HAPPEN." - DARNITA

A number of women in the study talked about growing up in homes where they felt valued and were accustomed to a standard of living where their basic needs for shelter, food, safety, and affection were met. Their parents provided financial security

and modeled a determined work ethic. In moving into adulthood these women wanted the same. Following such family examples offered study participants an example of how to handle being the only Black person or the only Black woman on the job.

Pennington (1999) introduces the concept of being "attitudinally prepared" to address sexism and racism in her narrative study *Black Women Quitting in the Workplace*. She finds that Black women in corporate America whose parents did not share with them the realities of negotiating racism and sexism on the job struggle to be "attitudinally prepared" to address these social challenges in the workplace. Several of the women in this study expressed that coming from homes where their parents successfully navigated racism and sexism at work and shared this information with them was good preparation for negotiating their own work environments as adults. "Attitudinal preparedness," a feature of the modeling and mentoring that has been passed inter-generationally, supports Black women to enter and sustain in hostile workplaces. Participants also noted that their parents affirmed them as capable young women who were going to "be something" and did not have to conform to rigid gender roles.

Darnita, a laborer[11], worked hard in her career to seek out niche opportunities for training and to continue in her career long-term. Darnita's mother was the first Black woman substation operator engineer for a power company in her state. She later became the owner of a successful printing press business. Darnita said from watching her mother's example she knew that she could have a long-term career as a tradesperson in

[11] Laborers complete a 4,000 hour apprenticeship program. Laborers can be skilled or unskilled and are often the first onto a construction site - and the last to leave. Tasks may include, but are not exclusive to, using power tools for demolition, handling materials, landscaping, pipe installation, and road grading. Laborers work on new construction, demolition, bridge, and highway construction. The average wage for laborers is around $20 per hour (Apprenticeship and Training Division: Oregon Bureau of Labor).

spite of racism and sexism. She noted that her experience as a Black tradeswoman was easier than that of her mother, but it was still a difficult journey. She said:

> My mother, as a single Black woman back in the day - her accomplishments and that she accomplished what she did - it can happen. It's easier now than back in the day, you know what I mean? She really had to fight and scrape for hers. They didn't want to give it to us. And now, it's still hard for us. So you just have to do it.

While watching her mother struggle as a Black woman in two non-traditional fields for women and Black people -- power utility work and printing press operation -- Darnita learned that she needed to be self-reliant in the workplace since she would receive little institutional support for her job. She said her mother taught her a work ethic that kept her motivated in the trades. Darnita described herself as a "hustler," something she learned from her mother. She said:

> [I learned this] from my mom, I guess. I like to eat, and to eat well, and to drive well. I like money in my pocket. You can't do that doing nothing. I work legal. I'm a hustler because I like money and I like to keep it in my pocket. None of my kids asked for it, but I did give it to them. I probably give them too much. From my mother, probably, because […] I was pretty spoiled. You know, you try to spoil your kids a little bit […] I've seen things, I've seen things I've wanted like this remodel[12], all that takes money. I can see stuff all day in my head but have to have the means to see that it happens. That's what keeps me going. I want to live life.

Like Darnita Patricia, a sprinkler fitter and contractor, said seeing her parents' success helped empower her to dream big for herself. She said:

> My dad worked at [a steel mill] for eighteen years. My mom worked at [the phone company] as an engineer, traveled all over the country, managed million dollar

[12] At the time of the interview, Darnita was in the midst of a phased remodel of her home.

> projects. All of this. So I've seen this. The people that were our friends made that kind of money. I can't remember - even though we were as kids on welfare - I don't remember ever going without. I just don't remember. As a kid, I felt like I had a good childhood. That type of thing. And so I always knew that I'm going to do something.

She continued:

> I thank God for my parents who both worked all while we were growing up. I had role models, relatives, and friends. That's how I was able to have a value of work and work ethics and [knew] what it was going to take. I chose to do construction. I could do anything I wanted to. Even now, there are things I have got in my future that I want to be able to do.

Patricia did not work with her hands as a child, but watching her parents earn a living through physical labor stuck with her. She saw the benefits of blue-collar work in her father's occupation. She also saw her mother, as one of the few Black women at the phone company, work up the corporate ladder. From her parents Patricia took away a sense of limitless possibilities for herself as a young Black woman. This contributed to her conscious decision to enter a non-gender-conforming career. Patricia's career as a contractor combined elements of both of her parents' work. She worked with tools and managed the budgets of her projects.

Women also shared early messages of being valued within their families of origin. Some women were told there were high expectations of them as Black women, that they could "do anything," that they were "meant for greatness," and that they were expected to "make a life for [themselves]", that they were "spoiled," and that they lived a "charmed" life. These messages were foundational in developing a sense of self-worth and self-esteem that was crucial for their long-term careers. The theme of self-esteem will be

discussed in Chapter Eight as a component of the personal development needed to withstand a hostile workplace.

Kareema, a cement mason[13] and contractor, was in the unique position of running her family's cement-contracting business. Kareema's mother started one of the first women-owned concrete companies in the Midwest in the early 1980s. Her mother was a strategic thinker. Kareema's mother had her daughters become concrete apprentices through the cement masons union to ensure their success in business. She encouraged her daughters to capitalize on a joint partnership among a local tradeswomen advocacy organization, the federal government, unions, and the Urban League -- an African American advocacy organization. The decision provided union affiliation for the family business and trained Kareema and her sister in the trade. Only a handful of women completed their cement masons apprenticeship through this program. During the day Kareema and her sister worked on commercial projects, and in the evenings they worked for their mother as concrete finishers. The opportunity with their mother enabled them to practice skills that helped them in their day jobs with the union. Kareema, like many long-term tradespeople, alternated between managing jobs as a contractor and working as a tradesperson.

Kareema attributed her perseverance in the trades to strong modeling from her mother and sister. About being a second-generation business owner, she said: "It's a family legacy that I carry. I don't want to be the one that messed up the third generation!"

[13] Cement Masons work with concrete including: the pouring and finishing of slabs, steps, wall tops, sidewalks, paving, curbs, and gutters. The work requires a lot of bending and heavy lifting. This apprenticeship lasts three to four years and the average wage is $25 dollars per hour (Apprenticeship and Training Division: Oregon Bureau of Labor).

She credited her mother as helping her learn that Black women were strong and could handle extreme pressure. She said:

> I have been blessed to have my mother who was a big part of our life, and the driving force behind us. "Failure" is […] not even in our vocabulary. She has a policy, "Well, if you feel like everything is going bad, you can always come home." Noooooo-body wants to go back home and live with my mother. Trust me! [*chuckling*] […] I better fight through this one. But you know, she said, "Mama's always here. A room's always here for you." "Noooooo thanks" [*laughing*]. [My sister and I] are different because we have been able to draw on each other's strength - being African-American women working in concrete, second-generation, our company, and Union. This is what we are, Journeymen. My sister's a Journeyman. I'm a Journeyman. And my mom's - she's just "Kaddafi" for real.

Kareema's relationship with her sister reinforced her identity as a tradeswoman, and offered understanding with respect to the industry's demands that may not always be understood by non- trades affiliated family members. It can be difficult for outsiders to understand the seasonal nature of construction if they are not a part of it.

When Shonda wanted to quit her electrical apprenticeship[14] because of racism and sexism, her mother encouraged her to stay. Her mother gave her advice that has resonated with her throughout her career. She said:

> One day when I came home and I told her that I was going to quit she looked at me and she said, "You would be doing exactly what they want you to do." She said, "They don't want you to make that kind of money. They don't even want you there. Hold your head up high. Do your job. That is all you have to do. You just have to get along at work, that's it. Get the job done for the employer. Go to

[14] Becoming an inside electrician takes 8,000 hours of on-the-job training, and depending on the program, four to five years of classes. Union wages top out around $36 per hour with benefits and a pension. Inside electricians are trained to install all outlets within residential to large scale commercial structures. They are involved in electrical installations, construction, and maintenance. Electricians work in inclement weather and in a variety of structures (Apprenticeship and Training Division: Oregon Bureau of Labor).

> work and earn your money. Come home and live your life. You're just there for the money, remember that." And so when I had issues with people at work, I said, "You know what? You don't have to like me. We're here to do the job. We have to get this done, today [*laughs*]. About you not liking me and not wanting to work with me, get over it." Yeah! That's what my mother told me.

Shonda's mother taught her to validate herself as a worker since she would not receive any validation from her White male colleagues or superiors as a Black woman in a non-traditional field. Z, another interviewee who was a carpenter, said her father's support was crucial. She regularly called him to talk about problems with fellow apprentices and journeymen. Her father helped her develop her strategy for addressing workplace difficulty.

"THERE WAS NEVER ANY GUIDING TOWARDS A GENDERED CAREER IN MY FAMILY." - Z

Many parents and relatives told their daughters they did not need to conform to rigid gender roles. Utility worker Veronica spent summers working on her grandparents' ranch bucking hay, driving equipment, and chopping wood. The work was fun for her, and meant that she was close to her grandfather. Veronica said she got the message, "Women are strong," from female role models in her family. From her grandpa she got the message, "Strong men don't feel intimidated by strong women." Veronica said:

> When I was a kid, I might help my grandpa get firewood in the summertime. I loved to drive the tractor. So he had this tradition where he would wait to get firewood until I got there. And then the deal was that he would use the chain saw and buck it up because I was too young. Then I would get him a round of wood. I would set him on it, get him some beers, and he would sit and drink his beer while I split the wood and loaded it on the trailer. The deal was I got to drive the tractor-trailer back to the shed and back it in there […] I used to think I was really special, and then I realized how smart my grandfather was. He was a smart man! He had me thinkin' I was lucky!

Veronica's comfort with her athleticism and kinesthetic learning was developed while working as a field hand alongside her grandfather. Her early experiences on tractors were foundational to her career operating heavy equipment for the logging industry and with the utility.

As with Veronica's early experiences on the ranch in the 1960s and 1970s, Wanda Lou, a riveter, grew up working in the cotton fields with her sisters in the 1930s. The strong work ethic instilled from growing up picking cotton translated well in her trades career. She was expected to physically work hard as a means of family survival.

Seven of the women interviewed were first exposed to working with tools within their families. Keisha, a carpenter, grew up around her brothers and uncles. The men in her family largely trained to be mechanics, and would work on cars together. She was not attracted to working on cars, but loved being with her uncles. She said one uncle "would give me a bar of soap and a butter knife and let me carve something out of that so that I didn't hurt myself. So [working with wood] didn't accidently happen. It's been going on for just about all my life." She also credited fighting to be heard among her brothers as an important skill she developed to assert her authority among male coworkers as a project superintendent on major highway construction projects.

Similarly, Sue, an electrician, credited her early use of tools from being a residential carpentry assistant to her grandfather. In helping her grandfather, she developed skills as a handy-person. For years she did occasional work as a handy-person person for older women in her community.

Z was also close to her father. She described how he raised her to feel confident in her abilities and to follow her interests:

> I lived in a house where I was never given [the message] "This is what your life looks like when you grow up. This is what you're supposed to do when you grow up." I remember being seven, eight years old and my dad working out in the basement with the weights. I remember going down into his weight room, and him fixing me up a little 2 ½ pound weight for me to lift. And I'm 7 or 8. I just want to be with him. So he would let me lift.
>
> He was also working on the car. He would tell me "Hand me this, hand me that tool. The name of this tool is a blah blah. When I ask for it again, I'm going to ask for it by name and I want you to hand me this tool."
>
> My dad never put any boundaries on what I could do. He never said, "When you grow up, this is what you're going to do." […] He let me grow up. He let me develop my own identity.
>
> When I came to him and said, "I want to be carpenter. I'm in the process of signing up for the apprenticeship program." He said, "Okay, you know your grandfather was a mason worker." "I didn't know that." He said, "Yes, and your uncle was a carpenter. His dad did electrical work."
>
> I could kind of see that I was going to work with my hands and not do things that were normal for a woman. I have a long history of construction workers. I play a lot of sports. I was never told that any sport was not ladylike. There was never any guiding towards a gendered career in my family.

Z acknowledged that her father's encouragement gave her important space to imagine herself in different careers. She said that Black women were not regularly encouraged to try careers where they were not traditionally represented, limiting the scope of opportunity Black women envisioned for themselves. Z's father also offered her socialization more often offered to boys than offered to girls -- e.g. picking up tools and becoming comfortable with their use from an early age. He did not prescribe how to be a woman. Such openness allowed her to venture into carpentry.

Z acknowledged that for many Black women, even when the trades were an option, gender conforming messages within the Black community often limited the career possibilities Black women could freely consider. For some of the Black women in the study, the trades were within their frame of reference from childhood. The men in their

lives were tradespeople, their mothers and sisters worked in trades-related fields, and/or they learned to use tools to help the men in their families.

Though few Black women enter the trades, these women's experiences indicate that Black women have a history of doing physical trades-related work in their homes and communities that is often overlooked. Picking up tools has enhanced the women's sense of empowerment. For the women who did not have such foundational kinesthetic exposure, they did have encouragement of their athletic ability by their parents and messages of limitless potential. As Black women, they also were attitudinally prepared for the realities of racism and sexism at work by watching their parents model how to deal with workplace oppression.

THE TRADES AS AN ALTERNATIVE

"WHY SHOULD I DO THAT WHEN I COULD TAKE A TRADE?" - GRACE

Grace entered the trades in the 1940s. Growing up in the Midwest, she was told by her father that she would go to college after high school. Her dreams of going to college were cut short by her father's untimely death. At this point she could have become a maid, which was recommended by her teachers and accepted by many of her peers. Instead she chose a nontraditional path and began trades school[15]. This option gave

[15] Women first entered the nontraditional field of construction during World War II to fill the jobs vacated by White men. Changing racial attitudes, the enforcement of equal opportunity, the expanded need for labor, and the migration of Blacks from the South to the North and West, offered Black people the chance for expanded labor opportunities and upward mobility. Of the one million Blacks who entered the labor force during this time, 600,000 of those were Black women. For Black women the entrance into manufacturing meant access to higher wages and a movement away from domestic work. Racism and sexism resulted in Black women being concentrated in lower paying, lesser-skilled occupations (K. T. Anderson, 1982). When White men returned after the war, employers used discriminatory practices to remove women from their jobs and deny seniority. Few Black women remained in manufacturing in the post war years.

her a sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency that challenged both gender and race norms. She said of her decision to leave her town for trade school rather than to stay and be a maid:

> No, why should I do that when I could take a trade? My dad had said, "You are all going to college after high school." but after high school, he passed. My mother was not able to pay. So I did the next best thing, "get a trade and go."
>
> That would be better than staying and working for White people in a home. I wouldn't want to do that. Mr. Sattler[16] would find you a job after school, he was the principal [….] One day he sent me on a job and oh, that lady had dishes piled up in the sink, and then [told me to] go do the beds.
>
> I thought, "Oh, that's too much work." She was telling me I was supposed to work the next day. I said, "I won't be back."

Directly out of high school, Grace entered a federally funded welding training and worked as a welder. Her career choice afforded her more control over her own life than she would have had had she become a domestic worker.

The trades are attractive to women, in general, and Black women from working class backgrounds, in particular, since they are high wage careers that do not require a college degree as an entrance requirement. Two of the women interviewed in the study completed college degrees prior to entering their apprenticeships. Three completed some college courses before entering their apprenticeship. Grace, like the majority of the women in the study, was not afforded the opportunity of a college degree prior to entering the trades.

Like Grace, Shonda was raised with the expectation that she would go to college after high school. She took classes at the university, but discovered that the academic

---

[16] Pseudonym

environment was not for her. After working a number of retail jobs, Shonda entered her electrical apprenticeship[17] in 1978 at age 22. Her decision to choose a blue-collar career path with tools rather than a white-collar office career was initially met with disappointment from her mother. Shonda credited the economic stability provided by her working-class parents as motivation to "take the path less travelled and go for the money." She said:

> I first started in the trades back in 1978. My four year apprenticeship [...] I didn't know what I was getting into. I believed that I was prepared for it, but I didn't really know what an apprenticeship was. My mother was "disappointed" when I decided to go into the trades because I was groomed to be an executive. I had gone to university for a couple of years and something came up. [….]
>
> Both my parents were working class and they afforded me a high-middle-class, upper-middle-class lifestyle. I was working 60-70 hours a week with retail and with the telephone company. I really didn't think that my salary would be increasing that much. I wanted a job that would afford me the quality of life that I had grown accustomed.

"AWARENESS OF THE EARNING POTENTIAL OF WORKING WITH MY HANDS." - SHONDA

At age nineteen, Shonda took a job in the summer of 1975 as a "garageman." The job gave her the ability to work with her hands and make a living. She credited the job with influencing her decision to become a tradesperson. She said:

> I learned how to lube and oil. I changed tires. I chased vehicles. If an installer's van would break down, I would take him a stocked van and then figure out how to get the broken van back to the shop. I was nineteen years old, educated, working with my hands.
>
> [I] had a pair of coveralls that said "Shonda." I was earning $12.00 an hour. This was absolutely one of the most amazing summers. I loved working in the elements, working with my hands.

In her interview for the electrician's apprenticeship, her work as a garageman gave her legitimacy as a viable candidate. Shonda had grown up with limited opportunities to work with her hands. Now she understood what it meant to work long hours at a higher wage than she could earn at her current positions at the phone company and the department store.

Prior to Shonda's admission into apprenticeship a Black woman was the first woman to join the Electrical Brotherhood in her region. Shonda's entrance was on the heels of a mandate by the U.S. Department of Labor to increase women's share of the construction workforce to 6.9 percent over three years. Her successful entry into the apprenticeship program was boosted by her skill, the U.S. Department of Labor's mandate, and her work experience as a garageman.

Like Shonda, Patricia entered the trades as a sprinkler fitter[18] after becoming disenchanted with the limited financial and career opportunities within her office environment. After she completed an undergraduate business degree, Patricia married her husband (a contractor), had children, and entered the medical industry as an office-worker. In her spare time she helped her husband with his construction business, introducing her to the possibilities of construction. She said of the office environment:

> That environment turned me off. I felt like they really try to break your spirit as far as you leave your brain at the door and do as you are told as you come through the door. You are acting as a robot. I felt like I was being stifled, my creativity, and [I wanted to] *do* something that I felt was very impactful. […]

18 Sprinkler fitters are pipefitters with a specialty in fire protection. They install fire protection systems in commercial buildings. The work requires regular ladder climbing, carrying heavy pieces of pipe, working overhead, and the ability to travel. The average wage for sprinkler fitters is $25 per hour and requires an 8000-hour apprenticeship (Apprenticeship and Training Division: Oregon Bureau of Labor).

> I heard about the construction trades [pre-apprenticeship] program[19], and I thought I really like being outside. I'm very adventurous. I like to do things that are a challenge. I saw the wages. That was something. I had been at this $12 or $15 for a minute[20], and I could make up to $20 or $30 something an hour plus fringe benefits [in a trade.] I'm like, okay I could do this. I felt that I was athletic. I did sports, basketball, track. I knew how to train before I began the training. The whole thing is discipline.

Patricia's desire for financial growth, her disenchantment with the rigidity of an office environment, her athleticism, and her exposure to the business side of construction contributed to her decision to enter the trades. She attributed some of her success in the trades to her "discipline" and that she "knew how to train," meaning that she was able to manage her body, her work, and her home life. She said this stick-to-itiveness was with her from before she began as a tradeswomen, and was a necessary quality for her success.

There were fifteen study participants. Patricia was one of the four participants who graduated from a pre-apprenticeship program before entering a formal trades career. Two participants graduated from a trades school geared towards young people just out of high school. One took a summer work experience aimed at exposing young people to the trades. Another entered a formal apprenticeship because of a program that targeted young Black women. Out of fifteen interviewees eight noted that pre-apprenticeship, job training, and formal early construction work experiences were important means to prepare young Black women to become future tradeswomen.

---

[19] The program offered basic carpentry skills, construction math, and introduced students to the trades culture.

[20] With the colloquial term, "minute" Patricia referred to the long period of time she expected to remain in the $12 - $15 office pay grade.

The pre-apprenticeship experiences prepared women to enter the trades. Two of the four pre-apprenticeship graduates were mothers during their course. The programs gave them room to develop work-related skills and to figure out how to manage a family and an all consuming career.

DISCOVERING THE TRADES FROM OTHER TRADESWOMEN

"WHAT DO YOU DO?" - CRYSTAL

Unlike the women mentioned previously, Crystal, a laborer, did not know the trades were a career option while in her twenties. She entered the trades in her thirties after randomly meeting a tradeswomen at a bar. She regretted she did not know about the trades earlier. She said:

> I was with one of my buddies and I was at a bar. This girl came in. She was real dirty. I'm like ,"Man, what do you do?"
>
> She's like, "A laborer."
>
> I'm like, "I've been laboring all my life."
>
> She's like, "No, I'm a professional laborer."
>
> I'm like, "What are you talkin' about?" So that's where it started for me. And I'm thinking, "Well damn, I've been doing all these jobs for all these years and making minimum. I've had jobs that were laboring jobs, but I wasn't getting paid for it."

After this encounter, Crystal inquired at the laborers training center and applied for the apprenticeship.

Crystal, like many Black women, did not know about the opportunities to become a tradesperson. Limited access to information about trades careers is a barrier to the entrance of Black women into the field. Her statement is also telling: Black women are often caught in low-skilled careers that are physically demanding but offer few options

for real financial gain. Had she known of this opportunity, Crystal would have entered the trades in her twenties rather than in her mid-thirties.

Black women can only choose trades careers if they know that those opportunities exist for them. They also need the opportunity to actually try working with tools. Pre-apprenticeship programs, job training, and early work experiences offer such opportunities. Visible tradeswomen in the community are important ambassadors of the trades. Four of the tradeswomen interviewed applied for apprenticeships because of friends who were in the same trade.

THE TRADES AS A PATH TO FINANCIAL SECURITY

"IN FOUR YEARS I DOUBLED WHAT I WAS MAKING." - SHARLA

The trades have historically offered people a higher-wage career, which was an attractive feature to entering the trades for the Black women in this study. All of the participants earned more as tradeswomen than in their former career paths. The financial independence from being tradeswomen meant greater personal autonomy and self-sufficiency, which resulted in their increased capacity to contribute to household income. Financial independence also meant greater autonomy in romantic relationships, and the ability to sustain oneself when single. Nine of the eleven study participants with children were single parents at some point during their careers. All of the participants sought employment regardless of their romantic relationship status. Financial stability was both empowering and a necessity for the long-term self-sufficiency of these women.

The road to increased financial stability was not an easy journey. Entrance into apprenticeships often requires an initial pay decrease for apprentices, plus long hours

away from family. To become established in the trades, Darnita said: "You have to make the little money to make the big money." She took a pay cut to become a first term laborer apprentice. She felt the decrease in pay was worth the risk for long-term financial stability. At the time she was not the sole breadwinner for her family. Her partner's salary offered some financial buffer for her decrease in pay. Darnita began her apprenticeship in the early 2000s, a time of economic boom in the industry. Though it was risky to decrease her pay, she was able to work consistently, which helped offset some of the financial deficit.

Unlike Darnita, Sharla began her low voltage electrical apprenticeship[21] as a single mom with no family financial support. The appeal of doubling her income drew her to the electrical apprenticeship. Prior to her application she worked for a manufacturing company as a water tester. To come into the apprenticeship, Sharla took a significant pay cut. She had a number of part-time jobs to supplement her income during her limited energy electrical apprenticeship. She said of the attractiveness of coming into the trades:

> [The trades offered] the potential to advance; the potential of not being [in manufacturing] as a water tester for the rest of my life. The future, the health care, the potential …and in the long term, being able to [journey-out[22]] and make more money. Hopefully doubling what I was making. So in four years I doubled what I was making in [manufacturing.] So I was making sacrifices in order to get a better means for [my daughter and I.] Yes, it was a sacrifice and it was harsh at first, but

[21] Limited Energy Electricians install, maintain, and replace electrical systems and equipment of less than 100 volt–amperes including communications and specialized control systems. This apprenticeship requires 6000 hours of on-the-job training and the average wage is $25 per hour (Apprenticeship and Training Division: Oregon Bureau of Labor).

[22] To "Journey out" means to complete an apprenticeship and become a journeyman. Journeymen receive a journeycard that can be shown to labor halls across the country and internationally. The card allows someone to work on projects where their union has representation, and it promises them to get the top wage on offer for the trade in that region.

> it was something that I think needed to be done. It just became sort of a practice of life. It didn't seem, until now like when I talk to you or explain it to someone, it didn't seem crazy to me then.

Of transitioning into the apprenticeship:

> I decreased my pay by $600 a month, being a first-term apprentice. And then six months into the apprenticeship program, I bought my first house - additional money going out. So the only understanding that I know of is "I just need another job. That job's not enough - I'm not getting enough hours because of the time frame when I could work - so now I need something to supplement that." Well, let me add two more jobs on the weekend so we'll have enough money and be able to have some sort of a cushion. It was a seven-day week, 365 days, for several years.

The apprenticeship process is challenging. It requires the apprentice to work 35-40-plus hours a week in addition to attending evening or weekend classes. Apprentices initially earn roughly 60 percent of journey-level wages. Their pay increases incrementally depending on hours worked, and the levels of classes completed.

Apprentices cannot stay in their apprenticeship program if they do not successfully complete coursework, nor if they do not receive favorable progress reports on the job. For all apprentices, male or female, there is little tolerance for being late or for having family responsibilities. Sharla's ability to juggle the financial strain of decreasing her pay and continuing to mother her child was commendable. She worked extra jobs on top of her apprenticeship when her apprenticeship did not provide enough income to support herself and her child.

Commercial tradeswork ebbs and flows. The building season tends to run from February through December, depending on the weather and the economy. Tradespeople must manage their money as the work comes and goes. For all of the interview

participants, the fact that they completed their respective apprenticeships or in-house training requirements to continue in these careers was significant. The ability to financially swing a decrease in pay is necessary to begin the trades; the inability to do so can make entrance into the industry impossible.

Wanda Lou, a retired welder, noted that self-sufficiency was the biggest benefit of becoming a tradeswoman. Looking back over her 30 year career she found the trades offered her greater independence in her marriage, and gave her a sense of her own potential. It also enabled her to take over family finances when her husband's health faltered. Working allowed her to be a "strong woman" and to balance gendered power relations in her marriage. She said:

> By getting out and working, I have my own income. I can be self-supporting and take care of myself. If I hadn't have gotten out and worked, then I would still have to depend on my husband. Sometimes [husband's] don't always do like you want them to do, which I know we don't always do what they want us to do. But I'm self-supporting. […] I may not need everything I want. But if I really want it, I can go out and get it. Being in the workplace has really made me a strong woman.

Financial security was a reason for entering the trades and continuing for the women in the study. All of the women interviewed were union affiliated. Due to the union structure they attained wage parity per hour worked with their male counterparts. Though union tradeswomen were paid the same rate as tradesmen, Black tradeswomen's financial security at times was jeopardized by not receiving enough hours on the job and layoffs. Threats to their financial security will be discussed in the following chapter.

Black women have historically worked and carried the responsibility of childcare and caring for sick family members. The women in this study were no different. All of

the women had caregiver roles in their families, regardless of whether they have children themselves. Financial security and childcare were inextricably linked for these women. It is significant how the participants in the study balanced children and the trades.

CHILDREN AND BEING A TRADESWOMEN

"MY PERSPECTIVE IS ONE OF FLEXIBILITY." - PATRICIA

Statistically, only 20 percent of women complete their apprenticeships, and less than 17 percent of the Black women who enter apprenticeships journey-out (L. Williams, 2008). Aside from discriminatory practices, which will be discussed throughout this dissertation, Black women struggle to balance the responsibilities of motherhood and trades careers. As increasingly more men are becoming single with children, concerns with balancing childcare responsibilities while coping with the demands of the commercial trades environment have been noted by both men and women. All of the tradeswomen said they or the other females in their lives - be they lesbian partners, family members, neighbors, and/or nannies - were responsible for the care of children. Tradeswomen who were not parents themselves were active in the lives of their nieces and nephews. Participants weighed when they could enter the trades based on their childcare responsibilities and the potential supports available to help them manage.

Crystal became a laborer when her children were young adults. This gave her the flexibility to be available to work at a moment's notice. She said:

> My other sons, they are grown, and they have been grown for a long time. So for me, I picked the perfect time to go into this field because you never know what hours you gonna get, how long you gonna work. I have never had to worry about getting home or get nobody from school, and all this and other kinds of stuff like some women have.

> Matter of fact, it's been men in situations like that that brings little kids and couldn't work all the time. You see, they frown when you can't work overtime. Even though you've done your eight hours and the boss come to you and say "I need you to stay two more hours." Now by right you can say, "No, I'm done," but it don't look good.

Being available to work is of key importance in the commercial trades. Crystal's ability to stay late on a job was a strategy she used to keep employed and to maximize the opportunities to work. She said not being able to fill in at a moment's notice could jeopardize her job. For single parents or parents with limited childcare support, the expectation of overtime can be a barrier to success on the job.

Unlike Crystal, Sharla began her electrical apprenticeship while her daughter was young. She depended on her neighbor to watch her child when she had to go out of town for work. As a tradeswomen she was not able to spend a lot of time with her daughter. She took on more of an instrumental role with her child as opposed to that of a nurturer. She said:

> My good friend, who is like a surrogate mom, lived across the street. So she would make sure [my daughter] did her homework. If I went [out of town, my daughter would] stay over there on the weekends and with good friends of hers. I would come home and make sure dinner was done and she had food. We'd do homework together. I'd go off to school or I'd go off to the next job. And [my daughter] just being really independent really helped as well.

Debra, a fellow electrician and a single mother, shared a similar experience of getting through her apprenticeship while her daughter was growing up. She and her daughter would do homework together. These tradeswomen modeled for their children the value of work, self-sufficiency, and determination.

When Patricia began her sprinkler fitter apprenticeship, she worked on a big construction job in her community which lasted for a year. After its completion, staying with her company and continuing within the field required her to travel, a feature of many trades. Of balancing the requirements of her field and her responsibilities as a mother, she said:

> [It] wasn't doable at the time with small children at home. My youngest was nine months and the next one up was two and a half, and then four, and then eight. There would have been no way at that time. It would have been like going off to the military and leaving your kids. I really feel my role first is a mom and the responsibility of that. So anyway I took a three year break. […] I feel like my perspective is one of flexibility. That I know how to manage whatever I choose, that I don't feel like I have to leave something and go to something else.

The expectation of tradespeople to travel at a moment's notice is based on the gendered idea of men as instrumental providers, with a female expressive counterpart managing the home.

In this regard, women entering such non-traditional fields as construction or the military take on these performance expectations and receive little assistance from their employer. The trades continue to resist addressing the implications of childcare on employment. Because Patricia was not given work near her home, she made the difficult decision to take a sabbatical from her apprenticeship until her children were old enough for her to leave them for extended periods of time. After her sabbatical, Patricia returned to her apprenticeship and completed it. Prioritizing one's children over their career can result in stigma at work, and of having one's commitment to the work questioned. Patricia's example demonstrates that meeting the necessity of childrearing does not equate to a lack of career ambition or commitment. At times it is a necessity.

In contrast to Patricia, Sue found that taking a sabbatical from her apprenticeship meant she never became a journey-level electrician. Sue had to leave her electrical apprenticeship because of the inflexibility in the hours. In her final term of the apprenticeship, she was assigned the graveyard shift for a manufacturing plant. As a single mother of four, that shift was the "worst" for her situation. She was initially willing to take the graveyard shift, since it was all that was on offer for her to complete her apprenticeship. At that time she was recruited to join the outreach and training staff of a pre-apprenticeship program she had completed herself some years prior. Due to her financial and caregiving needs, Sue took a leave from her electrical apprenticeship and joined the pre-apprenticeship program staff. She said: "I took a leave of the electrical apprenticeship program; it was supposed to be for one year. […] It turned out to be nine and a half years." When Sue left her apprenticeship, she was one of the highest paid apprentices in her program, and had a reputation as a good worker. She would like to have finished her apprenticeship.

Unlike many women who leave apprenticeships, Sue was able to leave her apprenticeship for a career move that provided well for herself and her children. Many people leave apprenticeships but do not have clear opportunities on the other side of this transition. Had there been an opportunity for Sue to continue in her career and meet her responsibilities as a mother, Sue would not have left her apprenticeship. Though Sue returned to the trades by working with her husband's contracting business, her story highlights the ways lack of assistance and/or consideration of childcare responsibilities on the part of employers can hinder women's progress in the trades.

Through the early part of her electrical career, Shonda worked on commercial construction projects. After she became a journeyman she and her husband worked as travelling electricians. During this time she became pregnant. To protect her job she did not initially tell her supervisors about her pregnancy, and worked for seven months. She said her "coveralls kept getting bigger", but no one knew she was pregnant. She was forced to take maternity leave when she tripped coming off a ladder and hurt her back.

Later in her career, Shonda became a single mother. She found that working with the inflexibility of the commercial construction schedule limited her ability to parent as attentively as she would like. She transitioned from working on commercial projects to working as an electrician for the municipality. Of the transition she said:

> I *love* being a parent. I don't think I could parent as well as I was able to had I worked in the construction trade. Because I worked for the city, I had the freedom to have days off and worked at the same place all the time. And if I needed to get to his school I could leave, come back, and go. That was the best thing that could have happened.

Shonda made an important strategic decision to move from the commercial realm into the municipal work environment for her child. This allowed her to thrive both as a mother and as a tradeswomen. The shift also required that she move into a middle management position.

For many Black women, children and working are a challenging reality to negotiate. Providing for children is a motivating factor in becoming a tradeswoman. "Negotiating" children has meant being silent about a pregnancy, coming into the trades once children have become more independent, taking a sabbatical from the trades until children grew up, networking with other women for childcare assistance, and long

periods of being away or unavailable to children. Though the women did not directly talk about how their non-traditional career choice affected their romantic partnerships in regards to parenting, I did observe that women received more childcare support from their same-sex partners than from their male spouses. Darnita, a laborer, said her same-sex partner was willing to take on more childcare responsibilities at times because she herself was in a non-traditional field as a letter-carrier. Women in heterosexual partnerships and single women talked about employing women friends and family to help cover childcare when they were at work.

