Wow - They Are Having Lunch Together: A Grounded Theory Exploration of High Quality Relationships between Coworkers of Different Racioethnic Backgrounds

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Wow—They Are Having Lunch Together: A Grounded Theory Exploration of High Quality Relationships between Coworkers of Different Racioethnic Backgrounds

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

By
Cheryl A. Throgmorton

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

April, 2011
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approve it as adequate in scope and quality. We found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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April 18, 2011

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Acknowledgements

This doctoral journey has been a joyful one and the arrival to this dissertation mile marker was the result of the support of many. I am blessed to have so much love and support in my life and I wish to acknowledge some of that support here.

I first acknowledge the 27 participants of this study and the coworkers about whom they spoke. I cannot thank you enough for sharing your stories and allowing others to learn from them. You make a positive impact in your work places not only within these high quality relationships, but as role models to others. This is our research. I thank nephew Shaun who joined the process with graphic design support to create a visually pleasing theoretical model. I thank my transcriptionist Mary, as I would not have arrived at this point this quickly without her professional support.

I thank my family, the Throgmortons and the Atkinson/Fearce/Saddlers, and my friends for your ongoing support throughout this process. From my childhood friends Lesley and Athena who greatly influenced my interests, to my current gang of friends to every great niece and nephew in my growing family, I thank you all. Even when there were complaints about me not coming to an event or leaving after a brief visit, I knew I had your love and support. Just seeing you brought me joy. I appreciate when you asked how it was going and for being there in times of need like when my brother Larry came over to try to retrieve five lost pages of my literature review. I appreciate my Mom often asking how my “paper” was coming along. While she graduated from high school and my Dad completed seventh grade only, they gave me a foundation that I could do anything I desired. My Dad’s spirit was with me along the way. Thanks for that foundation to take my education this far.
The support of my organization, St. Louis Children’s Hospital and my coworkers there and throughout BJC Healthcare was present throughout this journey. It was working at this special place that motivated me to finally start the doctoral journey. There are so many supporters to thank, my HR teammates, my OE team, my managers, and so many others who were interested in talking about my classes and recently my research. Special thanks go to my colleagues Bryan, Cathie, Leroy and Jacks. Bryan, thanks for the help with the digital recorder. You willingness to coach me and allow me to use the equipment helped this research process a great deal. Cathie, while short lived, your willingness to loan out a transcription foot pedal was a big help. Leroy, from the time you helped me calculate and report statistics for a practice study for a research class to your interest in my current research, you have been a great thought partner. I appreciate your interest and willingness to talk about and to read my work. Jacks, I so appreciate the fact that you were enthusiastically interested in what I was doing. Your help editing my proposal, reviewing my data tables and editing chapter four is greatly appreciated. I would want your research assistance on any study.

I thank my committee, Alla, David and Monica. David, I am honored that this is the first UST dissertation committee you joined. Monica, I appreciate the professional work we did together and your willingness to add your diversity and inclusion expertise to my process. Alla, I thank you for being my advisor. I appreciate your guidance, responsiveness and your recognition of my work. It was wonderful to learn Energetics from you in tandem with this dissertation journey as it was a symbiotic experience. Alla, I thank you for being a stellar guide in both; you are a precious gift to my life.
Experiencing this doctoral journey as a cohort has been powerful for me. Each and every OD Cohort 4 member and instructor has offered help, insights, and fun along the way. I thank and love you all and cherish the lifelong friends I have made. I thank John for offering insights on dissertation topics. I always envisioned you on my committee, and while not officially as such, your support to prepare me for this step in the doctoral journey was forever present in the experience. I thank Dan, Jan, Margie and Linda for our talks to discuss our early progress. Our conversations helped me expand my thinking and helped me settle on a topic. I thank Heather and Linda for our Energetics journey together and your ongoing encouragement of my dissertation process—you helped me get on and stay on track. I thank Mel for your periodic encouragement check-ins and for sharing your own work with me as an example. I thank my fellow grounded theory researchers Jan, Linda, Margie, Nancy, and Megan from Cohort 3 for sharing information so freely. You helped propel my research process. A very special thank you to Margie and Linda – I feel like we have been connected on this doctoral journey from start to finish. Margie, from your offer to give me a ride to the first Gainey session to the countless emails, texts and conversations to commiserate on our research, I love and thank you for our partnership and friendship. Linda, I remember group work with you during the first Gainey session. We drew a picture of an OD tool kit that we anticipated growing over the program. My thought conversations with you and the strong linkage of research interests and findings led to many mutual exchanges about our work that I loved. I have to say, however, the time you gave to me in review of chapters 4 and 5 went over and above. I love and thank you for our research partnership and our friendship. Thank you OD cohort 4 instructors and students for expanding my life and my OD tool kits.
Finally, I acknowledge the ongoing love and support I receive day in and day out at home. Freddie and Spunky Joe, my furry research assistants, provide constant joy.

Most important in this journey is that I did not have an Angel on my shoulder; I had an Angel by my side every step of this doctoral journey. Words cannot express the love and gratitude I feel for my Angel. Thank you for being my constant and number one supporter. You are the most significant high quality relationship I have ever had across racial difference. I thank you for your unwavering love and support. I look forward to our continued journey together through life, love, and learning.
Abstract

As organizations move from diversity initiatives that solely strive to increase the racial or ethnic mix of individuals in the workplace to strategies of inclusion and cultural competence, building interpersonal coworker relationships across difference can help build inclusion. This study explores high quality coworker relationships (HQCR) across racial and/or ethnic differences. Using grounded theory research methodology, 27 participants were interviewed to explore the research question: What contributes to forming and sustaining a high quality relationship between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds?

A HQCR was defined by participants as 1) Mutual, 2) Knowing the whole person, 3) Working through disagreement, 4) Being fun/pleasurable, 5) Working together seamlessly, and 6) Helping to build other relationships. A variety of organizational factors and personal factors that helped form the relationship emerged. Eleven specific forming factors emerged, the last three appearing specific to relationships across racioethnic difference: 1) Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors, 2) Connecting on common interests, 3) Participating in something significant together, 4) Sharing on a professional and personal level, 5) Developing empathy, 6) Establishing trust, 7) Communicating effectively, and 8) Showing interest in person’s success, 9) Using intuition as a guide, 10) Assessing behaviors over time, and 11) Displaying genuine interest in difference. Seven turning points that helped grow the relationship emerged, with the last one appearing specific across racioethnic difference. These turning points were: 1) Sharing deeper personal information, 2) Pushing for growth, 3) Having a crucial conversation, 4) Reaching mutuality, 5) Growing more self aware, 6) Sharing a work success, and 7) Talking specifically about the racial and/or ethnic difference between
them, either directly or indirectly. Finally nine sustaining factors, the last two appearing specific across racioethnic difference, were: 1) Making time to interact, 2) Showing appreciation for insights, 3) Welcoming to other groups, 4) Serving as confidant 5) Maintaining open and honest communication, 6) Sharing organizational information, and 7) Serving as a “place of rest" and enjoyment, 8) Embracing each other’s differences and 9) Letting the guard down. These factors are depicted in a theoretical model. The study adds insights on diversity, inclusion and cultural competence strategies within organizations.

*Keywords:* Diversity, inclusion, cultural competence, grounded theory, relationships at work, high quality relationships, coworker relationships, relationships at work, high quality connections, race, ethnicity, positive organizational scholarship.
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

*Imagine all the people*
*Sharing all the world*

*You may say that I'm a dreamer*
*But I'm not the only one*
*I hope someday you'll join us*
*And the world will be as one* (Lennon, 1971)

*It's hard to beat the system*
*When we're standing at a distance*
*So we keep waiting*
*Waiting on the world to change* (Mayer, 2007)

Diversity, inclusion, cultural competence— which catch phrase should one use these days in organizations? Which should one imagine in organizations? Which will bring about change in organizations? I do not want to only dream nor feel powerless waiting for the world to change. As organizations become an ever increasing diverse mix of backgrounds, there is a need to continue to promote the achievement of and valuing of workplace diversity while creating an inclusive environment with employees who are culturally competent.

I remember the release of Beverly Tatum’s book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* (1997). Friends and coworkers shared seeing the same dynamic in their work places. While I wholeheartedly believe in an expansive definition of diversity, racial division is pervasive (Cox, 2004) in the United States. Racially divided discourse abounds in the US. This racially charged discourse was heard in reaction to what entertainers said - some will challenge my inclusion of a John Mayer song in this introduction especially in light of recent racist and sexist comments he made in a magazine interview ("John Mayer slammed," 2010). It is perhaps heard most loudly
within politics. President Obama had to apologize for firing African-American Shirley Sherrod from the Agriculture Department after the allegation that she made racist comments about whites was proven false (Hartston, 2010). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) issued a resolution denouncing racist elements in the Tea Party movement. The NAACP president stated "for more than a year we’ve watched as Tea Party members have called congressmen the N-word...We see them carry racist signs and whenever it happens, the membership tries to shirk responsibility" (Khan, 2010, para. 2). In response, St. Louis based Tea Party issued a resolution that "the NAACP withdraw their bigoted, false and inflammatory resolution against the tea party for any further consideration" (Siegel, 2010, "St. Louis Tea Party Coalition Resolution July 12, 2010, para.13").

It is a time of paradox. The United States has the first self-identified multiracial president. Companies have had success in creating more diverse and multicultural environments. The nation and organizations have realized some success and still have a long way to go. Diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, particularly racioethnic diversity, still confound and affect individuals’ personal and professional lives.

I feel fortunate that as a white woman I grew up in an area that was predominantly African-American. Growing up I was almost always in the cafeteria sitting with the Black kids. As I grew older, I saw the division that Tatum (1997) talked about in her book in work environments. I am also fortunate to be an OD practitioner who has had the chance to include work in the area of diversity, inclusion and cultural competence as part of my practice. This work still confounds me at times and it affects me personally and professionally. I look forward to others reviewing this research study and potentially
evaluating it as research that adds new insights in the area of diversity, inclusion and cultural competence within US work environments.

**Problem**

According to the US Census Bureau (as cited in Chin, 2010), racial and ethnic minorities will comprise 50% of the U. S. workforce by 2050. Given the predictions and actualization of growing diversity, many organizational diversity initiatives have focused on increasing the representation of women and ethnic minority groups (Chin, 2010; Thomas, 2006). While one can argue that there is still more progress to be made, particularly in the organizational leadership ranks (Chin, 2006; Sweeny, 2009), research and practice need to evolve to focus on inclusion and cultural competence. This focus stands to have a greater impact on individuals, teams and organizations (Chin, 2006; Herdman & McMillan-Caphart, 2010; Martinez, 2010; ROI of diversity, 2005; Sweeney, 2009; Tapia, 2009; Thomas, 2006b; Toops 2009).

Moving from representation to building inclusive practices and cultural competence offers new challenges at the interpersonal level. Thomas (2006a) noted a differentiation of the current opportunities within organizations with the following:

Future leaders will differentiate between representation and diversity.

Representation will refer to the presence of multiple races and both genders in the workplace, while diversity will refer to the behavioral differences, similarities and tensions that can exist among people when representation has been achieved. (pp 45-46)

While diversity encompasses many factors that make individuals similar and different, an area that is still hard for individuals to navigate is difference across race and ethnicity.
There is a need for expanded research with this as an area of focus. Royal (2010) stated "... race carries the strongest impact of impenetrable barriers to success and acceptance. In our society in 2010 race (skin color preference) is the dominant barrier to access, opportunity, goods and services" (p. 28). Alderfer & Tucker's (1996) stated that "although studies of black-white race relations in the United States span the history of social science in this country, this research has largely taken place outside the boundaries of organizations" (p. 45). Cox (2004) contended that research across racial differences is noticeably absent in leading journals in organizational behavior.

Studies in the area of diversity often use assessment tools to try to predict behavior and to note relationships to variables across difference (Herdman & McMillan-Capehart, 2010; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Nishii and Mayer 2009). These studies are often focused on formal leaders' influence. One can glean valuable insights from such studies about workplace diversity and inclusion, but such studies also yield a desire to follow up with qualitative data to help describe the employee experiences that could not come through in the statistical analysis.

Scholars have asserted a need for research that develops new theoretical models with which to view diversity and inclusion (Alderfer & Tucker, 1996; Cox, 2004; Jackson et. al. 2003; Thomas as cited in Johnson, 2008). Also noted is a growing need for research using qualitative methods and that this work is for scholars of all backgrounds not just racial minority scholars (Cox, 2004). In an interview with noted diversity scholar and practitioner R. Roosevelt Thomas, Johnson (2008) quoted him as having said "what some people call research is basically benchmarking and then declaring what the best
practices are” and "... there is still a major gap, and theoretical research where you are conceptually building and discovering concepts is still needed” (p. 407).

A study that influenced interest in pursuing this particular study is a grounded theory study of the impact of race on the cross-racial mentor relationships between White and African-American professionals and managers (Thomas, 1993). The study showed that more supportive relationships formed when both parties in the relationship shared the same strategy for addressing race—either both talked about it openly or both did not talk about it at all. The study also offered the following advice when the researcher reflected that all his participants viewed their relationships as positive "research with a positive focus may help identify the psychological and contextual factors necessary for productive cross-race encounters” (p. 192).

This made me think about the importance of relationships at work and how taking a more positive organizational scholarship approach to inquiry in this area could yield a potential new lens through which to view coworker relationships across difference. Pittonsky (2010) discussed characteristics of positive organizational psychologist, Barbara Fredrickson’s, "broaden-and-build" theory and contended that:

Positive emotions are more closely linked to positive behaviors than are negative emotions and that they broaden a person's thought-action repertoire beyond typical patterns of thinking, creating opportunities to build a range of enduring personal resources including social resources such as friendships and social-support networks. (p. 195)

Relationships at work are important and high quality relationships can lead to increased satisfaction and happiness at work (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Wagner & Muller,
2008, 2009a, 2009b). It is also noted that relationships are most frequently formed with those who are more similar (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Wagner & Muller, 2009a). Wagner & Muller (2009) stated that "deep-seated biases make you more trusting of those who look most like you, who think like you, or with whom you have the most in common...or mirror each other on more controversial factors such as race, age, religion or sex" (para. 2). They also stated that "self-segregation can be seen...in the cafeteria of any larger corporation" and "a preference for working with those of the same race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides in our personal environments" (Wagner & Muller, 2009, para. 4).

Given the barriers that exist based on racioethnicity and the need for new theoretical models, studies that can explore success at the interpersonal level can potentially provide insight into how to achieve desired behavioral results in support of diversity, inclusion and/or cultural competence. What can one learn from coworkers who have conquered the great divide of racioethnic barriers? What can one learn about their success in creating a high quality relationship? How can one ground theory in their experience? This study set out to answer these types of questions.

**Purpose and Research Question**

The purpose of this research was to understand the nature of a high quality working relationship between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds and to generate a theoretical model that depicted the individual, team and/or organizational factors that contributed to the creation and sustainment of the relationship. The guiding research question for this study was "What contributes to forming and sustaining a high quality relationship between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds?"
Significance

This study may have offered a new lens through which to study relationships between coworkers of different races and ethnicities. It gave a framework for moving beyond studies of bias, stereotyping and discrimination to those of inclusion and cultural competence. The study drew out not only the individual and interpersonal impact of the relationship, but also the team and/or organizational factors that contributed to the relationship. Data was grounded in actual experiences of people of many different backgrounds and provided a theory that can potentially inform how such relationships can be achieved between coworkers. Personally, the study helped form additional grounding for me as an OD scholar-practitioner who practices and conducts research in the area of diversity, inclusion and cultural competence.

Theoretical Influences

This study used grounded theory research methodology, so ultimately the theory emerged from the data. Consequently there was no formal theoretical framework that guided this study. The principles of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell 2007), particularly constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005, 2006, 2009; Goulding 2002), guided the way. That said, it would be naive to state that I had no influencing theoretical frameworks that I found pertinent to this type of study or that have influenced me as a researcher and in practice. Such influence came from attribution theory, racial identity development, social justice research-cycle of oppression and cycle of liberation, critical theory, transformational learning, human resource development, organization development and organizational behavior and most recently positive organizational scholarship. I also have had practical experience with
diversity, inclusion and cultural competence efforts in organizations. This was actually a
good thing throughout the research. Researchers should come with a theoretical eye or
sensitivity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I remained open, but had theoretical sensitivity. As
noted by Goulding "Nobody starts with a blank slate" (2002, p. 55).

In keeping with grounded theory principles, my challenge was to not go too deep
into one particular theoretical framework at the start of the research so that it influenced
the research process. I only brought them out of my theoretical tool box as the data
dictated (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding 2002). This happened more
so in the later analysis of the data than throughout the early stages of data collection. The
beauty of grounded theory for this study was the opportunity to bring together different
theoretical models and experiences from a variety of disciplines that may or may not
typically be considered collectively when generating theory. Given how multiple
disciplines have informed the work in the area of diversity, grounded theory was the
perfect roadmap to have had along for this research journey.

**Researcher Interest and Background**

I shed some light already on my interest and background as I let my voice come
through in the prior sections of this chapter. I share more here. My awareness of how
people react to racial differences was formed at a very young age when I experienced the
negative reaction of an adult when I asked her to buy me a Black doll. Racial division
still plagues my hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. I have had personal transformative
learning experiences on par with those described by Parks Daloz (2000) by being in
friendship with those of a different race than me. These experiences have fueled a
lifelong interest in all facets of diversity and particularly in race relations. I currently
practice in a hospital and realize that cultural competence goes beyond positive coworker relations or increasing the customer base and market share and can be a life or death proposition. I could have found satisfaction exploring relationships across age, gender, sexual orientation, educational backgrounds, organizational positions, or cultural competence in healthcare, but it felt right for me to focus now on the exploration of racioethnic differences. That said, as the research provided opportunity to explore the multiple connections of identity without losing focus, I did brave that territory. I also offer ideas for future research as it relates to identity factors in chapter five.

I am drawn to seeing things from both a critical and positive bent--a critical theorist drawn to the possibilities and the hope for a better tomorrow. While I realize and see the cycle of oppression, I see opportunity in moving toward a cycle of liberation framework (Harro, 2000 & 2000a). Exploring success stories across racioethnic differences in coworkers provided a great avenue to explore both sides of what interests me. I think I was a strong instrument for doing this particular research study. Citing Freire (in Brookfield, 2000, p. 145), I was able to grapple with and find ways to put in practice "how we remain critical yet optimistic while practicing a transformative pedagogy of hope." I had the travel guide of scholars who have gone before me, a toolbox of potential theoretical lenses, and the map of grounded theory. While the work will not change the world, it did hopefully add new knowledge to the field of diversity and inclusion.

**Definition of Common Terms**

**Diversity.** Diversity means the combination of differences and similarities that exist. Johnson & Gonzalez (2007) extended the definition to specify examples of some
aspects that can be observed (e.g. race, gender, ethnicity, age) and those less obvious (e.g. culture, language, religion, sexual orientation, profession, socioeconomic status).

"Diversity is the mix" (Tapia, 2009. p12). While this study focused on race and ethnic diversity, individuals represent many facets of diversity.

**Inclusion.** Inclusion means simply to include or the process of including. In this study it meant that people of all backgrounds have a voice at work, have power, are included in decision making, etc. The ROI of Diversity (2005) noted that "the true practice of inclusion releases unlimited potential...it is an environment where the best people can do their best work" (p. 111). "Inclusion is making the mix work" (Tapia, 2009. p12).

**Cultural competence.** Tyrone Stoudemire of Hewitt Associates (as cited in Toops, 2009, p. 27) defined this as "the ability to discern and take into account one's own and others' world views to seize opportunities, make decisions and resolve conflicts in ways that optimize cultural differences for better, longer-lasting and more creative solutions.” Building on Tapia (2010) it could be defined as how the mix interacts with each other.

**Racioethnicity/racioethnic.** Explained by Cox (2004) as referring to "biologically and/or cultural distinct groups” (p. 126). He also explained the term was his way of creating a short hand to denote any racial or ethnic differences. This term is also used by other researchers (Herdman & McMillan-Capehard, 2010; Jackson et. al., 2003; Johnson & Gonzalez, 2007). It was used in this study in the same short hand fashion as Cox (2004) described to refer to any combination of racial and/or ethnic background.
**Positive organizational scholarship.** "Positive organizational scholarship is the study of that which is positive, flourishing, and life giving in organizations. Positive refers to elevating processes and outcomes in organizations" (Cameron & Caza, 2004, p. 731).

**Social/group/racial identity.** "Social identity is part of your self-concept that derives from your knowledge of your membership together with the value and emotional significance you attach to that membership" (Johnson D.R., & Gozalez, 2007, p. 3). Research that informs identity development is sometimes referred to as social identity, racial identity and/or group identity development. All explore the same phenomenon of identity with a particular group so in this study, social, group, and racial identity were used interchangeably.

This study is explored in five total chapters. Chapter two is a brief literature review of applicable research, chapter three explores ontological and epistemological perspectives that guided the research as well as the research methods used in the study in detail, chapter four further explores the research analysis process and reports the findings and finally chapter five provides a summary and discussion of the study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

It is important for grounded theory researchers to not become too steeped in theory prior to a study. This helps the researcher keep an open mind so that the theory emerges from the data. It was equally important to provide context for the study in line with past research. As concepts emerged in the data analysis process, additional literature was reviewed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Goulding 2002). This additional review is reflected in chapter five. Background and context are provided here on organizational diversity and inclusion strategies, social/group/racial identity development, relationships at work, and positive organizational scholarship (POS).

Organizational Diversity and Inclusion Strategies

Work in the area of diversity and inclusion in organizations emerged from the Civil Rights movement era and particularly the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Affirmative Action Executive Order of 1972. With the release of the book Workplace 2000 in the 1980s, the focus of research and practice attempted to move beyond affirmative action to managing diversity in a broader sense (Ashkanasy, Hartel & Daus, 2002). This broader sense has been the focus of scholars and practitioners for 30 years. While diversity strategies often involve diversity recruitment and training, they have become more involved with looking at diversity as a business strategy that is systemic in nature. While diversity is still the prevalent term for strategies that seek to maximize the employee experience and work product of a diverse work force, the terms inclusion and cultural competence are becoming more prevalent in the 21st century.

Cox (1991, 1994) provided resources on how to look at diversity strategies and their impact at the individual, group and organizational levels. Johnson (2005) broke
down diversity as a change process and social identity into simple terms and Thomas (1991, 1996, 1999, 2000a, 2010), author of many bestselling books on diversity, challenged researchers and practitioners to think of diversity broadly and strategically. Books and also trade magazines and journals provide theoretical and practical insights on diversity efforts in organizations and have illustrated the trend of moving toward the use of the term inclusion (Sweeney, 2009; The ROI of Diversity, 2005; Tapia, 2009; Toops, 2009). This literature provides insights on how to make diversity efforts work through storytelling and best practice sharing typically by looking at particular organizations and their efforts, successes and failures.

In a 2003 review of research on team and organizational diversity (Jackson, Joshi & Erhardt, 2003) sixty-three studies, published between 1997-2002, were analyzed. The studies involved a variety of diversity factors not only including racioethnicity, age and gender factors, but also factors of diversity such as personality, education and functional background. The authors concluded with the importance of studying the intersections of diversity factors. The authors also stressed the need for new theoretical models. In a more recent review of literature and studies in the area of diversity, there is a caution between confusing a laundry list of best practices with research (Marquis, et. al., 2008).

Many researchers have noted that it is important to pay attention systemically and strategically to diversity, inclusion and cultural competence (Cox 1994 & 2001; Martinez, 2010; Ramos & Chesler, 2010; Thomas, 1991, 1996, 2006a, 2006b & 2010) and to look at the intersectionality of multiple dimensions of identity (Ashkanasy, Hartel & Daus, 2002; Holvino, 2010; Huntley, 2010; Jackson, et al., 2003; Rios, 2010; Royal, 2010). Thomas (1991, 1996, 2006a, 2006b & 2010) stressed the need to move diversity
beyond race and gender in research and practice, and suggested replacing the word diversity with complexity. Race showed up second most frequently behind gender in a scan of fairly recent studies on organizational diversity (Jackson et al., 2003). Other researchers noted that studies that include racial and ethnic diversity specifically are important and needed (Alderfer & Tucker's, 1996; Cox, 2004; Royal, 2010).

When conducting studies of race relations based on embedded intergroup relations theory, Alderfer, Tucker, & Drasgow (1983) and Alderfer & Tucker (1996) paid particular attention to studying the impact of the racial identity of the researchers and participants. In the 1996 study, they found a relationship to like-race administration groups to survey response rate and satisfaction, but little impact on what participants reported about race relations. In both studies the researchers noted that equally important to their statistical findings is that researchers should do self-reflection when doing research and should consider the impact of the cross racial dynamics between researcher and participant.

Leadership and the intersection with diversity is a prevalent area of study. In a meta-analytic analysis of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, LMX was shown to have a significant relationship to key organizational factors such as job performance, overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with supervisor, commitment, role clarity and conflict, member competence and turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Nishii and Mayer (2009) conducted survey research to evaluate the relationship between inclusive practices of managers as defined by LMX and turnover of diverse groups. They found that the interaction of diversity factors with LMX was significant only when the LMX mean was high. The researchers concluded that "these findings highlight the
important role that leaders play in influencing the relationship between diversity and turnover through the patterns of inclusion they create in their units” (p. 1412).

A newer concept in research is diversity climate (Herdman & McMillan-Capehart, 2010). Building on organizational climate theory, diversity climate was assessed via a survey with a large hotel chain that had implemented a variety of diversity initiatives. Three questions were used to assess diversity climate "'The hotel values differences in its employees,' 'I believe this hotel strives to have a diverse workforce,' and 'The hotel makes sure the opinions and input of employees from different backgrounds are heard.'" (p. 45). The study showed that evidence of initiatives did have an impact on diversity climate, but the results are mitigated by perceptions of manager values and perceptions of having diverse employees in leadership roles.

Two special editions on issues of diversity, the spring 2010 OD Practitioner and the April 2010 American Psychologist, provided a scan of the theoretical views of diversity and inclusion. American Psychologist scholars explored the relationship between leadership and aspects of diversity. In one article a wide range of leadership theories were explored from the context of gender and culture (Ayman & Korabik, 2010) and in another from the context of women and multiple intersections of identity (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Pittinsky (2010) applied a two-dimensional model of intergroup leadership to issues of national diversity and contended that it could have application to exploring other dimensions of diversity. The model described the dynamic of both positive and negative intergroup attitudes and explored their unique antecedents and outcomes.
In addition to the many personal reflections that appeared in the April 2000 tribute volume of the *OD Practitioner*, theoretical models that relate to differences in organizations were presented. Royal (2010) presented Quadrant Behavior Theory (QBT) and Huntley (2010) Journeys' of Race and Culture. Holvino (2010) explored how organizations and organizational theories are "raced, gendered and classed and what is the impact of such practices" (p. 55) and encouraged exploration of intersections of multiple group identities. QBT provides a framework for looking at relationships across race and gender. It explores competing factors of power and privilege based on group membership. Royal's (2010) Quadrant Behavior Theory provides one framework for exploring the impact of race and gender particularly as it relates to inequality. She contended in the article that:

Group membership and acceptance of your identity group credentials is the strongest intersection of culture and systems. The group carries out the cultural contract. The organization is the stage for the action. The individual level is the arena of the highest impact for behavior change because each of us has had the power to influence and create new group behavior based on our individual and personal power. We can create a new acceptance code. (pp. 27-28)

Given the importance of group identity in working across difference, the topic is explored more fully in the next section.

**Racial/Social/Group Identity Development**

Social identity is the result of the connections to groups that individuals have formed over the course of their lives that inform self concept. These social or group identities might include gender, age, race, culture, religion, national origin, sexual
orientation, occupation etc. It could be any dimension of difference that an individual values. Social identity derives from being conscious of the group membership, accepting it and ascribing importance to being a member of the group. Social identity can blend individual, interpersonal and group interactions. People make judgments of group identity based on perception and people explain self and others behaviors by attributing certain value or judgment based on perceptions. Attribution and perception are often at play when bias and stereotyping is displayed (Johnson & Gonzales, 2007). "Members of identity groups share common biological characteristics, participate in equivalent historical experiences, and as a result tend to have similar world views" (Alderfer et al., 1983).

Tatum's research on racial identity development (1992, 1997, and 2007) built on the earlier work of Cross (1978) and Helms (1984). While teaching classes on the psychology of racism and interviewing students in her research from a variety of racioethnic backgrounds, Tatum explored the stages of racial identity development. She applied Cross' (1978) five stages of Black identity development noted as reencounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization and internalization-commitment and Helms' (1984) six stage White racial identity development. These six stages are contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independent, immersion/emersion and autonomy. Tatum (1992) explained that while they may be presented in a linear format it is more accurate to think of them as a spiral experience. In a study of the racial identity development of Black youth growing up in White communities, Tatum (2004) interviewed 18 college students between the ages of 18-22 and asked them to describe
their experiences growing up. She concluded the students fell into three groups: race-conscious, race-neutral or race-avoidant.

There are growing reflections on racial identity development in the US beyond Black and White. Work looking at Latino, Asian, American Indian, and Multiracial identity development as well as applying racial identity development in conflict and counseling contexts are explored in Wijeyesinghe & Jackson (2001). Of their text, they stated that it:

Reflects our belief that the understanding of racial identity development is constantly evolving in response to changing social dynamics, ongoing research, and the fluidity of our understanding of both race and the experience of racial groups in the United States ... it is a snapshot in time. (p. 2)

While not specifically explored or applied in work settings, this work can inform the potential dynamics between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds. The dynamic of race is a deep one within the United States in particular. It is noted that racism has impacted racial identity development of those targeted by racism as well as those who benefit from it (Tatum 1992, 1997, 2004; Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2001).

