

Citation: Rose, S. (1996.) Who to let in: Women's cross-race friendships. In J. Chrisler, C. Golden, and P. Rozee (Eds.), Lectures on the psychology of women (pp. 211-228). New York: McGraw Hill. Book received the 1997 Association for Women in Psychology Distinguished Publication Award.

15

Who to Let In: Women's Cross-Race Friendships



Silently or explicitly, we all have been taught "who to let in and who to keep out" as friends (Pratt, 1991, p. 19). A color line often divides the group of eligibles from ineligibles in friendship, although the line may be disguised or denied. The line separating Black people from whites in terms of friendship appears to be especially effective. Own-race friendships are the norm; most adults show a clear preference for friends of the same race, gender, age, and class (Duck, 1991). Women seem to be more able to transcend the race barrier than men. First, women tend to be more intimate and affectionate with their friends than men do (Duck, 1991). Their capacity for intimacy perhaps enables them to empathize more easily with women of other races. Second, women of all races share a common oppression based on gender that, if acknowledged, may enhance a sense of sisterhood. However, women and girls do not appear to choose cross-race friendships more often than men and boys (Clark & Ayers, 1992).

What inhibits cross-race friendship? The lack of attention to this topic among social scientists is surprising given the strong racial tensions present in the United States and the need for greater racial tolerance. The neglect of the topic within the psychology of women is also surprising, given that building alliances among women has been one of the feminist principles guiding research in the field. Few empirical studies have specifically examined cross-race friendships. As a result, little is known about how common they are or how they operate.

Gratitude is extended to Randy A. Page, members of the St. Louis Anti-Racism Group, and the Association for Women in Psychology for many of the ideas expressed in this chapter and for providing the motivation to change. Many thanks also to the students who participated.

The difficulties in establishing and maintaining cross-race friendships became apparent to me on a personal level through my involvement in feminism. Though I and other white feminists professed to be entirely open to and desirous of cross-race friendships, our friendship and political networks were mostly white. My participation in numerous antiracism trainings, the St. Louis antiracism group, and many discussions with women of color made me seek to understand the dynamics of the racial divide. It also made me aware of the tremendous potential rewards of cross-race friendships. These experiences provided the motivation for me to investigate the nature of cross-race friendship through my teaching.

In this lecture, we will explore the cross-race friendships of psychology of women students. The intent is to illustrate the racial attitudes that inhibit women's cross-race friendships, as well as the education and motivation needed to facilitate them. Friendships between Black and white women will be emphasized because the participants represented only these two racial groups; however, the processes described here may apply equally well to other cross-race friendships.

RACISM AND RACIAL IDENTITY

Racism is the most powerful barrier to establishing cross-race friendship. Although many white people today consciously reject racist beliefs, asserting that Blacks and whites should be treated equally, psychological research indicates that a majority of whites hold negative attitudes about Blacks (Carter, White, & Sedlacek, 1987; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). Racist attitudes and behaviors discourage cross-race friendship. For example, many whites agree that it would upset them personally if Blacks moved into their neighborhood or that Blacks in this country have tried to move too fast to attain their rights (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). In terms of Black women specifically, Weitz and Gordon (1993) found that white college students ascribe more negative traits to Black women than to American women in general. Almost all (95 percent) described Black women as threatening (argumentative, loud, stubborn, "bitchy," or dishonest). About 28 percent endorsed "welfare mother" traits (for example, too many children, fat, and lazy) as describing Black women and 19 percent selected traits associated with a good mother/wife/daughter image (for example, intelligent, family-oriented, loyal to family ties). In contrast, traits selected by the white women and men for "American women in general" were uniformly more positive, including intelligent, sensitive, attractive, sophisticated, emotional, ambitious, career-oriented, independent, talkative, imaginative, and kind. These results suggest that many white women regard Black women as unlikely candidates for friendship.

Do Black people hold racist views of whites that result in whites being perceived as undesirable as friends? According to the dictionary definition of racism, Blacks can be *prejudiced* against whites, but cannot accu-

rately be labeled opinions, or attitudes or behaviors that contrast, racism has and has the right a *system of government* in terms of this definition;

Black people hostility in response from three saying among I folks are thinking say it" (p. 427). all whites are racial institutions and will go to great founded suspicion befriend them.

Racial identity racism (Democracies whites (Pope-Davis's awareness personal, social, and a higher level of reject white racism with high racial identity (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994) connected to the quality of those racial identity reflect the friendships having cross-racial identity by making discrimination.

Black racial identity five stages: socialization, and internalization the Black personality, including traits simulate and be Blacks. Thus, individuals at this stage itated by an ever racism on one's that many white

s-race friendships
y involvement in
sed to be entirely
adship and politi-
in numerous an-
many discussions
e dynamics of the
potential rewards
he motivation for
ough my teaching.
lships of psychol-
cial attitudes that
ducation and mo-
Black and white
represented only
ed here may apply

rately be labeled *racist*. Prejudice refers to unreasonable or hostile feelings, opinions, or attitudes directed against a racial, religious, or national group or behaviors that discriminate against individuals of such a group. In contrast, racism has two components: (1) the *belief* that one's race is superior and has the right to rule others, and (2) a *policy* of enforcing such rights or a *system of government* based on them (Mallon, 1991, p. 115). White people have the power in the United States to put their racial prejudices into action in terms of governmental and institutional policies as specified by this definition; Black people do not.