The interviewed Black women modeled how to negotiate racism and sexism in the workplace to their children. They also provided the example of financial independence and hard work. These tradeswomen paid for some of their children to go to college, and encouraged them to be financially independent. Grace's son dedicated his degree from Harvard University to his mother. Though Grace did not make it to university, her son realized her dream. She "drank champagne" to honor the accomplishment. In her college application, Keisha's daughter named her mother a "hero in her life." She said her carpenter mother was both a mentor and a parent who encouraged her to go to college. Kareema, a cement mason, actively recruited the young people in her family to become tradespeople. She encouraged them to go to college, and to learn a trade. In line with the modeling received from their parents and grandparents, these women provided examples to the next generation of ways to succeed in the world.

ROMANTIC LOVE AND PERSONAL NETWORKS

"IT JUST SEEMED LIKE OUR CAREERS WERE GONNA CLASH." - KEISHA

Romantic partners both contributed and detracted from the professional success of these tradeswomen. Four tradeswomen maintained the same partnership throughout their careers. Most of the participants have dealt with the dissolution of long-term romantic unions. Some found new partners who offered greater support to them in their chosen field. Some sought support to stay in the trades outside of their marriages, and found affirmation from close friends. All of the tradeswomen protecting their ability and right to work was a central concern in their partnerships.

Keisha, a carpenter, acknowledged that early in her career she had to decide between continuing with her husband, who was a musician at the time, or her career. She said: "It just seemed like our careers were gonna clash with our relationship. And to me, I knew I would have to work for a fair amount of my life. So I was going to pick that over my marriage at that point." Her husband was impacted by her resolve to prioritize her work. He eventually became a carpenter as well, and the two of them worked for the same company. After becoming a carpenter her husband began to work with her, as opposed to against her, in the home. Similarly, Shonda and her husband worked together as electricians for a number of years.

In contrast to Keisha's ability to maintain her marriage and her carpentry career, Sue was forced to leave her cement mason and electrical apprenticeships because of her husband. Before she married her first husband she joined the cement masons

apprenticeship. He did not approve of her career choice and forced her to quit. She returned to the industry as an electrical apprentice when she divorced him.

Sandra had not had a long-term romantic partner while in the trades. She noticed that at times her male partners were intrigued by her work and liked the fact that she was a hard-working-woman. However at times they were jealous that her career was so time consuming. Both Grace and Wanda Lou's husbands were tradesworkers. Wanda Lou's husband considered her added paycheck a blessing. Grace's husband initially struggled with the concept of having a wife who worked in a non-traditional field. However, he too became accustomed to the lifestyle their dual-income afforded them.

Stereotypical expectations of women to be doting ever-present wives can hinder their progress in apprenticeships. Women in the study pushed for more egalitarian romantic relationships which supported them to work. Negotiating the demands of the trades was a central concern in these women's romantic relationships. If partners could not support the tradeswomen interviewed to go to work, women were forced to determine whether they could renegotiate the terms of the relationship, or whether they would leave the industry.

Some tradeswomen mention that their same-sex partners had an understanding and appreciation of their challenges as Black women in working a non-traditional field. For example, Darnita and her girlfriend were both in the military, and upon leaving the military entered non-traditional careers. Their shared experiences of being Black women in non-traditional environments impacted their understanding of each other's career choices. Darnita's partner supported her when she took more dangerous job calls, and picked up the slack with childcare when Darnita was unable to. Girlfriends have been

strong supports for some of the women when helping them navigate their workplace. Z would call her partner, a feminist and activist, before she got home to discuss the day. Her partner would run her a bath, and then they would share dinner. In the care of her partner, Z developed skills to help herself discharge the stress of the day. Z also developed a keen understanding of the ways racism and sexism impacted her work environment through conversations with her partner.

Some of the participants spoke about key friends and communities that helped them know that they were loved. Veronica talked about her three best friends whom she spoke with regularly. They provided her with a place of acceptance where she did not have to defend herself. This was in contrast to her experience at work. She was also involved in the queer community in her area which further supported her identity as a beautiful, queer woman. Darnita had a large extended family and was well-connected in the Black community. Networks of social support including romantic partners, friends, church groups, and broader community networks helped women let go of some of the stressors on the jobsite and provided venues for connection and belonging with others.

SUMMARY

The narratives of the Black tradeswomen in this study spoke to a variety of protective factors from their childhood, and into adulthood that contributed to their willingness to enter the trades and to persevere. In terms of growing up, some of the protective factors were the modeling of parents and elders on how to navigate racism and sexism in the workplace. Parents' examples as role models helped "attitudinally prepare" these tradeswomen to handle a difficult career path. Parents and elders also provided a

quality of life where these tradeswomen as children were well-provided for. The experience of having one's needs met, and watching the example of parents encouraged women to move towards career options that offered greater financial sufficiency.

The positive role-models of parents and relatives also affirmed women's identities as capable young Black women who were expected to do great things. These messages helped develop Black women's self-esteem and sense of self-worth even before they entered the trades. Women also acknowledged that they were raised in environments that encouraged women to work with their bodies to support the family. This included working on farms, maintenance work around the house, and athleticism.

As women, all of the participants had the expectation that they would work. Black women entered trades careers because they were an alternative to lesser paid work as domestics, office workers, retail sales assistants, and lesser skilled manufacturing work. Participants noted the significance of early work experiences, pre-apprenticeship programs, word-of-mouth, and workforce recruitment efforts in giving them the information needed to apply for apprenticeships.

When at work, the tradeswomen interviewed experienced periods of isolation and harassment. However, in their personal lives they cultivated community with romantic partners, friends, children, and family. This contributed to their ability to navigate their workplaces and develop a stronger sense of self. Meeting the needs of family was a motivating factor in Black women's decision to enter the trades. Parenting as tradeswomen was challenging, and at times meant leaving the industry, job changes, and being away from children for extended periods. However, being tradeswomen allowed them to provide for their children and to be self-sufficient.

Participants also spoke of the challenges of being with partners who were not supportive of their career choice. Romantic partners acted as a support or hindrance in tradeswomen's career. Partners were most supportive when they shared household responsibilities, and were willing to talk with tradeswomen about their work experiences. An area of future research may be to explore more how romantic relationships impact Black women's trades careers.

Women's narratives offered insight as to some of the convergent themes that encourage Black women to enter the trades and to stay. Women entered the trades on the shoulders of their ancestors who also desired the "American Dream" of financial independence and new experiences. They developed a mature outlook on the world before they entered the trades. This maturity provided a foundation for them that kept them grounded in the face of interpersonal and institutional oppression. The following chapter explores emergent themes around the climate of intersecting oppressions in the trades as they specifically related to Black women.

MICROAGGRESSIONS AT WORK

The experiences of the Black tradeswomen interviewed were varied and the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality impacted them in small and major ways. Though all of the women were Black they did not experience racism, sexism, or heterosexism in the same way. However, there were similarities in their struggles as they came onto the job, and had interactions with supervisors, and/or coworkers. For Black tradeswomen racial and gender microaggressions happened throughout their careers. This study did not set out to outline racial and gender microaggressions per se. However, the microaggression framework does offer a way to theorize the intersecting experiences of racism and sexism for Black tradeswomen. The following chapter discusses the various microaggressive themes which impacted Black women's work. At times microaggressions could be brushed aside and were easily circumvented. At times these were debilitating instances that hindered forward movement at work.

The racial and gender microaggressive themes that emerged from the data were: the assumption of inferiority, the myth of the meritocracy, color- and gender-blindness, treatment as second-class workers, the denial of individual instances of racism and sexism, sexist and racist humor, invisibility, and being sexualized in the workplace. A handful of women in the study talked about microaggressions due to their sexual orientation - specifically the microaggressions of heterosexism, and the assumption of abnormality based on one's sexual orientation. The following seeks to outline overarching microaggressive themes that affected Black tradeswomen; to highlight some

of the individual microaggressions that occurred; and to underscore some of the discriminatory messages within these microaggressions.

ASSUMPTION OF INFERIORITY

"GUYS ARE LOOKING AT US TO FAIL." - KEISHA

Tradeswomen continually face the assumption of inferiority based on their race and gender. Implicit in the assumption of inferiority is the expectation of failure. Black tradeswomen spoke of having to navigate subtle and overt messages that they were inferior to their male peers and therefore could not do their jobs. This message was communicated through disbelief at tradeswomen's credentials and reoccurring messages that Black women needed to prove themselves on the job. Women reported being watched constantly. The message of inferiority was also conveyed when tradeswomen's race or gender was emphasized over their actual skills on the job. Questions of the skills and legitimacy of Black tradeswomen on the job translated into extreme challenges to their leadership as they moved into roles with greater responsibility.

Kareema had an extensive resume as a cement mason. However, as a Black woman when she presented her resume to hiring managers her credentials were reviewed with disbelief. She said:

> Anytime that I've ever walked on and got a job on my own, it's always taken the owner and the attorney - I swear to God - to make a decision to hire me. They look at my credentials and they go, "There's no way!"
>
> And then they call [my former] superintendent or foreman and they say, "Yes, she is who she is." That's always something with me. [...] Well, I have all of my credentials. I got a driver's license. I got heavy equipment. I can finish [cement.] I got loads and loads of people who will be a reference for me.

Kareema made a practice of collecting letters of recommendation from each job she worked as a way of combating the microaggressive messages of inferiority that undermined her skill and achievements. When on the job Kareema noted she was watched to prove that her skill matched her credentials.

Similarly Sandra, despite being in the trades for ten years, spoke of the constant pressure to prove herself on the job. Sandra felt that if she failed or was less than exemplary on the job that another woman would not be hired. As a Black woman she felt the pressure to stand out from the negative stereotypes of Blacks as lazy and women as incompetent. She said:

> I am always trying to prove myself, always trying to make it look [good]. […] If I'm not doing it right then maybe some people might see it and might not give somebody else a chance. […]
>
> When I am on the job and when I am hustling I would have that little bit more hustle, when another male on the job might have just done it okay. You have got to do it above and beyond. You have got to do it a little bit quicker or else you are slower than if they can do it faster.

In the face of being stereotyped and having her work represent her gender and her race Sandra worked to be better than her male counterparts on the job. She recognized that if she was not better than her male colleagues, she was unfairly judged as inferior. Hypersurvelliance is a common feature of Black women's experience in the workplace.

White women also experience this pressure to be good at what they do and feel overscrutinized on the jobsite. Some White tradeswoman in personal conversations with me attributed their uneasiness about stepping into roles of greater responsibility to career anxiety about the intensity of the work. They refused to step into leadership positions because they felt they did not know enough to take on more responsibility. Sandra's

perspective is helpful as it highlights that this "career anxiety" is both an internal need for excellence, and occures in a sexist and racist climate that expects her to fail. Men - especially White men in their place of historical White male privilege - are not scrutinized to the same standards as women on the job.

Keisha said of being watched so closely on the job:

> It's unfortunate that we as females have to do a little bit more because guys are looking at us to fail. They're literally and physically looking at us, whether they're standin' on the porch, or standin' on an overhang.
>
> They are watching us, for whatever reasons, whether it is to look at us to fail, or just getting their jollies. I don't know, but they're watching us. And only they know the reason why they are watching us. But hopefully, they see that something in that person's work, work-ethics, that to where pretty soon, they don't see a female. They see a worker.

Keisha acknowledged that as a woman she was closely watched with the microaggressive expectation that she would fail, and had been sexualized by men staring at her inappropriately. In the light of this she, like Sandra, worked to be better than her male peers. Women in the study spoke of this hyper-scrutiny and assumption of inferiority as an industry-wide reality in the industry. Black women are constantly proving themselves to overcome gender and race stigmatization on the job, and seek to be considered a "worker" just like their male - predominately White -peers. The constant "paying of dues" according to Keisha was exhausting and exasperating.

In working as a career counselor it was not uncommon for employers to say to me: "We had a woman work here once, she didn't work out," or "Women don't like working here;" or "She didn't fit in." It was also common to hear: "We had a gal working here. She was a hard worker." Whether the speaker was against or supportive of women

in the trades a common message that I received was their assessment of women's collective eligibility for construction-related jobs was based on their personal expereinces with a handful of women. These experiences either reenforced their expectation that women were inferior workers or were outlier examples of random women who succeeded on the job.

Prior to Veronica's job at the utility, she worked in the logging industry for over ten years where she developed her skills as a heavy equipment operator. When completing her paperwork to begin her job at the utility she spoke with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) person from human resources. The EEO person emphasized Veronica's social identity as a Black woman over her operator skills as a reason for her hire. She said:

> I was talking with their EEO. She's like, "We're really ready to get some women in here. We really need to get some diversity."
>
> I had never heard of "diversity" until I came here. […] I was like, "I'm a hard worker." And she was like, "Oh, I know," and she kept reverting back to that.
>
> But I kept saying, "But I'm a really good worker, and I can catch on really quick what I don't know. And I am an awesome operator. So I'll be ready." She kept on going back to that, and it destroyed my self-esteem.
>
> I found myself in that work environment, you know and, like the only reason I had that job was because I was a person of color and I was female. It had never ever crossed my mind. It really affected me profoundly. […] I'd say I still haven't recovered from that.
>
> I guess it's a toll of self-esteem. Not feeling good enough - never feeling good enough. It's like even though I'll tell you, "I'm good enough and I can do this, and blah-blah-blah," I got the whole voice thing. "You're here because you're Black," or "You're here because you're a woman. That's the only reason you got the job."

Veronica had worked at the utility for two decades at the time of our initial interview. That said, those subtle messages of not being good enough took a toll on her. The passing

comments of the EEO person stayed with her throughout the past twenty years at the utility. Many of the women in the study acknowledged how these microaggressive messages of inferiority and not being good enough took a toll on their self-esteem .

THE MYTH OF MERITOCRACY

"YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE YOU'RE A WOMAN. THAT'S THE ONLY REASON YOU GOT THE JOB." - VERONICA

In the trades there is a pervasive message that the person hired is the best person for the job - those who succeed do so solely on their own merit, and deserve everything they have. The myth of the meritocracy is a pervasive microaggressive theme in the trades. Sue (2007) described the myth of the meritocracy as: "Statements which assert that race does not play a role in succeeding in career advancement or education" (p. 282). In the case of Black tradeswomen, the myth of meritocracy manifested by, predominately, White men saying that women and people of color got their jobs solely because of their race and/or gender. It was followed with the implication that they, as White males, worked for their jobs and were not subject to an overt or implicit advantage because of their race.

The myth of the meritocracy manifested in microaggressive messages from men to women such as, "When did they let you in?" or "How come you are here?" These messages undervalued the contributions, skills, and rights to work of the person being questioned. The microaggressive message that Black women do not deserve their jobs is a tool to secure male positions of economic power. Though Sharla had not experienced extreme hostility in the workplace, she had had male coworkers accuse her of getting her

job because she was a woman of color. When working as an apprentice a White male journeyman expressed frustration that she had been hired over his son. In response to his insult, which implied she was an under-qualified token hire, Sharla emphasized she was hired for her skill. She said:

> A carpenter-journeyman that I was sort of working side-by-side with made the comment that I must have gotten in when they let the women in. […] I said, "I have to earn my right to be here, just like anybody else, no matter whether I'm male or female or the color of my skin."
>
> I said, "They're not going to just give me carte blanche because I'm Black and I'm a female. It just doesn't work that way. No employer is going to allow that to happen. The training center is not going to allow that to happen. I've got to earn my way just like anybody else."
>
> So I sort of really nipped that in the bud. And then I heard another comment that his son had applied six times. I don't know what to tell you about why [his son] hasn't gotten in and I did.

Inherent in this man's question was a sense of incredulousness, "How can you - a Black woman - be better than my White male son?' Women and people of color often have to prove that they did not receive special attention to have their jobs. In contrast nepotism has been used generationally as an active strategy of White men to enter the trades and secure work. The network of friends, brothers, and in-laws has meant that the trades are largely filled with people who have a family history of being in that field. Lack of analysis around the reality of nepotism among White men in the trades speaks to the myth of the meritocracy and the reality of color-blindness among many of the men in the industry. The blaming of women and people of color for pushing for inclusion in the workforce through affirmative action is a component of sexism and racism.

A common response of study participants to this type of discrimination was to speak to their skills and credentials and to deflect the negative message that they did not

deserve their jobs. Sharla challenged the journeyman's perception of her and "nipped it in the bud." However, whether voiced or not, the perception remains that women are unfairly taking the jobs of men. This message can also be inadvertently conveyed by managers, supervisors, and human resources who in hiring women and people of color focus more on their race and gender rather than their skills as reason for being hired.

COLOR- AND GENDER-BLINDNESS

The microaggressive theme of color-blindness is conveyed in statements when White people do not acknowledge race (Sue 2007). Gender-blindness is conveyed in statements when men do not acknowledge the presence of gender. Color- and gender-blindness manifest as both the unwillingness and discomfort of dominant groups to address the realities of race and gender as important variables that affect people's lives. While working around apprenticeship training centers I heard coordinators say, "It does not matter what your race or gender, you will be judged by your work." As a concept this statement seems relatively benign. However, the experiences of the women in this study speak to a different reality. Earlier Keisha and Sandra shared that the microaggressive assumption of inferiority based on their race and gender impacted how they were perceived as workers. The presence of gender- and color-blindness works with the assumption of inferiority in clouding the realities of sexism and racism on the job. In practice, tradeswomen were judged as Black and female first, and as qualified workers second.

Gender- and color-blindness also comes up as opposition to inclusion measures to address racial and gender disparities on the job. Sandra told of a White male colleague

breaking the lock on the portable toilet reserved for women on a jobsite. For sanitary reasons and to prevent harassment big construction sites are required to have separate facilities for men and women. Sandra's coworker felt women had an unfair advantage in having their own toilet. He broke the lock on the women's portable toilet. This facility became as filthy as the male facility. She said:

> The last job, there was a guy, […] I didn't think about coming up and trying to talk to him because everything that came out of his mouth was very opinionated, very chauvinistic. You could just tell by what he said. By the way he said things, and how he said it. […]
>
> He said he broke the lock off the [toilet] the females were supposed to use. I went, "Well why did you do that?" He's like, "Why do you have to have a nice clean place?" I said, "Well ours is clean because we didn't get it dirty. They don't come in here and clean this one any more than yours." […]
>
> [A fellow tradeswoman] brought up a couple things. Since that day he said, "You know, I didn't even think about that. […] Okay, gotcha, I won't do that anymore."

Sandra and a fellow tradeswoman educated this man about why the toilets were different. He initially perceived the separate toilets as a sign of preferential treatment bestowed upon women. In the tradesman's eyes any effort to include women in the jobsite was discriminatory towards him as a White man. Lack of education of men about how to work effectively with women on the job allows these behaviors to remain unchecked. It becomes the responsibility of women to educate men on their biased assumptions.

SEXIST AND RACIST HUMOR/JOKES/LANGUAGE

"GUYS SAY STUFF THAT IS DISRESPECTFUL." - DANIELLE

Demeaning racialized and sexualized comments, jokes, and images has been a part of trades culture that all of the women contended with in some shape or form. The

lack of early disciplinary action around sexual innuendos and racist jokes contribute to a work climate that inadvertently condones racism and sexual harassment. Sexualizing behaviors ran a continuum from comments about women in general, comments about particular women on the crew, and more personal comments and inappropriate touches towards women in the study. Such behaviors in the early stages were comments which were off-handedly sexist, or heterosexist. These comments were often dismissed as "men being men." Such behaviors were mostly treated by supervisors as individual incidents.

All of the tradeswomen interviewed experienced slights and belittling comments indicating they were not fully accepted members of the team. Women expressed that some of the men around them spoke degradingly of the women in their personal lives and referred to them in derogatory terms. Danielle described these comments as "disrespectful." Danielle shared her experiences with racial and gender jokes. On the whole she was able to let things go, however some things did stick. For some of the women the microaggressions or slights to women and Black people were so frequent that they do not give them much attention:

> D: I might get little remarks, which you know, guys. Guys say stuff that is disrespectful.
>
> *R: Is it disrespectful to you as a woman or as a Black person?*
>
> D: It can go either way. There was this one guy, we were having a luncheon 'cause we were closing [a job.] He was saying something like, "I don't see no chicken and watermelon over there." I didn't even know! That's old school stuff. He was an old guy. I was like, "Man, whatever. You probably eat more chicken and watermelon than I do."
>
> I've also run into the drawings in the bathrooms, you know, of a girl's vagina and all that stuff. I think it's real childish and juvenile. If I wanted to I could have really made a big stink about one. […] It was pretty messed up. […] It was outdoor, you know, one of those stand-up port-a-potties. […] there was this

> picture of girl with her legs up and then they dug a hole out and then drew a penis. It was just crazy. […]
>
> There were other women on the jobsite too. They didn't say nothing really. […] But, that's some stuff that should be totally addressed.

In Danielle's experience the racially disparaging comments, such as the stereotype of Black people eating fried chicken and watermelon, occurred to give her the message she as a Black person was not wanted at work. The drawing of a woman's vagina on the bathroom communicated a hatred and domination of women. She noted that though the drawing was offensive, no women on the job complained. Women often tolerate these images to keep working.

Women also have to choose how much they are willing to participate in sexually charged jokes with male colleagues. Participating in the humor can mean greater acceptance by men. It can also mean putting up with comments that are personally offensive, and perpetuating oppression onto other women.

Similarly, Sue as an electrical apprentice heard disparaging comments about women throughout her apprenticeship. She said the men on her crew would harass women who passed by the jobsite and refer to women in general as "bitches" and "tramps." This was deeply offensive to her as a woman. At one point she spoke out against her crewmates' disparaging remarks about women. She said:

> The guys would always try to talk to the women [who passed by.] And if the women ignored them, when they drove off, they called them the "b" name. Now as a woman, I'm not going to sit there and listen to you call another woman that kind of name, especially if you don't know them.
>
> And then as a woman I had to listen to a lot of women being called other names. [Tradesmen would] come in and talk about their wives, and girlfriends, and this and that. I remember I got so tired of hearing the same "bitches" and "tramps."

> One day, one of the guys says, "yeah, that bitch, la la la" and I just turned to him and said, "Well if she's a bitch, what does that make you? You are with her."
>
> I tell you right then, all the guys just stood. [They] looked at me, and they just looked at him, and they looked at me. I said, "You guys, just need to learn how to treat women, and you wouldn't have the problems you have."

Men disparaged women walking past job sites, and in the way they talked about the women in their personal lives. Sue spoke out against the sexist name-calling, and challenged men to address the disrespect of women in their personal lives. She noted that the disparaging way men spoke of women generally, directly impacted the conflict they had with the women in their lives. This particular day she spoke out, however she tolerated these comments at various points in her career.

At times Keisha was the brunt of sexist jokes and sexist pranks played on her by fellow male carpenters. She relayed a story of a crewmate placing condoms in the supply truck for her to find. Everyone knew what had been done and waited to laugh at her expense. She said:

> And there was a lot of guys standing at the tailgate of the truck just b-s'ing and drinking coffee. We all get there and it's time to load up. No one's helpin' me. And finally we get all loaded up, and then the foreman decides, "Hey, go grab a box of nails."
>
> So I go in there, and he says, "They're on the left side on the bottom." So I'm walking in, kind of looking around. Seeing the left side on the bottom, and there's these pastel condoms on the boxes. Deliberately set there.
>
> Then I took some snap ties in the corner and I walked out to the back of the truck. I said, "Is this what you wanted?" And they cracked up laughing like it was funny. [*She tells this deadpan, not laughing at all*] So I said whatever I said. Then I went and got the nails, and threw them in the back. As I was throwing them in the back, I said, "Well, you've already got the nails in here." And then they laughed again.

Keisha told this painful story of being joked about at work. Her entire crew, including her foreman, participated in the sexist joke. Such a joke reinforces to women that they are inferior to their male colleagues, and that their gender is laughable. It is deeply offensive. Keisha had a number of sexist pranks played on her while working. She never reported them.

SECOND-CLASS WORKERS

Tradeswomen acknowledged contending with the microaggression of being treated as second-class workers. Second-class treatment is conveyed to women or Black people when they experience differential treatment based on their race or gender. For example being considered second-class is conveyed to Black people when White men are averse to work with them. It is conveyed to women when men help them too much or too little. It is also conveyed when Black people or women are relegated to certain jobs on the crew, often these are the most repetitive, dirty, and labor intensive jobs. The sanctioning of racist and sexist comments and jokes reinforce the microaggressive theme of women and people of color as second-class workers and inferior people. When these comments are allowed to be made in common conversation a message is conveyed that it is okay to treat women and people of color as less than.

"AT LEAST GIVE ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO MESS UP BEFORE YOU […] TRY TO RESCUE ME" - Z

The stereotype of the "weak woman" was a common theme that Black women negotiated on the job. This stereotype manifested as men trying to do everything for a woman on the job, or refusing to help women at all. The microaggressive message sent to

women when men did not help appropriately was “they are doing men’s work and need to hold their own.” At times “holding one’s own” may mean holding more than the average man. The message sent to women when men helped too much was “they can’t really do their job and need to be catered to.” Z said of this dynamic on the jobsite:

> I’ll be doing something, and then I’ll have some guy come up to me and say, “Let me do it. I’m stronger.” And I say, “I’ve got a little bit of muscle. I can do it by myself. If I need your help, my mouth works and I’ll call for you. At least give me the opportunity to mess up before you come and try to rescue me.”
>
> There’s that and then there’s the extreme of, “I don’t care if you need help or not. I don’t care if I see you struggling. I’m just not going to help you. You’re a girl. You’re in a man’s world. You knew what you were getting into. You were supposed to be able to handle this. You knew the kind of trade you were getting in.”

Both the behaviors of helping too little, an example of hostile sexism, and helping too much, an example of benevolent sexism, are unsafe. If men do everything for women on the job, women are not being trained to adequately do their work. If men do not help women at all this can cause a woman to injure herself as she tries to prove that she is tough enough to do something that should be done by two people.

White and Black women do not necessarily experience sexism around help in the same ways. Z noticed that White male colleagues shied away from helping her when she was in need of assistance. However, at times she noticed that when a White woman in her position needed assistance, White men would help her. The question is not whether assistance is necessary. All tradespeople need assistance on the jobsite. Tradeswork is inherently collaborative in nature. However, racism and sexism impacted whether men would work with women, and whether White people would work with Black people.

Where Z as a Black woman might experience hostile racism infused sexism, she noticed that her fellow White tradeswomen might be "babied" by benevolent sexism. This could be because a foreman was romantically interested in a woman or because he did not think she could make it on the job. It also is in line with the historical experience of White women being privileged over Black women. This is a practice of sexism and has racialized underpinnings.

"I WAS NOT HIRED AS A JANITOR. I WAS HIRED AS A RIVETER." – WANDA LOU

Black women tried to avoid being relegated to stereotypically "womanly" tasks on the job. Each woman found her own balance with how much of the site cleaning she was willing to do. Black women had to balance cleaning up as a way of contributing to the smooth functioning of the job; and cleaning as a demeaning task to put them in their place as less than their male counterparts. Who cleans on a jobsite was not neutral. Some of the women resisted doing cleaning work because they could get stuck being the go-to-person for site clean-up. Also in the quest to be taken seriously as a worker some of the women were very conscious of the ways women were stereotyped. They steered clear of any behaviors that reinforced those stereotypes. Wanda Lou and Grace related their experiences with cleaning on the jobsite:

> W: When I first started, every evening we would start cleaning up. The supervisor always wanted me to sweep the area. Normally you clean up your own area, but he wanted me to do it [for everyone.] I think I did it twice. Then I told him that, "No, I was not hired as a janitor, I was riveter. People can sweep their own places."
>
> But you know, I found that if you just tell them first, don't just let it go on and on and on. But I was not hired as a janitor. I was hired as a riveter. I felt like I was the only Black in my area. So I felt everybody should sweep their own spot, and I would sweep mine.

> *G: I didn't have any problem at [one site,] like I did [at another site.] I was a welder and they were asking me to clean up some janitorial area when it was raining, or especially when I wasn't working outside. I said, "Oh no, I was not doing that because I'm not a sweeper, I'm a welder, so I'll just go upstairs and sit until it's dry."*
>
> W: Oh, yeah, when you couldn't work on your job. Just like when we didn't have anything to do, we [would clean,] or do something like that. Yeah, find something to do.
>
> *G: But I'm not doing that because I'm a welder. I'm not cleaning. I used to go and sit upstairs. They couldn't do anything to me, because I couldn't work outside in the rain. I'd sit there and rest.*

Both Wanda Lou and Grace chose the trades as an alternative to becoming domestic workers, a career path that has often fallen to women of color. At times this sexist message that Black women are less than their male counterparts may be explicit. At times this message comes through subtly as in the case mentioned by Wanda Lou. In that case she noticed that her employer put the collective responsibility to maintain a clean jobsite on her as the woman. Her employer may not have been conscious of his sexism or the historical context of Black woman as domestics. However, he continually asking her to be the "maid" on the job thus reinforcing racist and sexist messages about a Black women's place on the job as a second-class worker.

Keisha found that despite her strong presence in her leadership role as superintendent, she still experienced men treating her as a "mother hen" or "mom" who would pick up after them on the job. This is an element of her job that is not shared by male superintendents. She noted that her coworkers still expected her to be the "mom" on the job and catch the project's loose-ends. Keisha experienced the respect of her

colleagues, and was sensitive to some of the gendered expectations from her coworkers. She said:

> It's just really weird going to the jobsite, and they are looking at me for - in my mind- motherly advice. "Can you clean that up behind me?", "Don't worry, Keisha'll get it!" "Well, where's Keisha at?" And I am like, "Okay now I'm Mother Hen." And it's bitter sweet. It's good they depend on me, but that's not my job.

Keisha spoke to the tension between being integrated into the job as a teammate, and gendered expectations of what that meant. Though she was an accomplished superintendent who led massive tunnel and bridge projects in different parts of the U.S. she had not transcended the gendered expectation of being the "mom" on the job.

DENIAL OF INDIVIDUAL SEXISM AND INDIVIDUAL RACISM

Women in the study differed in their comfort level with having sexualizing and racist comments made around them. Some chose to dismiss the comments, and maintain a stance that as long as the comments were not about them and no one was putting their hands physically on their person it could be tolerated. To continuously challenge these comments can cause a woman, whose presence is already questioned on the job due to her gender, to be questioned further. Saying such comments are sexist or degrading to women can be met with the denial of individual sexism by their male colleagues followed by a defense that men are being themselves and should not have to change for women.

The denial of individual racism manifests in Whites excusing racist jokes as unintentional or funny. The denial of individual racism occurs when racialized comments are unchecked and when racist incidences happen with no recourse from other crew

members or management. Women relayed stories of racist jokes and comments made to and around them frequently.

The denial of racism in small instances, lays the foundation for racism to be denied in instances of overt racism. Veronica relayed a story of a Black coworker finding a noose in his locker. When he approached his supervisor, the White male supervisor laughed about the noose and dismissed it as a joke. No action was taken on the part of the supervisor or higher up in regards to the noose. The denial of acts of racism and sexism limits the willingness and success of women and people of color to speak up about the racism and sexism they experience.

'ARE YOU BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BECAUSE OF YOUR RACE OR GENDER?' - SHONDA

When experiencing discrimination Black women are often expected to name how they were oppressed. Was it because of their race, or their gender that a coworker would not work with them? This approach focuses on the target diagnosing the problem and treats racism and sexism as distinct experiences, which are not interdependent or intertwined. It neither addresses the problematic discriminatory behavior, nor does it acknowledge that for Black women the experience of racism and gender are inextricably intertwined.

When Shonda began working at the municipality she was the first woman and only Black person in the electrical department. Her boss treated her differently than her White male coworkers. She attempted to lodge a discrimination claim against her supervisor for gender and racial discrimination. In her case the human resources

representative required she prove whether she was being discriminated against because she was a woman, or because she was Black. Though her boss had a reputation for bullying employees, his hazing of her was especially hostile. She said of bringing her complaint to human resources:

> I remember the HR guy asked me did I think [the supervisor] was discriminating against me because of my race or my gender? I said, "How would I know? All I know is that I'm treated differently. I don't know if it's because of my race. I just know that for whatever reason, it could be because I'm taller than him. I just know that he's treating me different." But, they told me at this point, [1991], you had to name what you thought your issues were. If they were gender, racial, sexual, I don't know! Crazy.

In Shonda's case she could identify the actual behaviors of her supervisor, which demonstrated disparate treatment. What she could not identify were her superior's underlying attitudes or motivations for his behavior – was he racially motivated, gender biased, or permanently hostile towards the world? It was unclear to Shonda whether the need for this illusive distinction was required from the municipality's policies, from the human resources representative, or a combination of the two.

During this two-year-stint Shonda became very depressed and was afraid she would "lose everything at any point." As a Black woman Shonda was keenly aware of when she was being discriminated against. It is an intuition that Black people develop from living in a racialized society that is largely unconscious of its own racism (Essed, 1990). Being in a workplace where the microaggressive behaviors of being undermined, publicly ridiculed, and threatened with termination by her supervisor continued unchecked was detrimental to Shonda's mental health. She worked to keep her

performance at a high level, and to manage the ways her workplace threatened her livelihood.

Human resources' focus on defining the underlying motivation of her supervisor as either sexist or racist, failed to address the actual oppressive behaviors which contributed to a hostile work environment. Her claim was dismissed as lacking substantive proof. Her supervisor's behavior was reduced to an individual character flaw, "He just treats people badly."

Few harassment claims have been validated by the municipality's human resources department. The denial of oppression is a form of microinvalidation. Failure to hold managers accountable for their behavior towards subordinates maintains color- and gender- blind racism and aversive prejudice. Shonda's department had the public statement that it welcomed diversity. As the only woman and person of color in the department Shonda paid a high emotional price to maintain her position in the department. In Shonda's experience she continued to be one of a handful of people of color and women in her department despite working for the same employer for twenty plus years.

SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION AT WORK

"YOU DON'T GET THAT FRIENDLY WITH ME." – WANDA LOU

In an environment where sexualized comments are permissible, where women are treated as second-class workers, and where bullying behavior is at times sanctioned sexual harassment can thrive. For the women in this study sexual objectification at work included having derogatory images of women displayed at work, hearing other women

sexualized, being stared at inappropriately, untoward sexual advances from male colleagues, and verbal sexual harassment. The following examples demonstrate some of the complicated ways sexualizing microaggressions work to isolate women on the job. Implicit in sexualizing behaviors are conscious and unconscious stereotypes about Black women as being hypersexual.

Both Wanda Lou and Grace recounted instances of uninvited touches from their male coworkers. Both responded assertively in the moment to sexual harassment. They said:

> G: You know what one did to me? Popped me on my butt! I kicked him on the leg, because I had steel-toed shoes. He said, "Grace, look what you've done!" I said, "Well you had no business to do what you did."
>
> *W: I had one put his hands on me like that. He was passing by me and I popped him right upside the head. "Oh, I was just being friendly," [he said. I said,] "You don't get that friendly with me."*
>
> G: I bet he has a scar to this day. He couldn't go tell the supervisor, because I would tell what he had done.

Both women's responses came in the moment and were done without fear of reprisal. However, for other women on their jobsites the fear of reprisal was an issue, and kept many of their peers from speaking out about sexual harassment at work. Women remained silent for fear of being disbelieved, or having colleagues tell lies to discredit their job performance. Wanda Lou said: "A lot of people lost their job by somebody fibbing on you. It depended on your supervisor." Grace said if supervisors knew their workers well, then the worker had a better chance of sustaining their job in the face of hostile coworkers who sought to discredit them. This indicates that to foster safety

supervisors need to be able to clearly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of employees.

On her first major job Patricia was harassed by a younger male apprentice. She told him to stop. He continued with the support of other male colleagues who themselves were denigrating women in passing conversations. She responded by going to the relevant supervisors. Telling the supervisors resulted in the end of the behavior, isolation on the job, and a sense of empowerment for her that she could stand on her own.

> I did have harassment from a young man on the job. At the time [he was probably] right out of high school. He kept making these comments. I just said "You know what, I don't appreciate that. I'm not here to find a date or have people whistling at me."
>
> I let it go for a while. It was some of the electricians and plumbers that were doing it. And so they got upset because I reported it to their people and to my company. That was really big - sexual harassment.
>
> Kind of for a while I felt a little bit isolated. I also felt empowered, because I was able to speak up for myself. I wasn't there to find a man. I was there to work, and gain work experience, and to feel safe, and know that I am valued as an apprentice and as a tradesperson. That's what I was there to do, to learn my trade so that I could journey-out.

Patricia was able to speak out about the harassment and get some action from her supervisors. However, as mentioned earlier, at times speaking out brings high consequences for the women bringing the claim. Patricia was isolated on the job by her male coworkers after she reported the abuse. Patricia's experience was empowering for her and protected her job. All women do not have this same outcome when they speak out about harassment.

Like Patricia, Veronica spoke out against harassment. However, she found the perpetrator's behavior increased to unbearable levels. Veronica initially tried to address

the behavior of her male colleague directly by asking him to stop. Instead of diffusing the situation, her request was met with escalating behavior. She said:

> This guy appeared to be a really nice guy. I could sit and talk to him for hours. On the other hand, I would say he's probably a sexual predator and he was the sickest, crudest fuck I have ever met in my life. […] I pulled him aside. I was like, "Dude, I need you to stop talking like that in front of me. I'm finding it offensive." […]
>
> He got really pissed. [He] proceeded to recruit others on his crusade. [He made] my life a living hell, to the point where him and I both were going to the supervisor saying that we had a personality conflict and we can't work together.

The perpetrator also turned the other six to seven men on the crew against her. He colleagues refused to speak to her. She tried to avoid her workmates, an impossible task when working on a small crew for ten-hour shifts.

In this case Veronica's supervisor reduced her complaint to an interpersonal issue, rather than harassment or bullying. The supervisor's reticence to act allowed the aggressive behavior of the perpetrator to thrive and increased the hostility of the workplace. She said:

> The supervisor was saying, "You guys just need to work on building teamwork and blah-blah-blah." Let's see, that went on for about six months telling the supervisor. […] So finally, it came to the point where I said, "Alright, I'll give you some information. But I don't want you to do anything. I just want a different crew. Or maybe you can help me figure out how to work it out." Which was a big mistake on his part[23]. And then I told him some, and it just kept getting worse, and worse, and worse; for a long time - over a year or more.

Veronica was reluctant to directly tell her supervisor what was happening to her for fear of reprisal from her crewmates. She fed her supervisor bits of information. She struggled

---

23 By law when supervisors are made of aware of sexual harassment among their employees they are required to act. In this instance Veronica's supervisors focused on trying to help the two work it out. He had little skills in this area and was not effective.

to name the behavior as sexual harassment. She was more concerned about stopping the behavior, than she was about having the perpetrator fired. The supervisor initially trivialized the harassment as a "personality problem" between Veronica and her colleague. The minimization and denial of sexual harassment maintained the behaviors.

Finding little response from management Veronica devised a strategy to spread the word among other women about what was happening to her. She said:

> I decided that one of my defenses would be because he appeared to be such a nice guy and easy to talk to, that I would start telling all the other women[24]. He was talking about women that worked with at the company. I decided I would start telling them how sick he was. I mean he was sick. I could take a lot, but this guy was sick. When he was talking, I felt like somebody was sexually assaulting me. […]
>
> So I started telling [the women in the office,] "I know he's a nice guy, but you know here's a head's up." Then one of them went to human resources. And again, after it was all said and done […] I took all the heat for [what happened.]

She told office women in the utility what was happening. One of these women took the case to human resources, which launched an investigation. In her testimony, Veronica did not discuss the complicity of her male coworkers in sanctioning the perpetrator's behavior. That said her male colleagues' fear of her disclosing their part in the conflict led to her continued isolation and stigmatization on her crew. Though the perpetrator's behavior ceased, Veronica was still bullied on this crew. She only experienced relief when she was transferred to another crew.

"THE CODE OF SILENCE" - VERONICA

Veronica noted that within her utility human resources had struggled to be preemptive in addressing sexism and sexual harassment within the utility. She attributed

---

24 At this time Veronica was the only tradeswomen at the utility. The women she is referring to were office staff that tradespeople regularly interacted with.

part of this inability to effectively respond to harassment, to the "code of silence" among women who experience microinsults and microassaults and do not come forward about their experiences. She said of the code of silence:

> As a woman in the field […] there's a "code of silence," because you want to make it through. If you go tell on somebody then you become labeled; then people are afraid of you. And also, what happens a lot of times is that people will step forward and nothing gets done. And then you got more heat than what you already had. You are still in the same situation, except it's worse. [The code] is a kind of a way of surviving in that environment.

This survival code of silence was a means of staying on the job. It did not necessarily address the problem or bring change to the situation. The code of silence was kept in place by 1) the threat of being disbelieved, a feature of the denial of sexism, 2) being ostracized at work, and 3) the examples of brave women stepping forward who were met by ineffective institutional responses on the part of human resources and management. Veronica noted that this code of silence also could limit the effectiveness of human resources should they choose to act. She said:

> [Human resources] hands are tied a lot. […] I've watched two women now go through this situation where finally the assaults that were done to them comes out, and it's two years later. One guy, […] they fired him, but he took it to court and he got his job back. Because of letting that time frame [lapse], and stuff happens and [women] don't say anything. That was his first offense. Because that was [human resource's] first thing they had written on him, [firing him was out of step with the process.]
>
> [Had] the [women] said, "Hey, this was said to me" and reported that. Or "Hey this was done" or "This day he slapped me on the ass" and reported that. Had they done that and [human resources] had that documentation, then he wouldn't be there now. Nobody talked. [...] I'm really just starting to question. You know? If given this kind of situation if silence is really [good], or maybe was it ever?

Veronica highlighted the ways the code of silence reinforced the inability of human resources to act effectively in the face of blatant acts of discrimination or assault. The

code of silence limited the ability of human resources to do something to address the problem. The failure of management to address workplace harassment keeps marginalized groups from speaking out.

At Veronica's workplace two women were assaulted on the job two years prior to the case being made known to human resources. Their assaults were brought to human resources by someone who had witnessed the assaults, but remained silent. The women themselves did not bring the claims forward. A number of sexual harassment and racial discrimination lawsuits and a change of leadership compelled the utility to act more decisively when claims of discrimination were brought forward. The utility initially fired the perpetrator. The time lapse from the offense, the lack of written documentation on the part of the women, and no documentation of prior offenses on the part of human resources meant that the perpetrator got his job back in appeals.

Veronica acknowledged the risk women took if they spoke out every time something happened to them on the job. All of the women had incidences where something racist, sexist, and/or heterosexist happened to them. However, if women are committed to changing the institutional culture of the trades, speaking out is necessary. That said women are always forced to weigh maintaining their presence on the job with challenging the status quo.

HETEROSEXISM AND ASSUMPTIONS OF ABNORMALITY

Sexist and homophobic jokes and comments may be directed at lesbians, and may be directed at straight women for doing a non-traditional job. Shonda as a straight woman was called a lesbian by coworkers for being an electrician. She said: "There were some

people who tried to put labels on me as being a lesbian." As a straight woman, being labeled as "lesbian" is to label Shonda as unfeminine and to insult real lesbians as abnormal. It is to give the underlying heterosexist and sexist message that real women are straight and do not use tools. These labels are not just about same-sex sexual practices. Such labels are to enforce gender conformity and coerce women into maintaining traditional gender roles. Heterosexism may also manifest as an aversion to working with lesbians, or people perceived to be lesbians.

"I AM WHO I AM AND IT SHOULDN'T AFFECT YOUR REACTION TO ME." – CRYSTAL

Crystal was a lesbian and had been open about her sexual orientation in most areas of her life. She carried herself with confidence in who she was and how she lived her life. She said: "I am who I am and it shouldn't affect your reaction to me or whatever because I'm not imposing my lifestyle on you. This is just how I live." In the face of homophobic jokes, ridicule, and job discrimination Crystal had her own "don't ask, don't tell" policy and shared little of her private life at work. At work, when asked about her personal life she referred to a fictional husband. It was a shock to her that she could not be herself on the job. She shared her first experience on the job:

> I was open. Ain't gotta tell you how long that job lasted, now do I? Okay, there we go. I came home and my wife at the time said, "Well, Crys, maybe you shouldn't have." I never ever thought about it. It's like, shit, we've been together forever. And she's like, "It's different out there in the world." I'm like, "Yeah, you've got a point."
>
> Everybody she worked for knew what was going on. Everybody I had worked for in the past knew what was going on. But the construction field is totally different because if they know your lifestyle that's the topic of conversation. […] They want to know and it's lunch-time, break-time, joking-time, saying little jokes about lesbians and all this other kind of stuff.

> After that incident, that was my first job out, so I learned real, real fast. To [the question] "you married?" I say, "Yes, I am." "What's your husband do?" "He works at such and such a place." [I] leave it at that, go on about my business. You know it took me that long to figure that out. […]
>
> I'm not ashamed of my lifestyle. I am who I am, but when it comes to getting my paper, it's a need to know basis. If you ask me a question so personal I'm going to lie to you, because it's none of your business anyway. I'm here to do a job. Why are you concerned about my sexuality? [...] That's all they talk about. I lasted about two months.

Crystal noted that she worked around a number of lesbians in the trades. There is a strong showing of gay women in the trades. In this study five of the women interviewed were openly in same-sex partnerships, the rest openly discussed heterosexual partnerships or did not refer to a significant other of any kind. Crystal said some gay tradeswomen were successfully open at work and experienced limited repercussions for this. She attributed this to a more outgoing personality and being more integrated into the social networks of the crew. It might also have been that these women dismissed some of the heterosexist comments and jokes said around them about gay people. She gave an example of an openly gay woman who at the time had stayed with the same company for three years and been moved from job to job within the company. Crystal did not say this women's race. She said:

> I've got a friend, she's openly gay. She's in a trade too. … And they know that she is gay. But they love her, from the boss on down. Her wife sometimes comes and brings her lunch. But she's one of them types of people. You know. That's just how she is. That's how she operates. But you see, I'm not [like her] because I don't want you to know my business. You don't need to know nothing about me, because I don't need to know nothing about you. You sign my check and send me on my way. That's all I care about. […]
>
> She's been with the same company, Roberta now, for about three years. They take her from job, to job, to job. So you got them people that do it. But then I'm not in the business of kissing no ass. I'm not saying that's what she do, but maybe she pacifies some of the stuff that they say. I don't know. But I'm just

> saying I'm not in the business. As long as I'm doing my job, I want my check. That's what I care about.

For all of the women interviewed there was an acknowledgement that acceptance on the jobsite could come at the cost of accepting behaviors that might grate on personal values and undermine one's identity. In Crystal's case she decided she was not going to allow someone's prejudice to get in the way of being paid. She could not change the climate of her workplace, but she could resist oppression by keeping to herself. Heterosexist comments and intrusive questions about her home life were indications that as a gay woman her employment could be threatened.

SUMMARY

Microaggressive behaviors impact Black women in the trades throughout their careers. These behaviors act as reinforcing layers to undermine the work performance, skill development, acceptance and identity of Black women on the job. These women's narratives shed some light as to how racism, sexism, and heterosexism operate to create a climate in the trades that does not support the success of Black women. These microaggressive themes provide a useful framework to understand how intersecting oppressions operate on the job. These microaggressions are communicated to women through the behaviors of coworkers, managers, apprenticeship centers, and as they move up the ranks on the job. Black tradeswomen deal with:

- the assumption of inferiority;
- the myth of the meritocracy;
- color- and gender blindness;

- being treated as second class workers;
- the denial of individual instances of racism and sexism;
- sexist, racist, and heterosexist humor and language;
- sexual objectification in the workplace;
- heterosexism and the assumption of queer abnormality.

For the women involved these racist, sexist and heterosexist microaggressions occurred in small and major ways at various points in their careers. With each instance they implemented strategies to address the behaviors. Some of their strategies worked to stop the behavior. Some strategies proved ineffective, and some strategies caused the behavior to cease while generating new sets of problems. At times the combination of microaggressions could be too much for women to continue at their jobs. The following chapter seeks to illustrate the ways institutional and cultural microaggressions come together to impact women at various stages of their careers. Understanding more how these factors come together can provide insight as to how institutions can be more responsive to the needs of Black women on the job.

INTERLOCKING OPPRESSIONS ON THE JOBSITE

Racism, sexism and heterosexism are realities in the trades. Microaggressions occur at various points in Black tradeswomen's careers. Women spoke of encountering hostility during their apprenticeships, as journeyworkers, as they moved into leadership roles, and as they became contractors. Women also discussed how microaggressions manifested in their relationships with male and female coworkers. The following narratives offer insight into the institutional and cultural climate that condones discrimination against Black women. Understanding how these microaggressions manifest at various points in the career of a Black tradeswomen are valuable in helping to strategize effective interventions towards a more equitable work environment.

APPRENTICESHIPS

The apprentice-journeyman relationship is foundational in the development of a skilled workforce. Racism and sexism can hinder that relationship and prevent women and men of color from developing in the industry. Black women can be stigmatized when they (1) apply to an apprenticeship; (2) step onto a jobsite as a new apprentice; (3) work with a new journeyperson or crew; (4) receive training and evaluation; (5) continue in the apprenticeship and working. Apprentices are particularly vulnerable on the job because they are new to the field. Apprentices also may not have the relationships necessary on the job to combat hostility from coworkers or management.

"YOU ARE TOO SMART AND YOU ARE TOO PRETTY. GET OUTTA HERE." - SANDRA

Apprenticeships have opened their doors to women. Some apprenticeships incorporate women's images into their advertising materials to invite women to apply. This is a step forward. However, institutional changes in terms of opening doors to women and in advertising materials do not necessarily mean that cultural change has occurred at the level of individual gatekeepers. For the majority of the women interviewed the actual application process was relatively benign. However, women can and do face hostility when applying for apprenticeships.

Sandra's application to the cement masons apprenticeship was met with hostility that prevented her from applying. From the beginning of her experience in the trades Sandra learned to read the cultural cues of her environment for racism and sexism. Initially Sandra intended to follow her father into the cement mason's union. When she approached the apprenticeship coordinator she was told she was "too pretty." She said:

> I asked [the apprenticeship coordinator] about getting myself over and doing the tests. When I walked in there, the guy in charge of the program he goes, "You are too smart and you are too pretty. Get outta here." He was serious. He wanted me to get out.

Sandra recognized the coordinator was not going to consider her application due to sexism. Undeterred she successfully applied to the electricians apprenticeship and began her career.

"AM I JUST GOING TO BE THE BLACK PERSON?" - SANDRA

On the jobsite Black women face a confluence of bias, and are often aware of how they are perceived as different. When they enter a new jobsite, aspects of their identity

may be ridiculed. They are aware of this and work to combat it. In the commercial trades it is common to go from jobsite to jobsite, and crew to crew. As an apprentice with each new crew there is a new journeyperson to work with. Sandra described her experiences of trying to integrate into new crews as an electrical apprentice. Confronting male aversion to working with her was a challenge from meeting the contractor, to the foreman, to the journeyman she was to work alongside. As an apprentice she would judge whether men would give her a fair chance as an apprentice or whether her identities as a woman and Black would relegate her to menial tasks. She said:

> People had to definitely warm up to me. […] You would get different reactions from when they see "Okay, it's a female walking on the job," or you know "it's some little person walking on the job." You could always see that. [...]
>
> You got this perception coming from the contractor that you are going to work for. Then you got the foreman; what's his attitude going to be toward you? Then you have the actual journeyman, and you are coming out as an apprentice. You gotta work with journeymen. Are they going to put me in a position where I am going to be learning something? Am I just going to be the Black person? Am I just going to be standing there cleaning all day?

Sandra's story reveals the intersections of racial and gender microagressions, namely the assumption of inferiority and being treated as a second-class worker. When she walked onto the job as an apprentice she confronted men's low expectations of her and their reticence to work with her as their equal.

When contractors place calls into the apprenticeship training center they make a request for a certain number of apprentices. Unless the racial and gender demographics of an apprentice will help a contractor meet an affirmative action contractual agreement around the number of minorities on a jobsite, contractors do not ask the race or gender of an apprentice. Apprentices are often called out based on their position on a list of out-of-

work apprentices. Each time a new apprentice comes onto a job they are to work with a new journeyperson. The apprentice-journeyman relationship is the foundation of on-the-job training. It is in this relationship that apprentices are to get the work experience they need to be proficient in their work. Working alongside a journeyman who does not want to work with the apprentice, or does not know how to train an underling, can mean that the apprentice does not learn the skills they need to move through the apprenticeship.

"HOW IS IT THAT […] YOU CAN'T TEACH ME ANYTHING?" - *Z*

Sexism and racism can get in the way of White men being open to training women and people of color. Another hindrance can be that being a journeyman does not necessarily mean one is prepared to teach. Being able to teach effectively is a skill. For some this skill is intuitive. For most effective teachers, this skill is learned and developed over time. Z noted that there was a connection between men refusing to train her, and their actual inability to teach someone what they do. This inability to train can heighten tensions between a journeyman and apprentice. She said:

> I have the hardest time understanding "How is it that you've been doing this for thirty years, but you can't teach me anything?" […] I find the people who do it sometimes based on "this is what my grandfather told me" type stuff, where there is no textbook, "well, this is how you do it". Because they don't know how to explain it, they try to cover it up with sarcasm and negativity and stupidity.

As an apprentice Z began to question whether the journeymen around her knew how to teach their skills to others. She found some journeymen were able to teach by the textbook. Many knew how to do things on the job, but struggled to communicate how to do so. This resulted in increased frustrations from journeymen towards apprentices. This

frustration could take the form of hostility towards Z as the apprentice. In this instance a lack of cultural competence on the part of journeymen around how to work across difference, coupled with an inability to teach limited Z's ability to learn from some journeymen.

As an apprentice Danielle found some men who were open to answer her questions. She sought out those willing journeymen to mitigate the effects of those who were averse to working with her due to racism or sexism. She said:

> I've noticed in the trades, [men will] try to tell you if you have any questions and then you get those guys who are kind of scared you're going to take their job. They don't want to teach you. They want to keep you on a certain level because they don't want to teach you everything so that they'll feel threatened.

She noted that men's behavior was geared towards keeping her in a subordinate role to them. As in Z's example above an unwillingness and inability to train combines to put apprentices at risk for being underprepared for their jobs.

"YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT MY APPRENTICESHIP. YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT MY SKILLS." - Z

The women interviewed had to fight to be trained during their apprenticeships and for career-building opportunities after their apprenticeships. As an apprentice Z was given menial tasks for much of her first few years on the job. As a new apprentice she did not know that the work she was being offered was a dead-end for her forward movement in the apprenticeship. When a new superintendent came onto the job she received the worst progress report she had ever had. A bad progress report for an apprentice can contribute to termination from the apprenticeship. Z had been treated as a second-class

worker, and did not know that she was being discriminated against. She only became aware that something was wrong when she was in danger of termination. Z's example is important as it demonstrates institutional and cultural discrimination that is faceless. As someone new to the culture she did not know it was happening.

Though Z was able to advocate for herself and subsequently was given tasks that directly improved her skill-level, her story is indicative of how apprentices, especially non-traditional apprentices, can be consistently overlooked and eventually leave the apprenticeship due to termination or on their own volition. This consistent experience of not being trained can also mean that people journey out without the appropriate skill knowledge to hold their own as journeymen. The issue of training is an issue throughout the apprenticeship system, however the experience of being overlooked is amplified for women and men of color. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) describe this experience of being *invisible* as a common feature of Black women's experience on the job. Z said:

> I was working for a company, and my first two months of working there, they switched superintendents. We had progress reports that we had to fill out and turn in every month for the apprenticeship program. I've never gotten a bad written report. The first time that this new superintendent did my report, everything was bad. I'm looking at it and thinking, "We've never even worked together. How can you give me a bad grade and we don't even know each other."
>
> So my feelings were hurt. I was really, really upset. I went to him. I said, "I'd like you to justify your reason for giving me a bad report. I have to take this, and it's going to be a part of my file. It's going to follow me throughout the rest of my apprenticeship."
>
> He said, "Well, the other carpenters say, you are lazy or you do this or do that." I said, "Okay, I hear what you're saying, but this isn't a third party piece of paper. This piece of paper is based on what you think, and what you have observed. Have you observed me not doing my part out here?"
>
> He said, "Sometimes I see you and you're not stacking wood and you're not doing it fast enough." And I'm like, "They're asking you on this piece of paper to grade me based on my proficiency, and how well I'm able to do stuff. There's no skill involved in stacking a pile of 2x4's."

> He said, "Well, you don't really do that much work". And I said, "I've never worked alongside a journeyman. You have me doing the grunt work, picking up wood out of mud all day. And you're giving me a bad grade based on picking up wood out of dirt all day?"
>
> He said, "Well, the journeymen say this and the journeymen say that". I said, "The journeymen have done my progress report and the journeymen have never given me a bad progress report, which journeymen are you talking about, because I would like to talk with them."
>
> He said, "We're not going to get all that deep into it." I said, "We are, because I have to turn this in. I have to answer to somebody about this. Somebody is going to ask me, "What is going on at the jobsite where you are not getting it right! We train you here, and you go out on the jobsite and you're still not getting it right? What is the problem?" You haven't put me alongside a journeyman to work with on a consistent basis enough for me to get everything. When we have a concrete pour and we're building forms and they're wondering why I don't know where to position stuff, it's because I've been under the bridge all day stacking wood."
>
> I think it resonated with him, because the next day, I was up on deck, working alongside a carpenter, doing what everybody else was doing. Even as a low level of apprentice. I said, "It doesn't make much sense. If you're not going to train me, then send me somewhere else." I think it really worked. The very next day I was up on deck, working with a journeyman.
>
> *R: Did you prepare to stand up for yourself? That's a really big deal.*
>
> Z: I didn't. […] It wasn't acceptable for me, because I knew I was not up to speed on everything. I knew I wasn't as good as the [other] woman who was up there. But I knew I was getting there. I also knew that working under the bridge, away from everybody else, doing the grunt work that nobody else wanted to do, I knew that I was never going to learn what they up there already knew how to do. I told him I couldn't stand for it. "You don't care about my apprenticeship. You don't care about my skills." It's like the teacher telling you, "If you don't care about your education, then I don't either. I've got mine. I've got my degree. So it's up to you to get yours. It's up to you to get to where you feel you need to be." If I hadn't said anything to him […] I wouldn't know anything.

In Z's experience she was able to speak up to the superintendent and demand that he review the bad progress report he gave her. Her actions saved her job, and prevented the negative repercussions that would have been on her permanent record.

Her story demonstrates the vulnerability of Black women when faced with an employer who does not want them on the job or care about their success. Her story is also

interesting because until the incident she did not know that she was being marginalized. As an apprentice she did what she was told. However, what she was being told to do, work under the bridge stacking wood, jeopardized her job on the bridge. Further her story demonstrates how the assumption of inferiority contributed to the superintendent's belief that Z was "lazy" based on the comments of anonymous journeymen.

"THE LAST HIRED, FIRST FIRED, FIRST TO SIT ON THE BENCH" - KAREEMA

Kareema, a cement mason, entered her apprenticeship due to a negotiated workforce agreement between an African American advocacy group, a tradeswomen organization, and labor unions to recruit women to work on a large federally funded job in her city. This opportunity provided her a job and entrance into the apprenticeship program. Her sister became an apprentice, and Kareema soon followed. She said:

> My sister was in the union already. I walked in and said, "I wanna work as a concrete person." They told me what I needed to do. When I talked to my sister, and she was like, "If you really want to do this, we can just sign you in wherever." So the next thing I knew, I was a first-year apprentice. I was working within the Union structure, going to school in the evening time, and working. […] It was okay for a moment, and then that's when a lot of the harassment started.

Though Kareema was brought into the local through a workforce agreement aimed at bringing women into the trades, the crews she worked on did not accept her. On the jobsite female apprentices worked in small pods, and were not integrated into the regular male construction crews. She said men stood around and watched women work to see if they would fail. Of her cohort that began apprenticeship only a handful of women journeyed-out. Kareema began her apprenticeship in the late 1980s. Of the difficulty in keeping working she said, "Unless you had somebody that […] would permanently pick

you up and keep you working, you were the last hired, first fired, first to sit on the bench. It was difficult."

Within Kareema's apprenticeship journeymen were allowed to choose the apprentices with whom they would work. Apprentices were only sent to work if a contractor or a journeyman requested them. For women this meant they had to find someone who was willing to take them on for training. Due to racism and sexism it was difficult for Kareema as a Black woman to find an employer who would consistently hire her. This practice of the apprenticeship system proved to be an insurmountable institutional barrier that prevented women from being trained or consistently employed. To combat racism and sexism in her first local Kareema decided to move her apprenticeship to a nearby city in the Northeast with the hope of greater opportunities for employment. Kareema moved a number of times in an effort to find steady work within the union.

EVERYDAY STRESSORS ON THE JOB

Becoming journeymen did not necessarily mean Black women were more accepted in the workplace than they were as apprentices. As journeymen Black women had similar challenges as apprentices such as 1) working with coworkers who may be averse to working with them; 2) being given marginal tasks; 3) safety concerns; 4) struggles to stay employed and continue with the same employer; and 5) limited avenues to challenge unfair working conditions and hiring practices. Across the board newly minted journeymen struggle with being less desirable employees than apprentices as their wage is higher than apprentices.

Paap's study of White male construction workers (2006) finds that much of the behavior of White men in the trades is grounded in the structural insecurity of their jobs. This insecurity has increased over the last few decades as unions have been targeted and construction wages have stagnated or declined. Paap asserts that White men may try to prove their worth to their employers by working quickly and sacrificing safety measures. Job insecurity may also motivate White men to limit the competition of newcomers – specifically women and people of color – who are experienced as threats to their jobs. For the women of color in this study the experience of becoming journeymen has at times meant they worked less than they did as apprentices. Their narratives speak to the hostile work culture that is created due to this fear of job security.

"I'M NOT GOING TO RISK MY LIFE." - CRYSTAL

In Crystal's experience men consistently gave her the less physical jobs. At the time of the interview she had worked as a journeyman for over four years, and had struggled to apply skills she acquired at the training center. She said being one of two or the only woman on a jobsite meant that she was "catered to" as a woman and given the less-skilled work. She said:

> I've only had a couple of jobs that was really physical. I mean, now don't get me wrong, I don't want a job to be too awful physical. But I would like the opportunity to do what I was trained to do at some point in time. I get on a jobsite and I'm constantly paid to do the same thing over and over again. I'm not learning anything. But what do you say, "Hey I want to learn this, I want to learn." You don't talk, basically. If they give you an assignment to do, that's what you do. That's just what you do.

Crystal spoke of the tension between doing what you are told to do, and advocating for oneself. As a journeyman Crystal went to the training center and took extra classes to develop her skill, but on the job she rarely used her new skills. However, as a journeyman she did not have the apprenticeship center as an oversight body ensuring she was applying her skills. She learned early in her career to do her job and not push too hard for change. She was grateful to have a job.

When it came to safety concerns Crystal was more assertive in advocating for her safety, however doing so could cost her job. Safety is a key concern on jobsites. Lack of safety concerns can result in someone loosing a limb or their life[25]. She said:

> Now I have been known to say something if someone gives me something that I don't feel is safe, because I'm very safe. Twenty-five dollars an hour is not enough for me to lose my life. I'm sorry it's just not going to happen.
>
> I have been on assignments, most recently prior to this lay-off, where I didn't feel comfortable and I just didn't do it. That could be part of me getting [laid off.] ... I'm pretty sure it is, to some degree, because I'm not going to risk my life. If the assignment is safe I've got you. I'll do that.

The messages of "keep quiet" and "stay in your place" were reinforced for Crystal when she spoke up for her safety and was let go from a job. Being wronfully terminated over a refusal to jeapordize one's physical safety silenced Crystal to speak out about her desires for career advacement.

---

[25] While I worked at the pre-apprenticeship program a woman of color laborer apprentice was severely injured while working on a jobsite. Before she was injured she told her supervisor she thought the situation was unsafe. She was told to continue working. Shortly after this exchange her foot was crushed by the bucket of a front-loader that bounced out of control and landed on her. It was a fluke accident. She can no longer work in the industry, and will continue to have issues with her foot.

"THE OLD BOYS CLUB" - CRYSTAL

Crystal regularly attended union meetings. However, she did not find the union to be a useful ally or advocate for her. She found that within the union structure there was not a place to voice legitimate grievances against bosses without facing reprisal. From watching the example of a fellow tradeswomen who addressed a grievance within the union structure and was blackballed for two years, Crystal determined it was best to let things go. She said, "I just let it go. What else can you do? I'm not a fool." Crystal noted that within the trades White male bosses were "untouchable". Of the "old boys club" she said:

> There are certain people in this field that's untouchable. You understand what I'm saying? There are certain people in this field you just go with the flow. That's just Bob, that's just Tom, that's just throw it under the rug. Everybody can't stand this person, but this is the guy that gets the job done even though he's an asshole.
>
> [They treat people] like trash, like nothing, and it doesn't matter if you Black, White, male, female. I mean they been doing this for years. It's called "the old boys club." That's what they call it. These cats, you know, it's just something you don't mess with. […] It don't take much for me to realize what's going on. Some people don't realize what's going on. Shit, they never get called out.

Crystal observed that bullying bosses were sanctioned within this system. In the face of this she focused on staying on the job rather than fighting an entrenched manager. Crystal noted that this manager was backed by well-networked White men in an "old boys club" of which she as a woman and a person of color would never be a part. She said of a "tyrant" boss who made her work life "miserable":

> That's his nature, you know. [...] I was like, "Man, I'm not saying nothing. I've worked too hard to get here. I'm not going to say nothing. All they gonna do is ship him off to another jobsite. He ain't going nowhere. But I am. I'm gonna be the one they get rid of."

"YOU WERE SENT HERE FOR ME TO FIRE YOU." - SHONDA

Shonda shared the experience of walking onto a jobsite and hearing journeymen make negative comments at her presence. At the beginning of her career Shonda was one of two Black women in her electrical union. She described her experiences of walking onto a jobsite:

> I followed a Black woman who was five years ahead of me. She was a journeyman. I would walk onto jobsites and people would say to me "Oh shit, here comes Tony" and I would say, "I'm not Tony. I'm another one." Then I could hear, "Ah hell, it's another one."

Within her local Shonda and Tony were the first women of color to become journey-level electricians. Tony was the first woman admitted to their union. Tony held her own on the jobsite and was quick to fight back against the overtly racist and sexist behaviors of coworkers. In the first year of her apprenticeship Shonda struggled to make the probation period due to the racism and sexism of her journeymen and foremen. She relayed the story of being sent to a job where a White journeyman shared with her how she was perceived by her colleagues. She said:

> I was working with this guy and doing everything that he told me to do. One day we are up on a scissor lift and we are bending pipe. He told me to do this, and he just lost a part. He turned to me and he said, "I need to tell you something. I cannot do what they want me to do. You know why you were sent here?" And I said, "No." "You were sent here and I was told that you had a bad attitude, poor work ethic. […] You were sent here for me to fire you. You have done everything I've asked you to do, your attitude is great. There's no way that I can cut you [from the apprenticeship.]" This was a White guy.

With each new person she encountered during her apprenticeship Shonda had to be prepared that her White male colleagues might have talked to each other about her, and colluded against her. This collusion impacted her job at different points in her career. It almost resulted in dismissal from the apprenticeship. Shonda found she could win over racist or sexist individuals one to one, but when they were a group it became impossible. Shonda's career in the trades has spanned over 25 years. It is important to note that though Shonda has an extensive track record to demonstrate her skills and has moved up the ranks both on the construction jobsite and with the municipality where she now works, the collective racism and sexism of her male colleagues has often impacted her reputation and the way she was perceived. Throughout her career she has had to actively network with her male colleagues as a type of damage control against White and Black men who have publicly ridiculed her and tried to discredit her leadership within the union and on the job.