**Relationships at Work**

Relationships are also referred to in research as partnerships (Wagner & Muller, 2008, 2009a, 2009b) and as connections (Jordan, Walker & Hartling, 2003; Dutton & Heaphy 2003). The impact of relationships at work is described by Gersick, Bartunek & Dutton (2000) when they said "to join a profession is to plunge into a community of people. Much more than the meeting rooms and offices where we work, our relationships with individuals and groups constitute the environment in which we live our professional
lives" (p. 1026). Wagner & Muller (2008) contended that studying individuals in partnership lag beyond the studies for understanding self or team dynamics. As they studied partnerships at work, they noted that "humans are made for collaboration. Our blood pressure rises and falls based on whether allies or enemies are nearby" (Wagner & Muller, 2008, para. 5). They also shared that when individuals were asked to guess the weight of a box, it was perceived as lighter if they knew someone would help them. As Wagner & Muller (2009) continued to research partnerships at work, they concluded that there are eight elements of a powerful partnership that hold true between work peers or supervisor and employee: complementary strengths, a common mission, fairness, trust, acceptance, forgiveness and communicating. The researchers noted that relationships are more easily formed with those similar to oneself and that there is a need for differences in positive partnerships (Wagner & Muller, 2008). They did collect age, gender and education differences in their research but did not comment on their interplay with their findings. They described a plan for future research using this data. Racioethnicity was not tracked (Wagner & Muller, 2009b).

While not focused specifically on relationships at work, a description of relational competence (Jordan, 2004) provides another insight into what skills may help make a relationship more high quality. She wrote that relational competence involves:

1. Movement toward mutuality and mutual empathy (caring and learning flows both ways), where empathy expands for both self and other
2. Development of anticipatory empathy, noticing and caring about our impact on others
3. Being open to being influenced
4. Enjoying relational curiosity

5. Experiencing vulnerability as inevitable and a place of potential growth rather than danger

6. Creating good connection rather than exercising power over others as the path of growth (p. 15)

Describing high quality connections at work, Dutton & Heaphy (2003) provided a metaphor of human blood vessels to depict the nature of human connections. When people have a high-quality connection (HQC), the connection flows freely and is rich with nutrients—they are life-giving. In a low-quality connection they are restricted and “there is a little death in every interaction” (Dutton, as cited in Dutton & Heaphy, 2003, p. 264), so they are life-depleting. It is noted that “understanding the quality of the connection is critical to understanding why and how people thrive at work” (p. 264). This comment is contrasted with the assertion that “despite its importance organizational researchers have not consistently defined connection quality” (p. 265). Dutton & Heaphy offered a way to define and indicates the quality of a connection between people by using three clusters of indicators, one focused on the features of the connection between people and the other two clusters noted the experience of each person. They balanced their definition by stating that each connection is dynamic and affected by “changes in the individual and the social context” (p. 266). They provided the following key characteristics of HQCs: Higher emotional carrying capacity; Tensility, the ability bend and withstand strain; Degree of connectivity as indicated by the relationship’s generativity and openness to new ideas; Feelings of vitality and aliveness; Positive regard; Mutuality; and, Enhanced physiological responses and outcomes. They
offered four theoretical lenses through which to view a HQC, an exchange lens noting leader-member exchange theory, an identity lens, a growth and development lens and a learning lens.

Using the metaphor of relationships between elephants and giraffes, Thomas (1999) discussed relationships across difference. The story promoted a shared responsibility for creating an organization that works well for all. The book strived to help individuals at all organizational levels deal more effectively with diversity. Thomas noted three particular skill areas: ability to identify diversity mixtures and their related tensions; ability to analyze the mixtures and related tension; and, an ability to select an appropriate response.

Research across differences at work has shown that women and men view relationships at work differently (Fletcher, 2003 & Gersick, Bartunek & Dutton 2000). In an experimental study of people defined as high prejudiced and low prejudiced as measured by a test instrument, it was noted that a focus on multiculturalism led to more willingness to learn from and about out-group members by low prejudice individuals (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2010). As previously mentioned, a leader with more inclusive exchanges with staff has an impact on turnover of employees across demographic differences (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Researchers have shared that challenging the norm to form close relationships with those who are similar (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Wagner & Muller, 2009a), but rather with those who are different is not easy. "People carry identity and group memberships and their consequences from organization to organization (Alderfer et.al., 1981, p 108). In the Spring 2010 issue of OD Practitioner, three OD
professional partnerships shared personal accounts of building relationships across difference (McMahon & Cahill, 2010; Miller & Katz, 2010; Ramos & Chesler, 2010).

Diversity and inclusion efforts are moving beyond representation (Chin, 2006; Herdman & McMillan-Caphart, 2010; Martinez, 2010; ROI of diversity, 2005; Sweeney, 2009; Tapia, 2009; Thomas, 2006b; Toops 2009). Researchers have also asserted that "compared with isolated coworkers, those with just one collaborative relationship are 29% more likely to say they will stay with their company for the next year and 42% more likely to intend to remain with their current employer for their entire career (Wagner & Muller, 2008, para. 13)."

**Positive Organizational Scholarship**

Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is a newer area of focus within organizational studies (Cameron & Caza, 2004; Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003b). The book *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline* (2003a) gives an overview of the many potential areas of focus within POS. High quality connections discussed in the previous section (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003) is an example of work in this area.

While POS does not ignore negative aspects within organizations, it seeks to explore the less explored aspects of positive deviance in organizations such as thriving, appreciation, collaboration, vitality and meaningfulness (Cameron & Caza, 2004; Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003b). This study of positive states and processes is done within organizational contexts and in a way that builds empirical credibility and theoretical explanations (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003b). POS strives to build on previous work and theoretical constructs. POS "expands the boundaries of these theories
to make visible positive states, positive processes, and positive relationships that are typically ignored within organizational studies" (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003b, p 5). Other traditions that explore positive dynamics include positive psychology, appreciative inquiry and "community psychology, humanistic organizational behavior, organizational development, prosocial motivation and citizenship behavior, and corporate social responsibility" (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003b, p 7). A positive lens is promoted within OD and for diversity processes (Royal, 2006).
Chapter 3: Methodology

While many qualitative researchers say they are using grounded theory as a way to analyze data, true grounded theory research emphasizes theory development that is grounded in the experience of the research participants (Merriam, 1998). The founders of the methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) proffered that the usefulness of a theory is informed by how it was created and that one that is inductively developed from social research is better. The methodology encourages researchers to not become too steeped in the literature prior to conducting the study. While I clearly did not ignore the literature of theory, the last chapter provides theoretical sensitivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and it showed my guiding interests and "points of departure" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 17) for this study.

Grounded theory is particularly applicable to studying human processes and interactions (Creswell, 2007) and where there is little study in an area or there is a need for a fresh slant on existing data (Goulding, 2002). Scholars have also promoted the use of grounded theory specifically with a diversity focus in order to yield theories that are relevant to diverse populations (Green, Creswell, Shope, & Clark, 2007). For all of these reasons, this methodology suited this topic of inquiry. The following sections describe this research study in detail by covering ontological and epistemological perspectives, methods, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, participant protection and data storage, credibility, researcher reflexivity, and limitations.

Ontological and Epistemological Perspectives

Grounded theory is not without its ontological and epistemological debates. The debate particularly rests between objectivist versus constructivist grounded theory

There is agreement with the role and influence of symbolic interactionism from the Chicago School of Sociology (Charmaz, 2005, 2006, 2009; Clarke, 2005; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Crotty, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002). Symbolic interactionism built on the concepts of pragmatists including George Herbert Mead and John Dewey. Three tenets of symbolic interactionism include:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.

2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.

3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he [or she] encounters (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

Blumer said that "fundamentally human groups or society exists in action and must be seen in action (1968, p. 6). As defined, one can see how this perspective has informed grounded theory.

While some have specifically challenged grounded theory's ontological objectivist underpinnings (Charmaz, 2005, 2006, 2009; Clarke 2005), I think it could have just been the influence of the politics in academia at the time of its founding. It is clearly a methodology that differs in form and fashion from typical positivistic methodologies and symbolic interactionism by definition lands soundly with interpretivism. While I agree with Charmaz's (2005, 2006, 2009) constructivist contentions that facts and values are linked and that fostering researcher reflexivity about our own interpretations is important,
I do not agree that the use of tools and methods as described by Corbin & Strauss (2008) stand in strict opposition to those contentions. Corbin strikes a chord with me when she said:

> Some researchers have walked away from the more traditional approaches to doing qualitative research, while others, like me, have tried to hold on to what is good about the past while updating it to bring it more in line with the present.

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 9)

I sensed frustration when she challenged if there should even be a grounded theory method, but rather researchers should think of it as a set of methods, or a variety of methods that share in common theory development with different philosophical underpinnings and ways to do data analysis (Corbin, 2009). I agree with Glaser & Strauss (1967), that qualitative and quantitative data do not have to be at odds. All of this is stated well by Morse (2009) when she stated that "as with all qualitative methods--and perhaps all research methods--the method cannot be used in a 'cookbook' or formulaic way" and "...grounded theory is not being performed in exactly the same way each time it is used" (p. 14). I think all scholars presented in this chapter could agree with that point.

Perhaps most important in this debate is for the researcher to clearly state her ontological and epistemological lens and to clearly articulate the methods used within the study. To that end, the lens through which I conducted this research was that of social constructionist ontology and an interpretive epistemology. Constructivist grounded theory fit well within my lens (Charmaz 2005, 2006, 2009). I was an active participant in this study and one who has experienced the phenomena of interest. I was not an objective bystander and my experiences did help form the theory that emerged. That said,
I did not refrain from using a variety of analysis tools created by other grounded theory researchers.

Methods

While theory development was primary as I explored what contributed to the forming and sustaining of a high quality relationships between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds, rich description was also important (Merriam, 1998). The rich description was achieved via the use of in depth recorded interviews.

Participant Selection

A combination of convenience and snowball tactics were employed to identify research participants. The process was purposive by listing specific participation criterion within the convenience (Creswell, 2007) invitation to the research process. Participants were not limited by industry or position within the organization. To qualify for the study, individuals met the following criteria: self identified as having formed and sustained a high quality relationship of at least one year with a coworker of a different racial and/or ethnic background; and, felt as if they knew how they achieved it; and, formed this relationship while working in the United States; and, finally were willing to share their experiences and racioethnic backgrounds with me as a researcher.

I began the search for participants by asking current colleagues and friends via email if they qualified and/or knew of others who qualified. I encouraged friends and colleagues to let the email snowball to others. Included in this email was a survey link from SurveyMonkey that helped track potential research participants. This helped me to ensure I had a diverse mix of participants and that I followed up with interested parties in a timely manner. A copy of this invitation to participate is in Appendix A. A copy of the
survey questions used is in Appendix B. I also searched for participants via professional
organizations and networking sites through which I am affiliated such as the American
Society for Training and Development (ASTD), OD Network, and LinkedIn. Within
LinkedIn, I posted a research participation inquiry on a variety of HR, OD and Diversity
group pages. A copy of this general invitation to participate is in Appendix C. The
survey instrument was the same. While I also discussed potential participation with some
colleagues and friends, I used email and ultimately the survey to track all potential and
actual research participants.

Those interviewed were a purposeful theoretical sample based on the research
criteria. As data were analyzed and categories and concepts emerged, earlier interviews
were reviewed with a more theoretical lens. Some follow up emails were sent and one
follow up conversation was scheduled for clarification, but I determined there was no
need to schedule additional interviews with the same or new participants based on any
particular theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Goulding, 2002).

For the purpose of this research, racioethnic diversity was defined with those on
the US Census 2010 Listing. I asked participants to self identify racioethnic background
as part of the survey process. There was a place to note "other" if a person felt the list was
limiting. I ensured that no more than half of the overall participants were White, non
Hispanic (Green, et.al., 2007). After the survey responses were analyzed, an email
invitation to participate in the study was sent to each individual. A copy of this invitation
is shared in Appendix D. Ultimately, 27 individuals participated in the study.

Data Collection
The primary mode for collecting data was via semi structured interviews. Whenever feasible, interviews were conducted in person. In situations in which I and the participant were in different cities, phone interviews were conducted. All interviews were recorded and saved as computer .wav files so that I could listen to them while transcribing and/or coding. I personally transcribed the first five interviews. A professional third party transcriptionist who was bound by a confidentiality statement transcribed the remaining interviews.

I heard Patton (2002) loud and clear when he stated "the quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer" (p. 341). An effective interview is a guided conversation (Charmaz, 2006; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002). While I gathered some demographic data from each participant, the main interview process flowed from a semi structured process with a few open ended questions to start the process. Probing questions were asked to go deeper into the data. I was attuned to Charmaz's (2006) advice that "rather than uttering 'uh huhs' or just nodding as if meanings are automatically shared ... say, 'that's interesting, tell me more about it'" (p. 26). I included context before and after the interview (Kvale, 1996) and asked all participants a final question to invite participants to share anything that they wanted to share, but had not (Patton, 2002). Almost always, this question yielded additional, relevant insights. The interview guide used for this study is found in Appendix E. As the process and themes emerged, additional theoretical questions were asked with no major revision to this basic interview guide.

Also important during interviewing was building trust and rapport (Goulding, 2002). While identity, particularly racioethnicity, was a focus of this study, it was
important to keep the potential dynamics and perceptions across differences in mind and how my racioethnic background differed from those of my participants (Alderfer, Tucker, & Drasgow 1983; Alderfer & Tucker, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Green, et.al, 2007). Given self work I had done prior to this study to increase my personal cultural competence, I felt I handled trust and relationship building well during the interviews.

**Data Analysis**

Across the various perspectives on grounded theory research presented in this chapter there are a variety of nuances when it comes to data analysis. While the procedures may vary, where there is agreement is that within grounded theory analysis, one employs a constant comparative process, conducts data coding in order to get to higher level conceptual categories, writes memos as part of the data analysis process and that data analysis begins when the first data are collected.

The analysis process yielded codes, concepts and conceptual categories. Open coding (Creswell, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and initial coding (Charmaz, 2006) are essentially the same process. I called my work at this stage of the analysis process initial open coding or just open coding. Corbin dropped the calling out of the specific practices of axial coding and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and described a process similar to Charmaz’s focused coding (2006). For this study, this higher level of coding was referred to as focused coding. Throughout all coding, memo writing was used as an analysis tool. The analogy of data analysis as a spiral as I went through this process (Creswell, 2007) was accurate.

**Initial Open Coding.** The goal with this phase was to remain open to all possible theoretical directions while staying very close to the data. This coding phase informed
subsequent decisions as I defined core conceptual categories. Speed and spontaneity was recommended as was using words to depict action. To that end, I used line by line coding and used gerunds to denote action. This coding helped me sort data into categories and processes and helped achieve grounded theory fit and relevance. When possible and relevant, as advised by Charmaz (2006), I used in vivo codes, or codes directly stated by the participants.

**Focused Coding.** This second phase of coding seeks to find the most significant initial codes and to raise them to a higher conceptual level. This was done by analyzing data across interviews and memos (Charmaz, 2006). It was during this phase of analysis that I explored the use and application of the conditional matrix (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) and situational analysis (Clarke, 2005, 2009). These tools situated the data into a broader context as I explored the developing theory. During this phase of coding, the literature areas that emerged from the data were explored to help form the conceptual categories and to confirm theoretical saturation.

**Memo Writing.** Memo writing is another critical step in grounded theory. Memo writing provides an opportunity for immediate reactions to the data, noting preliminary conceptual categories, making comparisons and staying actively engaged with the data. They may be words or diagrams and provide a repository of ideas that can be reviewed and changed throughout the data analysis process (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Goulding, 2002). "It is not the form of the memos that is important, but the actual doing of them" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p 118). Charmaz (2006) advised "begin writing memos as soon as you have some ideas and categories to pursue. If you are at a loss for what to write, elaborate on your most frequent codes" (p. 84).
analysis, I wrote a variety of memos throughout the research process. I wrote reaction
memos right after each one to note key observations, I wrote memos after segments of
interviews were transcribed and coded and then compared memos and wrote combined
analysis memos. My memos included clip art, bulleted lists and sometimes more detailed
summaries. The memos were an instrumental part of the constant comparative process.

Theoretical saturation. Once theoretical sampling yields no additional
theoretical insights, properties, or evidence that inform the conceptual categories germane
to theory development, theoretical saturation is achieved (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser &
Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002). While there is no grounded theory litmus strip to know
when this has occurred, I trusted my instincts and analysis as recorded in my memos. At
the completion of the data analysis process, I analyzed all memos and drawings, enlisted
the help of a graphic designer, and depicted the theory that emerged in response to the
research question in the form of a theoretical model (Creswell, 2007).

Participant Protection and Data Storage

In order to protect research participants throughout this process, I was clear and
transparent about the study purpose and process and I handled their data with care. This
was shared in the informed consent process that began each interview. The consent form
is included in Appendix F. It was signed and collected via paper when interviews were
conducted in person. It was collected with electronic signatures when interviews were
conducted via conference call. I treated participants with care and empathy and worked to
leave them in a good place at the conclusion of the interview. While my default mode
was to maintain the confidentiality of the research participants by using individual and
omitted references to specific organizations, I did invite participants to own their stories
and have their names shared if they prefer it (Patton, 2002). I invited all participants to review the final prepared transcript to verify the content as desired. Six participants elected to use their own names and 10 participants elected to review their transcripts after completion.

The primary repository for all research data was my personal laptop to which only I had password protected access. Data that existed in print such as consent forms were kept in a locked cabinet file drawer in my home office. Interview recordings were shared with my transcriptionist via a secured site. They were deleted from that shared secure site upon completion.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

My aim was credible and trustworthy research. I invited participants to review and edit transcripts. I shared a summary of my final themes and the theoretical model with all of my participants and invited their review. Nine participants responded to this invitation and offered validation of the theory. Finally, while they were not actively engaged in the data collection and analysis as an active diverse research team (Green, et. al., 2007), my dissertation committee was made up of diverse individuals who helped to ensure accuracy and integrity of the research through their review.

**Researcher Disclosure and Reflexivity**

I have lived the experiences described as criteria for the study. In keeping with constructivist grounded theory, I used these insights to help create meaning throughout the process. However, I did bracket and suspend my experiences so that they were only called upon when the research data dictated so that I did not unduly influence the data with my bias. While I sought out research participants beyond my immediate circle, there
were some instances when the persons interviewed were people with whom I have close relationships, one in fact, was talking about me as her high quality coworker relationship.

I appreciated the cultural competence advice given by Green et al. (2007) and I acknowledge that I have more experience with coworkers who are African-American than from other racioethnic backgrounds. While learning about differences has been a focus of mine for years, I enjoyed the opportunity to learn from my variety of participants to enhance my own cultural competence. I acted ethically and modeled a value for diversity, inclusion and cultural competence. I believe I left all participants feeling good about the experience of participating in the research and I acknowledge them as co-creators of the theory developed.

**Limitations**

This research focused only on individuals working in organizations in cities across the United States. While the intent was to create a theory, the theory presented may or may not be applicable to other contexts. Insights gleaned were from the 27 participants who graciously agree to participate and from my interpretations as a researcher so it comes with the bias attached to each individual. As I pursued this research study, I assumed that the data presented by the participants were their true identities and experiences. I leave it to the reader to ultimately define the transferability of the theory to any other context as a result of the findings and discussion that follow in this dissertation.

This chapter gave an overview of the methodology. The data analysis process along with the linkage of the data to the theoretical model components is explored in greater detail in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings

Relationships at work are an important part of our work experience. As organizations become an ever increasing diverse mix of employees, it is important to build relationships across these many differences. The focus of this study was to explore what contributes to forming and sustaining a high quality relationship between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds. The data collected and analyzed via grounded theory methods for this study helped to explore this question. This chapter begins with a description of the 27 valued research participants and a review of the coding and comparative analysis process that led to the development of a theory that depicts how high quality coworker relationships (HQCR) are formed and sustained across racial and/or ethnic difference. With the grounding of the data from the research participants, a HQCR is defined; the organizational and personal factors that contribute to forming such relationships are explained; and then the themes that contributed to forming, growing and sustaining a HQCR are explored. Many of the themes appear common to any HQCR. Themes within these sections that appear particular to a HQCR across race and ethnicity are highlighted after common themes are described. Finally, the chapter offers a summary of the findings in response to the research question "What contributes to forming and sustaining a high quality relationship between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds?"

Study Participants

As described in Chapter 3, I used email and a survey (see Appendices A & B) to identify potential research participants. While a convenience strategy was employed by sharing my research criterion and request via email or a web posting with friends,
colleagues and professional networks, the survey was purposeful and theoretical in that it specified the criterion for research study (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Goulding 2002). The survey respondents confirmed that they met the research criterion and then shared racioethnic data about themselves and the person/s with whom they had a high quality coworker relationship. Between the snowball emailing and the postings on professional group pages within the LinkedIn site, it is hard to know how many people received my research request. From the snowballing process and survey, I had 62 potential research participants within just a couple of weeks. It was exciting to have so many interested in participating in the study. While I did receive what felt like an enthusiastic response, it is also important to note that I received a handful of responses from individuals who shared that they did not qualify for the study, having never had what they would describe as a high quality coworker relationship with someone of a different racioethnic background.

Knowing that I did not need to interview all 62 survey respondents, I set out to narrow down the number of participants. As noted in Chapter 3, my goal was to have no more than 50% of the participants be White, non-Hispanic so I did reach out to all survey respondents who indicated that they were Asian, Black/African-American, Hispanic or Biracial. I also wanted to have a good gender mix. I had far more survey respondents who appeared to be female by name to select from so to ensure I had good male representation in the study, I reached out to all of the respondents who appeared by my assessment to have a male first name. Finally, priority was given to individuals who were out of my home state and who I did not know through my personal or professional networks. This allowed for a better industry, business and regional mix to the participants. I had a high
percentage of White females who I knew through personal or work networks who responded to my survey and showed interest in being research participants. I contacted 11 of these respondents and indicated that I appreciated their responses, but that I would likely not be setting up a time for an interview. While I left the door open to have them as possible participants at a later time, given how the study unfolded, I did not need to go back to these individuals to schedule interviews.

I used email to reach out to each person to schedule an interview. The email provided possible times to schedule an interview, confirmed the research criterion, and included the consent form for review. An in-person session was offered to the individual if collocated in St. Louis, MO. A phone interview was offered to those who were in other cities. A copy of both email versions is included in Appendix D. Of the 51 invited to participate, 27 materialized into scheduled and conducted interviews. At the encouragement of my dissertation committee, several demographics were collected from my participants. Table 4.1 below describes the 27 participants in terms of racioethnic background, gender, age and where they grew up. These demographic data were collected at the start of the interview, for both the participant and the person about whom they would be speaking. Those of an Asian racial background included individuals who indicated their ethnic backgrounds as Filipino, Korean, Indian and Sri Lankan. Those of a Hispanic/Latino ethnic background indicated their ethnic backgrounds as Guatemalan/Latina/Mayan decent, Mexican-American, and Puerto Rican/Latina. Within the White racial category, most were US born, but two were Eastern-European from Serbia and Bulgaria. To help protect participant confidentiality, they were grouped, rather than separated by specific race and ethnic backgrounds using the following headings:
Asian, Black/African-American, Biracial, Hispanic/Latino, and White. The one White/Asian biracial individual indicated in Table 4.1 was subsequently grouped within the Asian grouping. When participants were quoted in this chapter, their overall racioethnic grouping was specified rather than their more specific ethnic background.

Given the popularity of looking at generations at work, the age of the participants were grouped by generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Participant ages ranged from 28-62, with most falling within the 35-45 age range. Within the USA Midwest category for participants and the coworkers they spoke about, states where individuals grew up included Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin. Within the USA South category, states included North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia, and of USA Northeast Origin was New York and USA West was California. Places where individuals grew up outside of the USA included Bulgaria, China, Guatemala, India, Latvia, Philippines, Puerto Rico (I realize this is a US Commonwealth), Serbia, and Sri Lanka.

Table 4.1
Participant Racioethnic Background, Gender, Age and Where Individual Grew Up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Dimension</th>
<th>Number in Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biracial (Asian and White)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data were also collected to better understand the nature of the relationship between the two coworkers such as if there was a reporting relationship or if they were peers and also if they were current coworkers or past coworkers. These relationship details are depicted in Table 4.2. In order to assess the variety of business represented by the individuals interviewed, company type, industry and size based on the number of employees was collected. This information is shared in Table 4.3.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Workplace Relationship</th>
<th>Number in Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Workplace Hierarchy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person’s Supervisor</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person’s Direct Report</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or more levels separating</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current or Past Coworker</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past (all still in contact)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.3
*Participant Workplace Information—Business Type, Industry and Size*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Dimension</th>
<th>Number in Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Business</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Profit</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Profit</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industry Type</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HVAC Services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of Organization (Number of Employees)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;50</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-200</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000-5,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000-15,000</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20,000-30,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;100,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All participants were asked to describe the racial/ethnic background, gender, age and where the person grew up in reference to the high quality coworker relationship they spoke about during the interview. While participants were allowed to reference others during the interview, they were encouraged to at least start with one particular individual in mind as they responded to the questions. Table 4.4 illustrates the background data of these coworkers of focus below.
Table 4.4  
*Coworker Racioethnic Background, Gender, Age and Where Individual Grew Up*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Dimension</th>
<th>Number in Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biracial (African-American and White)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-28 (Millenial)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-40 (Generation X)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-67 (Baby Boomer)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-85 (Silent)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where Coworker Grew Up</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA Midwest</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA Northeast</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA South</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA West</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of the USA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure, suspect Midwest</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were given a chance via the consent form to have their real names used in the study. Six of the 27 participants elected to do so. These will not be called out specifically, but the actual names are included in the list of pseudonyms used for the other 21 research participants. Table 4.5 lists the pseudonyms used for the study participants grouped by racioethnic background. Because my calendar appointments were viewable by others, when quoting by the names listed, dates of the interviews were not listed to better protect participant confidentiality. Further all coworkers who had access to
my calendar for viewing made an email commitment to not open or view any
appointments noted as research interviews. Calendar access was also turned off or limited
to some individuals during the time of the interviews.

Table 4.5
*Pseudonyms Used for Participants Grouped by Racioethnic Background*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racioethnic Background</th>
<th>Pseudonyms Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Gia, Hannah, Hiresh, Ishani, Martin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African-American</td>
<td>Alex, Denise, Evan, Felix, Gabriel, Janelle, John, Karen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>Carmen, Elena, Madeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Alice, Bob, Bonnie, Charles, Douglas, Fran, Ilan, Lilyana, Nada, Olivia, Sandra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Coding and Comparative Analysis Process Guiding Theory Development**

Through a grounded theory process of data collection via interviewing,
coding, memo writing and constant comparison of those data, theoretical iterations
emerged from the data. Throughout the coding process outlined below, gerunds were
used for coding in order to denote action and to ideally get to the process of how these
relationships were formed and sustained (Charmaz, 2006). Interviews one through eight
served as the basis of my initial open coding and subsequent interviews nine-27 became
that of focused and theoretical coding. In the sections below, I recap the process I used
for data collection, my initial coding process, my initial theoretical concepts, my constant
comparative process, my focused coding process, my revised theoretical concepts and my
final theoretical model for how high quality coworker relationships form, turn and grow
and are sustained across racioethnic difference.
**Data collection.** The 27 interviews took place between November 6 through December 17, 2010. Nine of the participants were interviewed via conference call and 18 were done in person. All yielded a digital .wav file that made it convenient to listen to the interviews multiple times. The interview guide noted in Appendix E served the research process well throughout. After demographic data were collected, every interview started with “describe your high quality relationship with this coworker.” I decided in my design that I wanted to allow the research participants to define the characteristics of a high quality coworker relationship rather than impose a definition. I wanted to make that a part of the study so I could compare my participant definitions to existing definitions of high quality relationships. Since I did not define “high quality” for the participants, many paused in reflection to this question wondering if they should define it first and then the relationship with the coworker. I encouraged participants to begin their response with whatever felt most comfortable. Often elements of how the relationship was formed and sustained came up in response to the first interview question. I still used my interview guide questions and probed as needed throughout to get more details on the forming of the relationship, focusing on what helped it go from a good relationship to high quality and what was done to sustain the relationship over time. The question that perhaps caused greatest pause was when asked to compare this relationship to those formed with coworkers of their same racioethnic background. Many People of Color did not have a close coworker of their same background to which to compare. Often the response was that it was/would be the same, but with more probing, most indicated some nuances that were different. The interviews achieved a conversational tone and many different follow up questions were asked, but generally all questions noted in the interview guide were
asked. From reflection and coding of the first eight interviews, subsequent interviews included the same foundational questions, but also included questions to theoretically test out the themes heard in prior interviews.

**Initial open coding.** Working with both the audio file and the typed transcript of the interview with an initial coding column to the left, I did a quick initial line by line coding process using gerunds, first with interviews one through five and then interviews six through eight. I would first listen to the question and answer on the audio file while reading the transcript. I would follow by coding that response line by line. I used this process with each question. A memo was written after each grouping of interviews coded. As noted in chapter three, I transcribed the first five interviews and then hired a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the subsequent interviews. Given the ease with which I could listen to the interview and then review to the typed document, I do not feel like I lost any opportunity to bathe in the data by hiring a transcriptionist. After I completed coding the first two interviews, I began a process of color coding via highlighting what could be important concepts. I then went back to the first two and used the same method. Figure 4.1 shows an illustration of this initial coding process and highlighting scheme for one of the interviews.
**Initial theoretical concepts.** From the first five interviews I wrote a memo outlining key concepts that I heard. I heard that there were some openings to help form the relationship, either of an organizational or a personal nature. I also heard that there was almost always a crossing into the personal realm of the individuals’ lives and this seemed to lead to a discussion specifically about their racioethnic differences. I also heard that there were turning points, things that helped to elevate, grow or shift the relationship from a good coworker relationship to a high quality coworker relationship. I used MS Word Clipart to help capture a picture that related to what I thought was emerging. Figure 4.2 shares a copy of this initial memo.
There is an opening – both an organizational opening (working together, a project, same department, assigning as a mentor/buddy, having diverse people actually there with whom to build a relationship, a boss’s encouragement, starting on same day, sitting next to each other, traveling together) and personal opening (seeking person out, making dedicated attempt to get to know, seeking out feedback, showing interest beyond what may be expected for role, etc.).