Black people who are prejudiced against whites often develop racial hostility in response to the racism they experience. They frequently operate from three major assumptions (Sue, 1990). First, there is a common saying among Black Americans: "If you really want to know what White folks are thinking or feeling, don't listen to what they say, but how they say it" (p. 427). A second assumption held by many people of color is that all whites are racist because they actively or passively participate in racist institutions and benefit from them. Third, they believe that most whites will go to great lengths to deny they are racist or biased. These well-founded suspicions may make Black people wary of whites who wish to befriend them.

Racial identity appears to be related to how Black people respond to racism (Demo & Hughes, 1990), as well as to racist attitudes among whites (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). Racial identity refers to an individual's awareness of his or her membership in a racial group and the personal, social, and political consequences of that membership. Blacks with a higher level of racial identity are more likely to actively confront or to reject white racist attitudes about Blacks (Demo & Hughes, 1990). Whites with high racial identity are less racist toward Black people (Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1994). It is reasonable to speculate that racial identity may be connected to people's motivation to form cross-race friendships or to the quality of those relationships, as well. For instance, people with higher racial identity may be more knowledgeable about how race is likely to affect the friendship and may value cultural differences more. Conversely, having cross-race friendships may facilitate the development of racial identity by making the friends more aware of racial prejudice and discrimination.

Black racial identity has been described by Cross (1978, 1991) as having five stages: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. At the first stage, pre-encounter, the Black person adheres to many of the beliefs of the dominant white culture, including the notion that "white is right." The individual seeks to assimilate and be accepted by whites and may distance herself from other Blacks. Thus, cross-race friendships may be more common among individuals at this stage than others. The encounter phase is typically precipitated by an event that forces the individual to acknowledge the impact of racism on one's life. For example, the Black woman may come to realize that many whites will not view her as an equal. This is likely to have an

ss-race friendship.
t racist beliefs, as-
/ psychological re-
ve attitudes about
& Ottavi, 1994).
riendship. For ex-
ersonally if Blacks
country have tried
(1993) found that
Black women than
t) described Black
v, "bitchy," or dis-
raits (for example,
omen and 19 per-
e/daughter image
y ties). In contrast,
merican women in
elligent, sensitive,
oriented, indepen-
suggest that many
lidates for friend-

esult in whites be-
the dictionary def-
s, but cannot accu-

adverse effect on cross-race friendships. The immersion-emersion stage is represented by the joint desire to embrace one's racial origins and to actively avoid association with white symbols. At this stage, same-race friendships are likely to be highly preferred over cross-race ones. At the fourth stage, internalization, pro-Black attitudes become less defensive, and the individual may be willing to establish carefully selected cross-race friendships with whites who are respectful and appreciative of the Black person's racial identity. The fifth stage, internalization-commitment, is similar to the fourth stage, except that the person translates her or his personal sense of being Black into a sustained plan to address the concerns of Black people as a group.

According to Helms (1990), white racial identity has five levels: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, and autonomy. Individuals in the contact stage are unaware of their white identity and ignore the race of others, acting as if they are color-blind. They may avoid Black people as friends, or if they befriend them, it is typically to satisfy curiosity. Choosing to have Black friends moves the white person into the disintegration stage where the individual's whiteness becomes more salient to her or him. Conflict over one's internal standards and societal norms about interracial interactions occur. Overidentification with Blacks may result; however, Blacks may reject whites who overidentify with them. Alternatively, the person may retreat into white society to avoid the internal conflicts. At the next phase, reintegration, stereotypical attitudes of fear and anger toward Blacks are common as the white person tries to come to terms with being white, as well as having been rejected by Black people. Blacks may be avoided at this phase. With acceptance of being white, the stage of pseudo-independence is reached. Relations with a few Blacks are likely to occur, as the white person attempts to deal with race issues on an intellectual level. As interactions with Blacks increase, the person is likely to move to the autonomy stage. Here, a positive white identity is internalized and cross-cultural interactions are sought out as opportunities for growth. Racial differences and similarities are appreciated.

In summary, many white people hold negative attitudes toward Blacks that are likely to inhibit cross-race friendships. Black people, in turn, may not be very motivated to establish friendships with whites who do not regard them as peers or appreciate their culture. However, an individual's level of racial identity appears to provide insight into who chooses cross-race friendships, how successful the friendships are likely to be, and how they may be facilitated.

CROSS-RACE FRIENDSHIP

The goals of this lecture are to illustrate how racism and racial identity were expressed in student essays written about cross-race friendships and

to discuss obstacles. Students (1991, p. 19), in "who to keep i specifically how ample, Pratt wa into the house. ploring how ra friends in their white friendship sex friend of th tudes, what wo problems might cross-race friend

I then class: identity present illustrate how c discussion below women student of women c

Black Women

Essays from the stage of Black r. dent. First, the t to value it over conscious awarene with a desire f woman of mixe friends. She attr tion from Black

Nothing wor because I've were predor friends. . . . It ple, I've noti the first time girls decided look black er