"PUTTING THE SCREWS TO ME"- VERONICA

In Veronica's career she found that she was tolerated when in a subordinate position to her male colleagues, but if she was in a position of equal or higher pay she became a target for hostile behavior. She told a story about male coworkers feeling threatened by a promotion she received. Though she received the promotion based on her skills crew members filed a grievance with their utility's union about her promotion. They felt she did not deserve to have the same job ranking as they did. She said:

> It is interesting with guys. If you are less than them, in their mind, then they are real cool, anything along those lines. But if you are in a position that's in their mind above them, or equal with them, then you're a threat. So when I came to the

> shop, and I was in their minds in a "less than" position, I mean we got along great. […] Yeah! I thought I was in heaven. But when my manager changed my job title, against my will, I got a pay increase. Those guys were livid. They were like puttin' the screws to me. They filed a grievance with the Union. […]
>
> I was like "Guys, I'm trying not to take this personal." But you know, they're basically like, "Well, you can't do our job." I mean, anyway, so they are not talking to me and recruiting other people, too. It became a really hostile work environment.

Veronica's promotion was not a change in her actual work. Her promotion was recognition by her supervisor that she did the same job as her male peers at a lesser pay grade. In being officially promoted she was targeted as a threat by her male peers. The collusion of her peers against her meant that she was isolated on the job. Her crewmates would not talk to her. Veronica did not ask for the promotion. Being promoted meant that she was persecuted. Maintaining a system where women are less than men in the workplace secures the dominance of men in higher paying jobs.

"THEY SAID THEY HAD NOTHING FOR ME." - KAREEMA

Black women have historically fought with Black men against racism. This remains true in the trades. However, Black male privilege against women in general and Black women in particular is also present. Black male sexism towards Black women further weakens the relationships between Black men and women which are already affected by racial and class oppression (Woods, 2010). Women in the study said that on the whole their relationships with Black men were at best mutually supportive, and at worst Black men tried to sabotage their careers. Hence in general an alliance between Black men and women on the jobsite cannot be counted on to support the success of Black women in the trades.

Eisenberg (1998) in her study of tradeswomen describes an alliance between men of color and White women on the jobsite. She argues that men of color tend to treat the White women on site with respect, and support them against discriminatory behaviors from White tradesmen. She notes that this alliance is also built out of a history of men of color experiencing retaliation if they were perceived as harming White women. However, she notices in her study that this alliance of mutual support is not necessarily extended from Black tradesmen towards Black tradeswomen. Black tradesmen's sexism towards Black tradeswomen often remains unchecked on the jobsite. Similarly Moccio (2009) argues in her study of women in the electrical brotherhood that Black men are more inclined to collude with White men against Black women than to join in racial solidarity with Black women.

The sexism of Black men towards Black women on the job can be particularly painful to Black women. In her experience as a cement mason Kareema found that Black tradesmen's fear that she was taking their jobs or was more qualified than they, was a barrier at times in her career. Kareema moved to the South and joined one of the only predominately Black cement locals in the country. She encountered sexism and regionalism there that barred her from working. She specifically moved to the South with a desire to work among Black people and escape the racism she experienced in the Midwest from White men. In the South she was one of three women in the local. Despite her skill level and affirmative action goals to hire women on a major construction project she was not hired as a finisher through her local. She relayed her story:

> This was a different type of discrimination. This was "placism" instead of "racism." I would say it was "racism" up North, and I faced "placism" here in the South. […]

> Up North, it was all Italian and European males. Down here, the union was the only people of color union ever, in the whole country. […] People of my race were discriminating against me with "placism" and "nepotism". Because I didn't have, again, the network of people […] who wanted to work with me […] I sat on the bench. […]
>
> I just left [the Northeast] because I thought I would have a better chance down here. Not knowing, after setting everything up, that when I got here, they said, "They had nothing for me."

When Kareema moved to the South she was treated as invisible and put in her "place" as a woman by her Black male colleagues. She left the Northeast hoping that the large Black population of the South would offer her a better chance in the trades. The tension between Black men and Black women on the job points to the limits of the social movements for the inclusion of people of color in the trades, and the tradeswomen movement. In Kareema's story Black men "had nothing for her" when they viewed her success as a Black woman as a threat. If Black men do not see their economic success as interdependent to that of Black women, the ally potential of that relationship is missed. Competition between Black men and women limits connection between them on the job.

"I HAVE TO PROVE I'M BETTER THAN YOU." - Z

Working within a competitive hierarchical structure that privileges some groups over another contributes to the vulnerability of women in their positions on the job. Though women mentioned the desire to connect with other women on the job, participants acknowledged that women on the job could be highly territorial of their position. This territoriality is steeped in a need for dominance as women may feel they are fighting other women for their job. A desire for solidarity between women has been hard to foster on jobsites where women are few and far between. This territoriality can

mean that for women, new women on the job can be perceived as a threat. Women may share minority status on a job and experience victimization in similar ways, but this does not necessarily mean they gravitate towards each other on the jobsite.

Z relayed her worst experience of interacting with a woman on the job. At the time she was a carpentry apprentice. Upon seeing a fellow tradeswoman on site Z was excited. Instead of validating each other, the White tradeswomen told Z she would not make it as a carpenter. This interaction undermined Z's abilities and right to be on the jobsite. The insulting experience had a lasting impression on Z's apprenticeship. She said:

> There was a woman on site. I got excited. I mean, working alongside another woman! It ended up being probably one of my worst experiences working alongside another woman. I didn't realize that working in the trades and working alongside women, they can get very territorial and feel like "I either have to break you down and make you quit, or I have to prove that I'm better than you." There was no solidarity or anything. There was no coming together. "No let me help you".
>
> She just didn't want me there. She's like "Why are you here?" […] Then several weeks later, she looked in my face and told me, "You're not going to make it. You're not going to make it in the trades. You'll never get that certificate, you'll never get that card."
>
> I want to say, that through these past six years, I have literally kept that in my mind. It's been hard! It's been real hard. […] I never asked her, "Why did you say that to me?" Because I knew she didn't want me there. It went from her being the only woman on the jobsite and her being babied, to me being another woman, a minority [Black person] on the jobsite. But I wasn't babied that much. I needed to work just as hard as everybody else. I ended up lasting longer in that company than she did.

Z noted that as a Black woman, she was treated differently by the men on her crew than her White woman colleague. This differential treatment contributed to the White woman's hostility towards her. In Z's career she had to develop a thick skin to handle the racial and gender microinsults of peers. She became strong enough to challenge

microinsults from coworkers. She said she no longer allowed such comments to "ride," as she did at the beginning of her career. The sting of being told explicitly she was not going to make it stayed with her. Hearing this sting from a fellow tradeswoman was hard to shake. The limits of solidarity among tradeswomen on the job are a challenge for the tradeswomen movement.

Black women may internalize the racist and sexist messages around them, and refuse to associate with other Black women on the job. Crystal and Sharla spoke of tensions among Black women on the job. Again, both women welcomed the chance to work alongside another Black woman. However, in their careers this never happened. Sharla said the first time she saw a Black woman on the job the woman "beelined it the other way." She said:

> It's interesting because [Black tradeswomen are] very far and few between. When I have met them, […] they're not very receptive, they're not very friendly. It's almost as though they don't want me to acknowledge that they exist.
>
> I remember being at a [job] and I saw someone that looked just like me. I was [excited,] […] she beelined it the other way. You don't see it on a regular basis.

In Sharla's case the Black tradeswoman avoided her.

In Crystal's case the Black woman colleague was hostile towards her. Crystal noted that in her six-year career as a tradeswomen she had only worked with one Black woman. She described how competition between the women caused their "negative" interaction. Crystal was sure this was not a racial dynamic, but more a result of women in general competing over being the only one on the jobsite. She said:

> She was the first Black woman that I ever worked with in all these years. My last major job is the job I worked with her. I thought to myself, "Okay, I got a female

> so this is going to be cool. You know what I'm saying? I got a sister." Negative! Negative! Negative! […] I think it's a woman thing, and the best woman wins.

Crystal recognized that she could be perceived as a threat to other women because the presence of women on the jobsite in general was precarious. She worked hard on the job to establish herself as a solid worker, but her performance at times brought negative attention to her by fellow coworkers. This negative attention contributes to a sense of isolation on the jobsite where every woman is for herself. This lateral violence, or displaced aggression in the workplace, is also fostered by the intense competition on the jobsite to remain working. The need to prove one's worth is present among women in general. Racial and gender oppression cause this need to be heightened between Black women. For Black women being the only one on the job can cause them to shy away from each other, be hostile towards each other, and contributes to the racial and gender isolation of Black women on the job.

Through Sharla's involvement with a women's only pre-apprenticeship program she met some Black tradeswomen from other trades in an informal setting and was cordial to them on the job. However, this did not mean that a lasting relationship was formed between them. She said:

> A year and a half ago was probably the most [Black women] I've ever had on a job. There were two apprentices. I want to say they went through [the pre-apprenticeship program.] […] We were at the [job] together. I happened to sort of know their faces from a picnic at [the pre-apprenticeship.]
>
> I'd see them in the elevator. We'd say, "Hello." We'd chat, shoot the breeze for a couple of minutes. But there weren't many. In my thirteen years, I could probably say five to six jobs that I might have seen or had another Black female. But definitely not in electrical; there isn't. I went through my entire apprenticeship program, being the one and only. If there is an apprentice right now, I don't know about it.

Women can and do act as allies for each other. That said on the job they can be competition for each other and act as barriers to each others' success. Further divisions of race, regionalism, union and non-union status, and sexuality can undermine alliances between women. It is difficult for Black women to support each other based on a shared alliance through their race or their gender. Though Black tradeswomen may want to work together, solidarity among Black tradeswomen on the job is rare.

STRUGGLES TO REMAIN WITH THE SAME EMPLOYER

"AS WE RETIRED, I DON'T THINK THEY HIRED MANY MORE BLACK PEOPLE." – WANDA LOU

Wanda Lou noted that after her thirty years on the shipyards the numbers of women and Black people working on the yards dropped drastically from her time. She attributed this to a lack of concerted effort on the part of management to cultivate and maintain a diverse workforce. Throughout her career there was a strong showing of Black people in the workforce for their company; though she usually worked on crews where she was the only woman or one of a handful. Towards the end of her career she noticed the numbers of Black workers on the shipyards had markedly dropped. In reflecting on changes on the yard Wanda Lou said:

> [The yard] has changed since we've been there. I retired in 1988. But when we went back […] they were showing us how the work goes now. It really has changed.
>
> In fact, I didn't see that many Black people there, period. And I didn't see that many women there. […] You see, there were a lot of Black people there when we were there. But as we retired, I don't think they hired many more Black people.

Wanda Lou noted that because the manufacturer did not consciously seek to maintain the racial and gender diversity of her era few Black people and women were doing this work in the present. This also points to the reality that a diverse workforce is cultivated over the long-term. Without long term commitment diversity is often short-lived, especially in fields like the building trades that have been resistant to change.

"IT'S LIKE AN ELECTRICAL FENCE." - DARNITA

As a laborer Darnita noted that staying with a company long-term had been a major hurdle in her career. She said:

> I don't like it when jobs are moving from this company to this company. I want to stay with a company. It's like an electrical fence. Talk to somebody and you let them know you're interested. You let them know, and nobody knows [who to ask.] "Go here." "Talk to here," blah blah. I don't care what area, I just want to get on. That's the toughest part, getting on with a company and staying with the company.

Financially there is instability in moving from contractor to contractor, and in terms of skill advancement there is a constant proving of oneself that is hard to overcome. Though Darnita worked for the same company for five years on a major project, when that project finished she was laid off. She was not carried to the company's next project. If there had been a possibility to move she would have gone.

As a laborer apprentice Danielle and Crystal noted that they worked consistently. The economy was booming and apprentices were attractive to employers because they earned a lesser wage. As a Black woman Danielle said she was an attractive hire for contractors trying to reach their affirmative action goals because Black women were

counted as double minorities. A strategy Danielle used throughout her apprenticeship was to draw out her time as an apprentice to ensure that she would continue working. To her chagrin once her apprenticeship finished she found she was unemployed for ten months. She said:

> A lot of people told me to stay working, try to stretch out your apprenticeship as long as possible. It was very true. In the laborer's trade […] they are accepting apprentices still to this day and they are the ones that are still working. […]
>
> It's like they used you while you were an apprentice and then when you're done they just toss you aside. Yeah. That's how they stand. I'm really fed up with them.

Danielle's situation was affected both by the U.S. economic downturn in 2009 and the lack of a strong advocate for her as a worker. This need for advocacy came through as a shared theme from the three laborers interviewed. All expressed a sense of frustration with their union; that the union did not have their best interest at heart and was not trying to advocate for their right to work or opportunities. A shared theme was as women, and as Black people: "We are the last hired and the first fired." This lack of support caused both Danielle and Crystal to doubt their union affiliation and consider working non-union to make ends meet.

Working in the trades financially benefitted Crystal and Danielle. However, Danielle said: "It doesn't really matter now 'cause [unemployment has been] so long. Bills keep going and money stops." Danielle spoke to the tension between the rhetoric of inclusion that she heard from the union, and the precarious experience of being a woman in the industry. She said: "I know that [women] have come a long way in this industry. But I don't think we get the respect. […] They always say they want us to be in it and

stuff like that, and still we're like the first ones to go." Some women talked about the affirmative action incentives to hire Black women. These incentives did not have a lasting impact on Black women's long term hiring.

As a career counselor from 2008-2010 I noticed that through the industry-wide economic decline people of color and women felt the affect of lay-offs more than White men. During this time I networked with highway projects to get women and Black men onto the few projects that were going. It was an incredibly difficult task. The projects often required a smaller number of workers, and contractors consistently told me they did not need anyone. Those who were already hired prior to the downturn continued working. Those who were new to the industry or were unconnected to thriving contractors did not work.

"THE JOB IS TWO YEARS. THAT DOES NOT MEAN WE WILL BE THERE FOR ALL OF IT." - DARNITA

A number of the women interviewed talked about understanding the negative competitive behaviors on the job as part of a system. Shonda, an electrician, worked on both commercial and municipal jobs. She noted that on commercial jobs as soon as one walked onto the job, they were to work themselves out of a job. Shonda said:

> On certain jobs I had a couple of Black guys who were my journeymen. I truly believe we were set up to be killed. You really felt a lot of times that they really didn't want you on the job, that there were a lot of people that didn't want you on the job. There was a fear thing.
>
> The thing that's really interesting about our environment is that it didn't foster a lot of love and trust, because everybody's looking for employment right. If you go on a job and they think that you can out do them, or that somebody might like you a little bit more. We are working ourselves out of a job. That is different as to where I'm working now [with the municipality.] Because with

> construction the day you step onto a job, you are working yourself out of a job. It's a really hostile environment."

The question of "Who is going to be on the job till the end," meant that unless people had strong networks of support they were working to prove themselves to be "better than" or "more valuable" or "more likable" than the next person. This competition fostered fear and mistrust among people. This fierce competition and scarcity mentality fostered racism and sexism on the job.

Darnita told me that for every job she went on, she knew how long the job was meant to run. That did not mean that she as a woman or as a Black person would last till the job's completion. She said jokingly: "The job is two years. That does not mean we will be there for all of it." Competition on the job includes pushing to become highly trained and actually getting the opportunity to continue working. The Black tradeswomen in this study had substantial resumes to demonstrate their competence and skill as tradespeople. Racial and gender microaggressive themes of the myth of the meritocracy, assumption of inferiority, and being treated as second-class workers converge to limit the recognition of these women's skills, and their career advancement. Though they worked hard, as Black women racism and sexism at times clouded how they were perceived by their coworkers and employers. This affected their long-term integration into the team.

CHALLENGES TO THE LEADERSHIP OF BLACK WOMEN

The assumption of inferiority and expectations of failure undermine Black tradeswomen's leadership on the job, and hindertheir willingness to step into leadership roles. Black women in leadership roles on construction jobsites are few and far between.

The women who held ongoing leadership roles in this study were: Keisha as a superintendent, Kareema and Patricia as contractors, and Shonda, Wanda Lou and Grace as crew leads and foremen. They spoke of the challenge of having their leadership followed by male subordinates who held sexist beliefs that men knew best; battling stereotypes that their decisions were inefficient, and their crews substandard; and potential sabotage from male peers.

Keisha found that with each new project she had to assert her authority and legitimacy as a boss and decision-maker. In Keisha's leadership she reached a point in her career, where she was no longer willing to have her voice be submissive to her male colleagues. She said dealing with male perceptions of themselves as the leaders in construction, and women as followers, was a continuous struggle on her jobs. She said:

> Yet, it never fails, the testosterone in these guys that "they are construction workers," you know? They come out there and they've got their tools and stuff, and they're gonna work. You're gonna pick up behind them. I just felt like I was constantly paying my dues. Not literally paying my dues to the union. […]
>
> I was just like, "Naw, I'm not going to do it like that. We are gonna do it like this, because I didn't buy my card[26]**.** You might have bought your card, and then you brought your brother-in-law in. He's getting journeyman scale [wages], and he didn't even go through the apprenticeship. He doesn't know what he's talking about. […] I'll take the blame if it's wrong. But I am confident that it's right. I know it's right." […]
>
> This is my constant fight. The guys don't like giving me a chance. I'm not trying to prove my stuff or myself, or whatever. I'm just trying to do what works for me because at the end of the day -- especially if I am a journeyman, and they are the apprentice -- I am responsible for it being right. […] There is no rework.

[26] "Buying your card" is a term used when people buy their journey card from the union hall without going through the formal apprenticeship. This requires completing a test, and is based on years of informal experience. Buying a card is a less rigorous path towards attaining a journey card. This qualifies individuals to earn journeylevel wages.

As a woman Keisha faced gender-based challenges to her leadership on a regular basis. She spoke to the irony of having males come onto the jobsite and underestimate her wealth of knowledge, and offer less credible ways to problem-solve on the job. She also noted that males could be promoted more on their networks, than their skill. For Keisha, her job was to ensure that the best product was produced for her company. Allowing males to undermine her leadership and impose decisions that did not run smoothly on the jobsite or resulted in rework on a project could negatively affect her reputation and cost her company thousands of dollars. As a superintendent she had to assertively challenge men to respect her decisions.

Keisha worked on bridge building projects around the United States, and had done so for 19 plus years at the time of our interview. Though her resume was impressive, she noted that male subordinates had to get past their bias against working for a woman before they would work effectively for her. She said once they did so, they would work for her "in a heartbeat." She was a fair boss, and set a high standard. Over her career she had had three complaints lodged against her by male subordinates. The complaints did not stand up to scrutiny. However, complaints by subordinates can cause women in leadership to be pulled from their position. Keisha did walk something of a fine line around when to speak up, and when to let men figure out for themselves whether their ideas worked.

Keisha's leadership earned her accolades within her company. Although she was honored by her company for exemplary service, her hard won success was bittersweet. Her meticulous efforts saved her company a lot of money and produced consistent high quality projects. She was supported by her company to be in her role, however, she did

not receive active institutional support to back her leadership or to counter sexism on the job. She was on her own to sink or swim. As a superintendent she found that male gender bias was the most undermining of her leadership, and that the significance of her race was second in regards to this. She said:

> I had an incident in Seattle, and I didn't take it that it had anything to do with race. I took it that it had to do with gender. The reason I said it had nothing to do with race is because there were also Black guys that stuck with their group of White guys that discounted my decisions, a decision that I made in terms of safety.
>
> I can't think of one time it had anything to do with race. I would tell them, "It has to do with gender." But more importantly, "It's not you, and it's not your gender. It's their gender."

Though Keisha largely focused on sexism as a key component of men discounting her leadership, the significance of race was still present.

It is important to note that Black men can be allies, or barriers to the success of Black women in leadership roles. If Black men feel they can gain from joining with White men against Black women, they will. This does speak to the precarious relationship between Black men and Black women on the jobsite. Understanding that a shared Black racial identity did not necessarily equate to a shared alliance between Black people on the job caused Keisha and some of the other women interviewed to reduce microaggressive behaviors from men in general to sexism. This sexism is both interracial and intra-racial.

In Darnita's ten years in the trades, Keisha was the first Black woman superintendent she met. Both women held their friendship as sacred and rare. On the job Darnita and Keisha were not publicly friends, for fear that colleagues would think that

Keisha gave Darnita preferential treatment based on her race or gender, or that they be considered unproductive for joking with each other. This secrecy was in contrast to the experience of White male bosses with subordinates. Darnita said, “We have to hide our relationships at work, but they [White male bosses] can sit back and Coke, smoke, and joke all day long.”

On this particular job where the majority of workers were White males, Keisha, Darnita, and a Black tradesman who was in a safety position would limit the amount of time they were seen talking together. This uneasiness at being seen together as allies or friends was in a hostile climate of structural insecurity where White men felt insecure in their positions (Paap, 2006). As people of color in positions of authority being seen together could jeopardize their positions. Together they represented a collective threat. Even though their conversations were work-related, the racist and sexist stereotype that they were wasting time was so great they did not want to be seen together for an extended period. The stereotype threat of inefficiency followed Keisha and Darnita throughout their careers. Darnita said this was a reality both in the trades and was her experience in the military.

Stereotypes of inefficiency and outright hostility can cause Black tradeswomen to lose their leadership positions. Weathering the humiliation of being demoted or labeled a problem is a reality for Black women in these roles. As an electrician Shonda was stripped of her foreman status due to complaints of inefficiency. A senior electrician examined her work, debunked those claims of inefficiency, and gave her back her foreman status. Veronica and Keisha have worked for their employers for roughly twenty years apiece. Like Shonda both women have experienced moments in their careers where

they were labeled as "problem employees." For Keisha this resulted in being fired from her company, and being told she was "not cut out for construction." She eventually returned to work for the same company, and became known as an outstanding employee.

Crystal stopped trying to advance at her work because she feared she would not be listened to. She told the story of her experience as a project leader:

> I was a project leader, or whatever you want to call it. It's too much headache. I've been given assignments where the supervisor says, "I want you guys to do X, Y, and Z. Crystal's in charge." Everybody looks at me like I got my tail between my legs. […]
>
> I'm not an aggressive type person. I'm just cool. It's like, "I'm not going to beg you to do anything." That's why I know I could never do that, because I'm gonna tell you, one time, "go do X,Y,Z." And you don't do it? I'm gonna take care of it. You see I found myself doing that too many times, because people won't listen to me. […] I'd be workin' myself to death.

This sentiment, "people won't listen to me," was echoed among the three laborers interviewed. It was expressed in varying forms from the other women. Without supervisory support of their leadership, Black women struggle to lead in the face of sexism and racism. Of course personality does play into whether one is willing to take on the challenge of being in this role. Keisha had a strong personality and was willing to fight for her voice to be reckoned with. This made her a powerful figure on her jobsites. That said it became exhausting to constantly fight the same battle for legitimacy, recognition, and authority.

Kareema asserted that as a female business owner it was important for her to be able to do the work herself so as to safeguard against sabotage from employees refusing to work effectively. She said women failed as business owners when they "are out of their power," meaning when they did not have mastery over their craft. Her expertise

meant that she did a number of jobs herself to ensure the standard of work. Her skill also meant she knew when someone was taking advantage.

Patricia found if she asked male contractors for advice it was best to double check their recommendations to ensure she was given quality instruction. She relayed the story of a fellow contractor's pseudo-advice that intentionally set her up to fail. Patricia said:

> I remember calling a guy one time. I asked him, "How did you dig out your ditch?" He said, "We did it with shovels." I snuck back to watch them. They had a DitchWitch[27] and it was just like bam! I was like, "Dang we would have been out there with a backhoe[28] and breaking up the asphalt and it would have been all messy." He lied to me.

Patricia's competitor lied to her so that her company would use the least efficient equipment to complete a job. This inefficiency would limit her chances of getting jobs in the future and reinforce a stereotype of minority contractors as inferior. As a minority contractor Patricia struggled to find contractors she could talk with candidly about how best to perform the work and increase efficiency. This information was vitally important as rework and inefficiency could incapacitate a business.

As a contractor Patricia contended with the stereotype of Black people as "lazy" and "criminals." Patricia's largely minority male crews often worked alone on jobsites. Onlookers have called the police to report her crews for theft, assuming that her workers were on the job as thieves rather than as workers. She said:

> There is still the stigma that Black people were lazy and don't know what they are doing. Even with my company I've had people see us on project sites and we've

---

[27] DitchWitch is a manufacturer of trenchers and plows.
[28] A backhoe is a type of excavating equipment consisting of a digging bucket at the end of a two-part articulated arm.

> been isolated where there were no other people. [Onlookers] would call the police and they think we are stealing something.
>
> Police harass us. They come to the jobsite and sit there for hours watching my employees. I'm like, "What are you doing? I mean there is crime happening somewhere, why are you here harassing my employees trying to see if they can recognize them or just make them feel bad?"

The experiences of Keisha, Patricia, and Kareema indicate that for Black women business owners and women in leadership positions on the jobsite their authority, and ability to lead the job is constantly challenged.

STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES AS A BLACK FEMALE CONTRACTOR

"EVERY TIME I GET THERE, SOMETHING CHANGES." - PATRICIA

As a contractor Patricia encountered many of the structural barriers that continue to limit the success of Black business owners in the United States. As a small contractor she encountered problems of red tape, trouble acquiring funding, limited technical assistance, limited enforcement of affirmative action requirements around hiring minority contractors on big projects, the refusal of existing contractors to partner with her, and fierce competitors who could offer more consistent work taking her employees. Though she saw a lot of work happening in her city, it was not easy to access it. She said:

> I kept hearing all this work, all this money, all these opportunities. But once I got into it, I can see that it's about jumping through hoops, the games they play. So they keep you spinning your wheels and you never really get the big opportunities to do anything.
>
> And then, as I recruited people, those people would leave and go with other companies, because I've already recruited and trained them. So [other contractors] were taking my employees. I'm like, "Wait a minute!"

Patricia said larger White contractors saw the talented Black employees she developed and recruited them. Due to sporadic work it became increasingly difficult for her to keep her employees working consistently. Though her employees may have been treated with more respect on her jobsites, they too were tempted by the possibility of working for a bigger contractor with more work and higher pay. She noted that real recruitment of young Black adults into trades-related work needed to happen straight from high school, at the university level, and in their early twenties. She saw contractors doing this for young White adults, but not extending the same concerted effort towards young adults in the Black community.

Patricia was a first generation business owner who did not come from economic wealth. The lack of generational wealth in her family made it difficult for her to leverage funds for projects. As a Black business owner, she experienced the historical realities of racialized lending practices that have limited lending to Black businesses.

> Every time I get there, something changes. Insurance changes, workman's comp changes. I can't get bonding. I get to the point where I can get bonding, then my credit is low, or something happens on the project. I've missed something. I go, "I know it's not this difficult". I know it's not. It's just a matter of whether [banks] are willing to help you. Only when it benefits them are they willing to help you. Even then, they don't even want to see you, [a Black person] with a lot of money. They've said to me, "Didn't we give you some money?" You didn't give me anything. You allowed us to work. […]
>
> These are the things I want to put on my affirmative action application because you have to say how you've been discriminated against in order to qualify. Basically I've been discriminated against because I am a woman. I am an African American. I haven't come up through their ranks. I haven't had the ability to get large projects because of bonding. Even though I've had a bankruptcy, I've been out of my bankruptcy for eight years. [Lenders] tell me now, you've got to wait ten years. First it was seven years. Now, because of the economy, they're really just being hard. […]
>
> The [lending] criteria should have been different. […] If you can't show you can pay because you don't have enough money, you'll never be able to qualify for a loan or a line of credit unless they change the criteria. Why did the

> city do it the way that they've done it, because it hasn't worked? So there is another area of discrimination. I've been discriminated against based on, I don't have the income based on a line-of-credit.
>
> Now the property that I have, the value has gone down [due to the recession] so I don't have any collateral. I won't be able to refinance. They're not refinancing, so even if I wanted to refinance, they're not able to take the property that I own and get a line of credit. To me, it just feels like a cycle. They are not really serious about seeing people create wealth.

Patricia lived in an area that received federal and municipal funding for restoration. This area was a historically Black community, but through gentrification many Black people and low-income folks were forced to move to more affordable parts of the city. Stricter restrictions in terms of who qualified for lending jeopardized her ability to qualify for funding to bid on this work. Though development in this area had some goals to include small minority-owned businesses in the work, the criteria used to judge the eligibility of firms to participate continued to privilege firms with large bank accounts, and a longer history of doing the work. As a Black contractor she tried to qualify for lines-of-credit. Changes in lending laws made it harder for her to qualify for loans. Prior to the economic downturn she bought houses to float her business on real estate property equity. The recession devalued the houses, thus limiting the available lines-of-credit necessary to float projects.

"WHY ARE THEY GIVING ALL THIS WORK TO MINORITIES?"- PATRICIA

Patricia benefitted from technical assistance groups to help her develop her business. When technical assistance programs were successful, she was able to grow her business. However, not all technical assistance programs are of the same quality, have

industry clout to leverage work, or have similar levels of understanding or ability to serve small contracting businesses as they try to develop capacity to handle larger contracts.

Patricia worked through a number of sheltered market programs. She took what she could from these programs. Patricia's business was undermined by (1) the lack of consistent commitment of major construction companies to work with small, minority-owned businesses; (2) limited compliance oversight on high roads agreements that incentivized the participation of minority-owned businesses on larger municipal, and federal projects; and (3) limited vision on the part of male contractors to partner with female-owned businesses. In regards to the missed opportunity to collaborate she said:

> We went to a pre-bid for [a highway project.] We got there and were talking to estimators for a [large firm.] Another subcontractor on the way out said, "You know they want to give all this work to minority contractors." You know, basically whining and crying about this percentage where you gotta use Blacks and Hispanics. We're looking at him going, "Hey dude, you've been getting all the work anyway. What is up with that." […]
>
> Why did he have to say "minorities, Blacks, Hispanics?" How come he couldn't have said, "Hey my name is such and such. We have been doing this work. We'd love to work with you." Without bringing up "they have to use minorities and we are just being cut out of this." I mean, wow, he was really bold, but this happens all the time.

Patricia's remarks highlight the resistance of White contractors to work with minority contractors. This resistance hinders the success of equity measures.

Patricia described some of the ways the institutional strength of sheltered market programs had been eroded by color- and gender- blind policies to shift who qualifies for the sheltered market. Patricia said:

> To me the MWESB (Minority Women Emerging Small Business) program was created to level the playing field for more opportunity. To give access where there was no access for women and minority contractors. Now they have the ESB

> (Emerging Small Business) program which is non-gender, non-race and now it is another way for White men to come through the backdoor. The White women are being the owners of the business. They are just a front for their husbands 'cause they, half the time, are not doing the work.

Patricia acknowledged that the MWESB program in her city was established to address the unequal representation of women-owned and racial minority-owned businesses in the trades. Inconsistency in the awarding of contracts to MWESB contractors and poor oversight has stymied the benefit of this program for women- and people of color-owned businesses. Due to pressure from White contractors who said this program was unfair, Patricia's city was moving towards an Emerging Small Business program. This program was color- and gender-blind in terms of who qualified for the sheltered designation of an Emerging Small Business. Without close monitoring the purpose of the program, to foster the small business development of women and people of color owned businesses, could be easily circumvented. The practice of White women, who are not tradeswomen, being used as the face of a small business where their White husband's actually run the business is a problematic practice that undermines the effectiveness of sheltered market programs.

SUMMARY:

Contending with racism and sexism is a reality for Black tradeswomen in the workplace. For Black women working in non-traditional fields their interactions with minor and major instances of interpersonal discrimination and institutional racism was high. Though efforts are continually made to bring more minorities into the trades, the

lack of consistent effort to unpack the culture of disrespect in the trades hinders the progress of racial minorities and women.

This culture of disrespect is not just a problem for minorities. It contributes to the attrition rate of White males who leave the industry due to a hostile work environment. This is expensive as the training for apprentices can cost thousands of dollars. For apprenticeships the investment in workers is high. The cost of losing the return on that investment is also high. The culture of disrespect is within a structure that treats people as expendable.

While on a jobsite a well-meaning journeyman[29] told a group of prospective tradeswomen and myself that it did not matter who they were, they were a "tool" on the job. If they, as tradespeople, were not a good "tool" they would be dismissed. This example has stuck with me as I assume the journeyman was trying to communicate that he was willing to work with the women if they came onto the job. What sticks with me is the image of human beings as tools moving around the jobsite. I am wondering what makes a good tool? Are tools bought at Home Depot, for example, better or worse than tools bought from a cheaper tool retailer? I am also reminded that tools are owned and used. The journeyman made this comment off the cuff. However, the comment when viewed within a hostile workplace, the decimation of unions, and fierce competition to prove one's worth to an employer (Paap, 2006) is dehumanizing to all workers. This speaks to the vulnerability of tradesworkers in general. This structural insecurity reinforces cultural fears, thus making newcomers vulnerable to exclusion.

[29] I cannot speak to the man's intent, however I appreciated that he stopped working to talk with my tour of prospective tradeswomen. He was working with a female apprentice.

For the women in the study their leading challenges in the workplace on a long-term basis have been contending with this culture. The task of navigating microaggressions in the workplace outstripped the intensity of the work, and managing a work-life balance. The Black tradeswomen interviewed also developed a great appreciation for what they did as tradespeople. Despite working in a challenging environment most of the women found people in their workplace to connect with. As participants shared their experiences with racism and sexism they offered strategies they used to interrupt the oppression.

These women were not victims, although they were, at times, victimized by their environment. The progress of Black women in the trades would not happen without the development of their personal resources to cope with difficulty, and their ability to build relationships across difference. The following chapter further discusses some of those places of Black women's agency.