A crossing occurs into a personal realm. This seems to open the door to directly talking about race (except with #5)

Turning points
- Purposefully seeking out to improve relationship
- Earning a promotion
- Selection for a learning experience
- Participating in an exercise together (see interview 2) or projects (4, 5)
- Reaching reciprocity
- Talking about race specifically

Other ideas/reactions: Other’s attributing positive things to the person may help encourage person to build relationship with other (see interview 3)

Figure 4.2. Thoughts and reflections after initial coding of interviews 3-5 and re-listening to and highlighting interviews 1 and 2.

Constant comparative process. After compiling a summary of initial codes from interviews one-five and then for three-eight, I combined themes from both summaries to compare and contrast them. This process led to a summary of focused coding themes and resulted in some rough attempts at diagramming the process that was emerging from the data. I used a color coding scheme within a computer document to combine similar themes. Figure 4.3 is a sample of what this looked like.
A series of focused coding themes that related to organizational factors, personal factors, forming factors, sustaining factors, turning points and strategies for dealing with race indirectly or directly resulted from this process. Some rough conceptual theory diagrams resulted from this comparison process. Figure 4.4 depicts my early attempts with MS Word SmartArt to capture the relationship and the process that was emerging. What I heard were organizational or personal factors that led to the relationship forming. There were forming themes that overlapped with sustaining themes. Dealing indirectly or directly with race and/or ethnicity seemed to be a turning point in these relationships and/or there were some unique aspects of forming and sustaining across the racioethnic difference that stood out from what may be seen in any HQCR (noted as R/E in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forming</th>
<th>Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Sharing personal and professional info</td>
<td>- Interacting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Building/Establishing trust (how they talk about other people, consistent messages) and respect</td>
<td>- Connecting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relating on common factors</td>
<td>- Giving feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Delivering consistent messages</td>
<td>- Welcoming in to other groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reaching out/extending to build (for personal info and with work related projects)</td>
<td>- Making time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asking explicitly to work on high profile projects</td>
<td>- Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Being interested in person’s success</td>
<td>- Constant open communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Learning across difference</td>
<td>- Genuine interest in the person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Asking questions to learn</td>
<td>- Moving on from disagreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Extending an inclusive offer</td>
<td>- Mutual respect and engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Displaying inclusive behavior</td>
<td>- Giving and showing mutual interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forming
- Connecting due to common interest
- Supporting the work of the person
- Entering a space where you can joke with one another
- Getting to know personal info
- Asking/inquiring
- Overcoming fears and putting down professional airs
- Relating on a personal level
- Understanding what person is facing

Sustaining
- Sharing an insight only known to the person in higher organizational power position
- Providing context to an organizational decision make, the backstory (even when not necessary expected,
- Mutual interest on both parts
- Interacting in work and also possible personal venues
- Staying connected to life’s events (births,

Figure 4.3. Example of constant comparative process for interviews 1-8.
During the interviews, I heard motion, turning, ratcheting up of the relationship that made me think of gears. A summary of the themes that would be used for focused coding that came out of the comparison of initial codes from interviews one through eight are noted in Table 4.6.

*Figure 4.4. Initial Rough Theory Diagrams.*
### Summary from Interview Data

**High Quality Coworker Relationship (HQCR) Defined in Summary** – builds in order of apparent importance based on frequency and how topics came up

- Mutual and reciprocal (highlights below indicate they came up frequently in descriptions – could possibly be separate categories rather than a sub concept under “mutual and reciprocal”:)
  - **Respect**
  - **Trust**
  - Coaching & feedback
  - Know each other’s strengths, knows what each brings to the table
  - **Empathy** -- know when person is overwhelmed, understand where person’s challenges, where coming from
  - **Open, honest communication** (comes up more in relation to being absent when there is not a HQCR)
  - Supporting each other’s goals and aspirations
  - Responsiveness
- **Getting to know the “whole” person**
  - Professional and personal
  - Can be whole self, not juggling multiple personnas
  - Meeting person where he/she is
  - “Somebody who gets me”
  - “I can be me”
- **Working through and moving on from conflict or disagreement**
- **Getting Work Done Together**

**Contrasting Experience – absence of HQR in Summary** (in frequency order)

- No open communication or sharing on a deeper level
  - Saying only “hi” to each other
  - Talking only at meetings
  - Joking, but don’t go deeper
- Feeling like a guard is up, mask is on, having to posture with each other
- No understanding of where the person stands, not sure how person will interpret, no invitation to learn
- Feeling judged and dismissed
- Lack of trust
Forming and Sustaining a HQCR (in apparent importance/frequency order)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8 Themes/Conceptual Categories On Forming</th>
<th>9 Themes/Conceptual Categories on Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors</td>
<td>1. Making time and space to interact professionally and sometimes outside of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sharing on a professional and personal level</td>
<td>2. Seeking out and showing appreciation for insights – professional and/or personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Learning about each/inquiring about person/differences</td>
<td>3. Establishing mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Establishing and building trust (knowing person has your back, feeling safe with person)</td>
<td>4. Working through conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Overcoming personal fears/developing empathy—understanding self and other person</td>
<td>5. Welcoming to other groups/extending interest past current organizational role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Connecting/relating based on common interests—personal and/or professional</td>
<td>6. Continuing to build trust, to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Communicating consistently</td>
<td>7. Maintaining open and honest communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Showing interest in person’s success (may be part of displaying inclusive behaviors)</td>
<td>8. Sharing organizational information beyond what is expected in role/relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Serving as a “place of rest”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tackling Racial/Ethnic Difference With HQCR (7 of 8 interviews tackled directly eventually)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tackling Directly</th>
<th>Tackling Indirectly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asking direct questions – personal (hair, dating) or professional (what does it feel like to be the “only one”)</td>
<td>• Exposing more of yourself so people can get to know you better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doing an exercise together during training</td>
<td>• Extending an open door for someone to walk through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeking out specifically for different perspective (how might this go over in a global audience?)</td>
<td>• Making it easier for a person to open up if he/she desires to do so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning about each other’s culture – bonding over food, hair, etc.</td>
<td>• Getting outside comfort zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discuss within context of organizational effort to work on institutionalized racism/social justice/diversity initiatives</td>
<td>• Living by philosophy that there is no mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sharing specifically, a Black person might perceive this in this way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
your world

- Discussing things “you don’t talk about at work”

**Summary of Organizational and Personal Factors that Helped Open the Door a HQCR across Racial/Ethnic Difference (frequency/importance order)**

**Organizational**
- Diversity/Inclusion Practices in Place: social justice work stated, hiring for diverse racial candidates stated, learning experiences available, global focus, actually having a work environment where more than one race/ethnicity is present
- Proximity/Access-same department, start on same day, sitting next to each other, traveling together
- Required interaction -- Working together on a project together, being assigned as a mentor/buddy
- Culture that supports open and honest feedback
- Hierarchy – you have to go to this person for resources and/or boss encourages development of the relationship

**Personal**
- Bringing whole self to work, being open to sharing your whole self with other. Know yourself and be willing to learn about others.
- Prior experience of one or both parties dealing across racial/ethnic differences (such as growing up in diverse neighborhood, + experience with person of particular different ethnicity, race riots, moving from rural to urban environment, participating in organization “diversity” programs.
- Showing interest, making time to extend an extra effort to get to know and support the person’s success explicitly due to racial/ethnic difference
- Taking a risk, having courageous conversations, being willing to extend beyond role boundaries, ask questions, talk about what you “are not suppose to talk about at work”
- Extend a significant invite (to lunch, home, to provide feedback)
- Being a person who speaks positively/constructively about all people/all interactions

**Turning Points – from good relationship to HQCR**
- Transition from professional sharing to personal – sharing personal information, invite and going to person’s home
- Sharing a significant work product or success with individual
- Getting to point of comfortable joking and camaraderie
- Earning a promotion (or other organization success) from the person’s support
- Being selected for a special assignment, learning event, etc. based on input from the individual
- Talking specifically and explicitly about your racial/ethnic and other differences (such as gender, where you grew up, sexual orientation)
- Reaching reciprocity – movement to the other person coming to you for advice, an ear, and a safe space.
After sharing and/or talking over with two fellow grounded theory researchers and a friend, I realized that the turning points were important to growing the relationship and needed to be captured in a unique and specified way in the theory diagram. They were creating an upward spiral of success or helped turn the gear to create higher quality. Figure 4.5 depicts how some of those ideas started to come together. I also realized that the HQCR was the both the end result and surrounded the participant’s experiences so HQCR needed to be reflected as such, touching on all other factors.

Figure 4.5. Further refinement of theoretical concepts needing integration.
Realizing the limitations of MS Word SmartArt to capture the true essence of the process at hand, I decided to enlist the help of a graphic designer to bring my ideas to life. After sharing with my graphic designer some of my initial ideas mentioned here, I committed to sending a more detailed and revised version once all interviews were coded.

**Focused coding and constant comparative process.** I used the list of focused codes to direct the coding, still using gerunds, of interviews nine-27. I created a large summary of interviews nine-21 in one memo and 22-27 in another. While coding these interviews, I moved from line by line coding to an incident coding approach (Charmaz, 2006). I continued to use the highlighting process shared in Figure 4.1 and if I felt a new code had emerged, I highlighted that code in the left hand column for further consideration. One particular theme that emerged after coding the first eight was the use of intuition, particularly by People of Color, that factored into the forming of a relationship. A “Black sixth-sense” was noted by a few. This seemed to emerge with interviews 10 and later as more of the participants were People of Color at that point. All three sets of focused coding were combined and compared. Through discussions with a fellow researcher engaged in her own grounded theory research, I was able to articulate theory factors, such as the organizational factors providing the environment for the relationship forming, but ultimately the personal factors opened the door to the relationship. I used the color scheme from my initial comparison and used additional boxes, bolding and underlining to further vet themes and categories as needed. Through a few iterations of the analysis, I was also able to pull out what was unique to forming.
growing and sustaining that were particular across racial difference. Table 4.7 shows the summary of these themes that set the stage for the final theory development.

Table 4.7  
**Combined Analysis of Interviews 1-27**

Theoretical Coding and Thoughts on Graphically Framing (Insights/ideas for graphic highlighted in yellow) February 12, 2011  
Info added/underlined after talking through with colleague on 2/13/11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Quality Coworker Relationships (HQCR)</th>
<th>Theoretically/Graphically: This is End State, Core State, Central State, Overarching State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‣ Establish mutual and reciprocal:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Trust – has each other’s back, holds information in confidence.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Coaching &amp; feedback, shared what you need to hear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Encouragement and appreciation of strengths and abilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Empathy -- know when person is overwhelmed, understand where person’s challenges, where coming from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Open, honest communication about good things and challenges. Work to establish a common language. Have “crucial conversations.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Listening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Enrichment: supports each other’s goals and aspirations, serves as a resource, encourages growth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learning and teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Responsiveness, follow through over time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‣ Know the “whole” person (in relation to iceberg model/metaphor – knows above and below the surface):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Professionally and personally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Can be whole self, not juggling multiple personas, not feeling guarded or masked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Meeting person where he/she is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Get to know values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Connect on commonalities and have genuine interest about differences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Share vulnerabilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “Somebody who gets me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o “I can be me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‣ Work through and move on from conflict or disagreement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‣ Hold each other in high, positive regard – experience pleasure, fun, camaraderie, openness, warmth, and comfort when together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Get work done together seamlessly
• Help to build relationships with others

Contrasting Experience – absence of HQR in Summary

Theoretically/Graphically – not relevant to research question, not focus of study, but may use/include in results write up.

• No open communication or sharing on a deeper level
  o Saying only “hi” to each other
  o Talking only at meetings
  o Joking, but don’t go deeper
• Feeling like a guard is up, mask is on, having to posture with each other
• No understanding of where the person stands, not sure how person will interpret, no invitation to learn
• Feeling judged and dismissed
• Lack of trust

Summary of Significant Organizational and Personal Factors that Helped Open the Door a HQCR Across Racial/Ethnic Difference

Theoretically/Graphically – these feed into/open the door to forming opportunities and also help to elevate and grow, ratchet up, the relationship (particularly the personal factors, but some stories about the learning experience also seem to do the same). Maybe they actually overlap with forming rather than just feeding into it. Personal factors seem to have stronger impact than organizational factors. Organizational puts you in the room, personal opens the door.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational</th>
<th>Personal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity/Inclusion Practices in Place: social justice work stated, hiring for diverse racial candidates stated, learning experiences available, global focus, actually having a work environment where more than one race/ethnicity is present, creating safe places for people to share their stories (learning, affinity groups, open forums)</td>
<td>Bringing whole self to work, being open to sharing your whole self with other. Know yourself and you past experiences and how they affect you and be willing to learn and open up about others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity/Access-same department, start on same day, sitting next to each other, traveling together.</td>
<td>Willing to take risks such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required interaction -- Working together on a project together, being</td>
<td>o Having courageous conversations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Being willing to extend beyond role boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Asking questions, talking about what you “are not suppose to talk about at work”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Extending a significant invite (to lunch, home, to provide feedback) and saying “yes” to the request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having prior experience of one or both</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

assigned as a mentor/buddy

- Leadership: Encourage relationship building, are good resources, allow place for different people and groups to come together.
- Culture with clear vision welcoming and valuing difference, encouraging open and honest dialogue, a space to share personal stories.
- Parties dealing across racial/ethnic differences (such as growing up in diverse neighborhood, + experience with person of particular different ethnicity, race riots, moving from rural to urban environment, participating in organization “diversity” programs.
- Showing interest as a White person, making time to extend an extra effort to get to know and support the person’s success explicitly due to racial/ethnic difference
- Using intuition as a guide (particularly of note with People of Colors considerations of forming relationships with others, a few noting “a Black person’s six sense”)
- Watching out for clues to the other person’s openness, watchful of other’s behavior. (particularly of note with People of Colors considerations of forming relationships with others)
- Being a person who speaks positively/constructively about all people/all interactions, sees talent in others, willing to share credit and power (white person in particular?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forming and Sustaining a HQCR Across Racial/Ethnic Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 Conceptual Categories On Forming</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretically/Graphically – These are listed in what appears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be a general progression based on what was described,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many of the things do overlap with an ability to sustain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a HQCR as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**10 Conceptual Categories on Sustaining and Continuing to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretically/Graphically – These are about growing over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time, more perhaps about growing rather than sustaining?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors such as including in conversation, asking to join a project, asking for input, inviting to lunch, saying hello, asking about person, speaking positively about others, etc.
2. Using intuition as a guide—relying on gut and then testing out (particularly of
3. Making time and space to interact personally and professionally—via multiple ways, in person, but also email, calls, text messages, Face Book
4. Seeking out and showing appreciation for insights – professional and/or personal
5. Establishing mutuality
note with People of Colors
considerations of forming relationships
with others)
3. Connecting/relating based on common
interests—personal and/or professional
4. Participating in something significant
together – a lunch, a training class, a key
project
5. Learning about each/inquiring about
person/differences from a place of
genuine interest
6. Sharing on a professional and personal
level—getting beyond just the surface to
values and personal stories.
7. Overcoming personal fears/developing
empathy—understanding self and other
person
8. Establishing and building trust
9. Communicating consistently and with
good listening.
10. Showing interest in person’s long term
success

4. Working through personal conflict,
disagreement directly and respectfully
5. Welcoming to other groups/extending
interest past current organizational
role
6. Continuing to build trust by being a
confidant, maintaining confidentiality
7. Maintaining open and honest
communication, giving feedback, having “crucial conversations”
8. Sharing organizational information
beyond what is expected in
role/relationship
9. Serving as a “place of rest” and
enjoyment
10. Embracing and each other’s
differences, being full self,
transparent, and role model
consistently

Apparent Turning Points – from good relationship to HQCR

Theoretical/Graphically: These things of course overlap with forming and sustaining, but they clearly help the relationship shift, grow and reach a deeper level of quality.

- Transitioning from professional sharing to personal – sharing personal information, inviting and accepting an invite to diner person’s home, a play, a play date with kids, etc.
- Getting beyond the public persona to values and personal stories
- Going to an even deeper level of personal sharing (vulnerabilities and hard life experiences)
- Pushing for growth, extending or exposing to a significant developmental opportunity
- Earning a promotion (or other organization success) from the person’s support
- Being selected for a special assignment, learning event, etc. based on input from the individual
- Talking specifically and explicitly about your racial/ethnic and other differences (such as sexual orientation, growing up poor)
- Having a “crucial conversation” to give feedback that you are not perhaps sure the person wants to hear, dealing with a disagreement or conflict, addressing differences in perception or experience due to race or other differences
- Reaching reciprocity – moving from one sided advice, feedback, invitations, safe place, insights to reciprocal
• Reaching a higher level of self-awareness through the person’s feedback, coaching, recognition
• Sharing a significant work product or success with individual

**Unique things in building across race – these relationships across difference differ from other HCQRs due to these general dynamics – these raise about the rest – is a cut above the other core to forming and sustaining:**

1. Dealing with the mask, guard, shield, wall dynamic
2. Embracing the difference and showing genuine interest in learning about and connection in relation to that difference
3. Use of intuition and behavior watching by People of Color perhaps more fervently to seek out/test out who is “okay”
4. Dealing with race – whether directly or indirectly and its impact on work, relationships, etc.
5. Place of rest, can let the guard down – may be in all HQCR, but given item 1, it is important

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**Tackling Racial/Ethnic Difference**

**Theoretical Considerations:** While a HQCR may have the same components no matter what the backgrounds of the two parties, participants (particularly participants of color) shared that being of the same culture gives you some access/a door that you don’t have to worry about cracking. 26 of 27 interviewed directly (most often) or indirectly tackled and discussed race and/or ethnicity. The one that did not did skirt gender differences with one another.

**Graphical Considerations:** These are virtually all already called out to some degree in the core themes of forming and sustaining, but also perhaps need to be called out in some significant way in the theory. They were shared in particular around race/ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tackling Directly</th>
<th>Tackling Indirectly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Asking direct questions – personal (hair, dating) or professional (what does it feel like to be the “only one,”” how am I perceived?):</td>
<td>• Exposing more of yourself so people can get to know you better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Doing an exercise together during training specially on racial and ethnic identity</td>
<td>• Extending an open door for someone to walk through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seeking out specifically for different perspective (how might this go over in a global audience?)</td>
<td>• Making it easier for a person to open up if he/she desires to do so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning about each other’s culture from a place of genuine interest – bonding over food, hair, etc.</td>
<td>• Getting outside comfort zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Living by philosophy that there is no mask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Doing self work to allow you to let go of past hurts that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discuss within context of organizational effort to work on institutionalized racism/social justice/diversity initiatives could prevent you from forming across difference.

- Sharing specifically, a Black person might perceive this in this way
- Inviting people across color lines into your world, getting beyond the workplace
- Discussing things “you don’t talk about at work”
- Realizing that racial and ethnic identity is complicated and it overlaps with our multiple identities – be will to talk about those complexities and that they will be different for each person
- Being willing to extend extra effort to build a relationship across race
- Being honest about limited exposure to difference, work through our own experiences and hold other accountable for doing the same.
- Admitting and recognizing the difference in tandem with celebrating commonalities
- Challenging stereotypes –within and across different racial and ethnic identities.

It was affirming to note that when I discussed these themes with my graphic designer, an African-American male, he shared that he felt like what I had put on paper echoed the experience he had in the work place with a White male assigned as his mentor. This served as an early validation of the data. He also asked me “how did you get people to tell you this?” This question was in particular reaction to what came out as in my interviews as nuances across difference. I felt, especially given the reaction of one of my African-American participants to remove comments from his transcript about feeling like he had to wear a mask at work that I was on to something. It was as if insider secrets of People of Color had been shared with me. They were shared in the spirit of helping
others learn from successful relationships. The graphic designer and ultimately the research participant mentioned both agreed that potentially people could learn from discussing these dynamics. As the themes are discussed in the sections of this chapter to follow, I will share the comments and insights from my research participants to illuminate this dynamic.

**Revised theoretical concepts.** During the discussion with my graphic designer, the concept of a plant growing over time came up at his suggestion instead of/in addition to the concept of the gears that had been turning in my head as it related to the data analysis. I received a first-draft depiction from my graphic designer that, while visually pleasing, did not capture the essence of the process of forming and sustaining a HQCR across race/ethnicity. So, I took pencil to paper and drew the following to depict what emerged in my mind from this constant comparative process. Figure 4.6 gives an idea of the process and how I interpreted the different themes interacting.
Final theoretical model. After further analysis, completing a conditional matrix (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 & Strauss, 1987) and a situational analysis (Clarke, 2005 & 2009), I further refined the themes for the final theoretical model. A sampling from the conditional matrix is shared below in Figure 4.7. While this was completed for all of the theoretical themes noted, the process of analyzing data across interviews and memos (Charmaz 2006) in retrospect seemed sufficient.
Given the nature of the topic and dealing with race and ethnicity, the use of a situational analysis seemed appropriate in order to ensure a potential critical lens to the research as needed. The situational analysis helped to explore human and non-human elements and actors within the process. It helped identify social constructions and political elements within the process. Finally, related debates and discourse are noted. The tool can help to frame the findings within a broader historical and sociocultural context. The situational analysis (Clark 2005 & 2009) I created is shared in Figure 4.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening The Door Conditions--Organization (Why, Where, How Come, When)</th>
<th>Action/Interaction (By Whom, How)</th>
<th>Consequences What Happens Due to These Interactions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity/Inclusion Practices in Place in organization as a stated organizational practice.</td>
<td>Social justice work stated, hiring for diverse racial candidates stated, learning experiences available, global focus, actually having a work environment where more than one race/ethnicity is present, creating safe places for people to share their stories (learning, affinity groups, open forums) By the organization By the people in relationship</td>
<td>Makes people feel welcomed, valuable, wanted, included, like they belong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity/Access, place person in location when first hired.</td>
<td>Hired into same department, start on same day, sitting next to each other, traveling together By organization By manager</td>
<td>Gives easier access to forming relationships Gives you more time together and increased interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required interaction as stated by the organization or manager.</td>
<td>Working together on a project together, being assigned as a mentor/buddy Organization Manager Co-workers</td>
<td>Get to know one another’s work style; appreciation for what each person brings to the project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.7. Sampling from conditional matrix worksheet*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Human Elements/Actors</th>
<th>Non Human Elements/Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals who formed the relationships</td>
<td>• Diversity, inclusion and/or cultural competence practices at organization such as hiring practices that placed individual in organization, training classes to learn across difference, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Managers of some of the individuals</td>
<td>• Organization programs for a new hire buddy, mentor relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other coworkers who serve in contrast to a HQCR</td>
<td>• Email, text messaging, face book,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective Human Elements/Actors</th>
<th>Implicated/Silent Actor/Actants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Organizations as a whole</td>
<td>• Other coworkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work group/s of the individuals</td>
<td>• Customers/clients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discursive Constructions (s) of Human Actors</th>
<th>Discursive Construction of Nonhuman Actants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Social construction of high quality coworkers relationship</td>
<td>• Social constructions of race and ethnicity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political/Economic Elements</th>
<th>Sociocultural/Symbolic Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Access to employment, all employed</td>
<td>• Race relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Election of biracial president, who is regarded as Black/African-American</td>
<td>• Other identities such as religion, gender, sexual orientation, age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temporal Elements</th>
<th>Spatial Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Widening of gap between left and right politically</td>
<td>• Departments of the organization, size of the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Invisible versus visible identities</td>
<td>• Local/regional, national or global business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Issues/Debates (Usually Contested)</th>
<th>Related Discourses (Narrative and/or Visual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Race as a way of differentiating</td>
<td>• Race relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aren’t there elements of all factors in any HQCR?</td>
<td>• Tea Party depictions of President Barrack Obama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do we need HRCR</td>
<td>• Political division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work/life balance – one overlapping with the other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.8. Situational analysis.*

Final revisions to the theoretical categories and themes based on this further analysis, along with the generally final notes to my graphic designer are shared in Table...
4.8. After a few more discussions and feedback exchanges via email, Figure 4.9 depicts the final version of the theoretical model.

Table 4.8
Condensing/Rearranging of Themes for Final Theory Diagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes to Graphic Designer/Instructions for Theory Diagram 2/20/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All except organizational factors/person opening door contained within a big circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Across top of circle – High Quality Coworker Relationship Across Race/Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Across bottom of circle to correspond with title above – could be all same color or alternate color by changing themes. Mutual: respect, trust, coaching, appreciation, communication, enrichment, learning/Know the whole person/Work through disagreement/Fun and pleasurable/Work together seamlessly/Help to build other relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• See plant graphic (or, it may be too busy and since the seedling idea came after not from the participant data, perhaps just remove this metaphor) from your original rendering in the background to correspond with different areas as noted below:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Square/ could be building to depict organization. Words stated are “Organization Serves as the Environment” (seed in ground)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Door opening – “Individual Opens the Door” (sprout underground)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Then need the “Forming” circle, wheel, gear, ship steering wheel, perhaps ideal is tiller blades if the plant graphic stays to show that it tills the ground to cultivate the relationship/growth). Forming can be a label inside the graphic, outside, whatever seems to work best. Spokes of the gear/tiller blades are the following. These can also just sit within the gear/wheel if it aids in viewing. Eight Final Themes are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Connecting on common interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participating in something significant together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sharing on a professional and personal level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Developing empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Establishing trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Communicating effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Showing interest in person’s success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Six Turning Points That Grow Relationship Themes are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sharing deeper personal information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pushing for growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Having a crucial conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Reaching mutuality
5. Growing more self aware
6. Sharing a work success

- Seven sustaining themes are:
  1. Making time to interact
  2. Showing appreciation for insights
  3. Welcoming to other groups
  4. Serving as confidant
  5. Maintaining open and honest communication
  6. Sharing organizational information
  7. Serving as a "place of rest" and enjoyment

2. Forming/Growing/Sustaining Circles Should go up – to show growth by corresponding to the upward growth/elevation. They should have some overlap in them to show that things that form also help to grow; things that grow also help to sustain.

3. For the nuances specific to race, I would like to do call outs over each circle/gear, with the heading “Unique Across Race/Ethnicity”

4. Call out above Forming to include (could just be bulleted list, no need for circle or spokes)
   - Using intuition as a guide
   - Assessing behaviors over time
   - Displaying genuine interest in difference

5. Call about above Turning Points to Grow
   - Talking about race specifically

6. Call out above Sustaining
   - Embracing and each other’s differences
   - Letting the guard down
Figure 4.9. How to form, grow and sustain a high-quality coworker relationship across race/ethnicity.
**Member checking.** The theoretical concepts summary and theory diagram in near final version were shared with my advisor, two fellow grounded theory researchers, a family member, the graphic designer and four work colleagues. All reported that the theory concepts made sense and a few also added that they had personal experience that resonated with the phenomenon described. The final summary of themes and the final theory diagram along with a brief description of the process that formed them were shared via email with all 27 research participants. They were asked for reactions, questions and comments and ultimately if the information resonated with the high quality coworker relationship experience described to me in their interviews. In one participant case, a clear outlier, I was transparent that it may not resonate with what he shared, but invited him to see if he could see this as a way to view a HQCR. The participants were encouraged to ask questions via email or to call me to discuss as desired. Responses were requested within eight days. Within the short response timeframe, eight of the 27 participants responded and an in person review meeting was set up after that date with one participant. All nine validated that the model and themes matched what they shared during their interviews (Alex, Bob, Douglas, Elena, Fran, Gia, Lilyana, Nada and Sandra, personal communication, March 8-March 16, 2011). In a conversation with participant Alex (personal communication, 3/8/11) he noted that he felt like “it included everything. I really like the graphic.” He indicated that he would be interested in using the graphic in the future. Fran stated “This is terrific! Love the graphic. Great work” (personal communication, March 9, 2011).

**Summary.** The process phenomenon explored in this study was how a HQCR is formed and sustained across a racial and/or ethnic difference. This final model
incorporated a definition of a HQCR, organizational factors that contributed to the environment in which the relationship could form and grow, personal factors that opened the door to the relationship, 11 forming themes, three of which were specific to relationships across race and ethnicity, seven turning point/growth themes, one of which is specific to relationships across race and ethnicity, and nine sustaining themes, two of which were specific across race and ethnicity.

All of the theoretical components were grounded in research participant data. Factors and themes are explored and supported with quotes from the research participants in the sections that follow. The data were rich; a scanning of highlighted quotes from the coded transcripts yielded a 90 page document of potential supporting quotes. In addition to the highlighting of quotes when coding the transcripts, another process piece that helped direct me to supporting quotes was an Interview Reaction Memo that I created throughout the process. After each interview, I jotted down initial thoughts and reflections. After listening to the interview and coding the transcript, I revisited this memo and added more. I hope I do justice to the voice of the research participants—whether quoted once or multiple times, all 27 are present in the following and I thank them for their words to illuminate the theory.

**High Quality Coworker Relationship (HQCR) Defined**

I was pleased with the decision to not predefine a HQCR. While it may have caused an initial pause, all participants were active in defining what makes a coworker relationship high quality. Their definitions came through in response to the question “describe this high quality coworker relationship” and in most interviews, I asked participants to summarize toward the end of the interview a personal definition of a
HQCR, regardless of any real or perceived difference between the two of them. The definitions that emerged were grouped into six focal themes. A HQCR is/allows you to:

1) Mutual—a give and take of many things, 2) Know the whole person, 3) Work through disagreement, 4) Fun/pleasurable, 5) Work together seamlessly, and 6) Help to build other relationships. These core items are explored below in both general responses and quotes that relate specifically to the HQCR discussed. As the concepts on forming, growing, and sustaining a HQCR across race and ethnicity unfold in later sections of this chapter many of these core themes are revisited.