¹This approach coul and having student measure, write an e

²Essays from 15 wh

n-emersion stage is
l origins and to ac-
s stage, same-race
s-race ones. At the
me less defensive,
illy selected cross-
id appreciative of
e, internalization-
t the person trans-
stained plan to ad-

as five levels: con-
ce, and autonomy.
white identity and
d. They may avoid
typically to satisfy
ite person into the
ss becomes more
dards and societal
ication with Blacks
overidentify with
ociety to avoid the
eotypical attitudes
ite person tries to
n rejected by Black
ceptance of being
elations with a few
s to deal with race
lacks increase, the
e, a positive white
are sought out as
arities are appreci-

attitudes toward
s. Black people, in
s with whites who
e. However, an in-
e insight into who
endships are likely

and racial identity
ce friendships and

to discuss obstacles to cross-race friendship and how they might be overcome. Students first were required to read an essay by Minnie Bruce Pratt (1991, p. 19), in which she explained how she was taught by her family "who to keep in and who to keep out" as friends. The essay describes specifically how this message was communicated concerning race. For example, Pratt was taught to be cordial to Blacks but never to invite them into the house. Students were then asked to write a three-page essay exploring how race affected "who to keep in and who to keep out" as friends in their own lives. They were asked to focus specifically on Black-white friendships, indicating how interested they were in having a same-sex friend of the other race, how their family had influenced their attitudes, what would motivate them to pursue a cross-race friendship, what problems might arise in the friendship due to race, and how many close cross-race friendships they currently had.

I then classified each student's essay using the stage models of racial identity presented earlier. The following examples, taken from the essays, illustrate how cross-race friendships were affected by racial identity.¹ The discussion below is based on responses made by 10 Black and 43 white women students between the ages of 18 and 51 years who took psychology of women courses during 1994.²

Black Women's Responses

Essays from three of the Black women suggested they were at the first stage of Black racial identity, pre-encounter. Two characteristics were evident. First, the three were quite assimilated into white culture and tended to value it over Black culture. Second, they appeared to have little conscious awareness of racism. These attitudes appeared to be associated with a desire for cross-race friendships. For example, one 21-year-old woman of mixed African and Mexican American heritage, had only white friends. She attributed this to attending white schools as well as to rejection from Blacks.

Nothing would inhibit me from pursuing a friendship with someone white because I've been around white people all my life. The schools I attended were predominantly white, so this also contributed to having all white friends. . . . It seems I'm more accepted by the white race. . . . Most black people, I've noticed, find something wrong as soon as they see me. For example, the first time I walked through the doors of M—High School, all the black girls decided right then they didn't like me. Their reason was that I didn't look black enough and I talked like a "white person."

¹This approach could be improved either by presenting the models of racial identity in class and having students classify their own essay or by having students take a racial-identity measure, write an essay, and discuss the relationship between the two.

²Essays from 15 white and 6 Black men were not included.

Although her identification with white people showed some signs of being challenged, she still seemed predominantly to share a white frame of reference:

In my whole 21 years, a problem never came up until recently. Most of my white friends automatically assume that just because a black man has a beeper, drives a nice car, or has nice clothes, he must be a drug dealer. They fail to realize he may have a beeper because it may be part of his profession (doctor, maintenance man).

Another 30-year-old Black woman at the pre-encounter stage placed a greater value on having friendships with white women than Black; the woman currently had no close friends of any race, but she preferred a cross-race one to a same-race one. The woman contended that "more damage can be done in same-race friendships than in a cross-race one [because] there is a tendency for one person to be jealous of the other one if she is prettier and more confident of herself . . . or if you are independent or have a spouse or boyfriend and the other person doesn't."

Five Black women were classified as being at the encounter stage because they recounted a significant social or personal event that had made them aware of racism and racial differences. Sometimes the event was due to an encounter with white racism; at other times, contact with the Black community forced the women to reconsider their views. These attitudes appeared to be related to a lack of interest in cross-race friendships. For example, patterns of racial segregation were an important factor in at least two of the women's lives. A 19-year-old woman, described how patterns of segregation had shaped her choice of friends.

As a young African-American child, I was never given the option to let certain people in or out of my life. Economic segregation decided for me. It decided that I was going to only let my own people into my life. It made me realize at an early age that friends like myself were easy to obtain and very comfortable to have. [Then] we moved to a desegregated neighborhood. . . . Many of the whites in the neighborhood were those who could not afford to make the suburban exodus [away from blacks]. Our next door neighbors were a very nice white family, except for the father. My sister and I became very close to the children . . . As we grew older, things changed. . . . The father was very racist and he would do things to make me realize that cross-race friendships were going to be difficult to maintain and rare in my life.

Another 22-year-old Black woman indicated:

It is quite difficult to make friends outside of my race. The students here are very antisocial and do not seem interested in talking to someone outside of their race. . . . Where I live also inhibits me from pursuing a cross-race friendship. I live in the city in a mostly African-American neighborhood where the crime rate is high. These two things usually keep White people away. If I make a cross-race friend, the person's family usually interferes or disapproves of them coming over to visit me or go out with me.

One 29-year-old Black woman indicated that as a result of being

I was accepted into a white elementary school. I saw hostility and hostility from my mom to ask me to whisper to me. I received notice that I was being done before my circle of friends.

At the encounter stage of entertainment, particularly if the Black woman shares white norms of

I am very lonely in my friendships. There are such as roller skating, bowling, ice skating, close relationships of effort I put in which include

The experience of the encounter stage of cross-race friendships could transform friendships into a better place to be. So I believe I see a difference."

None of the immersion-encounter stage is likely to be experienced. This stage of denigration of support of Black identity is likely also usually a denial of self identity.