BUILDING THE SELF

Though Black tradeswomen progress at work, all of the women interviewed had moments that reminded them that they are Black women in a man's world. These reminders came up as subtle and overt experiences of racism and sexism. Since the entrance of women in formal apprenticeships from the late 1970s, the numbers of women in the trades have contracted considerably. The nature of tradeswork is challenging. However, for the women interviewed maintaining a healthy relationship with self and establishing relationships with others on the job has been as challenging as the actual work. In such an environment study participants have developed personal and interpersonal coping strategies on and off the jobsite. They also worked to change institutional structures within their organizations be it their union, municipality, or state apprenticeship board. This chapter will focus on the personal coping strategies participants developed to build their self-esteem, to support themselves to go to work, and to be successful on the job.

Study participants developed a critical consciousness of oppression in their work environment and of their personal agency in the workplace. At times they were victims of racism, sexism, and homophobia as discussed in the previous chapters. They developed strategies both in how to work with resistant colleagues and ways of integrating themselves into the industry to maintain themselves through microaggressive incidences and continue in their careers. For all of the women this was not been a smooth process. It was challenging and at times caused them to question whether continuing in the trades

was worth it. At times they dealt with extreme isolation on the job, extended periods of joblessness, and the disconcerting denial of injustices incurred in their workplaces.

Women developed a self-concept that was independent of their workplace. The cultivation of self-esteem and healthy relationships, both within the workplace and outside of work, were crucial for Black women to consciously address everyday oppression.

CULTIVATION OF SELF-ESTEEM

'DEVELOPING THE STRENGTH TO GO AROUND THE MOUNTAIN' – WANDA LOU

Black women develop their personal relationship with themselves as a way of knowing what they are physically and emotionally capable of handling. This contributes to a stronger sense of self-esteem and the experience of themselves as capable workers. This sense of personal capacity and ability to succeed is in stark contrast to workplace racial and gender microaggressions regarding the assumption of inferiority and treatment as a second-class worker.

For everyone when I asked about self-esteem there was a pause. Some began with the answer, "Self-esteem, what's that!" Some followed with a question of whether they had self-esteem. All of the participants articulated a self-concept that was supportive of their self-agency and a strong sense of their self-worth. Their self-esteem did come under attack from colleagues, self-doubt, and friends who questioned why they continued in the trades. However, in their discussion of self-esteem women talked about the emotional strength they developed to combat the negativity around them. Part of self-esteem is the strength to continue despite adversity.

Darnita, a laborer, said: “I’ve never had self-esteem issues. I’m okay with who I am. I love me. I could be better. I’m a work in progress. As far as women out there, if she could do it, I can do it. She’s not better than me. The only things that would stop me would be a health issue.” Darnita’s sense that no one was better than she, helped her push for opportunities on the jobsite. In the trades if individuals do not advocate for themselves there is a good chance they can be overlooked. This could also mean not getting the training or the opportunities needed to advance on the job. Darnita’s self-esteem developed over the course of her career. After ten years in the trades she knew she could do this work, and that the people in higher positions than she were not necessarily better workers than herself. This awareness supported her to advocate for her career advancement. Darnita, like other women in the study, dismissed the microaggressive messages of inferiority and being second-class. Her strong sense of self-esteem prevented her from internalizing the negative messages around her.

At the time of our interview Darnita became trained as a compressed air worker. She was one of two women on a major pipe project in this position. Being a compressed air worker requires being lifted deep into a sewer to do pipe intervention work. This work is highly specialized, well paid, and dangerous. She said: “If you get tangled up down there, you’re dead.” To get this position Darnita lobbied for the opportunity to try. She said of seeing another woman doing this work:

> I’m like, if she can do it, why can’t I do it? I start asking, “How can I get on? What can I do? Where can I do this?” You’ve got to stay on them, because they’re going to get their cousin and their brother and their uncle and everybody else. But if you don’t fight for you in this field, nobody else will, you know what I mean?

Darnita had a core of self-respect that supported her to take risks and try new things on the jobsite. She noted that to get ahead, she needed to be vocal and persistent. Her persistence opened the door for a promotion. Her tenacity helped her land niche work on the job. The ability to stand out from the group in a tight economy was crucial. She said:

> I was asking, "What is she doing? You get what? You get extra money?" They're like, "The work is dangerous." I'm like, "I just left the military.[30]I was in the bowels of the ship that were as small as that. Scared? No." And they say, "You don't want to do that. I was in that once and I was scared and claustrophobic."
>
> "I won't ever know until I try. Give me a chance. Let me fall on my face if that's what is going to happen." So they gave me my chance and I loved it. All the way to the bank loved it!

Darnita's ability and willingness to do this challenging work kept her working through the bulk of the economic downturn. However, once the pipe project finished she experienced a long period of unemployment. She noted that because of her persistence, "they gave me the same chance that they gave everybody else." In the face of the expectation of failure, Darnita succeeded.

In Darnita's experience she was vocal about her desires and she was given a chance to excel. A number of the women mentioned the need to be given a chance. In being given a chance people show what they can do. It is in showing what they can do, that they build a reputation.

Part of self-esteem comes from knowing what one is capable of accomplishing. This sense of self comes from seeing the fruits of one's labor. Each project successfully completed builds a sense of one's ability and accomplishment. Though Black women's skill may be unknown to each new crew they encounter, Black women bear witness to

[30] Darnita spent six years in the Navy. This experience prepared her for working in confined spaces.

their individual efforts. They are their own self-witness. This helps grow individual self-esteem. For Crystal seeing projects she worked on grew her self-esteem. She said:

> It's fantastic, just goin' by a building that I actually had a part in making or refurbishing. […] Every time I drive by, it's like, wow, I was a part of this. [I] will, forever, be a part of this. I just love that.

This pride in what one has accomplished is common in the trades. This pride in personal accomplishments also supported women to "let my work speak for itself" in the face of ridicule or stereotyping on the job. Sharla noted that when she walked onto a new jobsite people noticed her and were skeptical of her ability. When she stepped on a ladder and completed a job her sense of herself as competent was affirmed. She said she could show someone her worth far more than telling them.

Competence grows one's self-esteem. Kareema's self-esteem was built on her pride in her family's legacy as tradeswomen and the fact that she knew her trade. She said:

> Self-esteem you know, to me, is a sense of pride. I think I'm proud, and because of my pride, it helped me hold the torch and then to hold it so I can pass the torch. The torch has to be passed. It's my charge to do that. I don't have low self-esteem. I'm very high-strung. You know? I think I can outdo someone's skill level. I think I rank top in the field.

Her heightened skill level, something that she worked on regularly, gave her a strong position to assert herself in her field. This sense of pride in her abilities and competence in her field encouraged her to pass this on to other women of color coming up. Her sense of pride required she "hold the torch" and "pass the torch" to the next generation. Self-pride was important in sustaining herself as a worker and contractor. It compelled her to make space for the next generation of Black tradeswomen.

Kareema's experiences as an apprentice caused her to develop this particular understanding of self-pride in the face of constant critique:

> I picked that up back in the day as an apprentice. You gotta have pride. They're not going to build up your self-esteem. They're gonna try to tear you down, put you down, and hammer you down on any level and every circumstance. My self-esteem has been maintained based on the pride that I know who my enemies are. Period. [...]
>
> It's all about the other person. It's the person who is actually administering the nonsense. You know, most of them are men, and some of them are women. I've seen women discriminate against other women. It's because their personal self-esteem and their personal growth is not there. So, you expect it. And you move on! I don't acknowledge those people. I didn't expect it any other way. [laughing]

As an apprentice Kareema came to understand the microinsults she encountered from men and women on jobsites as tactics to push her out of the trades. She developed a critical consciousness of the ways racism and sexism operated both in the trades and in the broader society. In understanding this she maintained her sense of pride and was no longer surprised or thrown off when people behaved in racist and sexist ways towards her. This sense of pride and a keen understanding of her work environment helped her move past the hostility that tried to deter her. Experiences of stigmatization helped Kareema understand the pervasiveness of racism and sexism on the job. It became something she expected. To withstand hostility she focused on building up her self-pride in her abilities and the worthiness of her cause to advance other women of color in construction.

On the other side of their 30 year careers as welders and riveters Grace and Wanda Lou said the trades increased their sense of self-esteem and ability to survive difficult environments. For both women the trades offered a self-sufficiency that

sustained them throughout their lives. Both women were proud of the fact that they never received a lay-off slip in all their time working on the Northwest shipyards. They loved their work, and appreciated being valued for it. They shared:

> G: I'm proud that I was able to contribute and was capable enough that I could go in and hold a job that long.
>
> *W: It gave me strength. I felt like I could do anything that I really wanted to do, with no obstacles in my way. I felt like I could go around them.*
>
> G: Like that old saying, "Go around them. Go over them. Go under them."
>
> *W: "Get over it, just don't move the mountain. Give me the strength to go around." And I feel I have that strength, now. Some of it came from working, being self-supporting. Because now, by getting out and working, I have my own income. I can be self-supporting and take care of myself. If I hadn't have gotten out and worked, then I would still have to depend on my husband. Sometimes [husbands] don't always do like you want them to do, which I know we don't always do what they want us to do. But I'm self-supporting. If I want it, really bad, I may not need it - I may not need everything I want. But if I really want it, I can go out and get it. Being in the workplace has really made me a strong woman.*
>
> G: Billy[31] would say sometime that I couldn't get. And I'd say, "Well it's my money, so I can get it if I want to."

Both women noted their financial self-sufficiency gave them leverage to address gendered power differentials within their marriages. They had the leverage needed to have greater autonomy in their relationships. This financial independence carried into their retirement as they earned substantial retirement income from the yard. This concept of self-sufficiency also gave these women a sense of themselves as strong women. Their self-worth increased because of their ability to endure. They found "the strength to go around" the obstacles they encountered in their careers. The strength to address obstacles

[31] Pseudonym for Grace's husband

of racism and sexism on the job directly or indirectly is crucial for maintaining in the trades long-term as Black women.

Black women develop their self-esteem as a component of anti-racist and anti-sexist struggle in the trades. This self-esteem is developed through the development of their competence on the job; developing a critical consciousness that understands how race and gender operate on the jobsite as a system of oppression; and the ability to advocate for themselves. This self-esteem is a type of pride in oneself. It is both an internal piece, and is reinforced by accomplishments at work. With each accomplishment they are reminded they are strong women. The cultivation of self-esteem is hard earned. It is built with the meeting of each milestone along the career path.

"EVERY STEP I TAKE, I TAKE IN FAITH." – PATRICIA

During our interviews I asked women about their spirituality practices, and if these practices had any bearing on their understanding of self and their careers. From a capacity building approach, spirituality can be a way that people develop and maintain a positive sense of self and make meaning of adversity. It is a way of cultivating a sense of purpose and personal integrity. Study participants came from differing spirituality practices and traditions including Christianity, Islam, and Divine Spirit-centered practices. Regardless of the practices or traditions participants shared similar concepts of spirituality as a place of belonging, deeper knowing and intuition, grace, relief from daily suffering, and self-worth. I was struck by the connection between spirituality and self-esteem. Nurturing the spirit gave people the strength to continue another day. As Black people in the United States spirituality has been a core component of the struggle for

Civil Rights. I highlight some of the ways the women spoke of spirituality in regards to their careers.

Patricia's self-esteem was rooted in her faith and in a knowing that she was a "woman of excellence." She said:

> I know who I am, and I know Whom[32] I belong to. I have greatness and destiny inside of me. It doesn't matter what someone else thinks of me or what they want to say to me. I know I'm a woman of excellence and that is my desire - it is to be a woman of excellence. I actually won the "Finer Womanhood" award in my senior year in high school.
>
> Because I have been disciplined, I plan my work, I work my plan, and I obtain my goal. The things I go after, I put my mind to it, and I thank God that he's helped me not to give up or give in. There have been times when I wanted to just give up and just say, "You know what? I can be doing something else." But I know I've impacted this industry just because I have dared to take the challenge and have refused to let them scare me off.

This sense of herself as mission driven and able to continue despite adversity helped Patricia weather the difficulty of her situation. She routinely encountered difficulty as a minority-owned small business contractor. Despite this her faith helped her endure. Though she might not receive outside praise or acceptance in her field, her spiritual practice and spiritual community affirmed her. Her faith was the bedrock of her professional life.

Initially the economic recession presented major obstacles for Patricia. The decline in housing prices caused her to lose much of the property equity she used to float her business. This was her second financial slump as a contractor. Ten years prior she filed bankruptcy, and reconfigured her business. Many contracting firms fail. Her faith in God helped her avoid some of the financial pitfalls she saw many contractors experience:

[32] She referred to God within the Christian tradition.

> Every step I take, I take in faith. I trust in God that He's going to be with me, He isn't failing me. I feel like the last two years, He told me what was going to happen in the market. He was like "Don't trust in man. Don't try to do more than what you can handle. Don't get so caught up in trying to make it because it's all going to fall out."

Though the past few years were hard for her, Patricia managed to continue working through the economic downturn when many contractors shut their doors. Her spirituality gave her a sense that she would survive. Her business ventures were a combination of strategic negotiation and faith.

Shonda credited her spirituality as important in helping her navigate her workplace. She tried to "stay connected with who I really am as a spiritual being having this human experience." Her spirituality helped her separate herself from negative behaviors in the workplace. She believed in reincarnation and said:

> In all environments you find people who are just limited in their ability. You know what I call them? I have this theory, it has to do with my reincarnation. When I find people who are just total assholes and don't get it and treat me like shit, I would always say "Okay this is their first time here."[33] [Giggle] Then when I find people who are really evolved, "Okay they've been here a couple of times. Okay, they know what it takes to get out of here.[34]" That has been a survival tip for me.

Shonda's spirituality offered her grace in dealing with personalities and situations throughout her career that have been challenging at best, and life threatening at worst. This spiritual distance supported Shonda to let go of negativity in the workplace, and maintain her personal value. She noted that people evolved in their understanding of how

---

[33] She refers to the reincarnation idea that this is their first incarnation as a human on the planet.

[34] She referred to the idea that as spirit beings we return to the earth as humans to repay our karmic debt. With each incarnation we learn more about the interconnectedness of all life and contribute to the well-being of each other.

to treat others with respect. She believed in the karmic law of cause-and-effect where negative actions came back on individuals in some shape or form. She tried to model respectful behaviors and positive communication on the job. She did not want to have negativity come back to her because of her actions. This approach was a "survival tip" for her. Her sense of grace allowed her to be an ally to people who harmed her in the past. A number of the women described helping people who initially harmed them. Their behaviors were acts of grace towards their colleagues, and a method of self-preservation. They recognized that working together was necessary to complete the job.

For Darnita spirituality was a way of connecting with her moral compass and an awareness of karma. She said:

> My grandma raised us to do that - [to] love God and just lean and depend on Him. Sometimes when you can't go anywhere else, that's where you've got to go […] I have a pretty big [extended] family, and I have a lot of friends. I'm not going to worry about it. Somebody will feed me a sandwich. I believe in karma, that the things that I have done for others, I can go somewhere and get something to eat. He's[35] never left me or forsaken me, so I know that it's not going to be that bad.

Darnita's family network and faith gave her a sense that she would be provided for. She sought to support others, and knew she would be supported. The Christian women spoke of God as a support, moral compass, and wise loving counsel.

Similarly Veronica spoke of her spirituality as an inner knowing, a deep "intuition," a "surviving tool" that helped her in her career. Her intuition helped her manage a highly competitive work environment where out of 500 employees she was one of three tradeswomen, and throughout the entire staff of trades and office workers, one of

---

[35] Referring to Christian God.

a handful of women of color. Her intuition helped her continue at her workplace despite instances of sexual harassment and bullying from colleagues. For Veronica intuition was linked with her personal integrity and consistent behavior at her job. This intuition helped her develop her own code of conduct on the job. Consistent behavior helped her build a reputation at her utility for honesty and forthrightness.

For Veronica a personal code of behavior and ethics was important to develop and maintain in a work environment that was at times toxic and unsupportive. Veronica said:

> I have to be consistently who I am - consistently. When certain situations happen, you know, - especially after this many years and with the same company and working with the same people - I say to them, "I did not say that" or "I was not a part of that" there is a trust and respect that has been built.

For Veronica her intuition helped her know who could be trusted, and when others were being dishonest towards her. Integrity was a core value for her. It was something she strove for and expected from her peers. Veronica also had a practice of receiving Reiki regularly. She said this meditative healing practice helped restore her to herself, and kept her balanced in the face of discrimination. Meditation and prayer can be ways of reconnecting with one's divine essence. Prayer has historically been used by Black people as a way to unload the burden of being in an oppressive system. Further spirituality gives people a broader community that validates their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

"I MADE MY PLAN. I RAN MY PLAN"- SHONDA

A sense of purpose was a component of self-esteem that participants discussed as necessary. They spoke of this sense of purpose as being "grounded" in why they were on

the job. This sense of purpose was developed in knowing what they wanted to do, why they were doing it, and a commitment to that path.

Crystal described her sense of purpose as being "grounded." This grounding was important for her in environments where she did not feel wanted or accepted. She said this was necessary to stay in the trades. She drew a distinction between what it took to get more Black women into the trades, and what it took for them to actually stay in the trades. A determining factor for Black women coming into the trades, or not, is whether the information about construction job opportunities are easily available to them. However knowing about the application process and successfully becoming an apprentice are not enough for long-term success in the industry. She said:

> I think the main thing about coming in is not having the information. Not knowing opportunities that exist for us [as Black women.] I think that's the main thing about coming in. As for staying in, if you're not grounded like I am, and I thank God for that, if you're not grounded and you don't know who you are, then you can be easily pushed out.
>
> They don't want us there. I mean, you gotta think about it. They're starting to come around to the White women. But even with them, I mean, construction is a man's world. […] You still got these good ol' boys. […] A lot of women just can't handle it. But me? All I do is think about my check and say, "Fuck you," and keep on movin'.

Crystal's thoughts were helpful. Her purpose for working was clear - she worked to meet her financial needs. Construction was a "man's world" with an established hierarchy of White men in positions of power. She saw some advancement in the position of White tradeswomen, but recognized the limits of this progress. She focused on keeping her job and dismissed microaggressive acts when they occurred as much as she could. Being grounded in her purpose and self-knowledge kept her from being "pushed out."

Shonda described part of being grounded in her purpose as knowing and running her plan. This commitment to living a purposeful life was a practice she applied throughout her life. She said:

> You know there are some people who would say I had a charmed life. I always had my affirmations in my mirror, my short- and long-term goals. I knew to do this. I hadn't had any classes on it. My closest friends will tell you I did everything that I said I was going to do in succession. Everybody knew what my plan was. I made my plan, I ran my plan. It wasn't an accident. This is what Shonda is working on now. She's doing this.

Shonda's steady focus prevented her from being deterred from her goal. When she entered the trades her goal was to become a journeyman electrician and move up financially. She did that, and continued to stick to her plan.

Carpenters Z and Keisha, like other tradeswomen, entered their field because they loved the work. Z said:

> I will always be doing carpentry. Yes, carpentry is my first love. I literally love building. I love seeing things come together. I like seeing a building gutted and see the end result. […] Just don't go and do this because you think it's fun. Even if you do, after that first week on the job, you get a whole reality check. It can be fun. I've had great times. I've worked for some great companies. Unfortunately, those few bad times can [voice trails off.]

Liking the work is important, and it is not enough to keep moving in the trades. Z noted that there were "fun" moments and "great times" in her career. She also noted that the effect of "those few bad times" could derail her efforts. In these trying moments a sense of purpose and grounding were crucial.

Keisha's love of her trade underscored everything she built. She said: "Everything that I build […] has a signature on it. […] It doesn't flat out spell my name, "Keisha". But to me, it's a piece of art that I put my hands on, that I did." Keisha was highly detail-

oriented and found her professional niche as a carpenter and superintendent. She said of the twists and turns of her career:

> My career changing? The biggest thing that I could say is that it probably changed from about, I don't know, $40,000 a year to over $100,000 a year. The kicker is they don't even have to pay me. You know what I'm saying? I love what I do! I can't really enjoy, you know, everything that I have to show [financially] for what I do. I get a half Saturday and a Sunday off.

Because of the demands of the industry Keisha, like many commercial tradespeople, worked constantly. Her responsibilities as superintendant did not allow her to take many breaks. Hence her love of her work, and sense that she was doing what she should be doing, was of great importance. Though Keisha and Z have had bumpy careers as carpenters they both have a love for what they did as tradespeople. They fulfilled a sense of purpose. A sense of purpose can act as a motivating factor to keep Black women engaged in the daily struggles to maintain on the job.

"KNOW YOUR ABILITIES." - KEISHA

Knowing the self is an important part of self-esteem. This self-knowledge is based on self-acceptance; an awareness of one's' physical and psychological abilities; and self-assurance. Self-knowledge is cultivated in conscious understanding of one's environment and the active support of one's self within the workplace. Patricia, a sprinkler fitter and business-owner, said her work required a "greater sense of self" where she was able to compartmentalize ways of being at work from ways of being in her private life. She said:

> You really have to be able to disconnect and connect. It is sort of like being Black living in a White world. You are juggling going back and forth. It is the same being female and going into a non-traditional role. I know how to put my heels on and put the boots on. I know how to go back and forth without me feeling like I

> am loosing being a woman. I don't have to have men harassing me to remind me of that.

Patricia's "greater sense of self" stayed with her when she moved into work environments that were all White and all male. Her grounding in her self-esteem enhanced her psychological capacity to filter out hostility. She was not "loosing" any part of herself when she "juggle[d] going back and forth" between her non-traditional career and her community. Her strong gender and racial identity was important. Patricia's identity as a woman was not swayed by the way men viewed her or expectations about the work she did. She noted she was a strong woman both when in heels or in work boots.

Keisha acknowledged the importance of individuals knowing their personal strengths and weaknesses as a means of preserving themselves in the trades. Keisha said:

> You have to recognize what your abilities are and when you've reached your limitations. Then accept it, and move forward. You know? This is more mental than it is physical, this industry. If you want to do it, people will see that and we will be willing to help. If you don't want to do it, others will see that, and will clown me. You will get yourself hurt. It's poison. You are in a bad position at that point.

As women knowing one's abilities - both the physical and psychological capacities to do this work - is important in an industry that often gives the message that women should not be on the job. Keisha's clarity about her abilities was a way of protecting herself. It was a way to avoid being perceived as weak or vulnerable. Being perceived as insecure or vulnerable can expose ones to bullying. Keisha used her mental toughness as a way of protecting herself at work.

During Patricia's apprenticeship she became very ill with kidney disease and incurred a back injury from repetitive motion on the job. She acknowledged her body was

weakened by working long hours, eating infrequently, and repetitive work. She realized that part of her longevity in the trade required she learn how to take care of her body. Her health regiment included basic health practices of eating regularly, exercise, and rest. Women are often given the message in construction that their bodies are weaker than that of men. This is used as a reason why they should not be in construction. She said of nontraditional work for women:

> As far as the nontraditional role for women, there is a stigma that you shouldn't be doing the work. But I think it is based on the individual, on what they fell their capabilities and abilities are, and understanding how to take care of your body. That is a real critical thing because we [as women] are built differently. We have to make sure we are eating properly and getting our proper rest, just as you would if you were in an office that was demanding, or doing landscaping, or office work.

She continued:

> I can remember working some days - especially early on before my body got used to it - I would come home beat tired because I was lifting some steel that was pretty heavy. But then I think things started to change. Now they have in place palate jacks, forklifts. You're not carrying more around on your body. You are able to maneuver it around the jobsite so that you don't have those types of injuries.
>
> I did get a back injury from carrying around, not a lot at one time, but carrying over a period of time. I wanted to do it and keep it moving and be good and stuff like that. You have to understand what your limitations are and you have to be willing to speak up and say, "Is there something else that we can do to make this job so that it is not causing injury."

Women on the job struggle to weigh asking for help on the jobsite with being perceived as weak. As both a tradeswoman and a contractor Patricia was sensitive to the needs of productivity and preventing work-related injuries from over-exertion. She was careful not to overtax herself and her workers. Worker burnout is a reality for both women and men.

The use of ergonomically correct assisting devices has improved the work of men and women on the job.

Knowing how she learned helped Veronica develop her capacity to master new tasks at work. This knowledge helped her protect her self-esteem on the job. She told the story of developing her own personal manual to help her take on a new job.

> There's power that comes in knowing your strengths and what you do well, and there's also power in knowing and understanding what we don't do well. I can go into a small example: when I was a mechanic in construction, I was responsible for the tool truck. That was my responsibility. I worked out of the tool truck. I kept it supplied for the whole crew. So, there was a foreman who was saying, "Okay, we're gonna need this, and this, and this in the morning, or you know, whatever."
>
> What I learned about myself and the power of knowing, is "I'm probably not going to remember that stuff and I need to write it down." […] Before, I would have said, "I'm stupid, I'm uneducated." But now what I will tell you is, "I don't learn well from books." I know that about myself. […] There's power in knowing those things and how we function differently.

This self-knowledge has helped her have compassion for herself in an environment that was often consciously and unconsciously minimizing of her contribution. In learning how she learned Veronica enhanced her self-esteem. Self-knowledge and the practice of compassion help to release negative external messages.

Sharla was "learning to appreciate me for me." This process of increased self-acceptance developed through the experience of getting older and a growing sense of personal self-worth. She said:

> The older I'm getting, the more I'm learning to appreciate me for me and liking me for me. […] [I am able to] say, "I am worthy and you should be able to care and listen to the words, the knowledge, and the information that I have to share."

For Sharla, part of knowing the self was learning to appreciate what she has to offer. Sharla's narrative highlights that the journey towards self-esteem is not necessarily a precursor to being in the trades. Rather it can be a byproduct of career choices or something that has developed due to life stages. However, this evolution does have an impact on how individuals show up in the workplace. It directly relates to whether people are willing to try new things, and to assert their rights on the job.

Self-knowledge also leads to the development of personal integrity. This personal integrity is built on a sense of personal values and a desire to be true to one's self. A number of the participants talked about knowing their values and being true to their values as an important guide for them on the job. This personal integrity supported women to stand alone rather than participate in oppressive behaviors on their crew. For example, Veronica and Crystal acknowledged there were times where their male coworkers invited them to be a part of the group. Often they refused. In some ways being a part of the group meant compromising on personal values that were important to them. Both women in our time together articulated that maintaining their personal value system was more important to them than being a part of the jobsite clique. Veronica said:

> There were times and points in my career where the guys were willing to embrace me, and like "invite me in." Then a few things happened. During some of those times, either part of being a part of them was dissing[36] somebody else. I wouldn't be a part of it. So then that put me back on the outside.
>
> I used to bitch about that, and then I realized I made a choice. I could be a part of it. I empowered myself by saying, "I made a choice to be out here because I am not willing to sacrifice my integrity, or how I function in life in order to be a part of their group." […] I am very okay standing on my own.

[36] Putting down someone else.

Veronica was not willing to be a part of the group when it involved putting someone else down. In many ways she shied away from being a part of the clique at all because she sensed she would always be on the outside. Working in environments where one is often on the margins and where one has experienced power abuses from coworkers does make it difficult to actually trust that coworkers are sincere when they extend a hand of friendship.

Through Veronica's experiences she consciously developed her personal awareness of her agency in relation to her coworkers. She recognized herself as someone who spoke against oppressive group-think in the workplace. Challenging oppressive group-think is necessary for a culture change to occur. She said: "Part of changing a culture, is getting people in there that will stand up and say "Hey! That's not okay!" It is so powerful, because that's what it takes." Though Veronica and other tradeswomen in the study paid a price for speaking against oppression in the workplace, they remained true to their values. Their values of inclusion and respect for themselves and others were valuable contributions towards industry change.

From the women interviewed self-esteem was based on a sense of personal spirituality, purpose, and self-knowledge. Self-esteem was a motivating force that developed both from facing adversity in the trades, and from the positive affirming influences of parents and loved ones. A sense of self-esteem was something that participants entered the trades with, and have relied on. Self-esteem was not static. Participants noted that a commitment to their self-worth was at times triggered by experiencing adversity. It was in those moments when they were faced with quitting or being pushed out of the trades that they relied on themselves to find the strength to

continue. They recognized they were worth fighting for. Self-esteem was necessary in navigating the challenges of getting into apprenticeships, getting hired and staying in positions.

FINDING THE BEST CHANCE OF EMPLOYMENT

Women had to read the people in their environments and discern whether the conditions were right for them to establish themselves in their respective industries. In some instances the hurdles of racism and sexism were too great for women to try to make inroads into certain trades. For example Patricia left her apprenticeship in carpentry for an apprenticeship with the sprinkler fitters because she found the fitters were more willing to actually train her as a skilled worker. That said she remained one of only a handful of sprinkler fitters of color and women in the country. Kareema left her cement apprenticeship in one city for an apprenticeship in another state because she was not being given adequate work in her initial apprenticeship. These women have had to make strategic moves in their careers to overcome blatant discrimination. Their flexibility allowed them to change course quickly and follow opportunities.

Sharla applied to an inside wireman electrical apprenticeship. She was one of 690 people who applied for 60 positions. She was not accepted into the program, but was accepted into the less prestigious low voltage apprenticeship. There is a certain amount of stigma to being a low voltage electrician as the pay is less than that of a commercial inside wireman. To get into the industry, Sharla decided to take what she was offered. Her willingness to take the opportunities that came her way put her in good stead.

Though she was paid less than inside wiremen she worked consistently and enjoyed her career path. She said:

> I'm a low voltage electrician instead of an inside wireman. You're looked down upon because you're only a half watt. But it's been great, experience-wise, financially. I know if I had gone the other way and went to the inside program, I wouldn't be doing the things that I've done.

As a low voltage electrician she worked more than some of her inside wiremen peers. Sharla has become a travelling worker installing the electrical components of retail displays across the country. She loved her niche employment. Finding her niche has been crucial for her success.

All of these stories demonstrate that Black women must go where there is an opportunity to actually work. There may be a luck component along this path. For others there is a clear plan. For example Shonda initially applied to the phone company as a telephone line installer, but chose the electrical trades on a gut instinct. Kareema's initial move to the South was met with resistance from Black men in the union who refused to work with her. She put more of her energy into establishing her contracting business in the South rather than having her career stymied by sexism in the Union. This has proved fruitful for her. Many of the participants are among a handful of women and people of color in their trades and constantly gauge whether the racism or sexism they will encounter can be negotiated or is insurmountable.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS JOB SECURITY

Advancing in trades-related education was a key place for the women interviewed to progress in the trades. Black women gain legitimacy on the job by being highly skilled.

All of the tradeswomen interviewed had a commitment to increasing their skills in relation to their work. This constant skill development was an important strategy of becoming a viable tradesperson and finding niche employment. For the women interviewed becoming increasingly skilled meant that even if the employer was averse to working with them because of personal bias or prejudice, their skill level meant they were hired. This skill development contributed to tradeswomen's sense of self-esteem. They knew their trade well enough that they could assert themselves in the face of microaggressive messages of incompetence and doubts regarding their right to their job.

Darnita attributed much of her longevity as a laborer to her willingness to acquire more skills. She said: "Because things change, you got to be on top of it. It's competitive out there. Like me, I had to go out there and get some more knowledge." During Darnita's apprenticeship she took almost every class offered at the training center. When she was off work, she was in classes. She said:

> Get down there to the school or wherever to get all that training because when they're hunting, you've got a sheet with all that filled out. You can say you are a general laborer. If you don't have extra things that you can do, then you're just like the rest of them.
>
> Like diving and intervention, there's only me and another girl that can do that. There are going to be more sewer projects around but we've got that training. We can do it. Or if they're going somewhere, like Vegas or Idaho, we can do it. We already went to school. We've already done the training. You've got to make yourself marketable.

As an apprentice Z also took a number of extra classes to complete her apprenticeship earlier. She also viewed her skill development as a component of job security. Skill diversity kept her working. She said:

> I had a foreman tell me once, "It doesn't look good on [your] resume to go from job to job." I say, "I think it looks great on my resume to go from job to job,

> because every job that I've been on has been different. I would consider myself to be a very well-rounded carpenter. All of my experiences and all of my skills aren't just in building bridges, it's not just in hardwood floors, it's not just in cleanrooms[37], it's not just in finish work. It's in all of those categories. […]
>
> He says that to me and I looked at him. [...] All his work is in bridge building. That's where his family is at. So I understand why he makes a comment like that. […] No matter what he's doing, he's always going to have a job, always.
>
> If I was with a company and I knew I would always have a job, I would probably stick there too. It would only make sense. But I know that's not the case. I haven't been anybody's good old boy system, group, clique, or whatever you want to call it. I've been liked very well on some type of jobs, but I don't think they kept me there any longer than anybody else. When the work dried up, they got rid of me just like everybody else.

Z did not have the job security of being a part of a family business or the same contractor. To address the effects of limited networks Z cross trained herself to be proficient in many aspects of her trade.

In Veronica's case as a utility worker, she too cross trained herself in many areas of her field. This training was done for her personal development to improve her job performance, rather than at the behest of her employer. She, like Keisha, spent a lot of her personal time learning her trade. She said:

> I put a lot of extra time in, and doing stuff on my own time. I spent time after work, working to get my CDL (Commercial Driver's License). Hanging out at the mechanic shop and working with some of the mechanics to learn, or working in a department and going out on my days off while the other guys were working so that I could cross train and get those skills.

When Veronica looked back on her career she noted that her path was more varied than that of many of her male colleagues. Veronica's extra skill development was geared towards preventing negative attention from her colleagues rather than gaining positive attention from her boss. Her efforts were for her to ensure her competence in her position.

[37]A cleanroom is a contaminant controlled environment built for manufacturing or scientific research.

Keisha took extra drafting classes at the community college. These classes were not required by her apprenticeship. She said she took the classes because,“ I was just looking for the knowledge.” She continued:

> I wasn’t taking these classes to be a foreman. I was taking these classes to really be unnoticed. I didn’t want to make a mistake. I didn’t want recognition because sometimes it’s not good. It is not good stuff. You know? I just wanted to be “equal to” not so much “better than.” I didn’t want to be the last person picked for the baseball team.