**Mutual.** The word mutual was used time after time in relation to many things. Virtually all participants used the term respect and/or trust. Also described with frequency and passion were mutual coaching and feedback, encouragement and appreciation of strengths and abilities, empathy, open and honest communication, enrichment, learning and teaching. Trust meant having each other’s back, holding personal and professional information in confidence. Coaching and feedback was about ongoing feedback and sharing what “needed to be heard” (Janelle, personal communication, November-December, 2010). Appreciation meant knowing and encouraging the use of strengths and abilities and using them in complement with the coworker. Empathy was about knowing when a person was overwhelmed, understanding challenges and vulnerabilities. Communication included what was referred to as “crucial conversations” (John and Janelle, personal communication, November-December, 2010), strong listening, and working to establish a common language. Enrichment includes supporting each other’s goals and aspirations and serving as a resource to one another. Learning with and teaching one another rounded out the themes around being mutual.
Table 4.9 highlights some of the quotes (personal communication, November-December, 2010) from the participants that support these themes. One will notice overlap between and among them supporting them as overlapping concepts.

Table 4.9

*Participant Comments Supporting Mutual Themes in a HQCR*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Gia</td>
<td>At the very minimum you would respect the person. You respect the person, you respect their abilities, you know that they can deliver the work, you know that they are good to work with – that’s the basic level.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hiresh</td>
<td>So I think when I talk about [name omitted] and how the whole relationship has formed, the whole aspect of integrity and respect for the individual really drove everything else.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Felix</td>
<td>I would say there is a mutual goodwill between us. We don’t do a lot of things socially but we regard each other as friends, we talk often – fairly often and because we’ve known each other for some years now we have pretty . . . we have a lot of background references that we share as well because we’ve worked in the same places. Our kids kind of grew up around the same time and, you know, I would say at the core is a mutual trust and respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>I’ll just reiterate I think what I’ve said before but it is that trust in each other, knowing that we’re there for each other even though it’s a supervisory type of relationship, that there is a comfort level there too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>For me a high quality relationship is that trust. Like I can really trust that she is telling the truth and she is honest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching &amp; Feedback</td>
<td>Janelle</td>
<td>…I think it’s somebody you trust they’re going to give you that honest feedback about you and they’re not going to say what you want to hear, they’re going to say what you need to hear…. [and she] asks for my honest feedback whether it’s a sensitive situation or a professional situation…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation (of complementary strengths)</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>One of the examples that I give is that one of my top strengths in the strength finder is empathy. Sometimes it’s such a strength that it gets in the way of making a damn decision. What they encourage you to do when you struck like that and your strengths are getting in the way to partner with somebody who has a complementary strength, someone who is decisive and strategic and she is those things. So I have found myself where I am stuck with empathy is in my way and I go to her and we have a discussion and often I leave with something that is right in the middle because she has influenced me with her perspective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Fran</td>
<td>So a high quality relationship for me is somebody who has my back, somebody who is not afraid of me, somebody who gets me, somebody who can hold me and somebody who is willing to let me be those things for them as well…. I would say it comes under the heading of empathy, I would say it comes under the heading of some intuitive understanding – because if they don’t “get you”, knows the questions to ask to figure out if the intuitive response is correct or not.</td>
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Communication  
John  
I think about the need to have courageous conversations and rarely do people or infrequently do people really get to know each other past “hi” and “bye”, past “we worked on this project together”. You’ve got to be willing to have those courageous conversations and that means talking about more than just the project, talking about more than just “hi” and “bye.”

Enrichment  
Karen  
I love people who will e-mail you articles that they found or, “I read this in the [newspaper], I was thinking about you.” Or, “Oh, I know you have a client that does XYZ and I just found this really great web site.” And so we’re e-mailing back and forth, being a resource to one another.

Learning and teaching  
Gabriel  
I think there also has to be a willingness to learn and to teach – I think you need both parts. If she wanted to touch my hair in the beginning it was all right and there may be times when I wanted to hear her sing – and so there has to be a willingness to teach and to learn.

Nada and Martin summarize these concepts well (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Nada stated “I think number one, there has to be mutuality in the relationships so there needs to be a mutual commitment to each other’s well being and to each other’s success.” Martin shared “I want to understand your self-interest; I want to understand my own self-interest…that’s the basis of a healthy relationship…. I’m getting what I want, you’re getting what you want and we’re mutually benefitting in the relationship.” These themes all lay a good framework for the next core area in a HQCR-to know the whole person.
Know the whole person. Participants described a HQCR as one in which people get to know each other not only professionally, but personally. People expressed not having to juggle multiple personas and getting to know each other’s values and vulnerabilities. Echoes of this were already seen in Table 4.9. Table 4.10 adds some additional perspective to these qualities of a HQCR from four of the participants (personal communication November-December, 2010).

Table 4.10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>I think for me I also felt more of a connection not only on the professional side, but as a whole person. Like we both knew each other and valued each other as people, not just colleagues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gia</td>
<td>…at the higher level, do you like the person personally? Would you talk to them if you weren’t working with them? That’s how I define it. And I would say high quality – so I respect them, I like them as a person not just as a manager or a coworker, and there’s a dimension of knowing that person other than what they do for work, that’s a big thing. It’s knowing them overall as a person and liking them as opposed to…I mean I work with a lot of people and I don’t really know much about them even though I respect them but I wouldn’t say it’s a high quality relationship.</td>
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<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>You know, I think I would want people to know that in a relationship, especially in a work relationship, it’s easier when you’re having a personal relationship but in a work relationship, there’s strength in vulnerability. When you let people into your world, when you let people see your whole SWOT per se, I think you just become more real in the relationship, you become more tangible, you become accessible and I just think people shouldn’t be afraid of their vulnerabilities or what might be their challenges or what might be their family situations. They shouldn’t be afraid or hesitant to bring those to the table necessarily at work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>So what I was saying is that the characteristics of who the people are, it’s like I get emotional about it because when I think about</td>
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high quality relationships, personal or professional, I'm describing the core of who someone is and that’s why there’s tears because it’s hard to find people like that and it’s even harder to maintain that relationship, especially when you move and you go different places or whatever. But I think that the people that have those core attributes: the courageous acts, the trust, the values – the core values that people have, and they’re sort of the basics that you expect all people to have whether it’s integrity or compassion or whatever, those are hard people to find.

Simply stated, Bonnie says of her HQCR “The thing is, I don’t have to pretend with her” (Personal communication, November-December 2010). With this type of foundation, perhaps it allowed these individuals to work through disagreement and conflict fluidly.

**Work through disagreement.** Being able to work through a conflict or being able to disagree was a hallmark in many of these HQCRs described. Marking the importance of this as an aspect of HQCR are participant comments outlined in Table 4.11 (Personal communication, November-December 2010).

**Table 4.11**

*Participant Comments Supporting Work Through Disagreement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>We often disagree… the two of us have to focus on what we have in common and build on that so that when we get to the point, and we always do about something or other, of disagreeing about something. And it’s not, what do I want to say, it’s constructive, it’s not there she goes again kind of thing because I am more open to her opinions and philosophies and she is more open to mine. And that wasn’t always the case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>She always spoke positively about others and was even more explicit on where she was at and if she didn’t agree with me she would say, I don’t agree because of this. And you know we never always agreed and to me a high quality relationship is not about agreeing 100% on everything, it’s about being able to</td>
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discuss things openly and not damaging the relationship as a result of that. So we would disagree on the way we view specific or general things, but we can still have a conversation and move on.

Felix  
We’re very different in a lot of ways – our backgrounds are different, our frames of reference is different, our personalities are different, just our orientation to life is different. Sometimes that causes a lot of friction and I think at the outset for us it caused some friction but it ended up being more complimentary than contentious and just kind of working through some of that and figuring that out kind of helped us to become friends.

Hannah  
So sometimes we did butt heads but then at the same time, we would come together with different ideas and come up with a better idea.

Nada  
I think really be willing to deal with conflict directly, to put it on the table and then to work through it as long as needed – like maybe you won’t get to finish it at the time, maybe you need to check out but because you are committed to each other that you do come back until you figure it out.

I love the way Gabriel summed it up, “Free to disagree and when it’s all done, we can totally disagree but it doesn’t change the core of the relationship” (Personal communication, November-December 2010).

**Fun/pleasurable.** A few tears were shed while talking about these HQCRs, but the laughter far outweighed them in recollection of fun times with one another. People with whom participants had a HQCR were just plain fun to be around. Time with them was pleasurable. This fun came through in the quotes shared in Table 4.12 (Personal communication, November-December 2010).

Table 4.12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>She has the kind of humor I like and so right away I was drawn</td>
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</table>
to her personality and thought, “Oh, I really like this person.” And she’s really competent and I value that. So I already had a good feeling about her…. And then during the interview process we just had a fun time, there were . . . let’s see, there were four of us who were the interview panel and we had a good rapport, we had fun, it didn’t feel like work.

**Ishani**

And she was a really outgoing, fun person and we clicked at that level too and then eventually invited, whenever we went to lunch or something, it was going to be the three of us and eventually the other one also came because the two 40-years-older folks [the HQCR blossomed into a HQCR foursome of women], those two were friends by themselves.

**Gia**

As you have more of those experiences you kind of develop your inside jokes and like a lot of the things, you know, later you refer to it as, “Oh remember that time this crazy thing happened and we were up until whatever time?” I think that was part of it, as with any friendship the more experiences you have together the more you get to know each other.

**Sandra**

And I think one of the things that came up that applies to all of the relationships that I have, some higher quality than others, is that people have also got to find a way to have fun with people. That is one of the key attributes that sort of draws people out, both the person that you’re trying to build a relationship with and the person that’s maybe trying to build it and maintain it, but you’ve got to find a way to have fun with people.

Ilan’s comment about his HQCR is the final word in this instance, “…in relation to the other relationships I had in the office-hers was one that always felt positive and uplifting, joyful, conversationalist, happy” (personal communication, November-December, 2010).

**Work together seamlessly.** One might think working together seamlessly goes without saying in HQCR. Maybe that is what happened with my participants as it did not come up as much as I expected it might. Rather the energy of the interview conversation fell more on the personal than the professional. Still, as noted below in Table 4.13, working together seamlessly was important and it helped define a HQCR.
Table 4.13

*Participant Comments Supporting Working Together Seamlessly*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>I think for me a high quality working relationship is the ability first of all to get work done together at work, but it goes beyond that. Over time, people grow to have mutual respect for each other based on getting that kind of work done together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>A recognition of there was skill, probably on both ends, but can’t say for her, and that you saw consistent effort. And so when things went well and so when things went less than well, you always saw her getting things done and you saw skill demonstrated on a regular basis. There were growth issues and attendance issues [in the program they worked on together] and there was, “what did my mother call it?” Panache. That somewhat indescribable ability to get things done. She knew what needed to be done and you knew there was motivation, there was value and that was just for the sake of value and over the course of the relationship just went out and got things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elena</td>
<td>When I’d ask her questions, professional questions or work related questions, and she would give me good guidance, good advice. And we worked together in a lot of projects that involve both of our executives and we really got to feed off of each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evan</td>
<td>So our meetings are like getting together with a close relative and it’s kind of hard to stay on task because of all this other stuff you want to talk about as well. But even, and I wouldn’t call that necessarily wasted time and something that takes away from the quality of a meeting, because even in our meetings we come up with solid tangible ideas and again, because we trust each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madeline</td>
<td>I believe she trained me so well that we almost think identical. So even though we have never really worked on a project together, when we are discussing projects she will talk to me about her project and I’m like . . . or she asks my opinion without telling me what it is that she has done. I’m like, “Well this is how I would approach it or this is what I would do, or this is what I would think.” And she’s like, “That’s exactly what I’m saying, that is exactly what I’m doing or it’s exactly what I told them.” And vice versa and I’m still growing. I’m</td>
</tr>
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</table>
still learning and sometimes I don’t have all the pieces to the puzzle together but the thought process itself, we’re like identical – don’t waste time, go to the point, go to the facts, don’t deviate and think about . . . and do the things that are not relevant, the distracters.

Combining working through disagreement and working together seamlessly, I end this section with Lilyana’s comment:

The work was seamless in the sense that we did not have major conflicts, we had disagreements in the course of work but we were able to discuss very openly with each other what the disagreements are and what the best methods are to go ahead and solve. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Help to build other relationships.** Perhaps more implied in many and only specifically stated in a few, the final quality that defined a HQCR to my research participants was that the experience of having one can help make other relationships stronger. These final quotes in support of this theme are shared in Table 4.14 (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Lilyana and Nada particularly noted how the learning across difference in this HQCR was helpful.

Table 4.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ishani</td>
<td>Our friendship eventually made my working with the entire group more enjoyable because I knew even if I had a really sucky situation I could just . . . when I would go on a break or for a walk or something with this person, we could just talk about it and maybe laugh about it or that person will just say, “You know, just forget it” and it makes the coping easier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lilyana  
So throughout the years when I was at the same company, I had an opportunity to mentor people and because she helped me see something that I had not seen, if I had an opportunity to take and mentor someone from a different background, I did go the extra mile because I thought it’s just not fair that you have to go through these extra steps because of who you are so if I can do something to help I will even though I’m not doing that putting the extra steps, but she kind of helped me see this, I did not think of the world that way.

Nada  
I think, in terms of close relationships across the organization, I think what happens is if, for me, when I reflect on how these friendships within the context of social justice work, I think what they have done for me is given me opportunity to just gain more confidence around what does it really mean to have all of these identities and to be able relate to people who may share them or not. I think there is a lot of anxiety around those differences so I think if you are in the context in which everybody is committed to working through those differences, which then I think allows for deeper connections and deeper relationships, then I think that just builds confidence in terms of how you then behave in any other situations.

**Summary.** A HQCR was one of mutual respect, trust, coaching, appreciation, empathy, communication, enrichment and learning. Within a HQCR the participant got to know the whole person, worked through disagreement and worked together seamlessly.

A HQCR was one that provided fun and helped participants to build other relationships.

Lilyana covered most of these factors when she described a HQCR in summary:

High quality coworker relationship for me between any two coworkers is one that entails professional behavior, trust, ability to openly discuss the good stuff as well as problem areas, ability to constructively provide feedback to each other and ability to work well and have respect for each other as human individuals – as humans. It’s a dependable relationship that you can draw on over a period of time and it’s also one that enriches where the two parties are able to learn from each
other, treat each other with respect. I’m tempted to say at the same level but just
meaning that there no artificial boundaries, one human interaction with another
and not any other divisions be that gender or background – that’s high quality
where you can trust and you can debate and you can solve problems and there is
no animosity or any bad behaviors resulting from that.

With this definition in mind along with the quotes that illuminated it, the exploration of
how a HQCR is formed and sustained between coworkers of a different racioethnic
background begins below.

**Organizational Factors that Contribute to the Forming of a HCQR**

As noted in the analysis section of this chapter, a variety of organizational factors
were peppered throughout the interviews. The focus of my study was relationships
formed at work so the organization at a minimum played a role in that it was the
environment in which the HQCR formed. There were some simple things on the surface
and some more significant things that happened in the organization to help accelerate the
forming of a relationship. The simple things included two people starting work on the
same day, two people being in the same department, two people sitting in close proximity
to each other. Gia offered the importance of proximity to others who are different
contrasted to proximity to those who may be more similar to her:

> I feel like the type of experiences I have with them, also with proximity probably
> – like if you work with them more you’ll develop that relationship more. And,
> yeah, I think it would take a lot more proximity and experiences together if it was
> a different background as opposed to somebody of a similar background because
that one, you would immediately say something in [my native language] and talk in [our native language]. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

More significant things were having hiring and recruiting practices in place that brought in a broader racial or ethnic mix, assigning one person to another as a formal mentor or buddy, sending to a learning experience, particularly some on diversity, together, a big group or team event, and requiring individuals to work on a project together. Other factors included things such as having diversity hiring practices in place that helped bring an individual into the organization, having leaders who encouraged relationship building and having a culture that was welcoming to and valued difference.

On leadership, Alice shared how her boss encouraged her to set out to improve her relationship with the woman who became the focus of her HQCR.

A couple of times a couple of years ago because actually at my bosses encouragement, he reminded me of the importance of meeting people where they are-and that this kind of difference can be important to helping someone who doesn’t fit like a glove immediately to succeed in an environment and to not be marginalized. And that made a lot of sense to me and of course that made a lot of sense to me intellectually. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Gia, who formed her HQCR with a woman who was once her supervisor, noted about her leadership style, “I think it also has something to do with the kind of management style that she has where she keeps tabs of everybody’s birthdays and so I think she really wants to foster that one-on-one relationship with each employee” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Highlighting both leadership and the role training can play
in building relationships, Martin shared that he had done the following at his organization:

The other thing that I did was, with the entire staff, is initially I wanted to train the entire staff on how their relationship to me should, how it should be based and how we were going to work together as a team because the performance of this organization is based on our teamwork…. So they have a training process that I helped to actually write and create, I was engaged with a larger team that worked on it but it’s a highly effective training process, it works across lines of race, difference, class – you name it. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

When asked about what organizations can do to support the forming of relationships across difference, Karen recommended, “So things that an organization can do – one of the things that I have found effective is when the organization creates a space where people can express themselves verbally, where they can talk about their experiences” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Nada, having been a part of a cultural competence training program at her organization, shared what can occur when an organization creates an open space for sharing.

I try to think about the cultural competency training class here which for me was amazing, it really was amazing, because it was a setting – it wasn’t a forum in a [school type omitted] school or kind of the format that I’m used to. People came from everywhere and many people had no idea what they were coming for specifically. So I think what has allowed for that, I think most people had a meaningful experience in it. I think what has allowed for that to happen are the
principles of our entire oppression work which are setting the process in place which gives people some space to be honest and to be given the benefit of the doubt and I think, you know, modeling that you can have a challenging conversation without going after people….most of us don’t have an opportunity to talk about our stuff which I think is also what gets in the way of having meaningful relationships. Like if we’re pretending like it’s all great but we have all this stuff that’s sitting underneath, you can’t really overcome that to become close when there’s all this stuff sitting there. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Finally, I share one comment on the role that organizational culture can play. After sharing in his interview the feeling of having to wear a mask in his interactions at work, I asked with a follow up question, “So it sounds like you are constantly thinking, are you saying with some colleagues the mask is completely on and you are constantly thinking through? “ Alex paused and reflected on his current work experience compared to prior organizations in other industries and shared:

Absolutely, particularly in my last job. It was up and reinforced, but here in healthcare not as much. Our mission is more noble than making [a consumer product] which is what I was doing in my former life. People are generally more accepting. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Whether a big role or small one, with a HQCR, the organization is the environment in which the relationship is formed and grows. Some factors such as proximity to others who are different from you, being assigned a mentor from a different racioethnic
background, leadership styles, training experiences and organizational culture factors can serve to accelerate the forming of a HQCR across race and/or ethnicity.

**Personal Factors that Contribute to Forming a HQCR**

Here I go deeper into what I heard in the interviews that seemed particular to individuals—their style, their personality, their willingness to take a risk. This could have been about the participant I interviewed or the coworker described as a HQCR. There were a few things at play that may have perhaps given participants an advantage in forming a HQCR across racioethnic difference.

Some participants showed a keen sense of self awareness when they brought their whole selves to any relationship. On being an open book, John expressed of himself (personal communication, November-December, 2010):

> One thing that we haven’t talked about so far, I guess, is the level of accessibility—like there are no doors that I close in trying to develop relationships so my life is open to people. My life and my professional life are open to people and I think that they see that.

Ilan sharing about his HQCR stated of her that, “She was comfortable in her own skin, literally and figuratively. Comfortable around people of all races and religions and just comfortable with herself” (personal communication, November-December, 2010).

Some were described as having a natural bent to being inclusive, fun, welcoming and/or personable, such as Hiresh saying of his HQCR,” It is not like [he is a] diversity-friendly kind of a person. He is an inclusive person by nature. He is an inclusive person by nature, so it’s his personality” (personal communication, November-December, 2006). Or Gia, said of her manager “She is the kind of person who is . . . she gets to know you,
she’s not just a boss boss, get the job done and go home, she really wants to get to know you” (personal communication November-December, 2010). Or, Ilan when he shared about himself:

I have a very kind of jovial, joking, out there relationship – I probably say things that other people wouldn’t which gets me in trouble sometimes and other times brings me closer to people…I was always conversant and open and open-minded and talked more than I should and always kind of got to the heart of the matter. I say things and talk about things and think about things a lot. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Many were involved in social justice and diversity work. Almost all of these HQCR’s in this study had someone who took a risk – a risk to invite someone out to lunch, to invite out to dinner and a play, to invite onto a project, to ask for input, to ask personal questions to get to know the person. These risks paid off as factors that helped form the relationship. Illustrative of this was Alice’s action (personal communication, November-December, 2010):

But I made a decision, I consistently reached out to her, the more I reached out, the more responsive she became, the more we engaged with each other on a regularly basis…. I needed to get to know her better, and I started to reach out to her and take initiative to go to lunch, to go to dinner to do whatever together…

Karen took similar action and stated in a couple of comments:

I really like her and I’d like to get to know her better and who knows where the relationship may go. And so I didn’t have any expectations but just knew that I
wanted to get to know her a little bit better. So I invited [name omitted] and one of the other managers on the interview panel out to dinner and a play after work.

I’m very inquisitive so I pepper people with questions and I’m told that I’m a very good listener and I’m the kind of person where people end up just pouring out all of their stuff to me and I just sit and listen and I’m not one to share all of your business with other people and people get that feeling from me. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

While I did not get a great deal of depth behind the stories, I heard many stories of the person in the relationship having had prior formative experience with difference prior to working with the person. Some examples of this for White people referenced in the study included two who grew up experiencing the race riots in Detroit, one who grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood, one who worked in San Antonio who had positive interactions with Mexican-Americans, a couple who moved from rural to urban areas and became more interested in differences, and a couple who experienced exclusion based on being labeled a nerd or the “chubby kid with glasses” (Olivia, personal communication, November-December, 2010) as a child. I heard the story of a White male who was triumphant over alcoholism and how that experience made him focus on relationships in a whole new way. Reflecting on her experience Sandra shared the following:

I grew up in a predominantly African-American neighborhood, I went to an all African-American high school and I was the only White person, only White cheerleader – not the only White person in the whole school but we were less than
five percent of the population... Yeah, no doubt it plays a big impact. I have no
quantitative research to support that but in my own qualitative assessment I would
say that it influences me on several different fronts. But one, I’m not afraid. I hear
people all the time, they’re afraid to go to a nightclub when it’s hip-hop night or
whatever or go to a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood or go to . . . one; I’m
not afraid. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I also heard formative stories from People of Color. A few Black participants
shared stories of having withstood many stereotypes and racism as a child and how they
found ways to move beyond, to not let those messages hold them back from forming
relationships with people different from them. Reflecting on a particularly hurtful
experience in high school at the hand of one of her White classmates, Janelle proclaimed
(personal communication, November-December, 2010):

If I kept in my mind saying the man was holding me down or because of the man,
I would never be anywhere so I had to let that go, I had to get that out of my mind
and I have to accept people for whom they are and I cannot let one instance like
that stereotype a whole race of people.

I heard stories from an Asian woman and a Latina woman whose cultural upbringing in
their countries of origin taught a strong sense of respect prior to coming to the USA.
Along with this they carry a strong sense of cultural pride. This same Asian woman then
experienced going to college in the USA where women’s togetherness was highly valued.
On the pride of culture and the desire to share her story, Elena shared her interest in this
study in the following way:
I think that this was great. I jumped at the opportunity because of that – because I am very proud of my culture, of where I come from. I don’t forget where I come from and any venue I have to share that to, to expose that to others, to scream it out I would jump at the chance. And so when I saw this – this is perfect.

(personal communication, November-December, 2010)

While the organization may have been the environment or the building where these HQCRs formed, it was these types of personal factors that opened the door to the formation. Whether one got to the door first or they both crashed through in tandem, it was at this individual level that the door knob to the relationship turned.

Themes on Forming a HQCR

From these types of personal factors discussed, the data revealed 11 behavioral themes that contributed to the formation of these HQCR across race/ethnicity. Eight of the themes, while nuances across difference will appear in the quotes, seem to be common in forming any HQCR regardless of difference. These eight included: 1) Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors, 2) Connecting on common interests, 3) Participating in something significant together, 4) Sharing on a professional and personal level, 5) Developing empathy, 6) Establishing trust, 7) Communicating effectively, and 8) Showing interest in person’s success. The three that felt unique to forming a HQCR across racioethnic difference included: 1) Using intuition as a guide, 2) Assessing behaviors over time, and 3) Displaying genuine interest in difference. All of these factors helped set the relationship in motion to becoming a HQCR.

Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors. These inclusive behaviors included things like merely saying hello, and also things like asking someone for input, including
in conversation, inviting someone to lunch, asking about the person, speaking positively about others, etc. Of the inclusive behavior of her HQCR inviting her on projects, Carmen shared:

I am a more junior person in this role and she explicitly asked for me to work on high profile projects and other colleagues didn’t trust my capabilities or weren’t aware of it, and she did it for a couple of projects. It was like she was interested in my success. You know? And I kind of felt that and she didn’t need to. She wasn’t my manager. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Alex shared interacting with his HQCR at a meeting that included many high level organization leaders. Alex was not a regular member to the group, though he was invited to present. His HQCR displayed behaviors that included him and help to put him at ease. And one small example, so you walk into the room and everyone’s an executive and they are at the table and then there are chairs around. So I walk in the room and I just sit around the room, I don’t sit at the table because I am not a CFO, CNO, COO or whatever-and I don’t get within two feet of the chair along the wall before he is like gesturing like no, no, no, you come sit here at the table, sit next to me and he introduces me as a high potential key player in our organization. He was talking to people at the right, to the left, just real engaging and supportive of me, being there making me feel welcome. He does stuff like that all the time. I felt like a part of the group and like the titles didn’t mean as much. I felt less nervous when I presented. You know all of those things are helpful when you are showing your work to an audience of that caliber and when you don’t know them. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)
Ishani (personal communication November-December, 2010) illustrated a good example of being on both the displaying/giving end of inclusive behaviors.

So I went on the breaks, whether it was lunch or coffee or something, just striking up a conversation just getting to know her as a newer person but also eventually kind of moving into how she’s doing with this new group which I’m a part of too. She went on to share a story of how her HQCR with one woman blossomed into a HQCR with three, then four women in the office. She and the woman she first bonded with were in their twenties at the time and they eventually bonded with two women at the organization who were in their sixties and about to retire. She was on the receiving end of inclusive behaviors in the following example:

Morning coffee, yes – it was almost a ritual for them. And being asked whether if you wanted to join, for us – or at least for me, it was like, “Wow, this is cool.” That you’re accepted into this little circle. So early stages it was kind of like that but also just hearing about how things were in the past and then eventually knowing what’s going on in their lives and people moving and what are they going to do after their retirement and things of that nature. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

This type of inclusive and welcoming behavior helped them to find common interests upon which they could connect.

**Connecting on common interests.** These participants often connected over a professional or personal common interest. They often learned that while they may have thought they were different at first glance that their backgrounds were pretty similar, such as when Alex said, “There is also a great degree of respect and camaraderie because our
backgrounds are similar even though ethnically speaking we are different” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). They may have connected over family or a hobby. Fran highlighted:

We shared two roles with each other. One is that we are both parents journeying through the whole scene at school. We’re also both journeying through that scene as parents in the school district where we neither live but we have chosen to bring our children. And I have absolutely no recollection how this friendship got started except it focused a lot around children in the beginning. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Karen had similar hobbies to her HQCR:

She’s a musician and a singer, I sing, so we had that in common. We like the same type of books, we have the same viewpoints on how to establish a good corporate culture and how to treat your employees, we have the same perspective on that. We often have joked and laughed with one another about how funny it is that we both come in a different package, but mentally we’re the same people. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Many times it was a connection on common ground in relation to work. Ishani described a connection to the person in a HQCR due to being a woman in male dominated role. She could relate and wanted to reach out to her and connect with her as noted below.

She came in as a trainee she was one of the only females in the equity trading group. It’s a very male heavy profession and if there are women in there, you are kind of supposed to be very man-like in your mannerisms meaning very brash and short and not very courteous. But I felt, at the time, that I was there and I really
I couldn’t… I could do the work but I didn’t fit into that mold and neither did I like that mold, that mold that they tried to put us in. And then when she came in too, I kind of noticed some of the hesitations that she had that I felt, like I didn’t know for sure but just observing I just felt like, you know, I think she’s feeling exactly what I felt a year ago when I just came, and our – the age similarity. We were quite in the younger group, there were more older people at the time, so we clicked that way – just out of college and we were so happy being in kind of a real sexy job of being a trader but at the same time knowing that, you know, it’s all that glam, it’s very cutthroat, you just have to let some of the comments just roll off the back of your shoulder, although in my case it did not roll off that easily.

(personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Noticing both inclusive behaviors and perceiving a common work ethic, Elena stated of her HQCR:

I felt that connection with her because she allowed me to- she made me feel comfortable. She allowed me to ask anything and everything and she would, her work ethic is a lot like mine. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Martin and Gabriel (personal communication, November-December, 2010), formed a connection with their HQCR due to a perceived common goal. Martin noted:

Both of us are people who understand that good relationships are based-that they’re intentional, they’re transparent, they’re long term. We have shared values and we spent some time working with each other around understanding the nature of our aligned commitment to this institution.
Gabriel shared:

I think for me, as we continued to talk together and share together, it came down to the fact that we had a common denominator of genuine care for the work that we were doing, for the people that were before us and we both seemed to have a passion to help people.

Connecting on common interests gave them an entry point into learning more about each other.

**Participating in something significant together.** In many of these HQCRs, the significant forming events were things that on the surface may not sound that profound. In other cases, they were bigger risks, an invitation to a group, participating in a training class together, or a big organizational event. The seemingly smaller things included going to lunch together, going to happy hour or to dinner and a play. Whatever the situation, in a HQCR, someone took the risk to reach out and ask the other and the other person took the risk and responded “yes.” An example of this was when, Ishani, after witnessing her coworker having a challenging work conversation did the following. It was the entry point into her forming this HQCR.