Emergence of the internal characteristics of pride, an inner

One 29-year-old Black woman described how her attitudes changed as a result of being in first a white reference group, then a Black one:

I was accepted into the cliques that existed in my private predominantly white elementary school. I felt comfortable being one of the very few black children there. [Then] after attending a predominantly black public school, I saw hostilities that I had not seen or had not noticed before between whites and blacks. . . . My white friends from my previous school would call my mom to ask if I could sleep over at their homes and I would immediately whisper to my mom, "Does her mom know that I am black?" I had preconceived notions that her mom would not want me to sleep over if she knew that I was black. . . . I became unable to relate to my white friends as I had done before. Unconsciously, I was accepting my black peers as my exclusive circle of friends.

At the encounter stage, an awareness of cultural differences in forms of entertainment also posed a problem in cross-race friendships, particularly if the Black woman was not willing to assimilate, that is, to adopt white norms of speech and behavior. As one woman stated:

I am very limited in the amount of time I have to spend cultivating relationships. There are no white people in the places that I enjoy going for recreation such as rollerskating, softball games, and get-togethers with family and friends. . . . White people I know seem to like golfing, tennis, skiing, surfing, bowling, iceskating, and soccer. . . . So, the likelihood of my developing a close relationship with a white person would be dependent upon the amount of effort I put into going outside my boundaries and into an environment which includes whites.

The experiences described above suggest that Black women at the encounter stage of racial identity may not be highly motivated to establish cross-race friendships, although they are aware that cross-race relations could transform racial stereotypes. Said one, "I realize that cross-race friendships are the key to ending racism, or at least making the world a better place to live in. They help dispel the stereotypes that foster racism. So I believe I should change my attitude [of indifference] and try to make a difference."

None of the Black women respondents were classified as being at the immersion-emersion stage. However, extrapolating from the attitudes likely to be expressed at this stage, cross-race friendships would be unlikely. This stage is characterized by a glorification of Black culture and denigration of white culture. The desire to explore Black history with the support of Black peers typically is strong. However, a new positive sense of self is likely to result from this exploration, and white-focused anger also usually dissipates as the person moves to the next stage of racial identity.

Emergence from the immersion-emersion stage marks the beginning of the internalization stage. Two Black women students expressed characteristics congruent with this stage, including a strong sense of Black pride, an inner security about their Black identity, and a tolerance toward

other races based on their common humanity. These attitudes appeared to be associated with a desire to establish cross-race friendships with carefully selected white women. For example, a 41-year-old Black woman described her personal development as follows:

Growing up, the only Caucasians that I remembered coming into my neighborhood were the bill collectors and the police. The bill collectors came to collect and then were gone. The police came under the guise of law enforcement. I remember some of the Caucasian officers shoving, kicking, and hitting several Black men. . . . It was clear to me that the Caucasian officers were the aggressors, since the Black men were handcuffed and the Black officers stood around without saying a word or stepping in to stop their fellow officers' aggression. Seeing the brutality of those police officers solidified an existing uneasiness of the Caucasian people. I believe this is the "why" I used to avoid building friendships with other races.

Her opinion of White people did not change until she was in her thirties. She met a young white woman who was the friend of some of her Black friends. She did not regard the woman as trustworthy because she wasn't Black and she was living with a Black man. Her opinion changed drastically one day, however, when the younger woman asked for her help and confided about her childhood sexual abuse and current marital problems. She said, "I sat and listened to B—with amazement and disbelief . . . surprised that she trusted me enough to talk openly about her pain . . . and disbelieving that a Caucasian woman could experience any of the things B—had just described to me, especially after seeing the happy-all-the-time June Cleaver depictions on television." Although still wary of whites, this personal experience made the woman more willing to respond to those whites who approached her with personal sincerity.

The second Black woman at this stage was 44 years of age. She expressed a strong sense of internal security about her identity.

At this stage of my life, I don't feel the need to prove anything to anyone. I have broken through enough color barriers and am well aware of my abilities and attributes. If the intended friend is receptive to change, pliable, and willing to ignore possible long-held stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory practices, I am more than willing to educate, befriend, evolve, and grow with them.

A current long-standing friendship she had with a white woman met this description. Thus, attitudes common to the internalization stage of Black racial identity appear to facilitate the formation of carefully chosen cross-race friendships.

No Black women were identified as being at the internalization-commitment stage because none expressed an overt commitment toward advancing the cause of Black people as a group. However, in terms of feelings about oneself and others, this stage is quite similar to the internalization stage.

In sum, the understanding of the internalization stage affected their lives. Black women began to experience immersion-emersion to occur, with feelings of self and internalization. They were open to cross-race friendships, with a preference for developed racial diversity.

White Women

Most of the white women at this stage of white racial identity were in friendship. They were types that provided support with someone who was different from students at the time. They were people who are of a different race they happen to be. They believed that a person of one race can ever have a friend of another race to befriend anyone. They confessed that race was a barrier to a race friend.

The contradiction of this stage held appeal for Black friends. For example, potential friends who were in relationships with few problems were considered an opportunity. They contradicted their own belief that they had described their influence on them.