Eventually Keisha’s extreme competence in her field was noticed by her supervisor. She was given a chance to replace her foreman when he called in sick. This opportunity was a surprise to her, and one she had inadvertently prepared for. She said:

> When he said, “You’re it” and he tossed me the keys, I was like, “Okay, see here, Keisha, what are you gonna do?” I’m just glad that I had been on the job long enough to where, I kind of held my own. I think the guys respected me. I thought I earned it. And from that day forward, I have never gone for any position lower than a foreman. I moved up and that was in 1987.

Keisha supported her leadership by increasing her skill level as a superintendent. To prepare for each new project under her leadership she would privately build mock ups of structures on her off-time to ensure that she could stand by her structural decisions on the job. This practice ensured her legitimacy on the job, and supported her competence. She said:

> I used to build [the plans to scale] with door veneer in my garage. […] Just so that when I got to work, I didn’t look like an idiot. I always saw what it looked like. And I knew what the dimensions were. I could sketch this stuff out on a piece of plywood and explain it to my guys without being undermined, and having them talk me into “Well, that’s stupid, We should do it this way.”
>
> That was job security for me, and again, we talked about “being stubborn”. I had that to back me up. So, to some, it was “stubborn”. To me, it was “competence.” Because I had already went through the drill. I just didn’t pull it out of my butt. I actually went through the drill. I didn’t tell them that. I’m like,

> "Okay […] if I'm screwed up here, then I don't belong here. I need to go do something easier or something different". But I had already walked the walk on the smaller scale at the house.

By "walking the walk" at home, Keisha was able to stand by her decisions at work. Her self-esteem gave her the strength to stand up for herself and standby her decisions. The combination of skill, and personal determination made Keisha a highly competent superintendent.

REFUSING TO QUIT AND THE REALITY OF CONFLICT FATIGUE

In the face of supervisor or coworker hazing a number of women said that they decided that no matter what, they were going to hold onto their jobs. As apprentices Z, Sandra, Shonda, and Kareema made up their minds that despite what came at them they were going to complete their apprenticeships. Z said:

> I made up my mind that no matter what was going on, no matter what I was doing, I was going to finish this apprenticeship. […] Even if I no longer worked in carpentry, I was going to finish just so that they couldn't say, "She didn't make it." I never wanted to have that over my head. I wanted to be able to have them say, "She was right." [This was] my goal. I strived. I worked really hard to make that happen. I say, if that's your definition of "resilient", yes, that's my picture next to it.

Z's determination was admirable. It was necessary for her to maintain this drive at some of the lows in her apprenticeship. However, there is a cost in working in an environment where aspects of one's identity are under threat. Shonda discussed the weight of working in an environment where she worried that she would lose everything for over two years. Shonda, like Z, refused to quit. Her fortitude paid off. Being able to withstand adversity is a hard earned skill. Shonda and Kareema both acknowledged that their careers had not been easy, but they were doing what they want to do.

The intensity of workplace difficulties ebbed and flowed in the tradeswomen's careers. At the time of our interviews Veronica and Keisha expressed a sense of conflict fatigue. Both women had been in the industry for over two decades. Veronica said she was not interested in applying for work that she did not have a passion for. In some ways she had conflict fatigue and was not interested in carrying on the difficult struggle of being around male colleagues who did not want her there. She said: "I'm tired of being places where people don't want me. I mean, I am totally fine standing on my own and not having anybody stand up beside me. I can do that any day of the week, but […] [it becomes tiring]." Keisha said she picked her battles. At this latter stage of her career she would rather limit the conflict on her crew. She no longer had the energy reserve to withstand conflict that she had at earlier points in her career. She said:

> Sometimes, I have to pick my battles, or humble myself. There have been times when I knew the right answer. I knew what it was, and I didn't say it, because I just didn't want that fight at the time. You know? So that's the hardest part for me because I know what the right answer is. And I'm not gonna say it because I don't feel like fightin' today. [...] I don't like to get worked up like that. Because I used to; it didn't faze me. But now - I don't know if it's because I'm getting older or going through menopause, which is a small part, because I think I am - I don't think I want to fight anymore. This is all friendly fire.

Keisha "knows the right answer" on her jobs. At times she refrained from pushing her point because she did not want to defend every decision she made. As she moved towards the end of her career she was less willing to take on fights with male coworkers as they struggled to accept her leadership. A number of the women expressed a resolve to continue in their work, and a sense of exhaustion. Negotiating racism and sexism is exhausting. These women developed strategies to address the obstacles in their path. That said it was a tough road.

SUMMARY

Personally, the women interviewed developed psychological, spiritual, and emotional skills to help them address the challenges of their workplace. They took a great deal of responsibility for themselves and were self-reliant in their abilities to do their jobs. The development of self-esteem compelled Black women to stand up for themselves on the job, and to push for their career advancement. It supported them to "stand alone" when they faced adversity. As Black women the development of self-esteem required an understanding of the presence of racism, sexism, and heterosexism on the job. It required that women develop self-preservation strategies that prevented them from internalizing destructive microaggressive messages. Though women developed this self-esteem individually their efforts shared similar characteristics. These components of self-esteem were:

- A sense of self-pride and the ability to overcome obstacles;
- Critical consciousness of the realities of oppression at work;
- Part of spirituality, faith and a personal value system;
- A sense of purpose;
- Self-knowledge of learning styles, one's body and competence in one's abilities.

The realities of racism, sexism, and heterosexism required that Black women develop a critical consciousness about their environment. They were required to judge whether their workplace would afford them the opportunity to work. Finding the best chance of employment was not easy. Women have weathered at times being perceived as

a problem on the job, at times being invisible, and at other times a poster child of diversity. Some women have chosen less illustrious trades because they were afforded an opportunity to work. This strategic movement was a difficult skill to master. Women determined at each step whether the resistance to their existence in the workplace was insurmountable or an obstacle that could be overcome.

Skill development was crucial for Black women's long-term presence in the trades. To compete and to survive racist and sexist microaggressions Black women worked to be highly skilled in their professions. At times this skill was noticed. Being noticed could expose Black women to ridicule, a promotion, or a combination of the two. Regardless skill development presented itself as necessary for Black women as apprentices and as journeylevel workers. In construction there is a push for people to continually up their skills. For Black women this sentiment was even more salient; if Black women did not stand out with a diverse skill set they could be easily overlooked.

The Black women in this study were hard workers with extensive resumes. They worked to prove themselves as competent in their trades. They developed their self-concept to a point that they could work despite adversity. They worked to build relationships with those who were willing to befriend them, to challenge oppression when they could, and to hold on to their jobs. Their presence impacted those who encountered them. However, conflict fatigue remained a reality for Black tradeswomen. The women in this study demonstrated competence in their work, the ability to stand up for themselves, and the intellectual, physical, and emotional ability to do tradeswork. The continued resistance of the trades to the presence of women and Black people does mean

that valuable workers are undermined. These women stuck with the industry. However, it was a challenging path.

The tradeswomen also acknowledged that their success on the job was not just based on their skills. Their ability to manage interpersonal relationships with coworkers, supervisors, and subordinates also determined whether they maintained their jobs. No tradeswomen would make it in this environment without the presence of allies on the job. The following is a discussion of the allies and ally potential of fellow tradespeople on the job and in the community.

INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS ON THE JOB

Tradeswomen acknowledged they could not succeed on the job without the building of relationships with peers, superiors, and subordinates. These positive relationships were at times intermittent and could be challenged by the workplace climate. However, they were necessary to offset the effects of the detrimental effects of the hostile behaviors described in the previous chapters. Some strategies used to build relationships were to focus on building allies on the job one at a time. Union involvement helped foster those individual relationships. Black women's relationships with Black men on the job could help build solidarity in environments where both Black women and men were the minority. Though few of the study participants worked with tradeswomen, some experienced sisterhood on the job. The building of supportive relationships between superiors and subordinates protected and supported Black women on the job. The following chapter discusses the role of constructive relationship building in the experiences of Black tradeswomen.

THE BUILDING OF RELATIONSHIPS

"ONE-ON-ONE […] THEY CAN SEE MY VALUE SYSTEM, MY WORK ETHIC." - SHONDA

As the second Black woman electrician in her local, Shonda continually faced prejudice and bias on her jobs. Though she was hired during an electrical company's recruitment effort for people of color and women, hers was a grueling apprenticeship in which she overcame racial and gender stereotypes in every relationship she encountered. She said one-to-one she was able to connect with her White male coworkers. However,

when a ring leader led other men against her, it was harder for her to convince her colleagues to give her a chance. She related some of her challenges with White male coworkers during her apprenticeship program:

> A little later they put me with this White guy who knew that the foreman was fucking with me. He made me walk ten paces behind him. […] He hated Black people so he really thought I was screwing with him. Well I'm being myself and within four weeks this man was inviting me home for rabbit to meet the family. [Giggle] He actually gave me the best progress report I'd ever received in my apprenticeship. He actually said, "I love Black people." [Giggle] […]
>
> I said, "Just treat everybody according to their actions not based on their color." I feel like my lot through this program has been a one-on-one-meet. I have had such wonderful relationships with people. There have been folks who really wanted to kill me, and I have been able to persuade them. [...] One-on-one I can get you. I can connect with you. They can see my value system, my work ethic.

Of her philosophy in working with White people Shonda said she took each incident as it came. She did not think all White people were out to get her; though she was sensitive to signs of discriminatory behavior. Discrimination was familiar. In Shonda's experience, her presence challenged the White men she worked with to rethink some of their sexism and racism. In her willingness to be open to these men she advanced their cultural awareness.

Shonda noted that her efforts meant that White men were open to her, but not necessarily more open to other Black people and women. Her experience also brought up the question of whose responsibility it was to create a welcoming environment in the workplace. Shonda was responsible for winning over her colleagues. If she had not successfully done this she would have lost her job. This was not about her skill as an electrician, but rather her ability to soften hostile colleagues. Not everyone has this ability to transform relationships and overcome stigma. Shonda noted that her relationship

building was at the level of the individual. This did not necessarily mean systemic institutional change around workforce inclusion.

To build relationships on the job and for the sheer necessity of being trained Sandra learned to "play psychologist" in understanding her male coworkers. In this way she was able to win over some of them so that she could actually work. She said:

> You could tell they were just like "I don't want to do this" or "I would rather not be working with you." Some of them did not want to work with apprentices at all. Some of them really didn't want to work with females. So, besides trying to learn what I need to do and what I need to know [to stay] on the job I had to play psychologist so many times.
>
> You kind of feel people out, you know. You gotta get them to feel like they are comfortable with you. They'll let you do what you need to do, learn from them. […] I had to try to figure out how I was going to get passed this so I could learn something.

In learning to "feel out" her coworkers Sandra overcame a hurdle that if not met could have derailed her career. In both Shonda and Sandra's examples their approach was to build individual relationships. This meant analyzing individual coworkers and learning to overcome their resistance to them as tradeswomen and apprentices on the jobsite. This is a subtle skill that Black women develop and is a component of reading the cultural climate of their workplace and the actors involved.

"IF I DID NOT HAVE THE BROTHERS I WORK WITH THERE IS NO WAY I COULD STAY." - SHONDA

As apprentices Danielle, Sharla, and Z employed the strategy of walking onto jobsites and immediately assessing who was friendly towards them. They then tried to work with that journeyman and learn as much as they could from him. On her last job as an apprentice Z was paired with a journeyman who gave her increased amounts of

responsibility. She met the challenges of the increased workload. Their relationship validated her as a tradeswomen. She said:

> When I first got onto the jobsite, I got lucky. They paired me with a guy. [...] He literally trained me up in a month on everything. He had a hands-off approach. He'd put me in a situation and told me, "Do this and do that. Use this tool for this."
>
> He literally stopped working. He stopped carrying his tool bag. I had my tool bags. I had everything. Whatever we were doing, I was doing it. I appreciated it. He had enough confidence in me to feel like he didn't have to be right there with me in order to get it done. It was great. It was really great.

On this particular jobsite Z's journeyman supported her to be autonomous on the jobsite. This helped her develop her skills. Her journeyman allowed her to show her skills. Her quality work was recognized by the foreman, and she was promoted to a lead role on the jobsite.

Shonda acknowledged she could not progress in her career without the White men who were willing to give her a chance on the job. She would not have lasted at different points in her career without her ally relationships with her White male union brothers. In her job with the municipality Shonda bonded well with her coworkers as union members. During her career at times she had been an accepted member of the group and at other times not. During her 19 years at the municipality she had had the benefit of establishing long-term relationships with her male coworkers. She said:

> If I did not have the [union] brothers I work with there is no way that I could stay there. […] When I started with this job my brothers took care of me. When my manager set me up for failure, to not complete my probationary period, they all wrote letters of my qualification. I had that as my support for my abilities. Against my supervisor! Yeah. It was big. […]
>
> These guys are really like family to me. […] We fight like siblings because we are truly brothers and sisters in this arena out here. That's kind of the beauty of being on a project where you have longevity. I've been at this location now for 19 years off and on.

Shonda credited career longevity in the same place as helping her build real relationships with her male coworkers. Though their relationships were not devoid of conflict, Shonda trusted her union coworkers to support her. This trust was proven when her coworkers stood up for her job. She returned this ally behavior and stood up for them as well. Veronica agreed that women could not make it on the job without some men who were willing to work with them.

"THIS BROTHER IS HIRING ME BECAUSE HE CAN." - DARNITA

Black tradesmen, at times, intentionally worked as allies towards the Black tradeswomen in the study. They did this by hiring Black tradeswomen, supporting their leadership, and sharing with them their knowledge as journeymen. They also worked with the Black tradeswomen in their workplaces to challenge discrimination. In an environment with only a handful of men of color Darnita had good relationships with Black tradesmen. Of the Black tradesmen she encountered: "They're trying to hold onto their jobs. They're just lucky to be working." She acknowledged that Black men continued to struggle to advance up the leadership ladder. She gave the example of a colleague who worked for the same company for ten years and was continually passed over for promotion by White males newly brought into the company: "He's been with these cats for so long. They take these guys and make them foreman, right before him. I mean [White men are] just trying to help themselves. We all got to eat."

During the study Darnita's job ended due to lack of work. She networked with a Black tradesman who owned his own business. She talked with him about joining his

crew on an upcoming job. She said mainstream White contractors "are only hiring [Black people] because they have to. This brother is hiring me because he can." Her efforts were stymied by the contractor's slow flow of work. If he had more work he would have hired her.

Similarly Veronica had a positive relationship with the few men of color that worked with her at the utility. Due to the small numbers of women and people of color at her utility she found that the racial minorities became more supportive of each other on the job. Part of this solidarity was enhanced by Veronica's consistent presence on her job over the past 20 years. Being able to see each other on the job gave her "strength." She said: "Being able to do a handshake or a wave, or whatever, it's like this unspoken word of support. And then if things are really bad, being able to just have somebody you can talk to that can understand." In Veronica and Darnita's examples they were able to network with Black men to support their mutual interests. For the men in these instances they were not perceived as a threat. Both women were able to build these work relationships over time. The building of relationships over time can help break down men's perceptions of women as a threat.

In an environment where Veronica felt isolated as one of two women in her division of the utility it was difficult for her to find colleagues who understood the combination of subtle microaggressions and overt racist and sexist acts that happened in her workplace. She shared an example of how this solidarity network came into play in the light of oppressive acts. A noose was left in the locker of one of the Black men working for the utility. In this instance the employee's supervisor trivialized the microassault by publicly laughing about what happened and treating the incident as a

joke. The network of tradespeople of color on the job spread the word among each other that this had happened. This “network of support” offered Veronica some sense of community on the job. Though the supervisor minimized the significance of the noose incident, having a community of support around the targeted tradesman encouraged him to speak out about what happened.

The lynching of Black men and women has been a tactic of White dominance during the Jim Crowe era; from the 1880s to the 1960s 4,700 Black people were lynched in the United States (Potok, Visconti, Frankel & Holmes, 2007). Potok, Visconti, Frankel & Holmes state that noose incidents in the United States rose from about a dozen a year to over fifty incidents in 2007. This rash of noose incidents is representative of White backlash to the social justice gains of Black Americans. These incidents are particularly disturbing due to the rise of hate groups across the country since 2000. The placing of a noose in a locker is a highly inflammatory and threatening act.

The supervisor’s treatment of this incident as a joke also gave the institutional message that there would be little to no recourse for the victim of this racist assault. At the time of that incident, the camaraderie among Black people on the job was one of the few ways to highlight the egregious nature of the act. In the face of the institution’s microinvalidation -- the minimization and denial of racism -- group solidarity is a way to resist oppression. Though this solidarity did not result in holding the utility accountable for addressing such threatening behavior, it did reinforce to Veronica that she and the other Black people had each other in such a hostile environment.

SISTERS ON THE JOB

Tradeswomen can act as supports to each other on the job. Grace and Wanda Lou worked in the same organization for the bulk of their careers. When they entered the trades there were some women on the job. Though the experiences of working with women were few, they experienced a measure of solidarity among the tradeswomen on their jobs. Grace and Wanda Lou were good friends throughout their careers. They acted as each other's support to keep going in the industry.

Grace and Wanda Lou were also allies to some of the White tradeswomen they encountered. Friendship networks on the job were motivating factors for keeping them working. These networks were where Grace and Wanda Lou processed difficulties on the job and found camaraderie. Grace and Wanda Lou had the easiest experiences of working alongside other women. Their workplace had more than a handful of women on the job and women were not in high competition with each other for a position on the job.

Though Grace and Wanda Lou's experience cannot be generalized it does beg the question, what is necessary for tradeswomen to work together on jobsites? Again, I cannot generalize, but I do hypothesize that from the women's stories the highly competitive nature of the commercial construction industry coupled with the rare presence of women in general and Black women in particular, increases rather than decreases competition between women on the job. When women are hired in greater numbers there is a greater likelihood of solidarity to form among women on the job. For all of the women in the study working with other women on the jobsite was rare. However, some of the participants were involved with tradeswomen organizations

outside of work to develop their support networks with other women. The importance of tradeswomen networks will be discussed in the following chapter.

The tradeswomen in the study all acknowledged the importance of relationships on the jobsite. Tradeswomen who had the opportunity to remain with the same company for decades found it easier to establish a presence on the job, and to build lasting relationships across race and gender lines. Longevity in a workplace may be a component of greater solidarity among men and women in the trades. Another component may be the need to increase the numbers of women and people of color on the job so that the presence of women and people of color are no longer tokenized in the workplace. This greater exposure of White tradesmen to non-dominant group workers may help foster easier connections among diverse workers.

"I DID NOT ALLOW THEM TO TELL ME JOKES." – WANDA LOU

Wanda Lou had little patience with off-color humor. When men would begin sexist or racist jokes she would "set them straight." She said:

> You had a few prejudiced people. There's always going to be a few. I knew how to set them straight. […] If they said something to me, I knew how to answer them back. I didn't let them get away with anything, period. I stopped them right then. As I said, I worked with men and I did not allow them to tell me jokes. If they were telling me a joke, I may say "Well, what did they want to do that for?" Kill the joke, you know. There wasn't anything to laugh at when I got through with them, because I made it stupid. I did not allow them to tell me jokes.

In preventing people from telling racist and sexist jokes Wanda interrupted oppression and put a hard boundary around herself. Each woman had to figure out how she would negotiate these comments. Patricia, Kareema, and Keisha also maintained rigid boundaries to support their authority among their crews. They did not fraternize with

employees. Maintaining a power distance among male crews prevented them from being taken advantage of by subordinates.

SUPPORT OF SUPERVISORS AND HUMAN RESOURCES

BREAKING THE "CODE OF SILENCE"

For Black tradeswomen friendship networks with coworkers could be a mitigating force against the hostility of microaggressions in the workplace. However, the support of supervisors and human resources remained as crucial points of leverage to help women stay on the job. The following section examines the ways supportive supervisors and personnel contributed to the long term success of Black tradeswomen.

Wanda Lou worked on the shipyards where there was a responsive personnel office on the jobsite. Wanda Lou was able to lodge a discrimination complaint against her White male supervisor for unfair treatment on the job. She claimed that this supervisor refused to promote her because she was a woman. Though she experienced different degrees of sexism on the job, this particular instance she took to human resources. In doing so she received a transfer from this man's crew and a promotion. She said:

> I said, "Why don't you give me an upgrade, because I'm doing all the work. I'll just go to personnel. You give me a slip." He said, "What do you want to upgrade to? Sweeping?" That's what he told me.
>
> I march myself over to the personnel. I told [personnel] just what he had said. [Personnel] said, "They didn't give you an upgrade?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, I'll fix that. I'm going to give you an upgrade transfer, and transfer you to another job." That's what he did. He was angry. […] They transferred me to a lead too.

Wanda Lou was frustrated enough with the way she was treated to take the matter to personnel. In her case human resources believed her when she lodged the claim

immediately after the discriminatory incident. Personnel that will respond in the face of blatant sexism support the retention of workers of color and women. In Wanda Lou's case it was helpful that she had consistently worked for this employer and her skills and work history were known by coworkers and personnel. It also helped that she lodged this complaint immediately after the incident.

Many women do not speak up about what they experience for fear of not being believed. When women do speak up they can also face the inaction of supervisors and personnel. This inaction contributes to marginalization as it allows oppression to continue. Veronica noted that within her utility human resources struggled to be preemptive in addressing sexual harassment because of a "code of silence" among women that prevented them from speaking out for fear of retaliation. Breaking the code requires women to speak when something happens but also for human resources and management to act. In Veronica's experience when she spoke up to management about ways she had been victimized on the job she was met with responses such as "work it out" and "get along". Her story highlights the need for greater training of managers around their responsibilities in terms of keeping people safe from physical harm and bullying; and for human resources to make known and enforce procedures to address sexual harassment.

Breaking the code also requires the participation of tradesmen. In Veronica's experience her harassment was witnessed by her male colleagues. The witnessing of harassment and failure to speak out is a form of collusion with the perpetrator against the target. Being an ally on the job requires tradesmen to stand against the harassment of women.

SUPERVISOR ACTIONS TO SUPPORT TRADESWOMEN

Coworkers and supervisors have a part to play in positively or negatively contributing to these women's resolve to stay on their jobs and in this industry. Grace experienced her supervisors as important in both increasing her morale on the job and in keeping her from quitting when things became too much. She recalled a White woman supervisor who called her to come back to work when she walked off the job in response to a job transfer that sent her to a site farther from her home. She said:

> I was so angry, I left work. I didn't punch out or anything. I just acted stupid. I left work and came home. But the supervisor, who was a lady, got on the phone and called me and said, "Grace, bring yourself back in here. You are not doing that. You've been here too long for that. You're playing right into their hands. You come back in here. It's not going to be that bad. Take yourself on up there."
>
> I took her at her word. [...] I came back the next day and went onto [site C] like she told me. [...] I was glad she did that. Now, we both laugh. She is White, but she lives near here. We send each other Christmas cards. She says, "I'm sure glad I got on that phone and made you come back here". She was really nice.

In this instance Grace had a female boss who wanted her on the job, and persuaded her to stay despite her frustration. That supervisor's intervention saved Grace's job.

Supportive supervisor-to-subordinate relationships are important for the retention of minorities. In Z's case a coworker made a homophobic comment towards her on the job. This comment was overheard by another coworker, who told their foreman. The foreman told the contractor. The contractor shortly thereafter called a meeting of all people working on the jobsite, saying if anyone said anything homophobic or racist they would be fired. Z said: "The vice-president of the company came in, squashed it, and pretty much threatened us all, but it was really big to see that."

In this incident it was quite unusual for a contractor to respond so forcefully and quickly to the mention of discriminatory behavior. However, Z shared with me some of the awkwardness of being one of a handful of women and an even smaller number of women of color standing in a group of mostly White men. She felt everyone knew the homophobic comment was directed at her. The contractor tried to set a standard of behavior for his crew. However, because this was done immediately after an incident it inadvertently underscored that the presence of the identified minority caused a behavior change on the crew.

This particular job was on the grounds of a large manufacturer with strict guidelines around conduct. This institutional mandate for compliance around higher safety behaviors including higher codes of conduct in regards to racism and sexism also compelled Z's contractor to act more promptly. This incident does point to the need to support contractors in setting stronger behavior standards on the job. Just as this contractor set a hard line for behavior, so can others. It would be useful to set this hard line as soon as people begin the job, and have that code of behavior enforced when an incident occurs. Similarly, Paap (2006) in her study of White male construction workers where she compares the actions and policies of three firms, finds that the firm, which *enforced* anti-sexual harassment policies, fostered a more inclusive workplace culture for women. The enforcement of policies is key to create a welcoming workplace environment.

Sharla had been with the same electrical contractor for over seven years. She felt accepted by her company. This helped her thrive in her profession. She said:

> I work for a contractor who cares about who Sharla is. […] I have a personal relationship with my boss as well as professional one to the point of, he treats me how he was first treated when he came to the company, as though we're family.

The personal attention she received in this company gave Sharla a sense of belonging. With this she was granted increased responsibility and grew as a tradesperson. The welcoming stance of her boss contributed to this positive environment. This environment afforded her consistent work, economic gain, regular opportunities to travel and skill development.

Sharla's contractor did niche lighting projects across the United States. The company had a point person who consistently did this work. When he no longer wanted to travel, Sharla was approached to work on projects that required long periods of travel. Sharla said:

> There was only one particular individual who [my boss] would send out to those jobs. But he hated to travel. He's got a wife, he's got kids at home. He wouldn't mind being gone for the week, but didn't want to be gone for a week and a weekend or multiple weeks. So it was sort of my niche. […] "Well, are you interested in this? We've got this project that will start in January and you will be gone for approximately three months." I basically left town and flew to the East Coast [...] That was basically my "in" for the whole traveling piece.

Being in the right place, at the right time, and working with the right boss offered Sharla the opportunity to step into an opportunity that invigorated her career. She was asked to fill a gap and she was able to do it. By this time her daughter had grown up. Being asked to take on a responsibility and given the opportunity to show what they could do allowed women to advance in their careers.

"IT'S NOT THE CONTRACTOR THAT YOU WORK FOR. IT'S THE PERSON." - KEISHA

Over the years Keisha's relationship with her employer has changed. She was laid-off from her employer in 1983 because she was told she was "not suited for heavy highway construction." She was later rehired and had been an honored employee for nearly a decade. Both Keisha and Veronica had experiences of being labeled a "problem" or "having a bad attitude" by their employers. Their perseverance and ability to navigate their work environments in spite of bias caused them to maintain their careers over time. Keisha said:

> It wasn't my intention to come back to them. I have been with them for eighteen years now. That wasn't my intention at all. I just learned over the years and I matured. I am not as stubborn as I used to be. I have worked for a lot of our competitors. I figured out it's not the contractor that you work for. It's the person. They are humans, too. They make mistakes. They are incompetent. […] You just can't judge people. I mean, you can show a person better than you can tell 'em.

This comment, "You can show someone better than you can tell them," was a recurring comment among the participants. The default comment throughout the interviews was "let my work speak" for itself. It is rare for a woman, especially a woman of color to work for a commercial contractor as long as Keisha had.

Veronica found that working for her employer for 20 years had given her some confidence in her workplace that she would not have had if she changed jobsites regularly. Because of her longevity in the workplace she felt she could speak out about discriminatory behavior without worrying that she would lose her job. She noted that this confidence came over years with her company. She said:

> I think that one of the unique things about my situation […] is that I have worked for the same company for going on nineteen years. So, I think that over a period

> of time, you get this like confidence. "What are they going to do to me?" To this comfort zone. Like I'll be talking to one of them and he says, "Well, you know, I don't want to make things hard for you." I'm like "I'm not fucking afraid of this guy." […] It's empowering. Plus you're there and you get a reputation. People know certain levels. You're not constantly having to reprove yourself.

In Veronica's case her long-term presence with the utility gave her an opportunity to cultivate a reputation for herself. Her long-term relationship with her employer allowed her room to develop her skills over time. Hence her employer's investment in her meant she was able to contribute more to the actual institution.

SUMMARY

Racism, sexism, and heterosexism divide groups. Relationship building across differences enriches everyone. Tradeswomen acknowledged their success on the job could not happen without those who were willing to work with them, to stand up for them in the face of bullying and discrimination, to share skills and knowledge about the next job, and to include them in the network. These positive relationships were in contrast to the destructive interactions Black tradeswomen contended with. To manage these relationships Black women employed some strategies. Strategies discussed ranged from clear boundary setting in regards to how close one allowed their workmates; limiting the types of jokes told around them; trying to educate coworkers about oppressive behaviors and equity issues; and speaking out when they were being mistreated. These women coped on the job and built relationships with male and female tradespeople to continue in their careers.

Further there were some institutional responses on the parts of managers and human resources to complaints and difficulties tradeswomen had along the way. Supervisor and human resources actions that supported Black tradeswomen were:

(1) Knowing Black tradeswomen as individuals and having some knowledge of their skills and work ethic;

(2) Encouraging employees to continue working even when faced with discrimination;

(3) Acceptance of Black tradeswomen;

(4) Providing them a sense of belonging on the job;

(5) Promoting Black tradeswomen and giving them new opportunities on the job;

(6) A willingness to act when made aware of harassment and bullying whether the claim was brought by the targeted individual or not;

(7) And changing institutional policies and procedures to respond to discrimination to be more inclusive of non-traditional workers.

Highlighting these places of agency and structural responses, which actually benefit Black tradeswomen, are important. In doing so we develop our understanding of the capacities and strengths these women developed to cope in their environment; and the presence of allies and ally potential among coworkers and management. The development of allies and ally potential is a component of developing a culturally competent institutional response to racism and sexism in the trades.

Nine of the tradeswomen interviewed were consistently involved in efforts to promote inclusion in the industry. Their advocacy and political involvement within different groups contributed to their longevity in the industry. The following chapter will highlight some of Black tradeswomen's contributions to institutional and cultural change in the industry.

BLACK TRADESWOMEN'S EFFORTS FOR CULTURAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

From the previous chapters we see that Black tradeswomen developed their self-esteem to stand up for themselves on the job, enhanced their trades skill to heighten their job security, and sought the best chance for employment. Black women also worked to build relationships with coworkers and with their superiors. These relationships gave Black women a necessary support network on the job and mitigated some of the impacts of racism and sexism in their careers. Black tradeswomen also agitated for institutional and cultural change within their organizations and the broader industry. This advocacy around racial and gender justice could be through suing their locals for discrimination; becoming business owners; networking among tradeswomen advocacy groups for moral support, professional ties, and a common political agenda; starting their own advocacy efforts; and working to shift their workplace and union. All of the tradeswomen used aspects of the aforementioned methods of advocacy with varying degrees of success.

Noting the high levels of advocacy among the tradeswomen interviewed I asked women if they thought of themselves as activists. Most answered this question slowly and initially said, "No." After reflection all of them said, "Yes." All interviewees had a desire for change in their position on the jobsite and to improve their industry for other women and people of color. Their actions highlighted a variety of interventions used by women and people of color to shift cultural and institutional barriers to their hire, continued employment, and promotion. Here are some of their stories.

"I SUED THE UNION." - KAREEMA

As an apprentice Kareema simultaneously sued two cement masons unions in different cities for gender discrimination. At her first local she sued due to a "lopsided" policy that discriminated against female apprentices. This policy stipulated that apprentices could only work if a journeyman invited them to apprentice under them. Hostile sexism meant that few journeymen were willing to take on female apprentices. This practice limited the number of female apprentices who could join the union and who could work. Few men invited them to participate. Kareema left this apprenticeship for another city because of the policy. At her second city the business manager did not allow her as a Black woman to continue her apprenticeship or to join the union. She said of this time:

> I wind up filing a charge against him because he wouldn't let women of color in the union. He felt that we were "inadequate." as he said it, to be a part of the union. So I sued the union.
>
> At the same time, I was suing the other union to open up the doors for other women. Because other women had been discriminated against with the policy that they had in place. It was lopsided. You had to have a journeyman sign you in, sign that they would take you [on.] It was lopsided. We didn't have anybody in the local, so how could we have anybody represent us to take care of us inside the local?
>
> I thought it was unfair. So I wound up suing. I was told that I couldn't get any money, but they would open up the doors for women. […] This was in 1990.

She successfully sued the locals in both cities for discrimination. She did not receive financial remuneration for lost work hours. Rather, her efforts created the platform for more women to enter the trades. Her suits highlighted the discriminatory practices that excluded women and forced unions to shift their behaviors. Her efforts reflected her tenacity, and the cultural opposition of the trade against women joining the craft.

Kareema was the only study participant who successfully brought legal action against her employer. Shonda filed a discrimination claim against her boss for racial and gender discrimination. Her case was dismissed at the level of human resources because she could not prove whether her supervisor's discrimination was motivated by sexism or racism. As an apprentice sprinkler fitter Patricia was sexually harassed by a male coworker. She brought this to her contractor. She did not sue. In her case bringing up the possibility of a legal claim, caused her contractor to address the issue. Legal action and harassment claims are challenging to complete and to prove. That said they have been necessary components of movements for racial and gender justice in the workplace.

"THE WOMAN WHO WRITES THE CONTRACT RULES THE WORLD" - KAREEMA

Kareema asserted that the next frontier for Black tradeswomen was to become business owners. As a second generation business owner, she pushed to hire women as concrete finishers. Though she successfully sued locals for discrimination, suing remains only one component of changing the actual position of women on the job. It is illegal for employers to refuse to hire women based on their gender. However, Black women repeatedly discussed the realities of racism and sexism as factors which interfered with steady employment in commercial construction. Kareema used her position as a contractor to hire more women, and Black women in particular, into the trades. As the contractor, she was able to hire women with little skill and develop them as tradespeople.