I couldn’t jump in because it was an interaction between those two but I kind of kept it in my mind to kind of talk to her because I could feel that- just looking at the expressions on her face and how she carried herself, or maybe I was superimposing what I was thinking on to her that she might be thinking it but at least I felt like, you know, I should at least ask if she felt really badly or what she can do next time, offer some help because I have done similar things too and how to avoid that the next time. So what we talked about in the little break room when
I saw her, because I saw her going in there and I could get away from my desk for a little bit too and I just went in there and pretended like I wanted some coffee and I just asked her whether if she wanted to go for lunch that day with me and then she said yes. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Another story is the one of Alice when she, having connected on a common interest, having made a commitment to improve her relationship with the colleague, debated about inviting who would become a HQCR to a group that met to discuss a topic of interest to them both.

Before I had made the commitment to have this relationship with her, I had started this group, and I really, really debated whether or not to invite her in, but I couldn’t see a way out of it politically. And I did and I think that gesture was also a precipitating factor in changing our relationship because created one more neutral, not work, non political place to share what we knew about each other, challenges, whatever. She is a part of the group and it’s really been fun. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Finally, I share Douglas’ story that brought him and his HQCR together. Kareem was someone many levels down the organization who gave Douglas a challenge during a meeting that Douglas convened with a sampling of employees. This helped them form a strong and lasting bound. They bonded, not only across racial differences, but across religious difference as well. This was the story.

It began in a “President for a Day” meeting… So I get assignments and it was in one of those meetings that [Kareem] gave me an assignment that started us on a journey that has been thrilling. And that assignment – it was pretty much at the
height of the gas pricing, where gas was almost $4.00 a gallon and he said, “You
know, Mr. Douglas, we make $8.00/hour; a gallon of gas if $4.00; a gallon of
milk is $3.00; and a day old loaf of bread is $2.75; we can’t make it on that kind
of money. I know you pray and I know that your God answers, will you pray for
us, will you make a commitment to pray for us in our general meetings every
Wednesday. I believed him to be Muslim and he believed me to be a Christian.
So I thought that was an interesting request but we began supporting each other in
prayer and the results have been—I would say miraculous. Not only in the
outcomes but in the relationship that has developed – a relationship of
endearment, trust and respect…I think it was the following Wednesday we have
our meeting, so I made a commitment that, “OK.” And it may not be-and I told
[Kareem], “This may not be socially acceptable” but I made a commitment and I
honored it, so the next meeting I had decided to pray for our employees. In that
meeting – normally it’s me, their managers, their supervisors, their leads and 125
people, it’s our family [department name omitted]. Not this meeting. This
meeting, two managers from Human Resources show up, the Vice President of
Human Resources shows. Just by happenstance. And the COO of the
organization, Chief Operating Officer, [name omitted]. So I thought, “This is
frightening.” And I got up at the microphone and I said, “You know one of our
employees has asked -” I said, “I know what you guys make and I know how
difficult. I have no idea, I don’t know how you support a family on this but one of
your colleagues has asked that I pray for you and I intend to keep that promise.”
We prayed for our department that God would meet their needs, we prayed for
our leadership that no matter how difficult the enigma that they would have uncommon wisdom to lead this organization. And when I finished I fully expected it to be my last day because organizations feel strongly about that kind of thing. But instead, I handed the microphone to [the COO] and she stood up and she said, “I don’t know what’s going on in this department but I wish I could sprinkle the rest of the [organization] with it.” (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

This was a personal and an organizational risk for Douglas. I know it gave me pause at first as well since not all people believe in God. Douglas went on to share what he had learned from the first session and he now allows people to choose to come to the prayer portion or not. Employees are allowed that time to practice whatever they believe. He said that most, if not all, of the department staff do come for the prayer portion. Experiencing this together and with so many others bonded Douglas and Kareem in a profound way. Whether via lunch or a revival of sorts, having the opportunity to participate in something significant with a coworker helped to form a high quality relationship.

Sharing on a professional and personal level. Many times these significant events like lunches and happy hours opened the door to sharing on a more personal level. The range of personal sharing varied among the research participants from some general sharing and knowledge of family and kids to house-sitting for a boss relatively soon into a relationship. Whatever the depth, all shared beyond the professional to some degree with their HQCR, many noted the personal sharing being critical and differentiating within a HQCR. Denise highlighted this factor with the following comment:
I think forming has to do with communication and just sitting down and talking to people like we are now. People work side by side with someone who is somehow different from them on a daily basis and they never have a conversation about anything that’s not work related. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Bonnie shared about the opportunity she had to join with a group of three African-American women, one of whom became her HQCR of focus. She talked about their experiences going to get their hair done. I saw personal factors in Bonnie of being curious, inquisitive and willing to take a risk.

I think there might be some sort of boundary that people feel, and women in particular, feel around when we are getting in other people’s business and asking questions about things that are personal. And I was just very curious about it and I guess there was a moment and I seized it. That’s how I got in. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

John and Madeline shared examples of how they crossed into personal sharing. John said, “He would invite me to his house and we would be at happy hour together and talk in detail about life, not just what went on during the day at work with a particular customer or employee” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Madeline enthusiastically shared about her HQCR:

My relationship with this particular person is exceptional because not only can we talk about personal stuff; we can talk about any subject, subjects or opinion. She’s my mentor, I consider her a mentor. We talk about business, we talk about personal stuff, we talk about all type of stuff.
Gia and Ilan summed up the importance of connecting on both a personal and professional level for high quality well when they shared with me:

If I talk to them frequently about things other than work, if I know what’s going on in their life. I just think the personal dimension, like knowing that and getting to know them on that level, I think that’s what separates it from just a good relationship with a coworker. (Gia, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

This was somebody that I could speak to her about children that I had, extracurricular activities that we were involved in…For me, at least, a high quality relationship is one that you’re in a business setting but you feel like friends, you get to a place where you talk about personal things. (Ilan, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Gia and Ilan’s entry into sharing more of the personal side matches well with being whole when in a HQCR and helped set the stage for forming stronger bonds of empathy and trust.

**Developing empathy.** Developing an understanding of the other person and them of you, the mutual empathy was clearly a part of helping a relationship become high quality. To the participants, developing empathy was about exposing vulnerabilities to the other person and giving an open window into personal experiences. Developing empathy was about knowing what is on each other’s plates, personally and professional. For example, Alice suggested:
High quality coworker, like the one we are describing here, we know more about each other and what we bring to the table than just our job roles. We know what we are struggling with at any given time, personally and professionally, we know what is on each other’s plates and the extent to which people are overwhelmed. We know what we have in common and we build on that. And, we know each other’s strengths and weaknesses and when to tap each other on the shoulder and when to pass and say you are not going to be able to help me with that one.

(personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Empathy was about walking in someone else’s shoes; a common phrase when it comes to developing empathy.

I credit it to her for kind of enriching me. It’s a form of enriching because I put myself in her shoes and I thought I wouldn’t like to be treated that way so let me make sure-and I’m not perfect, I still have days where I may not be so super patient but I have been making an effort since then thanks to what she described to me on how she was assuming it was based on who she is. (Lilyana, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

It was about meeting people where they were and being willing to cross the line into deeper understanding as John suggested:

I think that it takes moving forward and coming across that line in spite of whatever you fear and putting down any professional airs that you might have and trying to relate with the person on a personal level and have them understand that you understand what they’re facing and what they’re thinking and acknowledging that, acknowledging their vulnerabilities, communicating their strengths – almost
doing an instant SWOT on them, letting them know, “I understand you and this is where I’d like our relationship to grow to.” (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Fran also described an intuitive empathy earlier in the chapter. Here Hiresh described his intuitive connection with his HQCR:

We are very intuitively connected, we are very reflective in our conversations, we don’t get into the mundane. I am much more head driven, head driven in the sense that I love a lot of a reflection, intellectual inquiry and analysis and all that – not mathematical analysis but situational analysis and all that. And he is- I think he also borderlines on that. It is like we would speak code words and not those we have pre-discussed that but naturally we do that. If I make a statement, he would get it where there would be 10 other people who would be in the room who would say, “What do you mean?” And he would get it without me elaborating any further on it. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Perhaps ultimately developing empathy was about a feeling, an understanding of each other and being there for one another.

That feeling that, first of all, I’m here, there’s two people in a room and I’m here for you and you’re here for me and that focus on each other and getting to know that I have some needs and you have some needs and getting a basic understanding of what those are and to know it’s not kind of bullshit kind of stuff but I’m really interested in you individually. (Bob, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
My sense was that empathy and trust formed and grew in tandem. Trust, a word that was shared by all participants is explored next.

**Establishing trust.** Elements of trust overlap with the prior theme of developing empathy. Establishing trust on some level, trust of work skills at a minimum to deep personal and professional trust at a maximum was a common theme across all of my participant interviews. I heard many stories of trust being about sharing and then holding information in confidence. A comment that starts this section well comes from Gabriel when he said, “So we kind of formed a bond where we could trust each other and therefore be able to share very sacred personal information with each other with no concern for hearing it again or I’ll look down upon you” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Alice echoed many themes within this forming section when she said of forming a HQCR, “I think it takes trust, it requires constant open communication and a genuine interest in the person – where they are, how they are doing with things” (personal communication, November-December, 2010).

It has been hard throughout the writing of this chapter to pull out just a few of the volumes of beautiful quotes the participants shared with me. It is especially hard within this theme of trust that came up so frequently. While knowing evidence of the importance of trust was shared earlier in Table 4.9, I feel compelled to share an additional sampling of participant quotes about trust in Table 4.15.

**Table 4.15**

*Participant Comments on Trust as a Key Factor in Forming a HQCR*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>And for me a high quality relationship is that trust. Like I can really trust that she is telling the truth and she is honest… For me</td>
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Elena (with hints of the intuition that will soon be explored) | Somehow she kind of gave me that notion that I could trust her and so I kind of explore that trust and yes, throughout - it’s been four years now and since then I know I can trust her. When I’d ask her questions, professional questions or work related questions, and she would give me good guidance, good advice. And we worked together in a lot of projects that involve both of our executives and we really got to feed off of each other. And so that kind of opened up the door for me to feel comfortable in sharing more of my personal life with her and then as we shared we realized we had a lot in common.

Evan | She had such a trust in me that even though she only worked part-time, she gave me a key to her office saying, “The days I’m not here you can use my office.” She had me set up on her computer so that I could use her computer, just this total trust. A key to her office, a key to her department, which I still have to this day.

Gabriel (when asked how the trust formed) | I think it came out of risk and risk taking, taking the challenge of risking saying something that was very personal; risking sharing something with her that I may not want anyone else to know or even the risk of sharing tears which are sometimes very hard to come by and finding that there was acceptance there and there was not judgment, that there was a release and care. So I think that’s how the trust began to come and to grow.

Ishani (when asked how the trust formed) | I don’t think that it happened right away but the fact that at the early stages that we realized that we could easily talk to that person and that person, each other kind of felt that input is being respected and what was discussed between is just between us – some of the things. And then kind of something intangible but that clicking thing happened over time it just grew into being a very trusting relationship, not only trust some of your personal…I don’t know if secrets is the word, but really personal information but also just normal what’s happening in our lives and some things as well.

Sandra | I think the first sort of set of characteristics, it really starts there, for me, is that trust word that I mentioned early on. Someone that you can trust. I trust this person that we’re talking about and the other person that I mentioned. It manifested itself both in professional and personal – that trust transcends both of those relationships. That you can tell them something on your
Communicating effectively. Elements of communicating openly and effectively were seen in many themes already shared. Communicating effectively came in the interactions and helped to form and grow trust and empathy, particularly when open questioning skills and keen listening skills were used. Martin framed it well in the context of overlapping themes presented when he shared, “the start is obviously you have to be willing to talk and listen. You have to- the basis of building relationships is one-on-one conversations and one-on-one conversations that go beyond the workplace” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Lilyana and Hiresh both shared the importance of communicating with non-verbals as well, Lilyana indicated the need for “Effective communication that includes language and body language as well – verbal and non-verbal “(personal communication, November-December, 2010). Finally, Alex shared what he described as “beyond the open door policy “with the statement:

He is always willing to give you insight and feedback. You would think at his level in the organization that he wouldn’t have time or he would be past the point in his career where he could offer insightful advice, but he is not. He is the only leader I have worked for who has the notion of an open door policy, but he is beyond that, it’s open email, open phone calls, it’s open door, you want to go to lunch, he is cool with that. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Showing interest in person’s success. This is one final area of general consideration in the forming of a HQCR. Elements of an interest in each other’s general personal and professional success were shared in prior sections. Here I share a couple of
specific examples of commitment to an individual’s professional success and growth. Noteworthy for Alex with his HQCR was “I aspire to get promoted to my boss’s level or above and this individual is supporting me in understanding what I need to do to get there” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). John shared the story of how he invested time and energy over time to do an individual SWOT analysis for the person who became his HQCR.

Nine months after I started working here, I finally handed over the SWOT analysis and what I had accrued thus far in watching him operate and watching him interact with his subordinates and his leadership, his manager. I think that, right there, let him know that aside from the coaching and advising I had provided him all along, that let him know that I was really looking out for his best interest and I really wanted him to get better as a person and as a leader and that I was always going to give him the truth no matter what was at stake and that he could trust me. I think that what he did in exchange from the beginning of my employment was, he was always open and honest with me and there was always-he always wanted to make me feel comfortable. I’m not sure that that was attributed to the difference in our races or what have you, but he was just an open person and didn’t necessarily come to the table with any preconceived notions from what I could see and observe. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Themes on Forming Of Particular Note for HQCR across Race/Ethnicity**

John’s last story is a good transition into this section of the forming themes. While many of my participant quotes showcasing forming themes thus far had clear
elements particular to race and ethnicity within them, these forming themes are likely common to forming any HQCR. As I analyzed my data, three factors stood out to me when forming a HQCR across racioethnic difference: 1) Using intuition as a guide, 2) Assessing behaviors over time, and 3) Displaying genuine interest in difference

Using intuition as a guide. Some individuals use or respond to intuition more astutely than others. As I listened to descriptions of these relationships forming in the interview recordings, I heard, not solely from, but particularly from the People of Color, the role intuition played. Many noted that their racial or ethnic differences, or in one instance his Orthodox Jewish faith, helped to develop this intuition. Intuition was referred to my participants with a variety of terms.

Intuition was described as “clicking” when Ishani said, “And then kind of something intangible but that clicking thing happened over time it just grew into being a very trusting relationship” observe (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Elena, described intuition as “gut feeling” or “green light:”

I need to first feel you and get that feeling, that green light in my head that, yes, it’s OK to give a little bit more or share a little bit more with this person. I always say to myself I kind of know- I go with my gut feeling and I kind of feel it. If the person says something and it’s not one specific thing, it just does something or says something or performs their job a certain way that kind of tells me, “OK, this person is-I can probably talk to this person about certain things.” (Elena, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I learned a new word when Ilan described intuition using the word kischka.
Probably - what’s the English term, not give and take, but when you try something and it either works or it doesn’t, chances are when I tried to say something and hoped that, as with most relationships, trust begins with hope and belief and a belief that one would trust. But I don’t know, I think that just develops over time. Perhaps she put herself out there in ways and I responded and then I put myself out there in ways, in appropriate business-to-business peer ways. But, you know, you feel it in your kishka as they say in Hebrew – kishka is like your guts, you feel it in your - it’s a gut feeling. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Felix shared his evolved “Black sixth sense” when asked about knowing when/how to form a relationship across difference. He shared its draw backs as well. As someone I knew before the research study, he also confided that he used this when he met me for the first time.

This is going to sound a little metaphysical, Cheryl, but I really think if you grew up Black you can just about tell right off the bat. If you were to ask me to make a list of things, if I thought real hard about it maybe I could, but you develop kind of a sixth sense of - I felt that when I met you and it didn’t take long. I just sensed that there is an openness in you and that that’s not an issue for you. It’s hard to put that in words and it’s also something that you have to be careful about. I think it’s something we learn, maybe as a defense mechanism, a protective measure, and it’s something that we - it’s kind of like that extra antennae you carry around so that you sense things and sense the little micro-aggressions and micro-inequities and the slights and you know, the more sophisticated you get with it the
better you are at sorting it and saying, “Well that was overt but it wasn’t conscious so that wasn’t -” And not attributing my meaning but really then willing to be open to, “Well what did that mean for the other person?” So I ‘m saying this to you from a Black man’s perspective because that’s the only perspective I have around that, but it is - there’s something there. And it’s subtle energy, so something that if you’re attuned to it, you notice it. After awhile it becomes second nature but like I said, there’s a danger in that because if you only go by that and you don’t necessarily get past that knee jerk reaction so maybe that’s a way of kind of saying, not necessarily stop, but proceed with caution and be watchful…. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Madeline also used the term sixth sense when evaluating someone for a relationship:

I think that’s almost like a sixth sense, that when you’re conducting business with somebody you have to look beyond the words that they’re saying – it’s body language, it’s reading between the lines, it’s really listening to the words that are not being spoken. It’s looking at a person and knowing what are they doing. Is what they’re verbalizing, instinct in alignment with what they’re doing? (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

There were elements of both using intuition and watching and noting behavior over time embedded within all of these comments. Madeline’s quote keenly makes the transition from using intuition to the theme of assessing behaviors over time.

Assessing behaviors over time. The use of intuition coming out so clearly to me was somewhat of a surprise. What was more of a surprise was learning how some of the People of Color I interviewed assessed the behavior of the person who would become
their HQCRs over what seemed to me a fairly significant period of time. Karen shared how she assessed behavior over time through observation and questioning. She said she was trying to “hear their heart” as she assessed if a person was someone with whom she wanted to form a relationship. This dynamic is explored below:

…And that was a very clear sign that she was open to interracial friendships and really appreciates being around a lot of different cultures and she is someone that I maintained a relationship with for awhile and visited her home and even went to church with her on one Sunday. And so that was another good relationship. But I listen for the background and how comfortable the person sounds with different ethnicities. But also that you really don’t know who someone is until you hear their heart and you really shouldn’t form your conclusions until you’ve done that.

I asked Karen the following probing question: Can you say more about that? How do you hear someone’s heart? She responded:

Well, I mean, for me the primary way is by listening to what comes out of their mouth in a variety of settings. I love when I have the opportunity to experience someone in multiple settings and not just the work place, but in their own home, in my home, maybe it’s at church or their place of worship, to see them out in the community in some fashion. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Carmen shared how she assessed the behavior of the women with whom she formed a HQCR in contrast to other coworkers:

What I noticed over time and I think this is what I noticed that was different from other colleagues she kind of extended more of a friendly invitation to me more
than my other colleagues. Like you know, do you want to do lunch or I am working on this project, what do you think? And I am more junior and I notice that other senior colleagues would never come to me let’s say for advice or my opinion. So I think her just her openness and her showing me kind of her trust—that started to build high trust in me so we really connected on various projects.

…[Contrasted with] with other people I just feel more judged I guess when I don’t have that. With some of my other colleagues like if I voice my opinion they might say “she doesn’t know anything or she doesn’t have enough experience or she’s young, and I have been doing this work for 20 years—and what does she know.” And sometimes they give or they say things or react to things to give me those clues. And of course that could be just the story I am telling myself, but it’s based on how they react to the comment. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

As White participants, Fran shared that she felt like her work with social justice was being watched and assessed over time and felt like that made her a “safe White person” to approach. Lilyana shared how her HQCR made her more attuned to inequitable behaviors in the workplace; she “opened her eyes.” When I asked Lilyana, “Once she opened your eyes, did you then notice and observe different treatment that you could not explain [other than perhaps due to race]?” Lilyana responded:

Yes, absolutely and not just in what she perceived her being treated differently but I thought I also observed how people put the extra barrier or they altered their own behavior because they anticipate and they want to be a step ahead and how they might sometimes act different and kind of put up the shield before the need
arises for it. So for me that was enriching even though the circumstance was not good, I wouldn’t want to be in that kind of a situation but it helped me smarten up and pick up more emotional IQ like you say and adjust my own behavior as well.

(personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Perhaps most poignant was Denise watching behavior over at least a year as she searched for a mentor within her organization.

I wanted to have a mentor so for the first year I kind of looked around and some suggestions were made to me, “Well you should ask this person, you should ask . . .” I didn’t think it was a good fit so there was one diversity meeting very early in his tenure here and he just spoke out about what he thought [the organization] should be doing and I was like, “Wow.” He was very nice about it but he was very direct, he didn’t beat around the bush and I thought, “Wow.” I thought that was interesting coming from a White male. And then the second thing was during a leadership forum he was doing a presentation on why he likes working at [the organization] . . . he was describing a situation about the little girl who is a daughter of a friend of his and she was a patient at the hospital at the time and when he got to a certain point in his presentation speaking about her, he started to tear up and he said, “I’ve also learned that it’s OK for men to cry.” And those two things, I said, “That’s the guy, that’s the person that I want to help me to learn, to help me in my development, to be a leader for me.” Because it said to me that he was very direct, he’s sharp, he knows his stuff, but he’s also a very caring person and for a man, in any role because of how they’re programmed but especially in his position, to say in that audience that it’s OK for a man to cry – I
thought, “OK, I’m going to ask him if he’ll be my mentor.” And I did and I told him why. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Within and around all of the themes on forming thus far, a final one of importance was displaying a genuine interest in differences.

**Displaying genuine interest in difference.** Often times, particularly White people, say, “I don’t see difference.” A few of the White participants said that at some point in their interviews, but then went on and shared stories of how they had tackled race and ethnicity differences with the HQCR. I think a key word that came out in this theme was genuine. The individuals I interviewed and quoted here stressed a genuine interest in differences that came through.

Bonnie shared how her interest was piqued about learning from African-American women and their hair. She later went on to share how she often talked about these things with her HQCR who was among this group and how they continued to learn from one another. She felt like her HQCR knew her questions were coming from a place of genuine interest.

I remember, we were standing in the suite of offices and it was her and two other African-American colleagues and me and they were talking and I was- this was like my first three weeks on the job-and they were talking about things that were very specific to being an African-American woman. Things about getting their hair done and about how their grandmother would never want them to cut their glory off. This sort of, I don’t know it just seemed like a perspective that I had, a moment into that cultural world that I had never really seen and I was just
fascinated by it. I don’t know why, I just was. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Carmen highlighted how people can bond over learning about each other’s different experiences, with even the “little things.”

…even like little things like she is very outdoors and you know does a lot of her own gardening and I grew up in the city so I didn’t and mostly in apartments and we didn’t own a home until later on so—you know again, I am very transparent and say I didn’t have that luxury and learned from her, I am trying to plant this, what would you do? So it really expands the conversation on types of things. Or she might ask me, I am trying to cook [Latino] food, how does your family do it? So again, there is just mutual interest in many areas. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Ishani shared how they developed an interest in learning about their different religious backgrounds that took them from deeper, less superficial layers of sharing:

…and this happened after a little while of just having kind of a superficial layer of the friendship. Over time, it was about religion – she was a practicing Catholic and I’m Buddhist so she would talk about some of the upcoming – like confirmations and things like that, that’s happening in her family and I would inquire after them because these are new things to me and when I talk about, “Oh, I’m having a special almsgiving at the temple for my father’s death anniversary,” she would say, “Oh, so what’s your church like?” (personal communication, November-December, 2010)
Hiresh shared a story about how he and his HQCR had a good discussion about the stereotypes that may be associated with Hiresh’s ethnicity and culture.

He said, “Hiresh, when I hired you, I had certain stereotypical concerns. It was not necessarily specifically to you, those were stereotypical assumptions people have about people from - you know, about an [Asian ethnicity] male in terms of will you be able to manage your own work/life balance or are you going to be much more burning yourself out and how it would probably translate into people on your team.” And the aspect of generally the perception of the stereotype is about the comfort of [Asian ethnicity] men to lead women. So early on have had those discussions and the way he has even expressed that is in total trust – not as to say that I have those concerns of you, but to say that here are my general concerns. Having really a transparent and honest conversation, I think that’s helped again. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Elena penned the term “genuine interest” for me. She shared with passion and appreciation the following about her HQCR.

Genuine interest – she showed genuine interest. She expressed her ignorance, if you will, when it came to me explaining that about my culture. It didn’t make sense to her and she was genuinely interested in understanding why. She didn’t criticize it, she didn’t judge it – she doesn’t judge it, she doesn’t criticize it, she doesn’t look down on it. She’s genuinely interested in knowing why and trying to understand it and trying to empathize with it. Not so much sympathize with it but empathize it and also very much interested in how she can help me... But with her, I was able to explain that because she showed interest, she really cared but
not at the surface, she really dug into the reasons why because she wanted to understand. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Felix offered that we may never completely understand, but shared the importance of working through discomfort in order to learn.

…you need to break through that initial discomfort, there needs to be a real desire for it to have a deeper level kind of relationship, and getting to know each other as people and then you start to learn those things, you start to figure out those things. And, you know, some things you start to understand some things better and some things you learn to accept even though you don’t understand it. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

The next section moves from forming factors for HQCR across racioethnic difference to the turning points that put them into deeper and faster motion.

**Turning Points That Grow the Relationship**

As I set out to explore what factors help to form and sustain a HQCR across racioethnic difference, I was equipped with questions about both forming and sustaining and potential areas for probing. It became evident early on that I needed to ask follow up and probing questions to assess how participants knew their relationship elevated from a good worker relationship to a high quality relationship. Many of the forming factors, especially when viewed in total could easily have had that impact and that is why there is overlap in the theory model. As I listened to my participants’ stories, it became evident that there were perhaps some unique themes or turning points that helped to grow the relationship in a profound way. Similar to how the forming factors were explored, turning point themes explored include six general turning points and one particular to growing a
HQCR across racioethnic difference. The themes were: 1) Sharing deeper personal information, 2) Pushing for growth, 3) Having a crucial conversation, 4) Reaching mutuality, 5) Growing more self aware, 6) Sharing a work success. The one theme unique to building a HQCR across racioethnic difference was directly or indirectly talking specifically about the racial and/or ethnic differences between them.

**Sharing deeper personal information.** Many participant stories got to a level where I knew they were no longer taking about past or present coworkers, but were talking about friends. This shift or turning point seemed to happen when individuals learned and connected with a person’s values, usually having seen them as similar to one’s own. It was also a turning point when a person discussed and revealed differences other than race.

Gia convincingly shared a deep personal connection with her HQCR. Her manager had said to her at one point, “You know, you started out as a college graduate and now you’re moving up – I love it. I trained my little guppy” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). This comment, along with the fact that Gia asked her manager to speak at her wedding reception, prompted me to ask Gia if she perceived her manager, especially given their age difference, as a motherly figure. Gia’s response was:

I don’t consider her a mom but we have kind of a mentoring, friend like relationship and she knows a lot about my personal life and I know a lot about hers. She’s definitely the kind of person that I’d be keeping in touch with probably for a very long time, if not until I have grandkids. She wants to babysit my future kids. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)
Connecting on values came through in many participant statements. Carmen, for example, connected knowing values and the concept of knowing the whole person.

High quality comes with it’s not only about work, but when you get again to that whole person and even the values that you bring to your work like integrity or you know when you see that something is going wrong in the project and people come together and have discussions on this is what is right to do or this is what we feel we should do and there is more connections around that level. And you get to know the whole person not just the work part. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Martin shared the importance of getting to know an individual’s values and how to do that in general and in the context of his HQCR. He shared that this turning point in a HQCR cannot be achieved without a strong foundation of trust and respect.

Once we understand values, the focus would be to -what are the stories that impact those values, that have made those values what they are. This is the person’s personal life stories, this is where we-I can tell you that the person I’m talking about, she has shared with me the life stories of her family. Her family is social work leaders in this community, in this portion of the community over many years. Her mother has led organizations in areas of providing human services to people so this kind of runs in the family – her mother is engaged in social services. So this is something her family, this is a tradition in her family, that helping others has been a part of who she is from her earliest remembrance. I use the image of a tree and say, “Look, the leaves are the public persona and the things you can see, the trunk is the values that people have and then the roots are
really where you want to get. Once you get to the root stories then everything else kind of, you understand why this is what it looks like.” So you really want to get to the roots because the roots help you to also build stronger relationships with people. People don’t generally share their root stories with you until there’s a level of trust and respect and a little more depth to the relationship and this is what we’re trying to create. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Elena shared how she and her HQCR connected with common family values which brought them and their daughters together for a learning experience.

On a personal level, like I said she has kids the same age as my kids and we have this same passion as to how we want to raise our kids and I put my kids first, before anything, and she does as well. And as we shared, as we’ve got to know each other better and share more of our personal lives with each other, we kept saying to each other, “Yeah, I do that too, yeah, I do that too – yeah, my girls did that too.” …And so she’s helped me with my kids and I’ve helped her with our kids. One example of the help that I’m talking about is her oldest daughter had an assignment in school…she was given an assignment that dealt with cultures and this person asked me if it was OK if her daughter interviewed me and my girls. She had certain questions she wanted to ask, it was this research paper or whatever it was that she wanted to put together and she wanted to really add on to it – like not so much write a paper on it but give examples and things like that. And so I said, “Absolutely.” So we met on a weekend, we met and her daughter came with lots of questions. The daughter was really nervous and I brought my
girls along and the reason why I brought my girls along, because I knew that it
was going to be a learning experience for my girls as well so they could
appreciate maybe their culture, where they come from. And she too saw that, she
too brought her youngest daughter as well and so it was more of a learning
experience all around than it was just me answering some questions to her oldest
daughter. So her daughter did ask me questions about my culture, similar to what
you’re asking me and she was very grateful for that—like I told her, she was
very grateful that I did that but I said, “Don’t thank me, I want to thank you
because it was a lesson all around.” (personal communication, November-
December, 2010)

Madeline shared that while she talked about a variety of things from the start with
her HQCR, the relationship definitively evolved and got deeper.