I used to go to work and would bring in my own things. I threw all of my things away. I hated dirty people. I wanted to be around people who would love to walk with their neighbors we walk on tracks.

itudes appeared to
ndships with care-
d Black woman de-

ming into my neigh-
ollectors came to col-
e of law enforcement.
ing, and hitting sev-
officers were the ag-
Black officers stood
ir fellow officers' ag-
lified an existing un-
why" I used to avoid

he was in her thir-
nd of some of her
orthy because she
r opinion changed
nan asked for her
nd current marital
zement and disbe-
nly about her pain
erience any of the
seeing the happy-
lthough still wary
an more willing
ith personal sin-

rs of age. She ex-
entity.

anything to anyone. I
ware of my abilities
ge, pliable, and will-
and discriminatory
olve, and grow with

a woman met this
ion stage of Black
ally chosen cross-

a internalization-
mitment toward
ever, in terms of
nilar to the inter-

In sum, the Black women at the pre-encounter stage had much less understanding than those at other stages about how race and racism had affected their lives; thus, they desired cross-race friendships more. As Black women become more racially aware, as in the encounter and immersion-emersion stages, conflict in the friendships could be expected to occur, with few, if any, surviving. At the last two stages, internalization and internalization-commitment, Black women once again might become open to cross-race friendships. Those friends are likely to be carefully chosen, with a preference being shown for white women who have a highly developed racial identity themselves and who show appreciation for racial diversity.

White Women's Responses

Most of the white women ($N = 29$) were classified as being at the first stage of white racial awareness, contact. They tended to be unaware of their own racial identity and were inclined to assert they were color-blind in friendship. However, they also were likely to have very strong stereotypes that provided the context for comments like, "I could be friends with someone who didn't seem Black." These are some typical comments from students at this stage: "Friendships will come easily between two people who are open and honest and nice to one another no matter what race they happen to be." "What's race got to do with it? I have always believed that a person should not be judged by the color of her skin." "No one can ever have enough friends no matter what the race." "I am willing to befriend anyone who is nice to me." Although women at this stage professed that race was not a factor in their friendships, only four had a cross-race friend.

The contradictory beliefs about race that white women at the contact stage held appeared to be partly responsible for their lack of cross-race friends. For example, one 22-year-old woman asserted, "I do not think of potential friends as being Black or White." However, her fears about such relationships were revealed in a later statement: "There could be quite a few problems with having a cross-race friend . . . you could possibly be considered an outcast . . . society could look down on you." Many contradictory beliefs originated in family messages. Some participants described their families as prejudiced but minimized its severity and its influence on them. A 31-year-old woman's story illustrates this point.

I used to go to bake sales with my mother when I was six. The black people would bring in beautiful pies and cakes, but after they left the church, people threw all of the desserts in the trash. My grandmother told me they were dirty people. . . . My mother also told me that my brother and I were not allowed to walk home from school with a Black boy. we knew because the neighbors were complaining. Everyone had to stay on their own side of the tracks.

These early experiences were not seen as being connected to her current views, however. She claimed, "I have never really given much thought to having a friend of another race. I also don't have any."

The contradictory views held by participants contributed to their confusion. An 18-year-old woman who had no cross-race friendships explained:

While it was unintentional on my parents' part, I grew up with slightly prejudiced views against African-Americans. I listened to my father describe the people he worked with. . . . Not until years later did I realize that my father wasn't prejudiced toward blacks, but that he just worked with incompetent people. He informed me there were just as many white people that were incapable of doing the job . . . it was not racial prejudice. . . . I am not prejudiced . . . [but] problems could arise in cross-race friendships [because] some whites are offended when the "master race" associates with inferior individuals. . . . [However] my personal view is that skin color doesn't matter.

White women at the contact stage also tended to be naive regarding the impact of race and racism on themselves and others. One example of naivete was the extent to which white women expected Black women to assimilate into white culture. "I pursue friendships when I have something in common with the other person. If I met a Black woman who I enjoyed being with . . . I wouldn't hesitate to become friends . . . [if] each of us had the same set of values and same lifestyle." This woman currently had no cross-race friends and did not expect to have any "because I can't think of any Black people who have the same values and lifestyle as I do. . . . It's not because they're different from me, but because of their values."

Other examples of naivete and stereotyping among the white women at the contact stage concerned their intolerance toward Blacks who spoke of discrimination or who held whites responsible for racism. "A major thing that would inhibit me from being friends with a Black woman would be [if] she blamed whites for their oppression and stereotyped us as a prejudiced, materialistic race," one woman commented indignantly. Likewise, a 24-year-old woman remarked, "Last semester I had a class with a black woman about my age who said that the whole campus was racist. I asked her how she could make such a broad statement. . . . I was offended by her comment. . . . It was evident that I would not be pursuing a friendship with her." White women also tended to side with other white people when the issue of race came up. For example, one woman described how her friendship with a Black woman ended.

My black friend became very disturbed with [the way] our supervisor [had handled a racial situation] and told him that he was racist—that if it had been her in the situation, he would've taken action against her. Knowing my supervisor as well as I did, I knew he was not racist and that he treated everyone equally . . . this broke up our friendship.

Only three of attitudes about Black

I am not particularly lived in an entirely their home. . . . Americans who modulated voice whom other blacks the traits of my I suppose that I

In general, white being overtly prejudiced identity had given minimal understated consciously considered friendships until they open to such a friend would not take the women at this stage

The other 16 women as being at the dis their own race, as awareness appeared friendships; 8 women with a Black woman

Three themes came in the essays. First that forced them to sue. For one young who was from the prejudices. Another racism when she did woman. "I responded Others struggled with thy neighbor" and the families deliberate schools.