Kareema remembered that her skills as a tradesperson were developed through her studies and apprenticeship. People "learn" to become construction workers; it is an "acquired skill." Kareema hired women and committed to develop them as long-term

workers. In doing so she challenged the stereotypical idea that men were naturally good at construction work. She said:

> That was one of the things we felt we were able to be powerful in. We could be on the ground, and work with other women, and pull other women to work without them having […] experience. Because how many women would walk on the jobsite with experience? None of 'em! [laughing]. Nobody's born a finisher. Nobody's born a tradesperson. It is a learned, acquired skill that you learn. To master it, nobody can take that skill level from you.

Kareema's developed skill sustained her career. Kareema recognized that long-term investment in the skill development of Black women was necessary to increase the numbers of Black women in the trades. As a contractor she was able to circumvent sexism, hire inexperienced women directly, and train them to become finishers.

Apprenticeship training varies from region to region. Kareema was well trained as a finisher in the Midwest. This training proved valuable when she moved to the Southeast where the skill level of her peers was less rigorous. She said poor training further isolated women within training programs. If women are already stereotyped as less capable than men, poor training further ostracizes them compounding their isolation and inability to contribute effectively on the job. Without the commitment of an employer to cultivate the skills of women of color on the job, it is unlikely that they will continue. As evidence of this, at the time of our initial interview in 2010 Kareema could identify only four women of color cement masons in her local. She noted that the local had not made a concerted effort to change its training policies in the last 17 years. She said: "Because the union did not have a good training model, a lot of women are not involved in the union here. The same policy they had 15, 16, 17 years ago, they still have it now."

Kareema used her status as a journeyperson and a signatory contractor with the union to bring more women into the trade. This strategy was an answer to the limited commitment on the part of the union to recruit women into the apprenticeship; contractors' low invest in long-term development of women as tradespeople; and the poor training practices that did not prepare female apprentices to become competent journeywomen. In hiring women to work on her crews, Kareema sought to invest in the long-term success of women in the local. She said:

> We can see ourselves […] keeping women in the construction trades, and actually getting work and pulling them into the union. As a company, you know, my card is still with [the local] as a tradesperson. I'm also a signatory as a contractor. […] I am also able to put other women into the union as I see fit. […] It's real simple the woman who writes the contract rules the world! That's what we learned.

As a contractor Kareema insisted that subcontractors working on her jobs hired a certain number of women. As the contractor, she could pull the contract if subs did not comply. She said:

> [I said,] "I want three women on all of these trades, or you don't get our contract!" Then if [subcontractors] don't comply, they don't get their subcontract. That's different in this day and age, being the [contract] creator. […] When you see both sides of the fence and you understand them both, strategically it makes sense to stay in the trades […] definitely become your own boss.

Becoming the contractor was a strategy Kareema and Patricia used to address racism and sexism. This step into leadership afforded both women greater control over what work they did and the roles they held on the job. This allowed them to grow in ways that they would not have if they were employed by a company. Patricia said:

> Now I have more control over who I can work with, where I want to work, what jobs I want to do. Versus if I'm working for a company, I basically have to go where the jobs are. I have input on the work. I get to select who I want to work

> with as an owner. I feel like where they don't give you the opportunity to advance, I can do whatever I want within my company. The role I can choose to be in, I can select. I can be the estimator or if I just want to be the chief operating officer. […] Just being able to have more input.
>
> My whole reason, for going into construction is I take pride in my community where I live. I wanted to be a part of the rebuilding of my city. I felt if I wanted to be in the construction trades, that would be one way - instead of talking about it, being about it - where I can hire people from the community; because I didn't see any people of color, men or women, getting those opportunities.

Being the business owner provided Patricia flexibility around the work she did, and the ability to call the shots. Within her business she wore various hats from working with the tools to negotiating large work contracts. She, like Kareema, had been motivated by a desire to impact her community and offer opportunities to people in need. She worked to develop her community and to be a part of the generational accumulation of wealth for Black people. Though she saw the positive sides of being a contractor, Patricia still encountered many of the structural barriers that limited the success of Black business owners.

Both contractors found ways to work with men who did not want to work with them. This meant maintaining vigilance to the ways male contractors attempted to circumvent contractual agreements. This required being open to working with these contractors when the opportunity arose. Kareema at times employed males who originally refused to work with her. She maintained her union affiliation to ensure that she had access to a strong enough workforce to complete major contracts. Her willingness to maintain relationships with the same people who rejected her previously was strategic.

Patricia and Kareema were aware they could not succeed in this industry alone. Patricia was highly vocal within different tradespeople of color organizations about her

needs as a small business owner. She spoke in front of state and municipal boards to advocate on behalf of minority-owned small businesses. She and Kareema acknowledged that networking among advocacy groups was necessary both to cultivate new work opportunities and to push for a common political agenda that represented their interests as women business owners.

"HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR TRADESWOMEN, I PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE MADE IT." - Z

Tradeswomen struggle to find solidarity with each other on the actual jobsite, however the network of women in the trades is strong. Tradeswomen from this study talked about the value of tradeswomen networks as a support system and in terms of advocacy for institutional change. Throughout Kareema's career she networked with various women in the trades organizations. From her days as an apprentice and throughout her career as a business owner she joined tradeswomen groups. She joined these organizations to network with other women and to participate in advocacy efforts. On her first job a tradeswomen organization acted as an ally for her to settle a dispute between the women on a job, and the men who did not want them there. When she moved from the Midwest to the Northeast, tradeswomen's organizations helped her connect with a major employer who was willing to hire her even though the union would not accept her. This relationship allowed her to journey out of her apprenticeship. Another tradeswomen group helped her circumvent sexism when she moved to the South and the union proved difficult to work with. As a contractor at times her survival was dependent on "having that full true network of other women."

I asked Kareema why she felt tradeswomen networks were so important. She said limited tradeswomen networks meant that when individual women entered trades they often did so as the only woman entering the local at that time. Kareema said:

> Because there are no networks or support levels for these women when they get in, they're just like a chicken in a coop around a bunch of foxes. You get that? It's just a matter of time before the foxes start eating on the coop until they get the chicken. There's no support! […]
>
> There're a couple [of women in the unions.] But it's not diluted. It's not, especially down here, because the unions have a bad name based on the discriminatory practices that they've had for minorities and women in the past.

Lack of union commitment to creating an inclusive work environment limits the success of the few women who enter the trades. Unions who have demonstrated a clear commitment to having more women have the numbers to show this.

Kareema developed a tradeswomen advocacy group focused on women of color called The National Coalition of Women of Color in Construction. Her organization pushed to bring more women of color into the trades and to support the efforts of tradeswomen as business owners. As a consciousness raising tool Kareema hosted a regular internet radio show focused on Black women in the trades. She said her show contributed to a "historical footprint" of the presence of Black women in the industry. She said: "If you do not record the experiences of Black tradeswomen, they do not exist." Kareema's efforts are important as the needs of women of color in the industry are not consistently represented in the membership or leadership of tradeswomen organizations.

A number of the women in the study participated in formal and informal tradeswomen groups in their areas. Shonda helped start a pre-apprenticeship program for women. Sharla served on the board for a tradeswomen organization for ten years. She,

Sue, and Shonda worked together to develop a pre-apprenticeship program focused on recruiting low-income folks and men and women of color into the trades. Sue and Patricia entered the trades through a women focused pre-apprenticeship program. Sue maintained affiliation with this group as an employee and as a tradeswomen advocate. In the early years of her career, Keisha regularly attended a tradeswomen circle as a place for moral support and understanding. She connected with tradeswomen groups throughout her career in the different cities in which she worked.

Wanda Lou and Grace were involved with a tradeswomen organization in their area to share the stories of their careers. Z, a graduate of a women focused pre-apprenticeship program, attributed a lot of her success in the trades to her long-term connection with her tradeswomen organization. She said:

> I remember in 2008 […] I had been off work for maybe a month or two and I just didn't have the money to buy my tools. Tradeswomen Gear Up[38] gave me the money to buy my tools. All the discussion groups and the caucuses that I have been a part of, I've been able to get my story out.
>
> To this day, I still get approached by different people and they say, "I really appreciate the things that you've said. I feel like hearing the things from you and knowing what I know now is going to make my apprenticeship easier."
>
> When I'm not working and jobs are far between, Tradeswomen Gear Up put me on the payroll. I appreciate it in so many ways. Had it not been for Tradeswomen, I probably wouldn't have made it through the trades as fast as I did. I probably wouldn't have got in as soon as I did. I appreciate that in so many different ways.

For Z being involved with Tradeswomen Gear Up helped her leverage work, buy tools, build community, and share her story with others who were considering joining the

[38] Pseudonym

trades. She, like all of the women who were heavily involved in tradeswomen networks, needed the support of other tradeswomen at times in her career.

As part of her consciousness raising efforts with her tradeswomen organization Z regularly told the story of her career to groups of potential and existing tradeswomen. She also told her story to apprenticeship coordinators as a way of agitating for change. At times, when telling her experiences of racism and sexism other tradeswomen were resistant to her reality. Z said:

> I'm always willing to tell my story in hopes that all the bad things that I went through, somebody else doesn't have to go through that. Or all the bad things I went through, people can realize their faults, realize their wrongs, and try to attempt to right their wrongs. I love telling my story, because my story is so different from everybody else's. A lot of people have the same experiences that I've had, but have dealt with them differently. I feel like the way I have dealt with mine is what makes my story unique.

Telling her story was a form of catharsis and healing for Z. Though at times she was let down by her fellow White tradeswomen around their denial of the reality of racism on the job, she acknowledged that she still needed her fellow tradeswomen in the struggle for gender equality in the workplace. Her story inspired others to enter the trades, and was a guide as other women encountered moments where they felt alone. She was fearless in her storytelling. Her experiences were particularly challenging to hear because she was in her late twenties when she began the trades, and at the time of this study was in her mid-thirties. She was a young Black woman saying things were not changing for women of color in the same ways that they were for young White women.

WORKING TO SHIFT THE WORKPLACE AND THE UNION

Seven of the tradeswomen were active in efforts to address racism and sexism in their unions, workplaces, and cities. These efforts were outside of their job duties and ordinary union involvement. They did so by leading diversity training within their institutions, educating themselves about systemic racism, becoming involved with tradespeople of color advocacy organizations, and bringing up issues of equity within their unions. For some of the tradeswomen anti-racism and anti-sexism efforts gave their presence in the trades a greater sense of purpose. This involvement also provided a sense of community and solidarity they may not have had at work.

Veronica was the public face of her employer's minority recruitment efforts. She travelled across her state speaking to people of color and women about entering the trades. At the time of our interview she led the utility's cultural competence and diversity committee. In this position she worked on internal diversity-related issues within her utility and focused on minority outreach and recruitment. She also coached women and men of color through the trades application process. Much of her recruitment work was done on her own time. This work was an important leadership position for her that energized her career. She said:

> I do a lot of work with recruitment and retention. […] [Including] networking and staying in touch with minorities so that when jobs come, I can call them and say "Hey! There's this job coming up." But again, a lot of it is on my own time, which is no different from what I did before with the other work.

Her efforts are important for bringing more people of color and women into the utility. Veronica, like all of the women in the study predominately did this recruitment of women and men of color as unpaid labor. All of the women interviewed maintained a value

around bringing more women and women of color into the industry. The industry benefits from the recruitment efforts of women like Veronica. However, Veronica's efforts are not taken up as institutional policy and practice. This limits the long-term effectiveness of inclusion measures.

The diversity team gave Veronica an avenue to experience a different side of herself. In her career she rarely moved into foreman or leadership roles within her crews. Of moving into leadership roles in the utility around cultural competence, Veronica said:

> I get to work outside of my job skills on things that I'm passionate about. The [general] manager that we have in place right now is open, I think, to shifting and changing, and cultivating a better environment. I'm being allowed to participate in that.

She continued:

> Something I bring to the table is effective. I like working with people. I like empowering people. I like inspiring them. I like helping them to see their strengths. […] We are doing good stuff and you know, I took a speech class and did a presentation to the [utility management] on our diversity team. I love that shit!

Being involved in the diversity team gave Veronica access to the upper management of the organization. She used this position to advocate for stronger action on the part of management when claims of discrimination and harassment were brought forward by targeted individuals. Doing this work helped her continue in the trades. She said:

> One of the things when I first took up the diversity team, I'm like, "What needs to happen is we need to educate management. We need to start up here. Because you can train all of us, construction workers all you want, and slap us upside the head and tell us how we need to act and how we need to not act. But if we have managers and supervisors who don't have that education, and they don't have that awareness or competency, and they are allowing stuff, or they're not speaking up

> against [it], or they are continuing to hire or keep people that act in ways we are saying as a company we don't tolerate, then what is that saying?"

Veronica asserted that employers needed to understand racism and interrupt it early. The ineffective responses of management in response to racism contributed to the continuing culture of disrespect within the workplace:

> So as supervisors start becoming aware of that, they squash it out, and they pass that down to their employees. Where out on the crews the boys are saying, "That's not really cool, " versus it being the "cool thing to do." It's huge! […]
>
> My starting point has been pouncing up and down: manager-supervisor, manager-supervisor need to be trained! They need to do this and they need to do that. But you really can't stop anywhere. We've seen it, because we started putting our managers and supervisors through [racism dialogue groups.]

Utility managers and supervisors were put through racial dialogue circles to learn more about the dynamics of racism, their own racial identities, and ways to interrupt racism.

Veronica noted that the dialogue groups were important in supporting managers to make changes in regards to racism within the organization. These sessions also helped her explore her racial identity and to understand the systemic racism she had experienced. This was a place of consciousness raising and self-esteem building for her. In these sessions she addressed some of her internalized racism that undermined her abilities. She saw the impact of these sessions trickle down to coworker interactions. A drawback within these sessions was that discussion of sexism in the workplace was limited. Veronica said the racism dialogues were a start. She pushed her organization to think critically about what it meant to have an inclusive workplace. She noted that for institutional change to happen White men needed to be educated about the realities of racism. All men needed to be educated about the realities of sexism.

Being an advocate for someone else was easier for Veronica than advocating for herself. Her involvement in the diversity team offered a space for her own reflection of experiences she had at the utility. This reflection was part of her emotional and psychological healing from the long-term effects of working in a hostile workplace. While on this team she advocated on behalf of colleagues who experienced discrimination. Even when sitting in meetings with the general manager she did not talk about harassment she was experiencing on her crew. She acknowledged the irony of her position.

Similarly, Shonda also worked on the diversity efforts of her municipality. She became trained as a diversity trainer in her workplace. She was part of a team that offered cultural competency training to municipal workers. Shonda also sat on a state apprenticeship oversight committee to enhance the cultural competency training of apprentices and journeylevel workers. Shonda, like Veronica, focused on educating her fellow tradespeople and management on the realities of racism and sexism. For her this type of education was crucial to maintain people of color in the trades.

A number of the participants were involved in tradespeople of color groups that specifically targeted anti-racist struggle within the trade union movement. Participants were involved in the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus - a national group within electrical unions focused on advocacy among people of color and women in the union; the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) -- the largest federation of unions in the United States; the A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI) -- an organization for Black trade unionists; and the Coalition of Black Trade

Unionists (CBTU) –- an organization for Black trade unionists affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

Of the 15 interviewees four were union electricians. I met the four electricians through an Electrical Workers Minority Caucus conference in the Pacific Northwest. At the conference I was inspired at the number of electricians of color from around the country and the strong showing of tradeswomen. Over 200 attendees came to connect with each other, discuss union business, and relax. There was a distinct Electrical Union pride in the air. The EWMC conference was an opportunity for people of color and women to celebrate and reaffirm their identity as electrical workers in ways that they might not have gotten to experience with their White electrical brothers. It was an opportunity for people to talk openly about discrimination within their union and their shared frustrations over the economic slowdown and national healthcare debates. Being connected to such a group was an important part of long-term success in the trades. This group provided its patrons a voice, a community, and a connection to the greater struggle of people of color and women in the electrical trade.

Debra, from the West Coast, got involved in programs with her union early in her electrical apprenticeship. She said:

> People who were ahead of me would say, "Hey, I'm in this program. You need to get in there and learn, find out more about your union besides just going to school and being on the job." I was like, "Oh my God! I don't have time or energy for anything else."

As an electrical apprentice she worked full-time, studied in the evenings and went to Saturday school. She was also a single mother and active in her Jehovah's Witness

community. Despite her busy schedule she found the Electrical Workers Minority Caucus meetings intriguing. She said:

> Someone just walked up to me who had been working with us and said, "Hey! Come on. I want you to come in here and see what is going on here in your co-workers' minority caucus. Just come in, and introduce yourself. Just stand around for a minute and see if you can pick up anything or if this might be appealing to you."
>
> So I did that. I was like, "Okay, this seems nice, but I really don't have time for it." Then it came around a second time, "Come on, come on. Just do it!" So I was encouraged to get involved with that. Once I just actually sat there and listened, I was interested. I thought, "I think I really need to be here."

For Debra the EWMC gave her some context for the purpose of the union as an advocate for workers' rights. The EWMC was a vehicle for her to develop her consciousness raising and advocate for the protection of wages, both for herself and others. Of her commitment to the EWMC she said:

> To know that I was part of something that people had sacrificed and given their lives for, I felt like I needed to be committed. That was something I could get behind, especially after we had come through this whole 'Ronald Reagan Era of the greed' and the mentality of people that unions are bad and private free enterprise is good, and people being entrepreneurs and all that, which was fine. That was fine, but not at the expense of cutting corners, and not paying a fair wage. That was something that motivated me to kind of solidify or take a stand on this side of the issue.
>
> Then also even within the union, knowing some of the history of unions, that minorities did not get into unions, to know that there had to be a class-action lawsuit, not class-action, but the government stepped in, and held these unions accountable for discriminatory practices against minorities. That's what made me want to be part of that minority caucus within the union.

The EWMC provided Debra a platform to stand for the betterment of the cause: the cause being workers' rights, fair wages, and a non-discriminatory workplace. It allowed her to advocate for her union, and to challenge the union to increase the participation of women and men of color in its ranks. As a Black woman she was compelled to participate in the

EWMC because her predecessors were excluded from the union both for their race and gender.

I asked women what gave them the strength to continue in the trades. Some said they were motivated by a commitment to the next generation, to themselves and to their families. Shonda offered her perspective:

> What gives me the strength to keep going in this field? Is what I know. Sometimes I feel confused and bothered. You know when I have to speak at my union meeting and I am the only person of color. I get up and address an issue of equity or, it's like I'm sure the majority of these White [men], I am projecting, don't even care what I'm talking about.
>
> So the other thing, they come to a meeting but a lot of them haven't been groomed or brought up to the level of the dialogue [around inclusion], too. […] Where do I meet them? At what level do I present this information? How do I frame this? How do I put it out there? Honestly I question a lot of their awareness of themselves and of society. If they weren't electricians what would they have been in life? What could they have been if they weren't electricians? That's where I am. [They have a] very myopic view.

Shonda spoke up regularly about issues of equity in her union and city. She had been vocal throughout her career about the need for greater inclusion measures for people of color and women in the trades. She was often alone when she stood up at union meetings to address inequitable practices within the union. She acknowledged that many of the White men in the room were resistant to concepts of cultural competency and inclusion needs. Many of her colleagues did not know the depth of their own racism or sexism.

At an institutional level she found it hard to raise the consciousness and commitment of her peers to hold inclusion as a shared value for the good of the union. It was often left to her to provide an alternative voice that represented people of color in the union. Within her union men of color had advanced to a certain extent, but women of color continued to lag behind in terms of acceptance in the apprenticeship and retention

numbers. At times Shonda wondered if she should devote her efforts more towards the recruitment of Black men into the trades rather than pushing tradeswomen recruitment. Over the span of her career she noted that tradeswomen recruitment had little impact on the numbers of Black women in the electrical trade. White women were coming into the trades, but she remained one of three Black women in her union. She saw that her efforts had resulted in more Black men coming into the trade.

BECOMING UNION LEADERS AND EXPANDING NETWORKS OFFSITE

Involvement in union leadership was a crucial way for Black tradeswomen to integrate themselves into the union. In being more involved in the union they built relationships with union brothers off the jobsite. The building of relationships offsite helped bridge relationships on the job. Women said being involved in union leadership increased their investment in being in the trades. Their involvement in the union was also dependent on whether the union had the infrastructure for them to participate in its leadership, and whether they felt their voice would be heard. The sample size is too small to generalize, but there does seem to be a connection among the women interviewed between union involvement and a commitment to long-term tradeswork.

Sandra was highly active in her Midwest union. Her region was particularly hard hit during the recession and at the time of our interview she had been out of work for over two years. She was involved in the majority of community service projects through her union including the children's Christmas party, and the annual Superbowl fundraiser. She said: "All the things they do I get involved with." She was also involved with union-affiliated constituency groups including the AFL-CIO, APRI, the Women's Group within

her electrical local, United Auto Workers Union, and EWMC. Sandra attributed part of her optimistic attitude about the future in her economically depressed area to her participation in these groups. She said:

> They are my networks. The women electricians we get together, we network between each other. Sometimes I mean, we are in situations where we can kind of lift each other up. […] I see things differently from people who don't do anything, who just do one job. That's one of the advantages of this. Like the situation we're in. It's almost as if I see it half-full and [my coworkers who are not politically involved] see it as half-empty. I am more of "This has got to get done" or "This is gonna happen for us." They're like "No, the world is coming to an end."

Sandra's political involvement allowed her to connect with other tradeswomen and to focus her energy within her union.

Sandra said her high activity "has to do with the fact that I gotta be doing something!" This is an important strategy in tough economic times when many people in her area became disenfranchised and stayed at home. She noted that the participation of her peers at meetings had dwindled with the lengthy recession. Her activity encouraged her to continue in the trades when many of her peers were leaving the industry. She was a regular at the union hall, waiting for calls and networking with union members. She had her finger on the pulse of her union.

Sandra was approached by her business manager to run for a position on the election ballot within the union. She said:

> I got out there. It actually gave people an opportunity to know a lot of things about me. I do a lot of things without realizing - unless you are there you don't know. […] So I am writing down all these things that I do. After that, while I was campaigning I am handing this information out. I had people who came up to me and were like, "You are involved in all of that? How can you do that? Does the union pay you to do all of that stuff?" I said, "No." It gave me a chance to kind of get out there. I am glad I did it. I might do it again, yeah. I might like to do all the different things.

Similarly for Shonda and Sharla, participation in the union leadership helped them to be known within their union. This helped them progress as leaders within the union, and created an ally base of people on the jobsite. This also allowed them to experience their leadership potential in ways that traditionally had been hindered at work. For all of the women involvement in union leadership was voluntary. They chose to participate because they cared about the union. Their efforts were beneficial for all people in the union.

Z and Keisha were union-affiliated carpenters. Both held a strong allegiance with their unions. Z made a point of paying close attention to the activities of her union. Her contractual knowledge worked to her advantage on the jobsite in combating the bias of her co-workers. She said:

> Once I started becoming active in my union, knowing a lot of people, and knowing some of the higher-ups, people kind of left me alone. When our business reps would come to our jobsites, they would come and look for me to talk to me. It showed I had a relationship with people. It made other people kind of keep quiet, hush, hush about stuff.
>
> I was one of the few people who took part in my union and knew all the things that were going on. When strikes were coming up, or raises were coming up - anything dealing with money and new jobs and stuff like that - people realized that "she's a co-worker and she's an apprentice, but she knows a lot." So it got to a point where people would literally not mess with me, but they would come to me for information to pick my brain to see what I knew, who I knew, and how much I knew. It was kind of like the tables were turned a little bit, towards the end of my apprenticeship.

Z had powerful allies within the union because of her involvement in union politics. The building of relationships was not her motivation for becoming more involved. Rather she became involved to protect herself from wage exploitation by her employer. She said:

> It matters to me that I am educated about what is going on in my union. I don't want to be making $35 one day and then be making $31 the next day and not

> know why. […] I don't want to be the last one to know, because it is going to affect me. [...] It is going to affect every aspect of my situation and I need to know.

Z's initiative had an effect on her coworkers. When Z heard that a certain employer was paying her less than the going union wage, she began investigating. She found that her company had recently joined the union and was significantly underpaying its' workers. After gathering her coworkers together and telling them what she learned about their wage discrepancy she contacted a union organizer to facilitate a new bargaining agreement for the workers. Of her advocacy she said:

> When I left, I had stirred up enough stuff and created enough awareness for everybody else about where they were at and what they were making, and the options that they had outside of that company. After I left, I heard that pretty much everybody else left, and went to work for companies making more doing exactly the same thing. I felt good. It was an accomplishment. […] People should know what they're making, what they're supposed to be making, and how much they're not getting. The employer won't tell you. If they can get over from paying that little bit of money, then they will.

This inspired Z to consider becoming a union organizer and move into leadership positions within the union. [39] Z's political involvement did not prevent Z from dealing with discrimination on the job. However, it offered her an avenue to advocate for herself and leverage power within the organization.

Like Z, being involved in leadership roles in the electrical union expanded Sharla's future career possibilities. She now considered putting herself forward for paid

[39] Sisters in Brotherhood is a tradeswomen advocacy group which developed within the United Brotherhood of Carpenters. This organization has worked since 2002 to promote the inclusion of women in the trade and to acknowledge their presence. The carpenters in the study did not mention participation in the Sisters. That said the presence of Sisters in the Brotherhood must be acknowledged.

leadership roles in the union. Sharla agreed that her political and community involvement helped develop her leadership skills. She said:

> I'm very much a doer. I've always been on the sidelines to say, "Okay, you just tell me what you need me to do. I'll do it," versus stepping up to the plate and being that leader. I never thought I would be that potential individual. But I realize I have what it takes to be able to be a leader, to be out in the forefront. To not only take direction but give direction and share some of that information to others as well as take those leadership roles. That's been an eye-opening experience for me.

Being involved in union activities helped develop this awareness in her. At the time of our interview Sharla was a shop steward and vice-president of a constituency group in the union. For eight to nine years she was on the board of a pre-apprenticeship program aimed at increasing the number of women in the trades. She was a chapter president for the EWMC for five years. During her apprenticeship she was heavily involved with her church community and feeding the hungry. She remained heavily involved with EWMC and was involved with Cross Trades Solidarity, a group of trade union activists interested in stronger solidarity among unions and advocacy. Her volunteer work also spilt over into the community; she volunteered with county elections for a few years.

SUMMARY

The women in this study engaged various strategies to push for institutional change within the construction industry. These strategies included:

(1) Suing unions for racist and sexist practices;

(2) Becoming the boss;

(3) Participating in tradeswomen groups and starting a tradeswomen of color advocacy group;

(4) Joining in anti-racist and anti-sexist struggle within their institutions, with Black trade unionists and other trade union affiliated groups; and

(5) Becoming leaders within their unions.

These avenues for institutional and cultural change offered women platforms to have their voices heard and to speak against racism and sexism with a collective voice. Their efforts highlight the connection between the advancement of anti-racist and anti-sexist political agendas in the trades. Black women have historically participated in the fight for racial justice in the United States. They also historically have pushed the women's movement to participate more fully in the struggle for racial and gender justice. This tension remains within the movements of tradeswomen and tradesmen of color.

Black women are involved in the broader tradeswomen movement. The women in this study acknowledged that this movement was important to them. However, they also acknowledged that membership in this movement at times could be difficult as White tradeswomen may not support shared leadership with Black tradeswomen and may deny the current significance of racism within the trades. Racism is not a thing of the past. That said, Black tradeswomen also noted that connections with White tradeswomen off the jobsite were important for pushing for political change at the institutional level, and networking for job prospects. At times tradeswomen organizations and their allies may be the only network available for Black tradeswomen.

Unions have offered a way for Black tradeswomen to be organized and to participate in the leadership of the broader union and of constituency groups. That infrastructure connects tradeswomen to a potential network of support. A theme here is that being organized off the jobsite can help make situations better at work. This is both a

function of relationship building among workers, and actual advocacy for change in conditions on the job. However, unions in general still remain resistant to the recommendations of anti-racist and anti-sexist activist groups.

A number of the participants expressed a sense of conflict fatigue around the slowness of unions and the trades in general to become inclusive of Black people in the industry. Despite their high levels of involvement in different advocacy groups Black tradeswomen noted that they still spoke as lone voices in their various organizations and workplaces. At times divisions of racism and sexism impede unity among anti-racist and anti-sexist groups. That said, all of the participants acknowledged that participation in their union and some sort of political involvement remained necessary for the long-term retention of Black tradeswomen.

CLOSING DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In these storied accounts of long-term careers in construction black tradeswomen shared their motivation for being socially and politically involved in their collective struggle to advance as tradeswomen. They also shared some of the ways their acts of personal agency were stymied by (1) the structures of patriarchy, white dominance, and competition within their unions and institutions; (2) the minimal responses of human resources and contractors to acts of discrimination, insensitive behavior, and bullying; and (3) the limited institutional vision of an inclusive, culturally competent, multicultural, harassment free workplace that truly valued everyone. Their insights offer some areas of future intervention on the part of institutions to cultivate more inclusive work environments for all of its employees. Their voices provide reflection on the ways microaggressions and bullying occur in the trades, and some of the personal strategies needed to mitigate oppression.

Black tradeswomen did a great deal spiritually, psychologically, socially, and physically both on the job, and privately to build their capacity to work in this non-traditional realm. Women displayed individual willingness to build their capacity to thrive. This was affected by institutional practices and policies, which limited their efficacy as tradeswomen and undermined them as human beings.

The trades offered Black women the opportunity for higher wages and the potential for career advancement. Tradeswork is an alternative to office work and lower paid service industry employment, both the traditional domain of Black women. Black women worked in the industry because they were providing for themselves and their

families. They valued the work, and desired to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

Attitudinal preparedness was a component of Black women's resilience in the trades. This preparedness was informed by the examples of elders as they successfully worked in non-traditional environments; early expectations of academic and financial achievement; parents talking openly with children about racism they encountered at work; and early encouragement for Black women to work with their bodies. Strong networks of friends and loved one's provided Black women a sense of belonging and community that helped them continue in their work.

Self-agency emerged as a key component of Black women's success in the trades. This self-agency was informed by the cultivation of self-esteem. Women said their self-esteem was developed through pride, viewing the self as competent and capable of the tasks as hand, a sense of purpose, spiritual practice, and self-knowledge.

Self-esteem was necessary for Black women to speak up for themselves on the job and to advocate for their advancement. Self-esteem also came from the development of critical consciousness which more deeply understood the racial and gender dynamics of the workplace. Critical consciousness helped targeted groups resist internalizing destructive microaggressive messages. Black women said family, friends, personality, and life experience helped shape their self-esteem. This self-esteem also developed in response to workplace hostility. Black women individually developed their personal value system and presented themselves in accordance with this value system. They pushed themselves to be well trained, and sought the trade that offered the best chance of employment.

Relationship building was a key strategy employed by Black tradeswomen to advance on the job. These relationships could be sporadic in nature, like on short term construction projects, or were established over years of working for the same employer at the same work site. To overcome prejudice Black tradeswomen learned to "play psychologist" at work and tried to gauge who was a potential ally and who should be avoided on their crews. They tried to let their work speak for itself and demonstrated they were excellent employees. The building of relationships between apprentices and journeyworkers, and superiors-to-subordinates is crucial in the trades. Due to the limited numbers of women and women of color on crews, Black women generally did not often build solidarity with other women on the job. Positive interactions with men who were willing to give Black women a chance were vital to address critical moments where women faced termination.

Participation in union leadership offered Black women the opportunity to be known in the union and to assume leadership roles. This had an impact on interpersonal relationships on the job, and fostered greater acceptance of Black tradeswomen. Union advocacy groups focused on the needs of women and people of color have fostered greater opportunities for marginalized groups within unions. Tradeswomen advocacy groups remained important for the advancement of Black women as tradeswomen. However, Black women at times found that tradeswomen groups struggled to address racism within their organizations and within the broader society. This did limit their effectiveness in supporting Black women in the trades.

Black women worked to combat discrimination and promote inclusion at the level of policy and procedures in their unions and places of employment. This meant working

with their employer to push management to learn about creating an inclusive workforce; advocating for people who had been victimized; and/or pushing organizations to take up anti-racism and anti-sexism to develop a more inclusive workplace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Black tradeswomen encounter racism and sexism at various stages of their careers. At each level there are roles individuals and institutions can play to interrupt exclusionary behavior. My recommendations are broken into a discussion of interventions at the levels of pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and foreman and above. Black tradeswomen have done a great deal to foster their success in the trades. For the long-term success of Black tradeswomen and workforce diversity in the industry non-traditional tradespeople need to be supported. The failure to support them is costly to the industry and causes valuable workers to be lost. Further the continued exclusion of Black people and women in the trades continues the racial and gender wealth divide in the United States.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Firstly, pre-apprenticeship programs can aggressively and consistently employ early recruitment efforts to bring young women of color into the trades. As an interview participant stated, bringing Black women into the trades is about information. People need to know that trades-related opportunities are available. Consistently getting the word out about opportunities in construction and introducing Black women to the trades is important. Introducing Black female adolescents to trades-related opportunities plants

their future consideration of the trades as a career path. Work experiences where young people learn what their hands can accomplish are foundational.

Targeted recruitment of Black people and women has been a consistent strategy employed by workforce training organizations and apprenticeships to bring more non-traditional workers into the trades. This remains an important strategy. However, there is a need for greater protection of these workers once they come into the industry. Racism and sexism can derail efforts to bring Black women into the trades. Hence it can feel like a revolving door that pushes Black women to apply for the trades and does not support them to become hired, or once hired fails to ensure their retention.

Secondly pre-apprenticeship programs need to build anti-sexist and anti-racist education into their curriculum and their advocacy. Though it is challenging to address racism and sexism this is a reality that tradeswomen of color will face. By not addressing this in training programs, pre-apprenticeship programs practice color-blindness. This does not prepare women of color to address the challenges they will face on the job. It also does not prepare White women to become allies to people of color in the industry. This type of culturally competent education is necessary to build solidarity and collaboration among women across difference. Part of this education must include how to speak out effectively when being harassed or witnessing harassment. This training can include how to document harassment for a legal suit. It can also include everyday strategies for subtly and overtly addressing colleagues who are averse to working with nontraditional workers.