So it was practically from the beginning but the relationship evolved, we were
able to talk about different type of subjects—very sensitive subjects such as race,
sexual preferences, you know it—political aspects, being poor, being able to buy
this or alternative places to buy stuff. All of those things that you would not think
of or that somebody could come and kind of make fun of you because you don’t
have this or make fun of you because you don’t have that or you speak with an
accent or because you don’t dress well. Just taking that care to deliver the
message without offending and really caring. (personal communication,
November-December, 2010)

**Pushing for growth.** While there were elements of pushing for growth in many
of the HQCRs discussed, pushing for growth seemed a particularly important turning
point in the mind of the direct reports in a HQCR relationship. All the examples which follow came from individuals whose HQCR were with individuals who were either their direct manager or their manager’s boss.

He is always trying to raise the profile of the department and he is proud of what we do and what I do so if I tune into that- that was kind of the turning point I guess I should say for the relationship. So the next thing that was a milestone I would say was when I was chosen to participate in this leadership development program that is [city omitted] wide. You know you got to get nominated and it’s a big deal. Fortune 100, 500 companies in [city omitted] all have who they consider high potential leaders put their name in a hat to be selected to be selected for this city wide program. (Alex, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Before when I was working with her an opening came up at [organization name omitted] and I wasn’t initially interested in it and then she said, “You know, you should go check this out, I think it would be good for your career.” (Gia, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

She always pushed me to do better, of course I was dragging my feet and she would always say, “Go back to school, go back to school.” And I’m like, “I will, I will.” And so she was the one who actually taught me a lot of the stuff I know now because before that I didn’t have anyone really directing me, it was just kind of like, “Here’s the work go do it.” And she was the one that was behind me,
pushing me to do better. (Hannah, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I learned a lot from [my HQCR] – a whole lot, a lot that I probably didn’t want to know or wasn’t interested in really knowing more about but [she] kind of forced me to do in a slick kind of way. “Oh, Janelle, I think this would be good for you.” Or, “Janelle, I think this is an opportunity you might like.” (Janelle, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Having a crucial conversation.** Many participants referred to a “crucial conversation” or a “courageous act” that helped to elevate their relationship. These courageous acts could have included when participants worked through a conflict, shared some sensitive feedback forward, talked to others on the person’s behalf, or perhaps even shared something of a very personal nature that could impact work. For example:

> When I was trying to be a consultant and I kept getting the door shut and nobody would ever tell me why they wouldn’t give me the opportunity, [department leadership] told me to go back to get my MBA, I’m in school, [department leadership] had me working on these special projects – I’m doing everything [department leadership] asked me to do but you still won’t give me the opportunity but [department leadership] won’t tell me why. And so [she, the HQCR] asked me …So why do you think that’s happening? What do you feel about that?’ And I was honest with [her], I said, “This is what they told me to do, I did it; this is what they said to do, I did it. I did everything that they asked me to
do.” And [she] took that back [department leadership] and [she] framed it in a way where it didn’t sound like it was coming from me and then they finally listened and then they finally gave me the opportunity. So right there I could trust that what I was saying in that room with [her], my raw emotions, wasn’t going straight back, “Well Janelle said.” It was in a very professional manner, “Well let’s look at this.” (Janelle, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

One courageous act that I can think of with [my coworker] that I just talked about is of more of a personal nature but one of the courageous acts that she did that really impacted me when we were in this relationship is she had a very tough call that she had to make in her personal life regarding her husband and their long-term marital status. And she made a courageous act to actually address something in the workplace. It fits into a lot of private things but the bottom line is that there was an indiscretion that took place with her husband and with someone in the workplace and the courageous act was, she basically – number one, she came and confided in me; and number two, she addressed the issue that basically had a direct, could have had a direct impact on her employment status. (Sandra, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

John inspired me to go out and have a courageous conversation at work the day after our interview with this advice he shared.

It’s moving forward in spite of what you’re afraid of. It’s kind of trying to abandon however you’ve been brought up to keep the lines divided. A lot of my
parents and my relatives might say that, “All right, don’t talk about this at work.” Or, “Go and just work your hardest and outwork the next person.” But that’s only going to get you so far, that’s not going to advance you to your dream job or the regard you want to have at work. It’s really about the image you build and the image is all about relationships and if you don’t build those relationships, if you don’t step across those lines, have the courage to step across those lines, and put yourself on the line to be exposed or for people to get to know you better, you’re not going to have those relationships and you’re going to see more closed doors than not, you know. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Reaching mutuality.** Reaching a level of mutuality and reciprocity on virtually all the themes discussed thus far was a clear turning point for the HQCRs. Mutual feedback, coaching, trust, learning, etc. were achieved during this turning point. Sandra and Alex expressed this turning point exceptionally well.

I felt like in the beginning she was more in a relationship of giving to me because I was new in my job, new in my role, new to a bigger organization, etc. And she was giving a lot to me but over time, what I found was there was a lot that I could give to her as well because just as she helped me in that one little RIF [reduction in force] situation, there were many changes that were impacting her and her organization and I went to her more as a friend, like on our walks to the train, on our walks to the deli, on our walks here, asking her probing questions, reaching out to her… So then I just started finding things that I knew mattered to her, that I had access to that maybe she didn’t. (Sandra, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
I suppose that in general and I see that in the relationship that I have with this individual, it reaches a point of reciprocity. So all this time, we have been talking about what he does for me, but another turning point was when he respects and solicits my advice and input, and not just on minor things. There are things he would like to understand and do better with and how to approach his fellow executives, how to approach those who report to him, or those who don’t report to him, but whose titles are below him. I feel like he values my feedback, like I have something to offer. (Alex, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Growing more self aware. Growing more self aware was an intrapersonal turning point for many participants. Even if not specifically stated, there was personal growth on some level that most participants shared. A few of comments that supported the importance of growing more self aware in order to form HQCRs came from Sandra, who equated it emotional intelligence, Nada, who called it doing personal work and working on personal “stuff,” and from Olivia, who said she had to get over herself so that the HQCR could continue to grow.

I would put it under the umbrella of emotional intelligence and what I mean specifically about that, I know that that’s like an overused term, but I specifically have gone to a couple of different courses- here in town around understanding emotional intelligence and understanding some of the behaviors that can be tweaked, modified or frankly just gotten rid of completely, that demonstrate our emotional IQ. (Sandra, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
I think doing personal work, whatever that is – for some people it may be social justice, for some people it may be spiritual work, I think people come to a place of compassion in many different ways but I think that that’s also helpful – that kind of understanding of, it’s kind of painful for all of us to be around and if I can sort of tap into that, I can be more present for your stuff and can ask for things that I need. So I think self-awareness is a big piece but it doesn’t necessarily have to come from anti-oppression work. I think however you come to that place of I guess interconnectedness in general to human beings. (Nada, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I guess me getting over myself and what I mean by that is from the cultural aspect, and I think this is why I picked this person – the Chinese culture really does not embrace conflict, whether it’s healthy conflict or unhealthy conflict. I basically had to accept that OK, we’re not going to have the conversation, we’re not going to hash it out, I have to kind of try to put my personal biases behind me and although I think it would have been for the betterment of the relationship if we had had the conversation, it just wasn’t something that was going to happen. (Olivia, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Sharing a work success.** Experiencing a success often motivates individuals, team and organizations to reach new heights. When the examples of a particular work success were shared, something achieved together, or with the HQCR’s support, it was clear that the shared work success elevated the relationship. In Martin’s example, it showed how they worked together to achieve success, or in his words, she made him
“look like a superstar.” In Alex’s case, it was another clearly stated turning point because a commitment made to him had been kept.

So this person I think is growing, we’re aligned, she makes me look like a superstar. So everybody is happy. More money is showing up, more people come, more volunteers – as I say, we’ve done $600,000 on this building and every bit of that is a gift this year. Not a single dollar has come out of our operating dollars.

(Martin, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Well when I got promoted-they could have instituted a broad search both internally and externally to find candidates, but he opted to convert me to interim [manager] and see how I performed and what not, and we learned from one another what was in our best interest and then there wasn’t much of a search after that and I got promoted permanently to the manager position. I had not experienced that in my former job when I worked in manufacturing. There were always extra hoops that you had to jump through, formal and informal, expressed and unexpressed, so you always were kind of guessing. But he was very upfront about what could happen and as we went through me meeting certain milestones he was upfront and met my expectations for how to make my position permanent. (Alex, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

This quote ends the exploration of general turning points; next I focus attention on the turning point that appeared to have a unique significance across racioethnic difference.
Turning Point Of Particular Note for HQCR across Race/Ethnicity

A particular turning point that stood out for building a HQCR across racial and/or ethnic differences was reaching a point in the relationship where participants had a conversation about how race and/or ethnicity might impact someone in the workplace. There were two instances in which race and/or ethnicity were not broached within the relationship discussed in the interviews. One of these participants later noted how race was sometimes brought up by employees in his department, but reiterated that he did not talk about racial differences with his HQCR specifically. With the other 25 participants, race and/or ethnicity was addressed specifically, either indirectly or directly. As noted earlier, I also heard some “I don’t see race responses.” The process of discussing race and/or ethnicity was not always neat or tidy, but it served as a turning point in these relationships. Some of the indirect strategies included exposing more of oneself to invite the other to share, doing self work and living as an open book so it made others perhaps feel more comfortable with difference. Direct strategies included asking direct questions, participating in a diversity learning experience together that opened the door to the dialogue, or talking directly about how it impacted their relationship or their relationships with other coworkers. Ultimately, discussing race and/or ethnic differences can be complicated as some of the participants shared. As noted in the situational analysis, race is a social construction and that can complicate the concepts and discussions about the topic. The stories and examples are many; it was hard to choose just a few as illustrations of this turning point. Stories did show, however, with work and addressing the issues, how participants made things less complicated and it provided a platform upon which to grow even more.
All of the examples shared here meet the criteria of the “crucial conversations” previously discussed. Alice’s relationship with her HQCR started out as a strained coworker relationship. Her experiences illustrated the interlocking dynamics of this theory. An organizational factor (her boss’s encouragement), personal and forming factors (Alice’s commitment to improving the relationship and taking a risk to extend an inclusive invite to this individual to go out to lunch) helped to form the relationship. Alice then experienced a turning point in the HQCR with they discussed race specifically. This was a crucial conversation and one that promoted feedback and growth. The conversation also illustrated that a relationship is a two way street as her coworker took a risk by asking a very direct question. Alice set out at her boss’s urging to make the relationship with her African-America colleague better. She showed the personal characteristics of one willing to take risks and invited her to lunch and invited her to join a group around a common interest outside of work. Alice shared pretty strongly that she thought race should not make a difference, but after she reached out and discussed racism and sexism, it helped to turn the relationship. Alice captured this crucial conversation about race as a turning point when she highlighted a lunch conversation with her HQCR:

She asked me flat out, “why do we have so much trouble?” to begin with and we had a discussion about it. I said this is how I perceive you and I perceive you were disrespectful, I shared all of those things with her and I had to take the time to learn otherwise, to learn what was there. The message that she sent to me was that she never felt that way about me. That my reaction to her was marginalizing to her and she put me in the same boat with other people because she struggles with issues of racism and sexism and all of those isms. And we realized that we have
more of those struggles in common [this evoked some laughter as she recalled the
discussion] than different. And that discussion, right out of the gate, was a
precipitating factor for the relationship changing....One of the things that she has
taught me is that this stuff is insidious. Racism and sexism-sexism is, well I think
it’s an equal challenge. Both of those isms are, what the wording I am searching
for - it is almost subversive. (Alice, personal communication, November-
December, 2010)

Gia, in a conversation with her manager, shared her struggle of not being a US
citizen and her green card status. This conversation gave them a way to bond and grow
that Gia had not imagined. They discussed the challenge directly and Gia knew her
HQCR was in full support of her.

I guess one of the topics, though, was in my life that I wasn’t very open about but
she knew because she was my boss, like the whole immigration thing. She knew
that I only had six years in the U.S. and that either I would have to get a green
card through work or by getting married and so that’s when she was on the, “Let’s
get you married” thing. But then she was also, at the same time, helping me build
up my professional life so that I could - if that doesn’t work out then getting a
good job that gave me a green card. And actually she said and maybe this is also
one of the turning points is that I told her about what I needed and she said, “You
know, I will help you, I will talk to HR and see if it’s possible for [organization
name omitted] to sponsor you” and she found it wasn’t but she did take that extra
step. And then she’s like, “Well Gia, if it’s not going to happen at [our
organization], I will help you find somebody in [city omitted], some company,
that will help you with that.” For me, that was on a very deep level. I would not ask that of anybody and nobody would offer to do that much work. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Alex shared how he and his HQCR explored race and bonded after a learning experience on race:

So during the session, we did this exercise were we to put different color beads in a glass box and those colors were to represent who you as an individual who you interact with from a diverse standpoint. So you might have a bead if you are White, a different bead for Black, for Asian, the spectrum. And so as the person facilitated the exercise, he would ask how often do you interact with someone of this background. As it turns out his box was mostly White so his challenge was to add more color to his box. So when I go into his office, I see the box on his desk so that to me tells me that he is trying to understand, to evolve, to grow, to respect diversity. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Lilyana’s story is one of increasing knowledge and self awareness. As a White person working in the US, she learned the following from her African-America HQCR. It shows an evolution from moving beyond things that she felt should not make a difference in the workplace to a place where she realized that maybe sometimes they in fact do.

I actually, until she brought it, and she was the first one that opened my mind to that problem, my eyes I should say, not my mind. Until then I hadn’t actually thought about it. I’m so deliverables oriented and certainly behaviors because I never looked at people as African-American, Chinese, or even myself with an accent from another country, I never stopped to look that way. I do ask people
questions if I find that it’s not going to offend them because I like learning about other cultures, so culturally related questions. But that was from a personal tourist standpoint, from a professional I never really thought about it so when she confided it I was really surprised. But it taught me something, to pay attention because we continued to work together so to pay attention at the work place and recognize that behavior and I give that credit to her. It kind of smartened me up a little bit. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

John, a person who lives his life as a self proclaimed open book, shared stories of not shying away from discussions about race. In one particular instance, he shared how he took the opportunity to coach his HQCR about one of his African-American direct reports, building on his own personal experience and understanding.

One of his direct reports is a pretty seasoned professional, probably even more seasoned than him, in fact, and is an African-American manager. And they have been- their relationship has never been a good one. It’s not necessarily a relationship of trust or open conversation, each one of them is kind of always posturing when they speak with each other and what I told [name omitted] about this other manager, about his direct report, is that, you know, when African-Americans come into a room or enter a professional position or are looking to expand and extend their career, they’re always thinking about is someone looking at my color. And not that I would speak for the whole race but just having this experience and knowing that many others have it – is someone looking at my color with respect to giving me opportunities or advancing me in the corporation? Or coming across the lines that typically divide to speak with me and have open
and honest and engaging conversation? And so when I told him that, I said, “You’ve got to look at this person’s background, how he’s been taught to interact in corporate America, what he’s been taught to protect as he interacts with his boss in corporate America. He’s not going to say anything that is going to compromise him or lose his job or lose any position with you so he may be less inclined to have open and honest communication or just communication that takes risks when you’re talking so you’ve got to get through and let him know that you’re coming across the lines – you’re meeting him where he is and then this is where you need him to be in terms of his thoughts and advancement of his career in the corporation.” (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Not that these situations were clear cut, but personal experiences from Karen and Hannah expressed particular nuances about race. Karen shared when asked how her HQCR compared to those she might have with her same race the following:

This is an interesting question for me because growing up - and it’s carried out throughout my life, but I feel sometimes misplaced in the African-American community just because of what my interests are and because of the way that I talk. I was teased, I’m still teased today but more so growing up that I talk like a White girl, because I speak proper English and I have good grammar and loved English – actually I really don’t know why I speak the way that I do because it’s not consistent with my other family members. But that created a rift for me. The Black kids teased me a lot; I’ve always had friends from a variety of cultures ever since I was in elementary school, as long as I can remember. So I’ve been fortunate in that way to have exposure very early. With African-Americans the
relationship tends to grow slower just because I’m not- Black people don’t see me as a typical African-American and so they have to become comfortable with me and they have to get around to the point of realizing, “Oh, she cares about our community, she is one of us, she’s not a typical Black person from the ‘hood’ if you will, but really does value our culture and our community.” And once they discover that about me, then everything is just fine. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Hannah shared some similar identity challenges in reflection to some follow up questions I sent her via email after our interview about how, if at all, her Asian background impacted her.

I was adopted and brought to the US at three months old so the only thing I really knew was the environment I was raised in. Race never really came up in our family. To tell you the truth, I grew up thinking since I attended a majority all White schools and grew up in a White family that I was White. I remember once when I was in school I was told that I wasn't White but didn't exactly understand that at the time. I would say it was when I went to college that I starting seeing myself as Asian. The interesting part is that I started relating more to the African-American students and it’s been like that ever since. It’s kind of funny, just by looking at me no one would ever guess any of this. I have always had a dilemma as to how to identify myself. The only reason I identify as Asian is because that is how I am seen. Otherwise, I would probably identify as White still. I really don't relate to the culture at all. So I tend to ask myself, do you identify as how you are seen or how you feel you fit in. What is actually right and wrong? Strange as it
may seem, I tend to try and stay away from the issue of race as it relates to me. Personally, I don't think it has played a part in my work life. However, it has allowed me to get involved with several young professional groups that target young people of color to stay in the area. (personal communication, December 1, 2010)

In conclusion, Felix and Nada, both having done work in the area of social justice, offered the following that I think illustrated why tackling our racial and ethnic and other differences are important and played a role as a turning point for HQCRs across racioethnic difference.

I think, first of all, you have to be willing and able to put race on the table. If you try to ignore it or talk around it or talk past it, things come up that put it in your face. So, you know, having deliberately, willingness, and ability because I think both are important. If you have the willingness then the ability can develop. I think most people have a level of discomfort just in engaging in dialogue about race across racial lines. I think folks don’t know how to do it, don’t want to step on anybody’s toes. Black people and other people of color just sometimes don’t want to go there, it’s kind of like-it’s a land mine-So there needs to be that willingness to have those kinds of dialogues, to really just go there, to be frank and honest about it. And then there needs to be the ability. People need to be able to know that this is going to be messy, you’re going to disagree, we're going to have issues. (Felix, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
I think when we hold privilege around an identity, that when we start interacting with people who don’t hold it we become very anxious and so I think then that impacts confidence and what do I say and- it kind of becomes very complicated…. I think it just when you gain confidence that you are capable of creating meaningful relationships with people and the importance of being transparent about your stuff and holding people accountable for their stuff. I don’t know, I think to me it feels like a necessary part of the relationship, maybe it hasn’t been an active part of the relationship but how can you introduce it maybe in a way that even the new relationships get on board in terms of being direct and communicating around these issues and navigating the fact that you are different. (Nada, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Having greased the gears for both forming and turning point factors, I now move to sustaining factors that help keep the HQCR in motion.

**Themes on Sustaining a HQCR**

In many ways, the individuals in these HQCRs had to continue building on the actions taken in the forming and turning point stages. The participants acknowledged the need to continue those behaviors and also shared specific insights about the actions needed to sustain these HQCRs. The sharing of these sustaining insights resulted in seven general themes and two themes that stood out in relation to building HQCRs across racioethnic difference. The seven general sustaining themes were: 1) Making time to interact, 2) Showing appreciation for insights, 3) Welcoming to other groups, 4) Serving as confidant 5) Maintaining open and honest communication, 6) Sharing organizational information, and 7) Serving as a “place of rest" and enjoyment. A few participant quotes
within each theme will offer illumination. The two themes unique to HQCR across racioethnic difference are 1) Embracing each other’s differences and 2) Letting the guard down. These two themes will segue way into the summary for this chapter.

**Making time to interact.** Whether a past or present coworker, the importance of making time to interact or connect personally or professionally was shared as important to sustaining the HQCR. Impromptu conversations, social outings and using tools such as text messaging and Facebook were deemed to help with the ongoing interactions. For example:

We still keep in touch as closely, if not a little better, than what we did at the time that we were there in terms of she has gotten married and I went to the wedding; she had two kids and I had gone to see her at the hospital. (Ishani, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I think just seeing each other at the different events. I still stop by, I always say hi, and then I still tell her stuff that’s going on with my life which keeps her posted on what I’m up to and then she also tells me what she’s up to or what her daughter is up to. I think Facebook probably helps a little bit because- I see her daughter’s stuff and then I see what my former boss would say, like if she says on her Facebook profile, “Oh, I just sent off my daughter to college, I’m so sad.” I ask her about it, how you are feeling about it. She’s always talking about her daughter so just continuing to talk about things that go on in our lives, I think that helps. (Gia, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
There is importance in devoting our time to the relationships we want to develop.

In other words, you spend time with the people you want to get closer to; no matter how little or sparse that time may be. And a signal of the value and impact of the relationship is the frequency of impromptu two-way initiated conversations you have. (John, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Gabriel offered that it takes work and commitment to sustain a HQCR while Madeline offered that once one reaches a HQCR, it may not matter how much time goes by without talking because the high positive regard will remain.

I think of high quality relationships, they have to be maintained and it takes work and sometimes it’s on her part and sometimes it’s on my part and we have to be intentional about saying, “Hey, it’s been awhile since we talked deeply or since we’ve gotten together or since we had some fun together, let’s do something.”

And I think that is important, that it does take work. (Gabriel, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

You know, I tell you – when we were working close together it was constant communication but when you have a deep relationship, a loving relationship, even if you don’t talk often when you talk, you talk, and you pick up where you left off. (Madeline, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Showing appreciation for insights.** Often when making time for one another in a HQCR, it was an opportunity to ask for insights or to recognize each other in some way. Evan and Bob clearly went to their HQCR for insights and resources over time.
So if anything comes up in the course of my day, if it’s personal and I need a shoulder to cry on I can call this person, I can text them, I can whatever – send them an e-mail….I would define it as being one where I don’t feel, I don’t hesitate – if this individual has resources that can benefit me in my work day then I don’t hesitate to contact them. (Evan, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

So I used her to network with and so I’m showing her I appreciate her insight into trying to find us some good quality folks to have that happen to be [racially] diverse. I made sure I explained the why behind what we were doing because we’re not as diverse here as we’d like to be. So again, I think things like that, those kinds of conversations help strengthen relationships. (Bob, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Alex and John expressed how they appreciated when their HQCR recognized them or came to them for insights. John shared, “I treasure those times when [name omitted] or anyone at work or in personal life feels so inclined that they need to call me for my input or just to see how I would mentally process their life decision” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Alex offered the following:

He just has a respect and awareness for, intuitiveness of things that’s hard to teach. You have to figure that out on your own or naturally be good at it. He does that. So without me having to toot my own horn or say hey, look what I did, he acknowledges it without me having to reinforce it and that aligns with my personality being humble and introspective. I don’t want to, like to speak to those
things, but he brings them out without me having to push my own agenda.

(personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Welcoming to other groups.** Sometimes as shared earlier with Alice and her HQCR, welcoming to groups played a big role in forming the relationship. Over time the HQCR grew to also mean opening up to other roles, other opportunities, and/or other organizations as seen in the following:

We stayed in touch and as I did my consulting work, sometimes she would call me and say, "Hey, can you help me with this?" Or I'd call her and ask her if she would help me with that. She left the organization not long after and it just so happened that I had started doing consulting with another company, kind of an on-going gig, and I knew that there was an opening in a different department and so I kind of brought her into that. And that's where she works to this day. (Felix, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

There was one point where I wanted to quit the organization because I wanted to grow faster than what I was growing. So I have never hesitated to go down to him and I say, “Hey, [name omitted], you know what? I love what I’m doing but … can you be my reference for this new opportunity?” And then he and I would go off-line, we would meet over breakfast really talking about . . . I think probably he did not see me within the context of just working for him or working within that organization, definitely I feel that he was genuinely interested in who I am as a person, whether or not I worked for the organization under him or not.

(Hiresh, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
Serving as confidant. Serving as a confidant was a big part of building trust in the forming stages for the participants. Overtime, participants noted the importance of their HQCR serving in the confidant role and trusting that information would not be shared with others. Lilyana stated that, “Anything that I discussed with her, it never traveled back to me from another angle” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Ilan shared that:

This was somebody that I could speak to her about, the inside the company gossip and not feel that I was going to be tattled on. Somebody you could trust to speak with and speak to and listen to and that it would be trusted and the information would not be misused I suppose. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Ishani explained well how the nuances of being a confidant could change from the forming to the sustaining phases of a HQCR with the following:

So you have a person to vent with, I guess, and that clicked us too. And we were able to kind of keep those things just between us and trust that. Even the little excuse – that she really wants to be open but she also is afraid that I might think something bad if she’s talking about somebody else in the department in a bad way and then I might have a good relationship with this person. So she’s making, she still talks to me but she also, “That’s how I feel right now” or, “How I don’t know how good of friends or what your relationship is but this person.” So I felt that she’s careful of how others, like me, would think of her thinking in a certain way. And earlier on, those kinds of comments, like the guarded comments, were there but later on it was [not needed]. I mean you didn’t have to say that and I
think that happened after the trust over time built that I knew that it could be exactly how she felt about this other person or it’s just the spur of the moment, still in the heat of discussion, that the idea might change – how she felt might change about this other person. (Ishani, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Maintaining open and honest communication.** This factor came up in direct terms in response to what is important to sustaining the HQCR. John, Ishani, Denise and Madeline shared some insights.

It is open and honest communication and never holding back from where I can see that he can get better or that he can be successful. I just see myself in him and that means that I’m not going to let him fall, just as I would do my self-talk or self-analysis or self-motivation, I’m gonna just- it’s an automatic response to give the same to him. (John, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I think number one was the maintaining of the communication. The communication via e-mail had to be after I left the organization and then also we had telephones too. So you made time, on my part and I think the others did too, made time to actually talk to the person like maybe once a month or sometimes even like once every two months depending on how things are going, just to catch up and see how things are going. (Ishani, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
Communication is key and then maintaining those relationships and strengthening them has to come with trust and a part of that trust piece is about being honest – being honest in your communication, being honest about your feelings, just being up front and that often creates a level of discomfort and when people start to feel that discomfort they tend to back off. So, but I would say communication in terms of building trust and honesty for sustaining, maintaining it. (Denise, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Just constant communication and always having that open mind and that open communication to say truly what we feel and how we feel but say it with respect and embracing who she is, how she is, and the things that she believes in. (Madeline, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

**Sharing organizational information.** This theme did not come up frequently, but it was important to a few participants. Sharing organizational information goes somewhat hand in hand with being a confidant, but had to do with if one person in the HQCR had and shared organizational information or knowledge that may have influenced the other person. This was important to Janelle, Karen and Fran in what they shared in these examples:

… It might have been a situation where I felt hurt or offended by it and [she] let me just give my open and honest opinion about the whole situation and it could have been something that was harmful to [her professionally]. (Janelle, personal communication, November-December, 2010)
I just thought that it was really interesting how we navigated that situation and the fact that there was a conversation that neither one of us really broached with each other during the difficulty and then after the difficulty was over, she did bring it up and give the one opportunity and apparently it was something that was on her mind and we talked through it and what I had suspected was going on her part actually was going on. (Karen, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I went to her and said, “Here’s the deal. We’re going to put a pause button on things because we need to settle some unrest or we’re going to lose the whole battle.” I knew that that would be upsetting to her and she could take or leave the fact that I was telling her this but it was out of respect because she’s been an active voice and leader that I went to her and said, “Here’s the deal.” And it was partly out of our friendship too that I felt like I wanted to be transparent about some battles I was having and how I knew that that was going to come to her attention and wanted her to do whatever she wanted to do but to know sort of what the context would be because the school district had gotten afraid, or the powers, or some other folks had gotten afraid. (Fran, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Serving as a “place of rest" and enjoyment. The comments here will be brief as the topic will be explored in more detail in the final theme of this sustaining section. Recalling these relationships brought out joy in the participants. There was a clear indication that the two within the HQCR could let their hair down with one another and
have fun. Bonnie succinctly communicated the concept of being a place of rest and also
the notion of being whole with her HQCR when she said, “It just feels nice to be free you
know. I can be sorta free with her” (personal communication, November-December,
2010). Sandra summed up the element of enjoyment, “So all the people that I was
testing of when I was answering these questions, we have fun together” (personal
communication, November-December, 2010).

Themes on Sustaining Of Particular Note for HQCR across Race/Ethnicity

Building on these six sustaining factors, the following two themes particularly
build on becoming a “place of rest.” In the examples that follow, participants shared how
they get beyond genuine interest in differences to truly embracing each other’s
differences. This appeared to allow participants to feel free and whole. There were many
instances in which People of Color, in particular, noted having a wall, mask or guard up
at work and once they were in their HQCR, they could remove the mask or take down the
wall or mask. It seemed like being in this HQCR offered a true place of rest and lightened
this load at work.

Embracing each other’s differences. Similar to displaying a genuine interest in
differences as noted in forming, this theme moves beyond to a place where those in the
HQCR could share and embrace any difference. Participants moved from just the realm
of dealing with their differences in race or ethnicity to embracing each other’s
differences. Examples of differences included food preferences due to culture, differences
in religion, differences in interests, or differences in sexual orientation.