Challenges to racial identity. For arguments with her

My father thinks shape. He was a Most of his anger head that blacks ten] I argued with

connected to her cur-
really given much
't have any."
ributed to their con-
ace friendships ex-

up with slightly prej-
my father describe the
realize that my father
ked with incompetent
e people that were in-
. . . I am not prejudiced
[because] some whites
ferior individuals. . . .
: matter.

be naive regarding
ers. One example of
ted Black women to
when I have some-
ck woman who I en-
iends . . . [if] each of
his woman currently
any "because I can't
ies and lifestyle as I
but because of their

; among the white
rance toward Blacks
sponsible for racism.
friends with a Black
pression and stereo-
oman commented in-
ed, "Last semester I
o said that the whole
e such a broad state-
It was evident that I
e women also tended
race came up. For ex-
with a Black woman

ay) our supervisor [had
acist—that if it had been
st her. Knowing my su-
id that he treated every-

Only three of the white women openly admitted to having negative attitudes about Black people. One, a 19-year-old woman, said:

I am not particularly interested in having a friend of another race. If they lived in an entirely black neighborhood, I would be uncomfortable visiting their home. . . . I am more likely to pursue a friendship with those African-Americans who display ambition in business and who try to speak in a well-modulated voice. You might say I [would be willing to be] friends with blacks whom other blacks would refer to as "Uncle Toms," those blacks who show the traits of my white friends. . . . My friends have told me I am a racist and I suppose that I may seem that way to some.

In general, with the exception of the three women who admitted to being overtly prejudiced, the white women at the contact stage of racial identity had given little thought to being white and appeared to have minimal understanding of the effects of racism. As a result, they had not consciously considered what role race played in choosing or maintaining friendships until they did the assignment. Most claimed they would be open to such a friendship, if approached, but they indicated that they would not take the initiative themselves. Perhaps not surprisingly, few women at this stage had cross-race friends.

The other 16 white women completing the assignment were classified as being at the disintegration stage. They were becoming more aware of their own race, as well as of the effect of racism on Blacks. This greater awareness appeared to facilitate—or perhaps result from—cross-race friendships; 8 women at the disintegration stage had a close friendship with a Black woman.

Three themes congruent with the disintegration stage were expressed in the essays. First, most of the white women had experienced an event that forced them to examine or assert their personal values about race issues. For one young woman, being assigned a Black college roommate who was from the Chicago projects was the impetus for her to face her prejudices. Another woman noticed her own covert stereotyping and racism when she defended to her family a friendship she had with a Black woman. "I responded by saying, 'She's different. She's very educated.'" Others struggled with having received one message from parents to "love thy neighbor" and treat all people equally and an opposite message when the families deliberately fled from racially mixed neighborhoods and schools.

Challenges to or insights about parents' messages seemed to promote racial identity. For example, one 21-year-old white woman had serious arguments with her father about race.

My father thinks that other races are the reason this country is in such bad shape. He was an active member of the KKK for a short period of time. . . . Most of his animosity was directed toward blacks. He tried to drill into my head that blacks were bad. . . . But I just knew my father was wrong . . . [of-ten] I argued with him about it. . . . I've just never had that prejudice in me.

For a 28-year-old woman, recognizing the similarities between her mother's and her own behavior toward Black people provided the impetus for conflict.

My grade school was considered progressive. It was a mixture of children of university faculty and children from, as my mother euphemistically said, "the other side of town" (black children). While I never heard or saw my mother say anything overtly racist—indeed, she proclaimed that we were getting a "better education" because we were "exposed to different people"—she was always very condescending toward the mothers of the black girls, taking particular care to explain in a simple way how to fill out the forms to award [Girl Scout] badges. She also made a point of telling me how fortunate I was to "have these experiences." Now, looking back, I realize she was drawing the line between "them" and "us."

I also see that in my daily interactions I am still very aware of the line drawn in part by my mother. . . . I am careful with people of other races, take more time to be warm and helpful. . . . now that I examine those expressions, I'm afraid they are a bit too close to the attitude my mother used to take.

Guilt and depression, a second characteristic of the disintegration stage, also were common. For several of the participants, completing the assignment itself was a catalyst for internal reflection and conflict. One 42-year-old woman wrote:

Why, now, do I feel uncomfortable when I read the questions in this exercise? I think that I try very hard to be open-minded, unprejudiced, nonjudgmental, and I feel disappointed in myself when I am brought face-to-face with my shortcomings in this area. The reality is that intellectually I see similarities between races more than differences, but on a gut level my fear of the differences outweigh rationality.

Similarly, a 35-year-old woman expressed guilt about her failure to continue friendships with Black women from work outside the work setting. Even though she had been invited to parties and dances, she had never attended, citing safety as a factor. She pondered whether this was an honest reason or "an excuse not to take the risk to really get to know those who are different."

Third, a number of white women at the disintegration stage mentioned an aspect of the self or an experience that made them more empathetic to people of other races. One 21-year-old woman thought that prejudice directed at her because she was overweight had made her reluctant to judge others. Another 22-year-old became more racially aware when she took a Black friend to a party aboard a boat in an affluent white community. The boat owner, a close white male friend of hers, made comments about how much his property value was being lowered by having someone Black on the boat. She chose to drop the white man as her friend. An entire family's racial identity was expanded by empathy for gay issues, according to a 34-year-old woman.

The summer
gay. Mike's
udice and fe
. . . I heard t
surprised by
brother died
the later year
mourned tog
in color and
we gathered
profound. A
dices.