Thirdly pre-apprenticeship programs can incorporate curriculum focused on enhancing students' self-esteem, self-agency, critical consciousness, and attitudinal

preparedness. These are self-protective factors that help targeted groups limit the mental and emotional damage of a hostile workplace. Attitudinal preparedness and critical consciousness can be developed through industry-related mentorship and candid conversations between emerging and existing tradeswomen about the realities of racism and sexism on the job.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPRENTICESHIP CENTERS

Getting Black women into the industry is one thing. Keeping them in their jobs is another. Apprenticeship coordinators can provide useful interventions at the level of apprenticeships to protect non-traditional apprentices. Firstly coordinators can monitor the skill development of Black tradeswomen. It is important for coordinators to push for Black women to develop well-rounded skills; the stronger the skill-level of Black women the greater their chances of success on the job. Apprenticeship coordinators can also work to develop a positive relationship with Black tradeswomen. The more the coordinator knows the skill and ability of tradeswomen apprentices, the more they can advocate for their success.

Secondly apprenticeship coordinators can monitor whether non-traditional apprentices are working. If they are sitting on the bench while traditional apprentices are working, this is a problem. Thousands of dollars are spent by training centers on apprentices. It is a waste of resources and potentially career damaging to allow non-traditional apprentices to sit on the bench. It is clear that non-traditional apprentices do not always have the networks of potential employers that are necessary to keep them

working. Apprenticeship coordinators can ensure that non-traditional apprentices are not overlooked.

Thirdly training centers can educate all levels of apprentices, journeypeople, foremen, managers, and supervisors about racism, sexism, and heterosexism. A hostile workplace decreases productivity. Behavior change towards a harassment free workplace starts with clear expectations from the top and regular skill development in this area. Education can foster greater integration of non-traditional workers into their crews. This has a direct impact on retention efforts. Part of this training needs to include messaging that the inclusion of women and minorities in the trades is for the long-term success of the industry. Learning to value workers and address hostility is for the good of everyone.

Fourthly training centers can provide training for journeymen and journeywomen on how to improve their teaching of apprentices. This training also needs to directly address racial, gender, and sexual orientation bias. Working with people across identity differences is a skill. Black tradeswomen learn to develop this skill, or they cannot make it in the industry. It is not enough for Black women to learn how to work with men. Men need to learn how to work with women, and White people need to learn to work respectfully with people of color. Evaluating journeypeople on how well they are training apprentices is a further means of bringing greater accountability around the quality of the education apprentices receive.

Fifthly union leadership can also visit jobsites and check on the progress of nontraditional apprentices. The business agent can check whether they are working; what does the foreman have to say about their performance; what do nontraditional apprentices say about their workplace. The more union leadership takes on the value of a racially and

gender diverse workforce, the more inclusion will become a cultural value in the trades. Continuous evaluation of inclusion efforts can ensure greater long-term success.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FOREMEN, SUPERVISORS, EMPLOYERS, AND UNION LEADERSHIP

Black tradeswomen offered some strategies to promote inclusion and combat discrimination in the industry. To institutionalize these efforts and promote substantive culture change I make the following recommendations. Firstly union leadership and employers need to take the discrimination claims of women and men of color seriously. Trivializing these claims, dismissing them as indicative of individuals alone, or blaming the person bringing the claim continues cycles of oppression.

Targeted groups often do not come forward when they are harassed by coworkers because of fear of reprisal, assertions that their claims of microaggressions were made up, and ineffective responses from management. These responses keep harassment in place and undermine employees. Managers and supervisors need to be educated on how to recognize racial, gender, and sexual orientation microaggressions and how to respond quickly and effectively to discrimination and bullying claims. The training of managers and supervisors needs to be more extensive than discussions around what behaviors are necessary to prevent the employer from being sued.

Secondly contractors and employers must set clear guidelines around behavior expectations for all employees. Foremen and supervisors can be evaluated upon how well they meet these expectations and how they respond when conflict emerges. Safe workplaces require accountability of all employees to look out for each other. When

management responds constructively to claims of discrimination or harassment this helps to break the code of silence among targeted groups. Breaking the code requires those targeted and bystanders to speak when something happens but also for human resources and management to act. Combating harassment requires multiple interventions happening at the level of tradesworkers, managers, and human resources.

Thirdly give Black tradeswomen a chance to step into leadership positions and diverse work experiences. Everyone who has moved up in the trades has been given a chance at some point to show what they can do. It is a challenge for nontraditional construction workers to be promoted. Black tradeswomen reported they were either under hyper-surveillance and expected to fail, or their contributions were overlooked. The more management knows all of their workers the more the contributions of women and people of color can be noticed.

Retention and promotion are key indicators of the success of diversity measures. If people are not staying it says something about the climate of the job. Managers need to give non-traditional workers the chance to try new things on the job. The women in this study worked hard to avoid being pigeon-holed in limited jobs at work. Racist and sexist stereotyping contribute to Black women being placed in less physical work such as cleaning or in repetitive tasks with little opportunity to advance.

The building of relationships between apprentices and journeypeople, and superiors-to-subordinates is crucial in the trades. Due to the limited numbers of women and women of color on crews and high competition within the industry for jobs, Black women do not often successfully build solidarity with other women on the job. Positive

interactions with men and women who are willing to give Black women a chance is important.

Fourthly managers and institutions need to commit to hiring non-traditional workers. When management commits to hiring non-traditional workers, non-traditional workers get hired. The limited numbers of women and people of color in the trades contribute to the low number of Black women who enter the industry and their retention. Low numbers of existing non-traditional workers means that when non-traditional workers are hired they are often the only one. This makes it difficult for them to overcome institutional and cultural racism and sexism.

Fifthly unions must take on the issue of inclusion and racial and gender equity in the trades as an important issue for long-term union survival. The cultivation of an inclusive workforce is not merely the concern of targeted groups, it is imperative for long-term union market share. Unions must set clear goals to bring in racially and gender diverse workers, set goals around retention, and cultivate relationships to bring these groups into union leadership. The more unions focus on clear behaviors towards this end, the more there will be a cultural shift in the industry. Participation in union leadership offers Black women the opportunity to be known in the union and to assume leadership roles. This has an impact on interpersonal relationships on the job, and can foster greater acceptance of Black tradeswomen.

Finally trade unionists of color and tradeswomen advocacy groups must take on a collaborative political agenda that consciously brings together the concerns of non-traditional workers. These groups focused on the needs of women and people of color are important to foster greater opportunities for marginalized groups within the union.

Tradeswomen advocacy groups remain important for the advancement of Black women as tradeswomen. Both trade unionist of color and tradeswomen groups need to address racial and gender divisions within their ranks and within the broader society. Union leadership needs to work with these groups towards stronger collaboration and mutual respect both on and off the jobsite.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

All of the commercial construction participants in this study were union members. This is a limitation of the study. I interviewed those who approached me to be interviewed or who I met in my networks. Non-union Black tradeswomen are hard to find in commercial construction. Union tradeswomen have organized groups to bring them together. Non-union tradeswomen are not as organized, which makes them harder to locate. Non-union tradeswomen's experiences are important to track and record.

A second limitation is that financial constraints limited my ability to travel to national tradeswomen conferences and events. These conferences are excellent opportunities to connect with tradeswomen and to keep abreast of changes in the movement. I attended EWMC events and tradeswomen leadership gatherings in my area. It would be beneficial to attend such events in other cities and parts of the country.

A benefit of the sample is it is varied across different trades and over different periods of time. However, a limitation is that some trades only have one representative. It is useful to look at Black women's experiences in various trades to highlight specific interventions trades have tried and to evaluate those interventions. Trades specific data as to the experiences of women of color may yield useful interventions.

AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of areas of future research emerged from the study. Two participants were contractors. More research on women of color contractors would be beneficial. Their interviews brought up structural barriers to the success of women of color-owned businesses. A larger sample size would yield more information as to the barriers and potential interventions necessary to assist women of color-owned contracting firms.

I began the study focused solely on issues of race and gender. I initially missed the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual orientation in Black tradeswomen's lives. I discuss this intersection somewhat. However deeper research into intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation in the experience of tradesworkers would be beneficial.

Research on spousal support of women in non-traditional careers is a future area of research. Romantic partnerships impact people's ability to work in different careers. Spousal support is not widely discussed in the trades in regards to tradeswomen.

Research that specifically looks at women of color in the trades is limited. Asian, Native American, Chicana, and Black women are tradeswomen. Their stories and the stories of the communities they represent are important.

CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

This study is relevant to the Peace and Conflict Studies field as it deepens scholarship on the interplay of intersecting oppressions and individual responses to structural and cultural violence. This study brings out the narratives of Black working class women in a non-traditional field. Their voices spoke of the pervasive institutional and cultural oppression in the trades. Their insights are relevant for Black women in the

trades, and for Black women in other non-traditional realms. Peace and Conflict theorists and practitioners must consciously account for structural and interpersonal power dynamics as we work with marginalized groups towards their empowerment, and with dominate groups to shift oppressive policies and behaviors. The agency of individual groups is nested within the structural and cultural context of the workplace. This study compels us within the Peace and Conflict Studies field to consciously address structural inequity and discrimination.

When attending apprenticeship training centers I was regularly told by apprenticeship coordinators, “We want qualified candidates who want to be here.” Intuitively I had the question, “What are you doing to make sure that this industry wants them here?” That bigger question takes the emphasis for the success of Black women in the trades off of the women, and places more of the charge onto institutions to work consistently on their cultural competence, hiring practices, and retention efforts. Discrimination may manifest more clearly on a person-to-person basis, however addressing this only on a person-to- person basis does not impact the systemic nature of discrimination. The limited numbers of women in the trades, and women of color in particular are indicative of this systemic discrimination.

Interrupting the myth of the meritocracy, and color- and gender-blindness among trades leadership is difficult. The inclusion of women and men of color is often viewed by White men as a threat to their jobs. This is a myopic view of inclusion. Black women want to do this work and have contributed greatly to their field despite discrimination geared towards pushing them out of the industry. Inclusive workplaces require the

building of respectful relationships among staff. Understanding racism, sexism, and heterosexism are important areas of skill development for leadership.

The right to work is a human right. Applying an intersectional analysis to Black tradeswomen's struggles to work uses the lenses of race, gender, and class to explain the factors limiting the human rights of women and people of color in the trades. I asked Shonda why she continued to be a tradeswomen activist despite the limited gains in the retention of Black people in the industry. Her answer is the essence of this dissertation. She said:

> I would just really like -- if someone would like to pursue this -- the avenue would be available to them. It is an honorable profession. People can raise a family decently and travel. I mean there are benefits to this occupation if you get in the right niche and do what you want to do.

REFERENCES

Alvord, M. (2005). Enhancing resilience in children: a proactive approach. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36*(3), 238-245.

Anderson, E. (2008). *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Anderson, K. (1982). Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II. *The Journal of American History 69*(1), 82-99.

Applebaum, H. (1981). *Royal Blue: The Culture of Construction Workers*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Applebaum, H. (1999). *Construction Workers, U.S.A.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Apprenticeship and Training Division: Oregon Bureau of Labor (n.d.). *Construction trades* . Retrieved from http://cms.oregon.gov/boli/ATD/pages/a_ag_ctrades.aspx

Archibald, L., & Crnkovich, M. (1995). Intimate Outsiders: Feminist Research in a Cross-Cultural Environment. In S. Burt and L.Code, (eds.) *Changing Methods Feminists Transforming Practice.* Peterborough, Ont.: Orchard, NY. (pp. 105-125).

Arvidson, J. (1997). *The Trades Mentor Network: Mentoring as a Retention Intervention for Women Apprentices in the Building Trades.* (Dissertation), Retrieved from Dissertation Abstracts. (AAT 9734007)

Ashbrook, C. (2005). *Solutions for an Emerging Workforce: Strategies for recruiting, training, hiring, retaining, and advancing youth of color and women in the highway construction trades.* Oregon: Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.

Austin, A. (2006). *Getting It Wrong: How Black Public Intellectuals Are Failing Black America*. New York, NY: iUniverse, Inc.

Austin, A. (2011). A jobs-centered approach to African American community development:The crisis of African American unemployment requires federal intervention. *Race and Ethnicity: Economic Policy Institute*, 11. Retrieved from www.epi.org website:

Barsky, A. (2007). *Conflict Resolution for the Helping Professions*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Bergmann, B. (2000). *In Defense of Affirmative Action*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Berik, G., & Bilginsoy, C. (2001). Do Unions Help or Hinder Women in Training? Apprenticeships Programs in the United States. *Industrial Relations, 39*(4), 600-624.

Berik, G., & Bilginsoy, C. (2006). Still a wedge in the door: women training for the construction trades in the USA. *Internation Journal of Manpower, 27*(4), 321-341.

Berik, G., Bilginsoy, C., & Williams, L. (2008). Gender and Racial Training Gaps in Oregon Apprenticeship Programs (pp. 1-34).

Bernstein, D. (1993). The Davis-Bacon Act: Let's Bring Jim Crow to an End. (Briefing paper 17) Cato Institute.

Bertaux, D., & Thompson, P. (1997). *Pathways to Social Class: A Qualitative Approach to Social Mobility*. New York; Oxford: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bonanno, G. A. (2004). Loss, trauma, and human resilience: have we underestimated the human capacity to thrive after extremely aversive events?. *American Psychologist, 59*(1), 20-28.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without Racists: color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Landham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Bowleg, L. (2008). When Black + Lesbian + Woman =/ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research. *Sex Roles, 59*, 312-325.

Bowleg, L., Huang, J., Brooks, K., Black, A., & Burkholder, G. (2003). Triple jeopardy and beyond: Multiple minority stress and resilience among Black lesbians. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 7*, 87-108.

Branden, N. (1994). *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem: The Definitive Work on Self-Esteem by the Leading Pioneer in the Field.* New York, NY: Bantam Book.

Brodkin, K. (2003). How Jews Became White Folks. In P. Rothenberg (ed). *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States An Integrated Study 6th edition.* (38-53) New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

Brofenbrenner, U., Friedman, S., & Wachs, T. (1999). Environments in developmental perspective: theoretical and operational models *Measuring Environment Across the Lifespan: Emerging Methods and Concepts* (pp. 3-28). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Burack, C. (2004). *Healing Identities: Black Feminist Thought and the Politics of Groups* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Byrd, B. (1999). Women in Carpentry Apprenticeship: A Case Study. *Labor Studies Journal, Fall*, 3-22. .

Byrd, B. (2007). Women in Construction Apprenticeship in the United States (English translation) *A Comparison of Skills Training in Japan, Germany and the United States*, . Japan: Meiji University.

Byrd, B., & King, M. C. (2001). Great Work if You Can Get It: Women in the Skilled Trades In M. King (ed)., *Squaring up :policy strategies to raise women's incomes in the United States* (pp. 201-225). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Byrne, S., & Carter, N. (2002). Social Cubism: Six Forces of Ethnnopolitical Conflict in Northern Ireland and Quebec. *ILSA Journal of International and Comparative Law, 8*(3), 741-769.

Carter, R. T. (2007). Racism and psychological and emotional injury:Recognizing and assessing race-based traumatic stress. *The Counselling Psychologist, 35*, 13-105.

Chase, S. (2003). Taking Narrative Seriously: Consequnces for Method and Theory in Interview Studies. In S. Chase, Y. Lincoln & N. Denzin (Eds.), *Turning Points in Qualitative Research: Tying Knots in a Handkerchief* (pp. 273-296): Rowman Altamira.

Chase, S. & Bell, C. (1994). Interpreting the complexity of women's subjectivity In E. McMahan and K. Rogers (eds), *Interactive Oral History Interview* (pp. 63-81). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Chicago Women in Trades. (1992). *Breaking New Ground: Worksite 2000*.

Clark, R., Anderson, N., Clark, V, & Williams, D (1999). Racism as a stressor for African American. *American Psychologist 54*, 11.

Cohn, S., & Fossett, M. (1996). What Spatial Mismatch? The Proximity of Blacks to Employment in Boston and Houston. *Social Forces, 75*(2), 557-573.

Cole, B. A. (2009). Gender, Narratives and Intersectionality: Can Personal Experience Approaches to Research Contribute to "Undoing Gender". *International Review of Education, 55*, 561-578.

Collins, P. (1989). The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thoguht. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 14*(4), 745-773.

Collins, P. (1990). *Black feminist thought :knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Collins, P. (1995). Symposium: On West and Festermaker's "Doing Difference". *Gender and Society, 9*, 491-513

Collins, P. (2005). *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241-1299.

Crenshaw, K. (2000). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics. In J. James & T. D. Sharpley-Whiting (Eds.), *The Black Feminist Reader* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

Cuadraz, G. H., & Uttal, L. (1999). Intersectionality And In-depth Interviews: Methodological Strategies For Analyzing Race, Class, And Gender. *Race, Gender and Class, 6*(3), 156-175.

Davis, A. (1981). *Women Race and Class*. New York: Random House.

Davis, A. (2000). Women and Capitalism: Dialectics of Oppression and Liberation. In. J. James (ed.), *The Black feminist reader* (pp. 146-182). Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A Sociology of science perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory, 9*, 67-85.

Denborough, D. (2008). *Collective Narrative Practice: Responding to individuals, groups, and communities who have experienced trauma.* Adelaide, South Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

Denborough, D., Koolmatrie, C., Mununggirritj, D., Marika, D., Dhurrkay, W., & Yunupingu, M. (2006). Linking Stories and Initiatives: A narrative approach to working with the skills and knowledge of communities. *The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 2*, 19-51.

Denissen, A. (2010a). Crossing the Line: How Women in the Building Trades Interpret and Respond to Sexual Conduct at Work. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 39*(3), 297-327.

Denissen, A. (2010b). The right tools for the job: Constructing gender meanings and identities in the male-dominatedbuilding trades. *Human Relations, 63*(7), 1051-1069.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., Kawakami, K., & Hodson, G. (2002). Why can't we all just get along? Interpersonal biases and interracial distust. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 8*, 88-102.

Dugan, M. (1996). A Nested Theory of Conflict. *Women in Leadership, 1*(1), 9-20.

Dullea, K. (2006). Women Shaping Participatory Research to Their Own Needs. *Community Development Journal, 41*(1), 65-74.

Eckman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1982). Felt, false, and miserable smile. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 6*, 238-258.

Eisenberg, S. (1998). *We'll call you if we need you :experiences of women working construction*. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press.

Essed, P. (1990). *Everyday Racism: Reports from Women of Two Cultures*. Claremont, CA: Hunter House.

Fairlie, R. W., & Sundstrom, W. A. (1999). The emergence, persistence, and recent widening of the racial unemployment gap. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review 52*(2), 252-270.

Fanon, F. (1965). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Feagin, J. R. (2000). *Racist America: Roots, current realities, and future reparations*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fiske, S. T. (1993). Controlling other people: The impact of power on stereotyping. *American Psychologist, 48*, 621-628.

Fiske, S. T., & Stevens, S. L. E. (1993). What's so special about sex? Gender stereotyping and discrimination. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Gender issues in contemporary society* (pp. 173-196). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Flick, U. (1992). Triangulation revisited: Strategy of validation or alternative? *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 22*, 175-198.

Franklin, A. J. (1999). Invisibility syndrome and racial identity development in psychotherapy and counseling African American men. *The Counselling Psycholgist, 27,* 761-793.

Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (1986). The aversive form of racism. In J. F. Dovidio & S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination, and racism* (pp. 61-89). Orlando, FL: Academic.

Galtung, J. (1964). A Structural Theory of Aggression. *Journal of Peace Research, 1*(2), 95-119.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research, 6*(3), 167-191.

Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural Violence'. *Journal of Peace Research, 27*(3), 291-305.

Galtung, J., & Hoivak, T. (1971). Structural and Direct Violence: A Note on Operationalization. *Journal of Peace Research, 8*(1), 73-76.

General Office of Accounting (1992). Apprenticeship Training: Administration, Use, and Equal Opportunity. Washington, DC.

Glenn, E. (1992). From servitude to service work: Historical continuities in the racial division of paid. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 18*(1), 1-43.

Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The antivalent sexism inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 70,* 491-512.

Glover, R. W. (1989). Apprenticeship: a route to high-paying skilled trades for women? In S. Harlan and R. Steinberg (ed.) *Job Training for Women:* (pp. 269-289). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Haignere, L. (1989). Nontraditional Training for Women: Effective Programs, Structural Barriers, and Political Hurdles. In S. Harlan and R. Steinberg *Job Training for Women: The Promise and Limits of Public Policy* (pp. 333-358). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hancock, A.-M. (2008). Intersectionality, Multiple Messages, and Complex Causality: Commentary on *Black Sexual Politics* by Patricia Hill Collins. *Studies in Gender and Sexuality 9*, 14-31

Haraway, D. (2008). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. In A. Jagger (Ed.), *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader* (pp. 346-351). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Harris, D. (1999). *All Suburbs Are Not Created Equal: A New Look at Racial Differences in Suburban Location*. Ann Arbor, Mich: University of Michigan Population Studies Center.

Health and Safety of Women in Construction workgroup, OSHA, & Advisory Committee on Construction Safety and Health, U.S.Department of Labor. (1999). Women in the Construction Workplace: Providing Equitable Safety and Health Protection.

Hellerstein, J. K., Neumark, D., & McInerney, M. (2007). Spatial Mismatch or Racial Mismatch., Working Paper 13161. Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research.

Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2007). Feminist Research: Exploring the Interconnections of Epistemology, Methodology, and Method. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Handbook of feminist research: theory and praxis* (pp. 1-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Hill, H. (1989). Black Labor and Affirmative Action: An Historical Perspective. In S. Shulman & J Darity (Eds.), *The Question of Discrimination, Racial Inequality in the U.S. Labor Market*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Hones, D. F. (1998,). Known in part: The transformational power of narrative inquiry.. *Qualitative Inquiry* (June), 225-248.

hooks, b. (1981). *Ain't I a Women: Black Women and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press.

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

hooks, b. (2003). *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*. New York, NY: Washington Square Press.

hooks, b. (2005). *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*. Cembridge, MA: South End Press.

hooks, b. & West, C. (1991). *Breaking bread: insurgent black intellectual life*. Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press.

Hughes, D., & Dodge, M. (1997). African American Women in the Workplace: The Relationships Between Job Conditions, Racial Bias at Work, and Perceived Job Quality. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 25*(5), 581-599.

Hulko, W. (2009). The time-and context-contingent nature of intersectionality and interlocking oppressions. *Affilia: Journal of Women & Social Work, 24*(1), 44-55.

Jones, C., & Shorter-Gooden, K. (2003). *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*. New York, NY: Perrenial.

Kasinitz, P., & Rosenberg, J. (1996). Missing the Connection: Social Isolation and Employment on the Brooklyn Waterfront. *Social problems, 43*(2), 180-196.

Lane, S. R., Rubenstein, R., Keefe, R.,Webster, N.., Cibula, D., Rosenthal, A., Dowdell, J. (2004). Structural Violence and Racial Disparity in HIV Transmission. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*(3), 319-335.

LaTour, J. (2008). *Sisters In The Brotherhood: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Lawless, E. (1991). Women's Life Stories and Reciprocal Ethnography as Feminist and Emergent. *Journal of Folklore Research, 28*(1), 35-60.

Lawless, E. (1992). "I Was Afraid Someone like You... an Outsider... Would Misunderstand": Negotiating Interpretive Differences between Ethnographers and Subjects. *The Journal of American Folklore, 105*(417), 302-314.

Lawless, E. (2003). Transforming the Master Narrative: How Women Shift the Religious Subject. *Frontiers, 24*(1), 61-75.

Lederach, J. P. (2006). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.

Longino, H. E. (1993). Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Problems of Knowledge Review Essay *Signs, 19*(1), 201-212.

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.

Martin, M. (1997). *Hard-Hatted Women: Life on the Job*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press.

Matthews, G., Emo, A. K., Funke, G., Zeidner, M., Roberts, R. D., & and Costa, P. T. (2006). 'Emotional intelligence, personality, and task-induced stress'. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 12*(2), 96-107.

McCall, L. (2005). "The Complexity of Intersectionality". *Signs, 30*(3), 1771-1800.

Mies, M., Bowles, G., & Klein, R. D. (1983). Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research *Theories of Women's Studies*. London; New York: Routledge.

Mies, M., Cook, J., & Fonow, M. M. (1991). Women's Research or Feminist Research? The Debate Surrounding Feminist Science and Methodology" *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research* (pp. 60-84). Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Mitchell, S. (2005). Debriefing after traumatic situations: Using narrative ideas in the Gaza Strip. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work.* Vol. 2, 23-28.

Moccio, F. (2009). *Live wire : women and brotherhood in the electrical industry*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Moir, S., Thomson, M., & Kelleher, C. (2011). Unfinished Business: Building Equality for Women in the Construction Trades: University of Massachusetts Boston.

Mullings, B. (2005). Commentary: Post-Colonial Encounters of the Methodological Kind. *Southeastern Geographer, 45*(2), 274-280.

Needleman, R. (2003). *Black Freedom Fighters in Steel: The Struggle for Democratic Unionism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

O'Farrell, B., Moore, S., & Cobble, D. S. (1993). Unions Hard Hats, and Women Workers. *Women and Unions* (pp. 69-84). Ithaca, NY: ILR Press.

Oakley, A., & Roberts, H. (1981). Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms *Doing Feminist Research* (pp. 30-51). Boston; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Ong, A. D., Bergeman, C. S., & Biscontim T.L, a. W. K. A. (2006). Psychological resilience, positive emotinos, and succesful adaptation to stress in later life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*(4), 730-749.

Optow, S., Christie, D., Wagner, R., & Winter, D. D. (2001). Social Injustice *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century* (pp. 102-109). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Paap, K. (2006) *Working Construction: WHy White Working Class Men Put Themselves and the Labor Movement in Harm's Way.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Paap, K. (2008). How Good Men of the Union Justify Inequality: Dilemmas of Race and Labor in the Building Trades. *Labor Studies Journal, 33*(4), 371-392.

Pager, D., & Anderson, E. (2008). "Blacklisted: Hiring Discrimination in an Era of Mass Incarceration" *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male* (pp. 71-86). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Pennington, D. (1999). *African American Women Quitting in the Workplace*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.

Phelan, J. C., Link, B. G., & Dovidio, J. F. (2008). Stigma and prejudice: One animal of two? *Social Science & Medicine, 67,* 358-367.

Potok, M., Visconti, L., Frankel, B., & Holmes, N. (2007, November 25). The geography of hate. . Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/opinion/25potok.html

Price, V. (2002). "Race, affirmative action, and women's employment in US highway construction". *Feminist Economics, 8*(2), 87-113.

Price, V. (2007). Hammering it out women in the construction zone. New York, NY: Women Make Movies.

Purdie-Vaughns, V., Davis, P. G., Steele, C. M., & Ditlmann, R. (2008). Social identity contingencies: How diversity cues signal threat or safety for African Americans in mainstream institutions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psyhcology, 94*, 615-630.

Reissman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park, California: Sage.

Reskin, B. F., McBrier, D. B., & Kmec, J. A. (1999). The Determinants and Consequences of Workplace Sex and Race Composition. *Annual Review of Sociology, 25*, 335-361.

Rosener, J. B. (1995). *America's competitive secret: Utilizing women as a management strategy*. New York, NY: Oxford Press.

Royster, D. A. (2003). *Race and the invisible hand :how white networks exclude black men from blue-collar jobs*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sanjek, R. (1990). *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Scherwig, F. (2009). *The Future's Rosie: Initiatives and pathways for tradeswomen in the United States of America - an Australian Perspective:* National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC).

Schroedel, J. R. (1985). *Alone in a Crowd: Women in the Trades Tell Their Stories*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Steele, C., Ebenhardt, T., & Fiske, S. (1998). A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance *Confronting Racism: The Problem and the Response* (pp. 202-233). London, UK: Sage Publications.

Sue, D. W. (2008). Multicultural organizational consultation: A social justice perspective. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 60*, 157-169.

Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Sue, D. W., Lin, A. I., & Rivera, D. P. (2009). Racial microaggressions in the workplace: Manifestation and impact. In J. Chin (Ed.), *Diversity in mind and in action* (pp. 157-172). Westport, CT: Praeger Press.

Sue, D. W., Parham, T. A., & Santiago, G. B. (1998). The changing face of work in the United States: Implications for individual, institutional, and societal survival. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health, 4*, 153-164.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2008). *Counselling the culturally diverse: Theory and practice (4th edition)*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Taylor, S., & Kennedy, R. (2003). Feminst framework. In J.Anderson & R.W. Carter (Eds.), *Diversity perspectives for social work practice* (pp.171-197). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Turner, M. A. (2008). Residential Segregation and Employment Inequality. In J. H. Carr & N. K. Kutty (Eds.), *Segregation: The Rising Costs for America*. New York, NY: Routledge.

United Nations General Assemby (1948). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/

U.S.Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. (2009). Quick stats on women workers 2008. Retrieved from http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm website:

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010). Median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers by detailed occupation and sex. http://bls.gov/opub/ee/2011/cps/annavg39_2010.pdf.

U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (2011)Women in the Labor Force in 2010 Retrieved from http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/Qf-laborforce-10.html

Weber, L., & Parra-Medina, D. (2003). Intersectionality and women's health: Charting a path to eliminating health disparities. *Advances in Gender Research 7*, 181-230.

Weigert, K. M. (1999). Structural Violence. In L. Kurtz & J. Turpin (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of violence, peace, and conflict* (Vol. 3, pp. 431-440). New York: Academic Press.

White, M. (2004). Working with people who are suffering the consequences of multiple trauma: A narrative perspective. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work*. 1. 45-76.

Wilkerson, Isabel. (2010). The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Williams, D. (1999). Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health: The Added Effects of Racism and Discrimination. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 896(1).173-188.

Williams, L. (2008). Improvements and Challenges for diversity. [Unpublished presentation]

Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When work disappears :the world of the new urban poor*. New York: Knopf.

Wilson, W. J. (1999). *The bridge over the racial divide :rising inequality and coalition politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wilson, W. J., & Anderson, E. (2008). The Economic Plight of Inner-City Black Males *Against the Wall, Poor, Young, Black, and Male* (pp. 55-70). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press..

Woods, J. (2010). The Black Male Privileges Checklist. In M. Kimmel & A. Ferber (Eds.), *Privilege: A Reader Second Edition* (pp. 27-38). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Wyatt, G., & Riederle, M. (1995). The Prevalence and context of sexual harrassment among African American and White American women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10*(3), 309-321.

Yuen, A. (2007). Discovering children's responses to trauma: A response-based narrative practice. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work,* 4, 3-18)

.

APPENDIX

Participant Consent Form

"How can the principles of Peace and Conflict Studies apply to the struggles of Black tradeswomen as they continue in long-term blue collar careers in the US building trades?"

University of Manitoba, Winnipeg
Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, St Paul's College

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a doctoral dissertation research study about your experiences in the building trades as Black tradeswomen. You have been selected as a possible participant because you expressed interest in the study by responding to a letter of invitation. I ask that you read this form and ask me any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

This study is conducted by Roberta Hunte, a Ph.D. candidate in Peace and Conflict Studies at the Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. The purpose of this research is to better understand how Black tradeswomen theorize their experience in the U.S. building trades. By exploring questions associated with this experience Black tradeswomen will share some of the skills and knowledge they have developed to survive and thrive in the trades; and will have the opportunity to share this knowledge with each other thereby making a contribution to the movement of Black tradeswomen in this area of non-traditional work. This study also contributes to the field of Peace and Conflict Studies as it enhances our theorizing around how grassroots folks address everyday systemic conflicts.

Procedures

If you agree to be part of this study I will ask you to participate in a primary audio-taped interview with me. This interview will last between one and two hours and focus on your personal experiences as a tradeswoman. You will receive a call from me to discuss the various themes from your interview. Please let me know if I've understood what you shared accurately, and what needs to be altered. If you would like I will mail a copy of your interview transcript to you. You will also be invited to a group meeting to discuss the collective research findings. This second meeting will be held in Portland. You are not obligated to participate in this focus group. All participants will receive a copy of the initial collective themes from the interviews. Your feedback on these collective themes is greatly appreciated and will inform the final analysis. Feel free to discontinue your participation at any point in this study.

Risks and Benefits

There are some risks involved in this research. The interview process may cause you to feel uncomfortable or psychologically stress. Feel free to end the interview, or your involvement in the study at any time. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the process. However, in the group meetings you will see members of the study in person. If this is not comfortable for you, it is not problematic if you decide not to continue in the study.

A local counseling and support resource list is provided for you along with your

copy of this consent form. This study will provide a forum for you to discuss your experiences, and connect you with a group of women who share a similar experience.

Compensation
You will receive $25 for participating in this study upon completion of the end of your participation in the study.

Confidentiality
Your name and all possible identifying information will be kept completely confidential. At the beginning of your study participation you will be asked to provide a pseudonym, which will be your identifier throughout the dissertation. The records of this study will be kept private. In my dissertation, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file cabinet and only I will have access to the files. The tape recordings will be destroyed when the project is completed. The information provided during the interviews is completely confidential, with the exception of any information related to first disclosures of the abuse of a minor or a statement of your intent to harm yourself or someone else. If you choose to have your actual name and location used in the dissertation please indicate so by signing the statement below.
I, _____ (full name), would like my real name used instead of a pseudonym in the final copy of this dissertation.

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Voluntary Nature
Participation in this study is voluntary. Whether or not you choose to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with the organization through which you may have first heard about this dissertation. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without affecting these relationships.

Contacts and Questions
The researcher conducting this study is Roberta Hunte, MS. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at (xxx), xxx-xxxx, or blankemail@domain.com. You are also free to contact my dissertation adviser Dr. Jessica Senehi at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or Jessica_senehi@domain.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, contact the University of Manitoba Human Subjects Review Board at (xxx) xxx-xxx; CTC Building 208-194 Dafoe Road, Winnipeg Manitoba Canada.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information.
I have asked questions and have received answers.

☐ I voluntarily consent to participate in the study.

☐ I give my consent to be contacted for a follow-up focus group.

Signature of Participant _____Date_____

Signature of Investigator _____Date _____