Madeline shared that she and her HQCR embraced each other’s culture when they
explored food practices:
She embraces my culture, the things that we do, and it could be simple things such as food. She had never eaten [a type Latino food] food and the first time we brought it over, we cooked and she ate and then she’s like, “We eat rice but this is the way we eat rice, with butter.” And then we try her food and so very simple things trying them and embracing who we are. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Bonnie and Gabriel shared specific stories about embracing each other’s differences in religious perspectives:

I am not an atheist, but am an agnostic person and if anybody asked me about it, I will tell them. It’s not that I don’t believe that there’s a God or don’t care what you do either it’s just, organized religion doesn’t make sense to me. And she gets that. She says well you can do what you want to do and that this makes sense to me and this is what I do. So we do talk about it. She is very involved in her [Christian] church, but she doesn’t just judge, there is no judging. She is like “whatever, I don’t care.” (Bonnie, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I also was reminded of an incident where I guess I felt comfortable enough as an African-American that not only are we different racially but we’re also different from a religious perspective. I’m what you would call an Apostolic, Pentecostal Christian and she is a very [ethnicity omitted] Lutheran and one of the days, I remember having a conversation, and I said, “You know, I just don’t think that you’re saved.” And she said, “What do you mean? You mean you think I’m
going to hell.” And I said, “Well according to the Scriptures, yeah, I think so.” And that led to a very heated discussion but that was one of my opportunities to really challenge her based upon my own observations of her and what I understood religiously speaking. And out of that now, we still laugh about that some days and sometimes she’ll say, “Am I OK, am I now born again, Gabriel?” I go, “Yeah, you’re born again.” Interestingly, she married – her husband is a Pentecostal so he’s very much into my tradition which is just even funnier. So they both will come and visit our church and find themselves very enhanced in our religious experience as well. (Gabriel, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Felix presented an important perspective that people are different and that is it okay to not hang out socially and still be in a HQCR. While one may have connected on some common interests, it is okay to acknowledge that having different interests is okay as well.

I would say probably because our cultural backgrounds are so different, our interests, that's probably why we don't necessarily hang out socially. We don't listen to the same kind of music, we don't dance the same dance, those things don't click at all. I don't think it would occur to either one of us to try to make that so- So those things do not intersect at all and to me probably wouldn't fit - it's like worlds colliding and wouldn't necessarily even feel right. But, you know, who's to say, I think it’s probably cultural, it’s probably just different cultural interests – that’s what I would ascribe it to. I would not ascribe it to any kind of feelings of
bigotry, prejudice, or not wanting to be together in either direction, it’s just different interests. (Felix, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Fran shared that it got to a point where her HQCR also embraced her sexual orientation.

I don’t remember how I came out [as a lesbian] to [name omitted] either. But it doesn’t feel -you know, it’s just one of those qualitative things about our relationship where there’s enough comfort that you sort of dance around how much you can entrust so you put little nuggets of personal things out there, they get embraced and you keep throwing them out and pretty soon your lives are entwined. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

A final perspective on embracing each other’s differences came from Ilan who offered that a place of rest perhaps or a place where a guard can come down may be more easily achieved with someone who is different.

Somebody who is an Orthodox Jew I have a lot more to, they understand the flow of my life, they understand the different obligations of an Orthodox Jewish man, or a woman for that matter, and you can relate on that. But at a certain point you get past that as well. Like the whole community, we’re part of each other’s lives in ways that-so I might be closer to him but not his good friend if that makes sense. Where somebody who is of a different ethnicity, you can share more with your life perhaps because you have the difference or dissonance of being not involved in each other’s personal lives outside of work, so there’s this safety in being able to share with them that you might not have with somebody who is intimately involved with your personal life. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)
This type of safety is explored further in the last theme section on letting down the guard.

**Letting the guard down.** Some of my participants discussed how having a wall up can prevent people from forming a HQCR. Others shared how they experienced having a guard up and they could let the guard down with their HQCR. Still others offered advice for moving forward without a guard. The following comments weave that progression.

Sandra gave good context into workplace dynamics that can cause some individuals to put up a wall or guard:

I think that in the workplace people, I think sometimes people have a wall up and I think that because I like to assume the best about people and I like to believe that many people have those core values but I think somehow the competiveness of the workplace gets in the way and who the true person is, we don’t ever see in the workplace. So I think it’s hard to find because I think people have barriers up against who they truly are and we get possibly conflicted in the workplace and sometimes some things take over and the true core person, they might see that person at home but we in the workplace never see it and so, therefore, we don’t ever get to build those high quality relationships. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Gabriel shared that he often has a guard up with most of his coworkers, but with his HQCR, “There is no discomfort, there is no uneasiness, there is no feeling like I have to put up any walls between us and I think that is very, very important and it has been mutual” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Janelle and Alex also
shared stories of this phenomenon in relation to their experience at work in general and with their HQCR.

I always have a guard depending on which type of setting I’m going into. So yeah, there are two different languages – I have to watch how I dress, how I present myself and sometimes watch the topics that I want to discuss because I don’t want to offend anybody. So, yeah, it’s tough but you adapt to it. It’s what you know…. I could let my hair down with [the person with whom I have a HQCR], I didn’t think I had to put on airs when we talked. (Janelle, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Here is the interesting thing-the fact that it even does compare [to a coworker relationship of someone of his same race] makes it kind of seamless in our interactions, which is important. I won’t say that I don’t see the distinction, and I don’t say that I can talk to him the way I can with my fellow African-American colleagues, but most stuff I can talk to him about. One might have a tendency when you are a minority-you put on…a mask, you put it on when you hit the parking lot and I am going to talk a certain way, think a certain way, act a certain way in all situations and then when you leave work, you take it off, you know. And I am not saying with him that I take the mask completely down, but we have more things alike than we have not alike. So I seek that out whether I am talking to African-American peers or not. That similarity, alignment, is what I am looking for and to get the amount of that that I have with him at his level of the
organization is empowering to me. (Alex, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Felix, Ilan and John offered some insights, and advice on creating this type of letting the guard down experience, whether from a conclusion made from personal reflection or a general comment for moving forward.

OK, I have good instincts, I trust my instincts, I’m pretty intuitive and I do have this sixth sense, you know, being a Black man growing up in a White world, I do have this sixth sense. But those are tools, those are tools in my tool kit, they are not me. I can’t walk around with this suit of armor all the time – it’s too cumbersome. (Felix, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

If you had the ability to be a little bit different than everybody else and be comfortable in yourself and not worry so much and be sharing and giving and open and not worry – so many people are worried about what they say and so many people are worried about who they’re friends with and what it means and how other people relate. I don’t worry about those things; I don’t worry about appearances so much. I would think that all relationships benefit from kind of a dropping of the guard to a certain level and being sharing and open and that certainly goes for work relationships where there are other layers involved. (Ilan, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

We are taught to be two or more people. I’m speaking from the Black perspective, we’re taught to be one way at work and to hold up this super persona and then
relax and be yourself when you’re with your friends and family. I think in one aspect it’s an asset because you learn to handle things in multiple ways and not be deterred from reaching your goals, but on the other hand it’s hard holding up two or more personas. And why would I want to be in a place in which I spend 70% of my life and not be able to be myself or to be one consistent person? So I always try to be that person and I always coach to that and I always advise of that – to find a place where you can be yourself, where you can develop honest relationships and you can be in a place where you can receive good feedback and you can give good feedback and you can coach up to your leaders and help build and develop them as well. (John, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

I think everyone can benefit from not having to expend the extra energy of two personas, or carrying around the mask or guard or building up a wall. Within these HQCR across racioethnic difference, masks, guards and walls, took on perhaps a more profound impact given the experience of many People of Color who related to having a guard up on a consistent basis at work. Within these HQCR sustaining the feeling of letting down the guard gave an ultimate place of rest and comfort when at work.

Findings Summary

I had the pleasure of interviewing and learning from 27 individuals who identified themselves as having formed and sustained a high quality coworker relationship with someone of different racial or ethnic background for at least a year within a US based organization. With the simple statement “describe this high quality coworker relationship” to start the process, a definition of a HQCR, 11 sustaining factors, seven
turning point factors and nine sustaining factors emerged, all grounded in these 27 participants experiences.

A HQCR was defined as that is/allows one to: 1) Mutual—a give and take of respect, trust, coaching, appreciation, communication, enrichment and learning; and as one that allows you to; and one where individuals 2) Know the whole person, 3) Work through disagreement, 4) Have fun, 5) Work together seamlessly, and 6) Help to build other relationships. Also noted were a variety of organizational factors such as assigning buddies or mentors, training programs or merely putting individuals in close proximity, and personal factors such as having a certain personality type or being one to take the risk of extending a personal invitation such as to lunch, that helped give rise to the forming of the relationship. Eleven forming specific forming factors emerged: 1) Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors, 2) Connecting on common interests, 3) Participating in something significant together, 4) Sharing on a professional and personal level, 5) Developing empathy, 6) Establishing trust, 7) Communicating effectively, and 8) Showing interest in person’s success, 9) Using intuition as a guide, 10) Assessing behaviors over time, and 11) Displaying genuine interest in difference. The notion of turning points that grow or oil the gears of the relationship also emerged rather than a clear-cut move from forming to sustaining. The seven turning point factors were: 1) Sharing deeper personal information, 2) Pushing for growth, 3) Having a crucial conversation, 4) Reaching mutuality, 5) Growing more self aware, 6) Sharing a work success, and 7) Talking specifically about the racial and/or ethnic difference between them, either directly or indirectly. Finally, the nine sustaining factors were: 1) Making time to interact, 2) Showing appreciation for insights, 3) Welcoming to other groups, 4)
Serving as confidant 5) Maintaining open and honest communication, 6) Sharing organizational information, and 7) Serving as a “place of rest” and enjoyment, 8) Embracing each other’s differences and 9) Letting the guard down. Chapter five will provide a summary of the entire study along with further discussion on how HQCRs are formed and sustained across racioethnic difference, areas for potential future research, implications for action, and a reflection on what the journey as meant to me as an OD practitioner.
Chapter 5: Summary and Discussion

I have been aware of people being treated differently due to race from about the age of five. I am White and from grade school on, I have had many close and loving relationships with African-Americans and I have learned and grown from these relationships. The lessons from these friendships have helped me form subsequent friendships and close coworker relationships across virtually any difference. As a student and OD practitioner, I am drawn to research and work in the area of diversity, inclusion and cultural competence. With this background and a growing interest in studying the positive and flourishing aspects within organizations, I set out on this journey to explore high quality relationships across racial and ethnic differences in organizations. From successful interpersonal relationships, success at a group and organizational level can also possibly unfold. One of my research participants, Martin, helps me below in describing the importance of relationships at work when he stated:

…relationships are the basis of everything. So the more relationships we create the better off we are. Any organization, it’s a study of relationships, bottom line – from the largest corporation to the smallest operation. Every donor is a relationship, every volunteer is a relationship, every staff person is a relationship, every board member is a relationship, every advisory board member is a relationship, every one of our funding partners is a relationship, every one of our political partners is a relationship. (Martin, personal communication, November-December, 2010)

In this final chapter, I summarize my study as a whole and I discuss the conclusions I have drawn from the findings presented in chapter four. The summary
The discussion section explores findings within each core area of the theoretical model developed, findings related to the literature, implications for action, recommendations for future research and my final personal reflections about the study. This chapter’s aim is to bring together a summary of the four chapters that precede it and to propel myself and readers to future action as a result of the study.

Summary of the Study

**Overview of the problem.** Martin’s earlier sentiments support prior research studies that have noted the importance of relationships at work and suggested high quality relationships can lead to increased satisfaction and happiness at work (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Wagner & Muller, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). In the area of organizational diversity practices, researchers and organizations alike have been challenged to find ways to move from representation of diverse individuals only to building inclusion and cultural competence at the individual, interpersonal and organizational levels (Chin, 2006; Herdman & McMillan-Caphart, 2010; Martinez, 2010; ROI of diversity, 2005; Sweeney, 2009; Tapia, 2009; Thomas, 2006b; Toops 2009). Scholars have also stated that there is a need to develop new theoretical models for framing diversity and inclusion (Alderfer & Tucker, 1996; Cox, 2004; Jackson et al. 2003; Thomas as cited in Johnson, 2008), one noting a particular call for qualitative methods (Cox, 2004). Past research has indicated that relationships at work are more likely formed with those who are perceived as similar (Baron & Pfeffer, 1994; Wagner & Muller, 2009a). Thomas (1993) asserted that research with a positive focus might be
necessary for uncovering the factors of successful cross-racial encounters. This study sought to meet these challenges and opportunities by exploring high quality coworker relationships across one of American organizations’ most prevalent identity divides, racioethnic difference (Alderfer & Tucker, 1996; Cox, 2004; Royal, 2010).

**Purpose statement and research question.** The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of a high quality working relationship between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds and to generate a theoretical model to depict the factors that contributed to the creation and sustainment of this relationship. The guiding research question for this study was “What contributes to forming and sustaining a high quality relationship between coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds?”

**Review of methodology.** I conducted this research through the lens of social constructionist ontology and an interpretive epistemology. I was an active participant in the study and my experiences helped inform my analysis and interpretation. I chose grounded theory as the most appropriate method of inquiry for the study given how well suited it is for studying human processes (Creswell, 2007). It also felt appropriate for the study given the promotion of the methodology for the use in yielding theory that better represents diverse populations (Green, Creswell, Shope, & Clark, 2007).

I had the pleasure of interviewing and learning from 27 individuals who identified themselves as having formed and sustained a high quality coworker relationship with someone of a different racial and/or ethnic background for at least a year within a US based organization. I conducted 18 in person interviews and nine interviews over the phone. My 27 participants represented a variety of racioethnic combinations as well as a variety of gender mixes, ages, and organization types. Sixteen were People of Color and
11 were White, thus I achieved the objective stated in chapter three that no more than 50% would be White, non Hispanic. Detailed demographic data collected from my participants are shared in chapter 4. Using a semi structured interview process, my 27 participants shared their definitions of a high quality coworker relationship (HQCR) and how they formed and sustained the HQCR of focus. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The digital .wav file produced with each interview gave me easy access to listening to all or a portion of the interviews multiple times. While discussed in detail in chapters three and four, a brief summary of the coding and constant comparative analysis processes used to yield my study’s grounded theory in response to the research question follows.

As I embarked on the coding of the interviews, I used a process where I listened to the interview while reviewing the typed transcript. Interviews one-eight were used for initial coding and were coded line by line using gerunds (Charmaz, 2006). In between coding sessions, I wrote memos with reflections of key concepts I heard emerging from the data. I then reviewed three memos of themes and theory ideas written during the process of coding the first eight interviews, comparing and contrasting them, in order to produce a memo of focused codes that guided the coding of all subsequent interviews. Interviews nine-27 were also coded using gerunds, but shifted from line by line to incident to incident coding (Charmaz, 2006). The coding process followed a gradual, intuitive and seamless progression from initial coding to focused coding to theoretical coding. A variety of memos, including drawings and diagrams were created throughout the process in support of a constant comparative process and the theory that was emerging from the data. Finally, I completed a conditional matrix (Corbin & Strauss,
2008 & Strauss, 1987) and a situational analysis (Clarke, 2005 & 2009) to help further refine the themes for the final theoretical model.

**Significant findings.** With the simple statement “describe this high quality coworker relationship” to start the interview process, a definition of a HQCR, 11 sustaining factors, seven turning point factors and nine sustaining factors emerged, all grounded in these 27 participants’ experiences. I could relate the themes and process that emerged to my own experiences forming, growing and sustaining HQCRs. I thought specifically about a recent HQCR formed with a Latino coworker. I remember how he appreciated my interest in his school experience in South America and that I was willing to talk about Karl Marx with him. I can also remember a turning point over lunch one windy and sunny afternoon when we shared at a deeper personal level. He has since left the organization and I miss him, but as was similar with many of my participants, given that we formed a HQCR, we have found ways to stay in touch; we have made time to interact and to connect.

I had the opportunity to discuss the theory that emerged from my participant experiences with friends, family and coworkers and all felt the theory made sense and was reflective of their personal experiences. It was gratifying to have the theory validated by my African-American graphic designer as we reviewed and discussed my findings for the first time. I had the pleasure of having nine of my participants review the theory model and a final summary of themes. All nine reported that it resonated with what was shared during the interview. Two responses in particular stood out that I want to share here. Douglas shared that he “resonated enthusiastically with the diagram except for the box titled ‘talking about race specifically’” (personal communication, March 9, 2011).
Douglas was one of the few participants who I knew had not discussed race directly with his HQCR, but also seemed to have gone through the bulk of the process in the theory. It was nice to see Douglas personal confirmation of my analysis. He also went on and stated “Maybe in time [Kareem] and I will have more conversations around race. I would not discard any work because he and I missed one box” (personal communication, March 9, 2011). I smiled and chuckled as I read that, appreciating that he was supportive of me leaving that on the theory diagram. I was joyful when I read Elena’s response that stated “wow...this is wonderful and captured it big time” (personal communication, March 12, 2011). It was rewarding to articulate the process clearly on paper and within a theoretical model. It was rewarding to have the theory validated by my research participants, friends, family and coworkers and by my own personal experience. I share the theory themes in summary below. I will touch on each area of the theoretical model in the discussion section as well.

A HQCR was defined as 1) Mutual—a give and take of respect, trust, coaching, appreciation, communication, enrichment and learning; and as one that allows you to; one in which one can 2) Know the whole person, 3) Work through disagreement, 4) Be fun/pleasurable, 5) Work together seamlessly, and 6) Help to build other relationships. Also noted were a variety of organizational factors such as assigning buddies or mentors, training programs or merely putting individuals in close proximity, and personal factors such as having a certain personality type or being one to take the risk of extending a personal invitation such as to lunch, that helped give rise to the forming of the relationship. Eleven specific forming factors emerged, with the last three of particular note across racioethnic difference: 1) Displaying/receiving inclusive behaviors, 2)
Connecting on common interests, 3) Participating in something significant together, 4) Sharing on a professional and personal level, 5) Developing empathy, 6) Establishing trust, 7) Communicating effectively, and 8) Showing interest in person’s success, 9) Using intuition as a guide, 10) Assessing behaviors over time, and 11) Displaying genuine interest in difference. The notion of turning points that grow or oil the gears of the relationship also emerged rather than a clear-cut move from forming to sustaining.

The seven turning point factors, with the last one appearing specific across racial/ethnic difference, were: 1) Sharing deeper personal information, 2) Pushing for growth, 3) Having a crucial conversation, 4) Reaching mutuality, 5) Growing more self aware, 6) Sharing a work success, and 7) Talking specifically about the racial and/or ethnic difference between them, either directly or indirectly. Finally in response to the research question, the nine sustaining factors, the last two in this instance being particular across racial/ethnic difference, were: 1) Making time to interact, 2) Showing appreciation for insights, 3) Welcoming to other groups, 4) Serving as confidant, 5) Maintaining open and honest communication, 6) Sharing organizational information, and 7) Serving as a “place of rest” and enjoyment, 8) Embracing each other’s differences and 9) Letting the guard down. As Figure 5.1 illustrates, a HQCR is formed across racial/ethnic differences via a relationship between organizational and personal factors that feed the formation of the relationship. Elevating from the forming of the relationship, turning points are experienced and then a variety of strategies are employed to help sustain the HQCR.
Figure 5.1: How to define, to form, to grow and to sustain a high quality coworker relationship across race/ethnicity.
Discussion of the Results

From this emergent theory, grounded in the voices and experiences of 27 diverse participants, there is an opportunity to discuss the theory components further, to compare the findings with existing related literature, to discuss implications for action, to note limitations and recommend areas for additional research, and to share what this study has meant to me personally. The sections that follow tackle each one of these discussion areas.

Discussion of the theory components. My interpretation of the stories and experiences shared by my participants suggested constant motion, a growth or elevation over time, and the interlocking of behaviors that contributed to forming and sustaining a HQCR. From the data, I interpreted that organizational factors can play a role in the forming of a HQCR, but these organizational factors take a backseat to personal factors. The organization provided the environment in which the relationship formed, but it was a person who opened the door to the HQCR. For these reasons, the organizational factors rest on the outside of the theoretical model and the personal factors are listed at the entry point into the HQCR model. While I had questions in the interviews related to forming and sustaining the HQCR, the turning points became clear early on and I added over time the theoretical question for participants to share when they knew the relationship had elevated from a good coworker relationship to a HQCR. Given the motion, growth and overlapping nature of some of the themes, gears interlocked and elevating from forming, turning points and sustaining factors captured the dynamic of the process on the theoretical model. Throughout the process, it was clear that the bulk of the themes could indeed describe any HQCR. In order to vet out the factors that appeared unique to across
racioethnic difference, I analyzed the responses to the interview question to compare and contrast relationships with coworkers of the participant’s same racial and/or ethnic background. I particularly focused on the responses from participants of color and a few White participants with a depth of social justice experience. I made a choice that the People of Color in the study, given the history of discrimination in US workplaces, and given that they have less of an opportunity to form a HQCR with someone of their same racial or ethnic background, could illuminate this dynamic most clearly. Those with a social justice background were good at balancing theory of navigating differences, power and privilege with the HQCR they were describing. Given the focus of the study on forming across racioethnic difference, these specific nuances are called out above the forming, turning point and sustaining factor gears on the model. Surrounding the model at the foundation is how my 27 participants defined a HQCR. This definition is reviewed and compared to definitions that exist in the literature in that section of the discussion. Before moving to a review of the literature, I share some brief additional interpretations, reactions, and insights about my theory components. I pepper in some thoughts for action and additional research within these sections, but will also follow up and summarize areas for action and research in later sections. This is one study with 27 voices and my interpretation; I am not generalizing the findings to other individuals or to organizational settings. All of my suggestions here and in subsequent sections are given as some potential starting points for action. The creation of what the study results mean for an individual or an organization is for that person or that organization to construct.

**Organizational factors.** I remember an original draft of my interview guide that included a question, describe the organizational factors that helped form this HQCR.
With good guidance from my advisor to keep in concert with constructivist grounded theory, I revised my interview guide and kept the questions more open and general, thus letting organizational factors emerge or not. I was a little surprised that I did not hear more stories about the relationship stemming from a learning experience about difference or from working together on a project. The factors that seemed to make a bigger difference were small, seemingly random acts such as assigning a buddy, or sitting the person next to another in the work cube. I have no way of knowing if the buddy or seating assignments discussed were strategic or not, but my sense is that they were not. In order to promote more relationship building in general and across difference, one action an organization could take is to make specific assignments when a person is new to an organization or to a department to ensure the person is receiving welcoming and inclusive behaviors. There could be purposeful assignments of individuals across difference.

Personal factors. In order to support an environment of inclusive behaviors, organizations need individual employees who are willing to display them. As I heard the stories of my participants, my impression was that some of these individuals had specific personal attributes that set them apart from others. Some of the individuals through their personalities, willingness to take risks, to ask questions and to listen seemed perfectly suited to have a HQCR with anyone. I did ask participants where they and their coworker grew up and sometimes I got insights into one or both of the individuals that gave me a glimpse into their past experiences that may have made them more prone to forming a HQCR across difference. I heard stories about individuals who grew up like I did in a predominantly African-American neighborhood, participants who experienced the pain of race riots, or who had overcome alcoholism. An area for additional inquiry could be to
identify what formative factors might lead one person over another to forming a HQC across difference. A potential action for organizations promoting an inclusive work environment would be to find ways to enhance selection tools and to hire and promote those who display the behaviors of inclusion and relationship building that are espoused by many organizational cultures. Finally, a potential action for any individual reading this study is to take a risk such as reaching out and inviting someone who is different to lunch.

**Forming factors.** Many of the formative factors did not surprise me. In many ways they supported training concepts I have facilitated for many years on how to communicate acceptance and appreciation through behaviors. As the nuance themes emerged that appeared unique to forming across racioethnic differences, I did experience some surprises and joyful learning. I heard stories of how the individuals did connect on common interests such as a work project, children the same age, a hobby, etc. and how they grew within the forming stage to have a genuine interest in each other’s differences as well. They illustrated how individuals can learn and grow in a relationship from what is held in common and from what is unique and different. The surprises came with the themes of intuition and assessing behaviors over time. As I reflected, I could identify instances when I did use intuition to form a relationship, so this theme became less of a personal surprise over time. I remember when I participated in a job interview with my Latino colleague I mentioned earlier. I got a good vibe and I knew we would work well together. When he was assessed as equal in work experience to another candidate, he won my vote of confidence because of that vibe. What I was most surprised about were the stories of watching a person’s behavior over time to assess a relationship. I was stunned
with Denise’s story of assessing behavior for over a year before she selected a worthy mentor (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Having had a chance to explore my position of privilege as a White person in the past, I realized that I have had the privilege in my career of never having had to experience this. I think the implications here could be very personal; individuals within organizations have to commit to displaying these types of inclusive behaviors in order to increase chance of forming a HQCR.

Turning point factors. Within the turning point stories, I heard many stories that gave an ultimate spray of grease to the HQCR that helped it to grow and move more freely. During these turning points, my participants tackled joyful and painful experiences with one another. Many shared deep personal information and they tackled difficult things such as giving each other tough feedback, working through a conflict and tackling the hard topic of racial and ethnic differences. It was through these turning points that I heard participants sharing what gave the HQCR resilience and the fuel it needed for the long haul. It did not surprise me that once the relationships had reached this point that race and/or ethnicity were discussed specifically, what did surprise me was that a few had not. It reminded me as was noted throughout the study that race is a social construction so the way race is tackled and addressed could be very different and unique from one person to the next. I do think that it is important for organizations to make it safe to have these discussions freely in whatever way is meaningful to the individual.

Sustaining factors. It is important to note that once you reach the phase of sustaining the HQCR, the forming behaviors do not go away and that turning points can happen at any time in the relationship. All gears within the HQCR stay in motion. It stood
out to me and was a relief to me personally that individuals felt like they had a place of rest and enjoyment with their HQCR. It was hard at times to hear the stories of having a wall up, putting up a guard, wearing a mask as it relates to work interactions. It was difficult hearing and knowing the extra energy it takes to keep those up. I also knew I could relate at least on some levels to the phenomena. I am not sure quite how to do it or how to research it, but finding ways to help create more places of safety, rest and enjoyment in the workplace would be worthwhile for all. I now turn to a review of the findings in relation to existing practical and theoretical literature.

**Findings related to the literature.** This study appears to offer confirmation and/or extension of each of the areas discussed in chapter two. A discussion of what this study may add to organizational diversity and inclusion strategies, social identity development, relationships at work and positive organizational scholarship (POS) is offered. Additional areas of focus in the literature that appear relevant in relation to the theory that emerged are also discussed. These include concepts of the use of intuition, the feeling of wearing a mask/holding up a guard, micro-inequities/micro-affirmations and wholeness as it relates to work. While most of these areas of focus will also appear in the areas for future research section, they offer current relevant insights that shed some light on the significance of this study. I continue to use the experiences of my participants to help illustrate many of the points made.

**Organizational diversity and inclusion strategies.** This research seems to support both organizational practices to increase the diversity mix of employees and to find ways on the individual, interpersonal, team or organizational level to increase inclusion and cultural competence. Within the organizational factors that gave rise to the HQCRs
across racioethnic difference discussed in the study, it was important that the organization hired people of different racioethnic backgrounds and then put them in close proximity to work together. For example, participant Elena spoke of how organizations could support Latinos better in the workplace and stated the need for “hiring more of us, bringing more of us into the forefront” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Other participants spoke about the challenge of being the only one of a particular racial or ethnic background in the organization. Felix stated, “I was not a Black guy—I was THE Black guy there for a long time” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Not everyone was willing to be the first [emphasis added] in the work environment, as noted when Karen shared a story within her organization about a woman turning down a promotion opportunity. According to Karen, this woman said, “I don’t want to be the only African-American and I don’t want to be the first woman, so I am declining the position…I am not interested in dealing with that” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). While the focus of the study was on HQCR across difference, when asked to compare a HQCR across difference with someone from the same racial or ethnic background, virtually all of the participants of color noted they did not have the opportunity within their workplace to form a HQCR with someone of the same background. For example, Carmen said, “Well the thing is, I can’t really compare because I don’t have that many to compare with. So in my career, I am the only [Latina] in my work group” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). When asked what it would take to eliminate the feeling of wearing a mask at work, Alex shared:

I mean in some ways it doesn’t ever totally go away because you are in a work environment, everyone comes with something. You’re not hanging with your
buddies, you’re not at home with your family. So I don’t know [pause] what would it take? As a minority, I suppose if you were working around and you saw representation at the upper levels of who you are, you might have a tendency to not wear that as often. You wouldn’t need [pause] the mask is like a translation mechanism; it takes who you are and puts it into a language that everyone else speaks. So what would it take greater representation across that level of senior people. People like myself. I am sure that is true for any minority. (Personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Increasing the racioethnic mix of employees would then seem to provide increased opportunities for both HQCRs to form across and within various racioethnic backgrounds.

In terms of looking for ways to be more inclusive and more culturally competent within organizations, the theory which emerged from this study offers a possible process for doing so on an interpersonal level. Cultivating the personal factors discussed earlier, such as risk taking and extending a significant invitation, can set in motion the factors to form a HQCR. The model’s forming factors are all actions with supporting behaviors behind them that individuals can use as a possible starting point. From that point on, experiencing key turning points and displaying sustaining behaviors can grow and sustain a HQCR across racioethnic difference.

**Social identity development.** All but two of the participants in the study shared stories of tackling race and/or ethnicity differences either directly or indirectly. The forming theme of displaying a genuine interest in differences, the turning point theme of talking about race or ethnicity specifically, and the sustaining theme of embracing each
other’s differences offer insight into how to explore social identity around race and ethnicity. These three themes combined with the forming theme of sharing on a personal and professional level and the turning point theme of sharing deeper personal information serve together as a potential process to explore multiple dimensions of identity. This process is reminiscent of the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning’s iceberg model of components and levels of culture and identity (as cited in Barnes Jewish Hospital, 2008) where participants explored things such as race, ethnicity, age and gender-- things that can be seen above the water line of the iceberg when forming the relationship. As part of growing the relationship, my participants also explored things that are important identity and cultural aspects that were below the water line, such as sexual orientation, religious beliefs and values. The sharing of cultural and identity factors below the water line provided the opportunity to share and learn from each other at a deeper level.