Thus, attitu
appeared to ha
close personal
catalyst for develop

None of the
tegration, pseu
tity. However, i
friendships mi
pressed at each
sociated with
toward Blacks,
comfort conce
odds of form
independence
some extent a
benefit from r
white. An effor
possibly leadin
white woman
awareness of a
engage in anti
Black women

In sum, th
tact, exhibited
appeared to
women at sta
them to becor
values; more
white women
that white we
about themse
adversely affe
suggests that
the developm
tween Black a

The summer of my freshman year, my older brother announced that he was gay. Mike's lover was a black man. . . . That year I discovered how cruel prejudice and fear could be. . . . [There were] nasty phone calls from neighbors. . . . I heard the hushed voices of my parents late into the night . . . [and] was surprised by the cruelty of [his peers]. . . . I often felt his pain . . . [then] my brother died of AIDS and I discovered another world of untouchables. . . . In the later years, Mike's partner became a member of our family. . . . We mourned together. . . . My father said, "People realize how little differences in color and lifestyles matter when they gotta rally together to survive," when we gathered for dinner a few months after Mike's death. His words were profound. As a family, we have come a long way in recognizing our prejudices.

Thus, attitudes expressed by white women at the disintegration stage appeared to have a positive effect on cross-race friendship. Alternatively, close personal contact with Black women might have provided the catalyst for developing a higher level of racial identity among white women.

None of the white women students were classified as being at the reintegration, pseudo-independence, or autonomy stage of white racial identity. However, it is possible to speculate how racial identity and cross-race friendships might interact by extrapolating from attitudes likely to be expressed at each stage. At the reintegration stage, the guilt and anxiety associated with the previous stage may be redirected as fear and anger toward Blacks, who are now blamed for the white woman's feelings of discomfort concerning race. Avoidance of Blacks may occur, reducing the odds of forming cross-race friendships. At the fourth, or pseudo-independence stage, the individual comes to terms with being white to some extent and is able to identify ways in which she and other whites benefit from racism. However, she may also subtly disavow that she is white. An effort will usually be made to seek out Black people at this stage, possibly leading to cross-race friendships. At the last stage, autonomy, the white woman has internalized a sense of oneself as white, along with an awareness of and appreciation for people of other races. The person might engage in antiracist work and seek to establish cross-race friendships with Black women who also have a high level of racial identity.

In sum, the white women at the first stage of racial awareness, contact, exhibited less knowledge about racism and their own identity; both appeared to have a negative effect on cross-race friendships. White women at stage 2, disintegration, had experienced incidents that forced them to become aware of their whiteness and to examine their cultural values; more cross-race friendships occurred at this stage. The fact that no white women were found at the higher levels of racial identity suggests that white women in general are underdeveloped in terms of thinking about themselves as racial beings. It is reasonable to speculate that this adversely affects the development of cross-race friendships. Conversely, it suggests that educating white women about race issues and enhancing the development of their racial identity might promote friendships between Black and white women.

PROMOTING CHANGE

Is it possible for Black and white women to be friends? The analysis of racism, racial identity, and cross-race friendship presented here suggests that mutually satisfying and fully reciprocal cross-race friendships are rare. Moreover, the desire and ability to establish them may depend not only on the individual women's racial identity but the match between the two. If friendships do happen to be established across the color line, some typical conflicts are likely to occur. A racially unaware white woman's insensitivity toward racism or unconsciously prejudiced remarks may offend the Black woman. The Black woman who is becoming racially aware may start reevaluating her relationship with her white women friends. Or, the reaction of the respective white or Black family or community to the friendship may be hostile. Thus, it appears that Black and white women can indeed be friends, but only if the right combination of people and circumstances is present. Otherwise, as one Black woman asserted, the friendships will be held together "by a very weak glue."

The results presented here suggest that enhancing women's awareness of their racial identity might increase the likelihood that cross-race friendships will survive. Assignments such as the one described here in conjunction with other experiential exercises (Katz, 1989) appear to promote greater racial awareness and serve as a catalyst for change. For example, one of the white women who participated in the exercise described here had been extremely upset during a discussion of white privilege. She argued that she treated everyone fairly and that *she* did not benefit from institutional racism. However, an event occurred during the semester that forced her to challenge her assumption. In her friendship essay, she had described an incident at work where the cook, a Black male coworker, had cursed her, mentioning her race. She was shocked at what she labeled "reverse racism" and reported the incident to the white owner of the restaurant. Her view of the situation had changed drastically a few days later, when she presented me with a supplement to the essay. The cook had apologized to her. She learned that he had been forced to do so by the owner who angrily told him, "You picked the wrong white girl to mess with." The event caused her perception of the situation to shift. She wrote:

I felt very confused and upset about this. It made me realize that racism really is prejudice + institutional power. The cook may have been prejudiced against me or even angry with all whites. However, I realized that he couldn't have been racist even if he wanted to. He was "put in his place" and made to apologize, not because of our argument, but because he is black and I am white. It was no longer "our" argument. It had become bigger than that and I began to feel like the one to blame. I felt like something had been turned around and I was on the wrong side.