**Relationships at work.** The definition of a HQCR that emerged from the voices of the study participants supports and complements those highlighted in chapter two (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Jordan, 2004; Thomas, 1999; Wagner & Muller, 2009). I was pleased with the decision I made to not predefine a HQCR as it was affirming to see that the emergent definition from my participants matched this prior research. The eight elements of a positive partnership (Wagner & Muller, 2009) are evident in this study’s definition of a HQCR. Six are strongly evident: complementary strengths, trust, acceptance, forgiveness and communicating, and two elements, a common mission and fairness, are implied. While specific physiological responses and outcomes and statements of vitality and aliveness did not come through clearly in this study definition, other elements of a high quality connection (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003) did. These
included the ability to bend and withstand strain, generativity and openness to new ideas, positive regard and mutuality. Within the feelings of being a place of fun and a place of rest, perhaps the physiological and vitality themes were present. The study definition overlapped perhaps most closely with the six factors of relational competence. These factors include movement toward mutuality and mutual empathy, developing anticipatory empathy, being open to being influenced, enjoying relational curiosity, experiencing vulnerability as a place of growth, and creating good connection rather than power over others (Jordan, 2004). Within all but two of the HQCR relationships in this study there was also either some or extensive evidence of an ability to identify diversity mixtures and their related tensions, an ability to analyze the mixtures and tensions and to select an appropriate response (Thomas, 1999) that served in these cases as ways to grow the relationship. Given the particular challenges to build across racial differences (Royal, 2010; Wagner & Muller, 2008), these study relationships across coworkers of different racioethnic backgrounds are particularly noteworthy and potentially relationships from which other individuals within any type of organization can learn. The theory that emerged from this study, by highlighting specific forming, turning point and sustaining factors across racioethnic difference extend this prior research to give specific strategies on how to form, grow and sustain a HQCR across racioethnic difference.

_connection to positive organizational scholarship (POS)._ By studying the flourishing, upward movement of a HQCR, this study provided a framework other than that of bias, stereotyping and discrimination to study race and ethnic differences at work. This approach was influenced by POS studies and scholars (Cameron & Caza, 2004,
Dutton & Heaphy, Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, R.E, 2003, Donalson, 2011). The theory grounded in the experiences of my 27 participants may indeed offer insights into how to create the high quality connections (HQC) presented by researchers Dutton & Heaphy (2003) which is where I felt their discussion fell short. This study also offers a grounded glimpse into what was discussed in relation to four theoretical lenses through which a HQC could be viewed: exchange, identity, development and learning.

Through an exchange lens, as seen in elements of turning points and sustaining factors, the relationships can benefit from an exchange of resources. Evan noted this importance when he stated:

Well I would say it’s having a work relationship with someone – you have this feeling as though you could have this person on speed dial…. There is no reservation in my mind, Well, you know, how would they feel about me if I asked them this question about this or that. . . But I don’t have those reservations so when I don’t have those reservations I would consider that, even if I don’t utilize that access - sometimes just knowing you have access to answers, to resources, you can come up with the answer…. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Through an identity lens, Dutton and Heaphy asserted that “other people are active players in the co-creation of who we are at work” (2003, p. 270). While explored from a racioethnic identity lens, other aspects of identity also emerged from the data such as gender, religion, age, sexual orientation and position or organization identity. The theory from this study on how to create HQCR across racioethnic difference may also possibly provide insight into how to form a HQCR across any identity difference. There were
numerous stories told by the participants in my study that yielded examples of possible value from a growth and development lens and from a learning lens. Growth and learning emerged in the participant definition of a HQCR and are evident across forming, turning point and sustaining factors. This study gives some insight into positive individual outcomes and positive dynamics as noted by the challenge that “focusing on the quality of connection between people at work is pivotal to understanding individual and organizational behavior” (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003, p. 274). Positive outcomes for study participants included experiencing a sense of wholeness, achieving a place of rest, comfort and fun, and from the learning achieved through the relationship. Positive organizational dynamics that resulted were getting work done seamlessly and more creative problem solving. Through participant interviews, some organizational factors such as training programs and buddy and mentor programs were deemed good examples of how to create a space for individuals to learn and to grow and to form high quality coworker relationships. While not developed in great depth in the study, these organizational factors appear to meet the following challenge:

…if organizations create fertile ground for building HQCs, employees may be able to display authentic identities more often, engage each other more fully, be more vulnerable in the process of learning, and experience more interpersonal valuing through positive regard, all of which cultivate positive meaning about being an organizational member. (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003, p. 276)

Participant stories shared in this study illustrated their HQCRs achieved many, if not all of the positive outcomes mentioned.
**Use of intuition.** Developing intuition has been of heightened focus in organizations with the release of work on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). This study outlined the importance of intuition in the forming of HQCR across racioethnic difference. As participant Sandra suggested, perhaps learning more and going to classes about emotional intelligence would help in forming these relationships. Emotional intelligence overlaps with not only the intuition theme, but also empathy and self-awareness themes as noted parts of the theory. With intuition coming up in my study, I was curious to find a research study that used intuition as a variable. I found a study done to assess what was referred to as caring morality in a work setting. The research explored if gender or race had an impact on how leaders faired on what was called a Caring Morality Inventory. The focus was on organizations that were pro diversity and pro equal opportunity. The researcher thought African-Americans would score higher on the inventory given experience with discrimination. One of the three subscales in the inventory included the use of intuition or feeling to make a judgment. The study results found that “Euro-American participants relied more on intuition and feeling to make judgments than African-American participants” (Jones, 2002, p. 645). This serves in contrast to what this study revealed in terms of the use of intuition by People of Color when forming a relationship. Given the pressure to speak two languages as noted by many of the participants of color in this study (Alex, Felix, Gabriel, Janelle, Karen), I wonder if there is hesitancy to use the same interpersonal intuition on an organizational level. Or perhaps, since the company was pro diversity, maybe they did not have to rely on intuition as much. Or, as the study suggests in its discussion section, “African-American managers may have been more concerned about rights and fairness than about
feelings and caring, especially in their corporate environment” (Jones, 2002, p. 647). These contrasting findings would make good fuel for more study on the impact and use of intuition in the workplace.

**Wearing a mask/holding up a guard.** When this theme began to emerge, I was reminded of the often noted work of sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) regarding negotiations within social interactions and the phenomenon of backstage and front stage. Many participants, particular those of color, noted a feeling of dealing with two personas, having to wear a mask or guard or having a wall up. As front stage behavior, this can be a barrier to the whole self and a barrier to achieving a place of rest as noted in my study’s theory. My research offers a glimpse via some participant’s experiences to how freeing it can feel when there is no need to juggle a front and back stage persona.

**Micro-inequities/micro-affirmations.** When my participants described the subtle and not so subtle inclusive behaviors that made a difference to them in forming these HQCR across racioethnic differences, I thought of research and work done in the area of micro-inequities and now micro-affirmations. Building on her research that dates back to 1973, micro-inequities were defined by Rowe (2008) as “apparently small events which are often ephemeral and hard-to-prove, events which are covert, often unintentional, frequently unrecognized by the perpetrator, which occur wherever people are perceived to be ‘different’ (p. 2).” Examples of micro-inequities might include accidentally leaving a person off an email, not inviting someone to a meeting, or introducing a Latino employee with the name of another Latino employee. These are contrasted with the micro-affirmations described by Rowe (2008) as:
Apparently small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed. Micro-affirmations are tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening. Micro-affirmations lie in the practice of generosity, in consistently giving credit to others—in providing comfort and support when others are in distress, when there has been a failure at the bench, or an idea that did not work out, or a public attack. Micro-affirmations include the myriad details of fair, specific, timely, consistent and clear feedback that help a person build on strength and correct weakness. (p. 4)

This study provided examples of these types of micro-affirmations in practice. All 27 participants provided examples of giving and/or receiving micro-affirmations within personal factors, forming factors, turning points and sustaining factors thus illustrating the power of micro-affirmations in forming a HQCR across racial-ethnic difference. The existence of these behaviors helps to create an inclusive work environment.

**Wholeness.** Thoughts of being a whole person and bringing one’s whole self to work abounded in my participant examples, making this a key part of the HQCR definition. For my participants, wholeness meant getting to a point where they could share deeper personal information such as values in a turning point of the relationship and embracing each other’s differences and letting the guard down as noted in sustaining themes. Felix said it well when he mentioned, “you’re able to drop your guard and that’s when it really feels like . . . that’s when it really feels authentic, when you’re able to let
go and drop your guard” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Karen also expressed well the feeling of wholeness with her HQCR when she stated:

I don’t feel any need or sense any reason to be anything other than who I am, which is great. We all want that whether it’s the same culture, race, or a different one – we just want to be able to be ourselves. And I am completely myself. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

The concepts of wholeness and authenticity are interconnected. Generally, I think a sense of wholeness comes from being clear on one’s values and purpose, being authentic, and having a genuine and ongoing search for self awareness that includes exploring both gifts and shadows that lead to true vocation (Palmer, 2000). Hesselbein (2005) offered a perspective on the importance of seeing things whole from an organizational and an individual perspective in the following:

...we can see the significant priorities clearly only when we see the organization complete and intact, embedded in the world at large. Only by seeing things whole can we understand and articulate to others why we focus on our few significant priorities. And only by seeing things in their entirety can we recognize when continued relevance and viability demand that we change our priorities. (p. 1)

...seeing things whole is not just the imperative of business, government, and social sector leaders; the overarching, overriding imperative of seeing things whole rests with you and me. Seeing our lives whole is an even greater challenge than seeing our world of work whole. (p. 2)
The 27 participants in this study through their forming, growing and sustaining of their HQCRs offer some insight into a process that achieved a sense of wholeness at work.

**Implications for action.** This study provides potential implications for action for any individual within an organization who has a desire to create a HQCR in general or across racioethnic differences. The themes and actions offered in the study’s model can serve as a starter recipe for forming, growing and sustaining such a relationship. There are also notable implications for OD, HR and Diversity and Inclusion practitioners. Depending on the existence of such practitioners within an organization, they may work solo or in collaboration with others to identify ways in which the participant generated theory could influence practice. Some potential insights include looking for ways to enhance the organizational environment to promote these HQCR across differences. Promotion could come from more strategic learning experiences, mentoring or buddy assignments matched with organizational diversity recruitment strategies, and setting clear cultural expectations for HQCRs and the behaviors that lead to their formation. New practices sensitive to HQCR development could also include looking at selection processes to better assess personal factors that indicate potential recruits have had experience or have the qualities conducive to creating HQCR across difference. From an organizational learning perspective, practitioners can also work to create learning experiences to help employees enhance the skills embedded within many of the theoretical themes such as displaying inclusive behavior, developing empathy, establishing trust, communicating effectively, growing more self aware, giving and receiving feedback, etc. Learning experiences around diversity, inclusion and cultural competence can also provide environments for employees to share their stories and to
better equip individuals with strategies for tackling differences such as race and ethnicity directly.

**Recommendations for future research.** One of the limitations of this study was a lack of depth explored in relation to power and privilege dynamics in the relationship and how an individual can hold both power and privilege depending on the identity factor at play. Fran noted, for instance, that “it’s not that common for a teacher and an assistant superintendent to have actually developed a relationship … I’m cautious about the power dynamics that would make her vulnerable” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Martin’s sentiment shared during the end of his interview is a good reflection of this limitation for the study overall, “another area of exploration we don’t really have enough time to really get into is the issue of power in a relationship” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). I did react during the interviews when White participants said things that seemed to imply that they did not notice racial or ethnic differences. Alice responded, “I don’t see a difference” (personal communication, November-December, 2010) when she was asked to compare and contrast a HQCR relationship to someone of her same race to the one she was describing she had formed across racial difference. Charles stated in his response to how he knew the relationship was one of high quality that “the ethnic or racial component doesn’t come into play, will never come into play, it’s still a function of responsiveness, getting things done, panache, those kind of things…” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). Douglas shared when asked if the racial differences he had with his HQCR came up in discussion “I can honestly tell you not at all” (personal communication, November-December, 2010). While Alice and Douglas went on to share related stories and examples of where
they said race did make a difference and they did discuss or reflect upon it, Charles never did. Because they were Whites in the study, it made me wonder if there was a privilege in perception coming from a White racial identity lens. The challenge of identity and privilege runs throughout many studies in the area of social justice. An illustration of this challenge is shared by Tatum (2000) when she described her observations of an identity introduction exercise she conducted with psychology students. She noted that “common across these examples is that in the areas where a person is a member of the dominant or advantaged group [such as being White in this study], the category is usually not mentioned (p.6)” and “when we think of our multiple identities, most of us will find that we are both dominant and targeted at the same time. But it is the targeted identities that hold our attention [such as a White woman focusing on gender] and the dominant identities [her being White] that often go unexamined (p.6).” Nada, a research participant with advanced skills around issues of power and privilege and the intersection of multiple identities described the dynamic well when she shared thoughts about her HQCR:

I think a lot of it, I think, is just being mindful about how our multiple identities are mixing, so sort of thinking about who sits where in terms of what identity. So between the two of us, one of the reasons why I wanted to work with him is because the model that I’ve always been trained in is if you are co-presenting you should have a mix of identities between the two people so that that can help the group process. So he’s a bi-racial man who actually identifies between African-American and bi-racial, he kind of goes back and forth between these two identities. So in terms of age we’re pretty close but he’s also straight and he’s a male. And then on my end, I’m an immigrant, he’s also an American. So I’m an
immigrant, I also identify as queer and then also sort of - what else, so being White. So those are kind of the mixture of identities between the two of us. So I think from the very beginning it was an understanding, OK – here’s this multiple identities that we carry and there are very few places where we both sit either in the place of privilege or the place of targeting except for class and education – that’s been shared. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Finding ways to get to this depth of understanding from individuals in a HQCR across differences could yield further insights into how issues of power and privilege are navigated. A similar study that explores these dynamics in more detail could yield additional theoretical constructs on how to form and sustain HQCR across racioethnic difference. It would also serve to better meet the challenge of other researchers to look at the intersections of identity (Ashkanasy, Hartel & Daus, 2002; Holvino, 2010; Huntley, 2010; Jackson, et al., 2003; Rios, 2010; Royal, 2010). Such research can also help to balance a critical lens with the positive lens. While it may be impossible to win over POS critic Chris Hedges, who said that “positive psychology is to the corporate state what eugenics was to the Nazis…It throws a smokescreen over corporate domination, abuse and greed” (as cited in Donaldson, 2011), studying how aspects of power and privilege were handled in the context of a HQCR, could potentially help clear any potential perceived smokescreen by studying high quality, flourishing relationships. Other intersections that could have been explored with even more depth within this study or in a repeat study are gender, age and job role/level mix.

While I agree that the intersection of multiple areas of identity in research is important, another recommendation for future research includes doing a similar study to
explore factors that contribute to forming and sustaining HQCR across differences of sexual orientation or gender identity. Given this is a difference that cannot be seen and the religious stigma often associated with sexual orientation, it could yield results that could help gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered employees feel a greater sense of wholeness as described in this study.

When conducting my interviews, issues of one or both parties in the HQCR having had prior experience with differences and also a personal transformational learning experience related to difference emerged. A study that digs deeper into the impact of prior experience and/or of transformational experiences such as the ones individuals often experience before entering a work environment, would be helpful additions to this research. I hope to potentially see the latter come in the future from Felix who is currently engaged in related research who noted:

I think that one can be very intentional about creating that kind of experience, I think there are specific kinds of things that need to be in place – and yeah, it can be made to happen. Maybe not with 100% of the people but with a sizeable enough, significant enough percentage to make it real. (personal communication, November-December, 2010)

Finally, expanding or conducting a study to explore any of the areas of literature added in this chapter in greater depth (intuition, micro-affirmations, wearing a mask and/or wholeness as it relates to individual, interpersonal or organizational outcomes) would all be worthy research endeavors.

**Concluding remarks and personal reactions.** This study has been a joyous journey for me. Given my awareness of difference across race at a young age, I have
always wanted to find ways to bring people together across difference. Conducting this study and having the chance to learn from the 27 participants yielded a theory grounded in their experiences that can give others a starting point for building a HQCR across racioethnic difference. One of the individuals I interviewed was someone who described the high quality coworker relationship she had with me. It was fascinating to listen to how my voice intonation and tone sounded different in this interview recording. I had a relaxed tone, a southern drawl that I am sometimes accused of having. An accent that was described by a sister of one of my best Black girlfriends growing up as one that comes from the fact I was always around Black people. The participants in the study reminded me to be whole and to present my whole self. The outcomes and themes from their experiences reminded me of an important self-reflection journey that I began with full force after the Moral, Spiritual and Ethical Issues in OD course in year three of this doctoral program. The reflection paper from the course resulted in my personal commitment to working and living the OD values of respect and inclusion, collaboration, authenticity, self-awareness and empowerment in word and deed. All of these values are needed to form a HQCR, so I feel the synergy in this work and that reflection. I also explored issues of wholeness, authenticity and spirituality at work. On my reflection of wholeness, I owned that I do not always bring my whole self from a personal relationship standpoint to work. After the interview recording stopped, I took the opportunity to add another turning point to our HQCR by sharing with her that I was not single and was in fact in a committed, loving relationship with a woman whom she had met before. We went tit for tat when she said, “I know, I was just waiting for you to tell me” and I asked “why on earth did you not just come out and ask me?” Ultimately it grew our relationship
illustrating the turning points can come at any time. It may not always be as easy to share, but it may be worth the risk in order to achieve a HQCR.

I am grateful for the personal reminder from my research participants that in order to form HQCR, or high quality family or friend relationships for that matter, one has to be willing to bring your whole self or your true colors to the table. I am carrying the lessons learned in this study with me to a new job opportunity. Personally, I will bring my whole self to the role and I will work to display these behaviors to form, grow and sustain HQCRs in a new organization. Professionally as a director of organizational learning, I will work with others to create and enhance the organizational environment in which HQCRs can result. I began this dissertation with insights from song lyrics. I will end it with song lyrics that feel appropriate in light of this personal reflection and as inspired by the outcomes of the study. From this research experience, I am a finer tuned OD practitioner and self as instrument. I plan to go forth letting my true colors shine through as I use my instrument. I invite everyone who reads this to do the same.

And I'll see your true colors shining through
I see your true colors and that's why I love you
so don't be afraid to let them show your true colors
true colors are beautiful like a rainbow

(Steinberg, Billy; Cooper, David; Kelly, Tom; Scruggs, Fredro, 1986)
References


Holvino, E. (2010). Doing od from the margins, taking on the complexities of identities in organizations. OD Practitioner, 42(2), 54-58.

Huntley, R. (2010). I am black! I am black and a man; I am black and a man who is gay. OD Practitioner, 42(2), 43-48.


Appendix A

Email Recruitment Message –

Convenience Purposive Sampling of People I Know

Hello, I hope this email finds you all well.

I believe I have shared with you that I am pursuing my doctorate degree in Organization Development at the University of St. Thomas. I am done with my coursework and I am ready to do my dissertation research! I am contacting you to see if you will help me in one or two ways.

1. If you qualify, agree to be a research participant and allow me to interview you; and/or
2. Share this message with individuals in your personal and professional networks to encourage them to consider participation in this voluntary research study

I am interested in studying how high quality relationships are formed between coworkers of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. I am looking for people to interview who meet the following criteria:

1. Have formed and sustained for at least one year a high quality relationship with a coworker from a different racial or ethnic background.
2. Formed the relationship while working for an organization in the United States.
3. Feel they know what contributed to the formation and sustainment of the relationship.
4. Are willing to share their insights with me as a researcher via a tape recorded in person or phone interview.

As a way to ensure I am keeping track of all possible research participants in one place and to ensure that I am getting participants from a variety of backgrounds, please click on the link below to complete a brief 3 minute or less survey if you feel you meet the above criteria and would like to participate in the study.

Throgmorton Dissertation Survey

I look forward to talking with you soon or with someone with whom you share this information. I will work to contact everyone who completes the survey within one week to set up a time for an interview.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me via the email address or phone number below.

Cheryl Throgmorton
Email: cathrogmorton@stthomas.edu
Phone: 314-408-4840
Appendix B

Potential Participant Survey Detail and Questions

Purpose/Intro

Thank you for considering being a participant in my dissertation research. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. If you meet the criteria for the study, I will be in touch to set up a time for an interview. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. All survey and interview data will be handled with care and kept confidential unless you decide that you want to be identified with your information in the final report. After the completion of the research, all survey, interview, and other research data containing your personal information will be destroyed in a secure manner.

If you have questions prior to or after completing the survey, please contact me via email at the email address below.

Cheryl Throgmorton
cathrogmorton@stthomas.edu

1. I meet ALL of the criteria below:

1. I have formed and sustained for at least one year a high quality relationship with a coworker from a different racial or ethnic background.
2. The relationship formed while working for an organization in the United States.
3. I feel I know what contributed to the formation and sustainment of the relationship.
4. I am willing to share my insights with a researcher via a tape recorded interview.

   o Yes
   o No

Background Information

As a starting point, I am using the racial and ethnic groupings from the 2010 Census form. Please share what best describes you and what you understand to be the background of the person/persons you will have in mind when completing the interview. Feel free to type in a response in the “other” area following the list of choices if there is a better descriptor for you. You can check more than one response as you deem necessary.

2. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin?

   o No
   o Yes, Cuban
   o Yes, Mexican, Mexican American or Chicano
   o Yes, Puerto Rican
1. Yes, another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin

From which origin/country not listed? ________________

5. Which best describes your racial/ethnic background?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian-Chinese
- Asian-Filipino
- Asian-Indian
- Asian-Japanese
- Asian-Korean
- Asian-Vietnamese
- Asian-Other
- Black or African-American
- Pacific Islander-Guamanian or Chamorro
- Pacific Islander-Native Hawaiian
- Pacific Islander-Samoan
- Pacific Islander-Other
- White

Other, please specify __________________

4. Thinking of the coworker/s you think you will have in mind during the interview, are they of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin? (check all that apply)

- No
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican American or Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin

From which origin/country not listed? ________________

5. Thinking of the coworker/s you think you will have in mind during the interview, which best describes their racial/ethnic background? (check all that apply)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian-Chinese
- Asian-Filipino
- Asian-Indian
- Asian-Japanese
- Asian-Korean
- Asian-Vietnamese
- Asian-Other
- Black or African-American
o Pacific Islander-Guamanian or Chamorro
o Pacific Islander-Native Hawaiian
o Pacific Islander-Samoan
o Pacific Islander-Other
o White

Other, please specify ________________

**Contact Information**

6. Please indicate the best way to contact you to set up an interview:

Name:
Email Address:
Phone Number:
Appendix C

E-Mail Recruitment Letter – Purposive Snowball Sampling of People I Do Not Know

I am an internal OD practitioner and a doctoral candidate at the University of St. Thomas. I am currently working on my dissertation and looking for research participants.

I am interested in studying how high quality relationships are formed between coworkers of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. I am looking for people to interview who meet the following criteria:

1. Have formed and sustained for at least one year a high quality relationship with a coworker from a different racial or ethnic background.
2. Formed the relationship while working for an organization in the United States.
3. Feel they know what contributed to the formation and sustainment of the relationship.
4. Are willing to share their insights with me as a researcher via a tape recorded in person or phone interview.

As a way to ensure I am keeping track of all possible research participants in one place and to ensure that I am getting participants from a variety of backgrounds, please click on the link below to complete a brief 3 minute or less survey if you feel you meet the above criteria and would like to participate in this voluntary study.

**Throgmorton Dissertation Survey**

I will work to contact everyone who completes the survey and qualifies for the research study within one week. **Please feel free to share this message and request with others who you feel may be interested.**

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me via the email address or phone number below.

Cheryl Throgmorton
Email: cathrogmorto@stthomas.edu
Phone: 314-408-4840
Appendix D

Interview Invitation Email to Possible Research Participants

Email – to individuals in St. Louis, Missouri

NAME, thanks so much for your interest in participating in my dissertation research on high quality relationships between coworkers of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

I am ready to start setting up my interviews. Generally, I am looking to set up time to meet in the evenings after the work day, 5pm or later, or, on the weekends. Since we are both in St. Louis, I would ideally like us to meet in person (or, if you prefer, we can do a conference call). We can pick a location that is convenient for you that is ideally quiet and where we can meet in private. I am in the process of trying to schedule several interviews so if you can let me know a few dates from the following that would work with you, it would be ideal. If you have a suggested location, that would be great as well. We can, if convenient for you, use my office at [address omitted]. I will follow up with an appointment to you once we confirm date, time and location.

Any of the following dates at 5pm or later: 11/5, 11/12, 11/16 (5:30 or later), 11/22, 11/23, 11/24, 11/29, 11/30, 12/1, 12/2 or 12/3
11/26 between 1-3pm
November 14, anytime after 4pm
Nov 20, 27, 28 or Dec 4, 5 anytime

I will bring a copy to the interview for signatures, but to give you a heads up about the process, attached is an informed consent form that walks through details about the study. This is strictly voluntary and you can decide that you do not want to participate at this time or at a later date. Please also note the following research criteria -- if with an additional review, you decide you do not meet the study criteria, we will not proceed with setting up an interview.

1. Have formed and sustained for at least one year a high quality relationship with a coworker from a different racial or ethnic background.
2. Formed the relationship while working for an organization within the United States.
3. Feel you know what contributed to the formation and sustainment of the relationship.
4. Are willing to share your insights with me as a researcher via a tape recorded in person or phone interview.

Thanks again for your interest! I appreciate it and look forward to learning from you.

Cheryl
Email sent to those outside of St. Louis, MO:

NAME, thanks so much for your interest in participating in my dissertation research on high quality relationships between coworkers of different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

I am ready to start setting up my interviews. Generally, I am looking to set up time to meet in the evenings after the work day, 5pm CST or later, or, on the weekends. Since we are in two different cities, we will do the interview via phone. It will be via a conference number that can record our conversation. The number is not toll free. Please let me know if that presents any problems and I will look for an alternate option. I am in the process of trying to schedule several interviews so if you can let me know a few dates from the following that would work with you, it would be ideal. Once we have confirmed a date and time, I will follow up with an appointment to you.

Any of the following dates at 5pm or later: 11/5, 11/12, 11/16 (5:30 or later), 11/22, 11/23, 11/24, 11/29, 11/30, 12/1, 12/2 or 12/3
11/26 between 1-3pm
November 14, anytime after 4pm
Nov 20, 27, 28 or Dec 4, 5 anytime

To give you a heads up about the process, attached is an informed consent form that walks through details about the study. This is strictly voluntary and you can decide that you do not want to participate at this time or at a later date. I will ask you to email me with your answers to the questions on the form along with your consent. I will keep a copy of that email with a form as proof of your consent to participate in the research study.

Please also note the following research criteria -- if with an additional review, you decide you do not meet the study criteria, we will not proceed with setting up an interview.

1. Have formed and sustained for at least one year a high quality relationship with a coworker from a different racial or ethnic background.
2. Formed the relationship while working for an organization in the United States.
3. Feel you know what contributed to the formation and sustainment of the relationship.
4. Are willing to share your insights with me as a researcher via a tape recorded in person or phone interview.

Thanks again for your interest! I appreciate it and look forward to learning from you.

Cheryl
Appendix E

Interview Guide

After going through the informed consent process:

1. Confirm racioethnic information from the survey (for person and coworker/s) and ask additional demographic data. If more than one coworker challenge individual to focus initially on the one they think is of the highest quality.

2. Is the person you will be thinking of during this interview a current or past coworker?
   - If past, ask … Are you still in contact? Why or why not?

3. Describe your high quality relationship with this coworker. (Will ask follow up probes as appropriate such as … at what point in your working relationship did it form, what was going on at the time, describe when you knew it became high quality, etc.)

4. What do you think contributed to forming this high quality coworker relationship? (Will ask follow up probes as appropriate based on response).

5. What do you think contributed to sustaining this relationship for a year or more? (Will ask follow up probes as appropriate based on response).

6. How does this relationship compare to relationships you have formed with coworkers of your same racial/ethnic background?

7. Is there anything else that you think is important to share before we wrap up?

8. Collect additional demographic details.
Appendix F

Consent Form University of St. Thomas

A Grounded Theory Exploration of High Quality Relationships Between Coworkers of Different Racioethnic Backgrounds

[IRB log number B10-227-02]

I am conducting a study about how high quality relationships are formed between coworkers of different racial or ethnic backgrounds. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because of the responses you gave to an initial screening survey. The reason for asking your racial and ethnic background in the survey is due to the nature of the study and to ensure that I get research participants representing a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Cheryl Throgmorton, doctoral candidate, under the advisement of Dr. Alla Heorhiadi at the University of St. Thomas.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to understand the nature of a high quality working relationship between coworkers of different racial or ethnic backgrounds and to generate a theoretical model that depicts how these relationships are formed and sustained.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things: Participate in an initial interview lasting up to 1 hour that you agree to be recorded and transcribed. I may also contact you for a subsequent voluntary interview at a later date that may last 30 minutes to 1 hour. You will be given the opportunity to review and edit all interview transcripts. You will also be asked to provide some additional optional demographic data such as age, gender, workplace industry, etc.

Would you like to receive the typed transcripts for review and editing?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: There are no anticipated risks of being in the study. Benefits are limited to any personal enjoyment you may feel from sharing your experiences. There is no compensation for your participation in the study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way UNLESS, you would like to be identified. The types of records I will create include information from the survey you completed, written notes, audio recordings, typed notes of the interviews and email communication. All data will be password protected so that only I can access the data on any computer. The primary repository for this data will be my personal laptop to which only I have access. Data that exists on tape...
or in print will be kept in a locked cabinet file drawer in my home office. If during the interview you reference certain documents or company information that may be noteworthy, I will pursue reviewing those. If they are personal documents, I would use only with your approval and would make arrangements to get copies and/or to get originals back to you in a timely manner.

Would you specifically like to be identified by your actual first name in this study?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with me, my place of employment, or the University of St. Thomas. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time up to and until January 2011. Should you decide to withdraw data collected about you, it will not be used in the study. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask during the interview.

Contacts and Questions: My name is Cheryl Throgmorton. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at 314-406-4840 or my advisor, Dr. Alla Heorhiadi, at 651-962-4457. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-5341 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records. Before signing, please make sure you ask any clarifying questions you have about any section of the form.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I attest that the answers to the two yes/no questions in this consent form are my own. I also agree that it is okay for the researcher to contact me for a subsequent interview as needed. I am at least 18 years of age. I consent to participate in the study as described.

Name/Electronic Signature of Study Participant

Consent Date

Name/Electronic Signature of Researcher

Date