How can Bl
mation presentec
hanced when bo
racial identity. A
pirically that rac
conducted by H
view. We intervie
at a high level of
themes were exp
served about ap
negative experie
has to initiate th
to establish trust
accomplished w
white women ed
lies against racis
racism. The rew.
plentiful, particu
culture. Most rei
effort required to
race gap often r
of what blueprin
woman in the pe
tion stage offerec
yield the most di

A motivation t
be an inquisit
questions whi
from a genuin
the human rac
learning exper
"let in" this in
ther be motiva
foolish mind g
ket hatred dee
explain my ov
inner feelings
gently, then w
velop a friend
You may shar
break down/s

In summary,
interact with ra
women by focu
women. It also a
potentially divisi

How can Black and white women become friends? From the information presented here, it appears that cross-race friendships will be enhanced when both Black and white women are at the highest levels of racial identity. Although more investigation is necessary to establish empirically that racial identity and friendship are connected, case studies conducted by Hall and Rose (in press) provide some support for this view. We interviewed a small group of Black and white women who were at a high level of racial identity about their cross-race friendships. Several themes were expressed consistently. First, the Black women were quite reserved about approaching white women as friends owing to previous negative experiences with whites. As a result, the white woman usually has to initiate the friendship. Second, the cross-race friends had to work to establish trust around racial matters specifically. Some ways this was accomplished were by socializing together in each other's homes, by the white women educating themselves about race, and by both becoming allies against racism, including taking public and private stands against racism. The rewards of cross-race friendships cited by the women were plentiful, particularly in terms of the insight they provided into another culture. Most remarked that their friendships were well worth the extra effort required to form and maintain them; in fact, struggling to bridge the race gap often made them stronger than same-race friendships. In terms of what blueprint to follow to establish a cross-race friendship, one Black woman in the psychology of women course who was at the internalization stage offered a description of what type of connection would perhaps yield the most durable tie.

A motivation that would prompt me to establish a cross-race friendship would be an inquisitive Caucasian who honestly sought answers to age-old racial questions which may have troubled her for years. If the initial approach came from a genuine desire to develop a viable friendship, to promote a oneness of the human race, and destroy the racial barriers, and if by doing so, a mutual learning experience occurred, I would be motivated to let down my hair and "let in" this individual. Honesty is an important component. . . . I would further be motivated if I could be assured of a realistic, sincere interaction with no foolish mind games or power struggles. I would like to understand the blanket hatred deeply rooted in many Caucasians and be given the opportunity to explain my own deeply embedded anger. If we could come to grips with our inner feelings, bring them to the surface, face and deal with them intelligently, then work toward solving our problems, then we could begin to develop a friendship. . . . There are benefits to having cross-race friendships. . . . You may share ideas, compare lifestyles, negate the bad, build on the good, break down/shatter barriers, and possibly change the world.

In summary, understanding how cross-race friendships develop and interact with racial identity provides insight into the psychology of women by focusing on important variations in social behavior among women. It also addresses how bonds between women can be built across potentially divisive issues such as race.

? The analysis of
ted here suggests
e friendships are
may depend not
e match between
oss the color line,
7 unaware white
ly prejudiced re-
in who is becom-
ip with her white
e or Black family
s, it appears that
y if the right com-
wise, as one Black
"by a very weak

g women's aware-
od that cross-race
described here in
'89) appear to pro-
for change. For ex-
n the exercise de-
discussion of white
and that *she* did not
occurred during the
n her friendship es-
cook, a Black male
was shocked at what
t to the white owner
ed drastically a few
nt to the essay. The
een forced to do so
wrong white girl to
ituation to shift. She

alize that racism really
have been prejudiced
alized that he couldn't
his place" and made to
he is black and I am
bigger than that and I
hing had been turned

REFERENCES

- CARTER, R. T., WHITE, T. J., & SEDLACEK, W. E. (1987). White student attitudes toward Blacks: Implications for Black student recruitment and retention. *Journal of Behavioral and Social Sciences*, 33, 165-175.
- CLARK, M. L., & AYERS, M. (1992). Friendship similarity during early adolescence: Gender and racial patterns. *Journal of Psychology*, 126(4), 393-405.
- CROSS, W. E. (1978). The Cross and Thomas models of psychological nigrescence. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 5(1), 13-19.
- CROSS, W. E., Jr. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- DEMO, D. H., & HUGHES, M. (1990). Socialization and racial identity among Black Americans. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 53(4), 364-374.
- DUCK, S. (1991). *Understanding relationships*. New York: Guilford.
- HALL, R. L., & ROSE, S. (in press). Friendships between African-American and white lesbians. In J. Weinstock & E. Rothblum (Eds.), *Lesbians and friendship*. New York: Routledge.
- HELMS, J. (Ed.). (1990). *Black and white racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- KATZ, J. H. (1989). *White awareness: Handbook for anti-racism training*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma.
- MALLON, G. L. (1991). Racism: The white problem. In G. L. Mallon (Ed.), *Resisting racism: An action guide* (pp. 115-118). San Francisco: National Association of Black and White Men Together.
- POPE-DAVIS, D. B., & OTTAVI, T. M. (1994). The relationship between racism and racial identity among white Americans: A replication and extension. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 72, 293-297.
- PRATT, M. B. (1991). *Rebellion: Essays 1980-1991*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand.
- SUE, D. W. (1990). Culture-specific strategies in counseling: A conceptual framework. *Professional Psychology*, 21(6), 424-433.
- WEITZ, R., & GORDON, L. (1993). Images of Black women among Anglo college students. *Sex Roles*, 28(1/2), 19-34.

SUGGESTED READINGS

- KATZ, J. H. (1989). *White awareness: Handbook for anti-racism training*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma.
- NELSON, J. (1993). *Volunteer slavery*. New York: Penguin.
- PRATT, M. (1991). Rebellion. In M. B. Pratt (Ed.), *Rebellion: Essays 1980-1991*. (pp. 9-26). Ithaca, NY: Firebrand.
- TATUM, B. D. (1992). Talking about race, learning about racism: The application of racial identity development theory in the classroom. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62, 1-24.