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THE COLOR OF CLIMATE

Ecology, Environment, Climate Change, and Women of Color—Exploring Environmental Leadership From the Perspective of Women of Color in Science

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What is the “color” of climate? There is an urgent need to address the participation of underrepresented minorities in the sciences, and nowhere is that need more urgent than in the ecological and environmental sciences. Despite a global environmental crisis that has brought together hundreds of cultures, languages, and ethnic groups, underrepresented people, especially women, are still a missing voice at the negotiation tables. Why are there so few? In this chapter, the experiences of women of color in the environmental sciences are examined through literature review and personal stories. Specifically, climate and color are defined as dualities for minority women—where these women may have a double burden, being underrepresented in the sciences as a whole and extremely rare in the environmental fields. Paradoxically, these terms can have dual meanings in the context of a discussion of environmental leadership for women of color. First, the

term *color* will be explored to examine the current data on minority women in the sciences and in environmental fields. In this context, color signifies “green” environmentalism as well as the many shades of brown, reflective of women of different racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. However, *color* is a highly charged term reflective of the U.S. cultural context of society, which defines different ethnic and racial groups based on the tone or color of their skin. In that context, the colors of green and brown suggest that the environmental leadership experience for women of color will be very different from that of others.

The term *climate* can also have dual meanings in environmental leadership for minorities. What is the “climate” of environmental professions and organizations in terms of the acceptance of women in leadership roles? Demographic data and personal stories gathered by the authors on their

own paths to leadership positions are woven together to highlight the role of mentoring and support structures. Background data on the climate associated with environmental leadership positions in environmental organizations show remarkably low persistence of women of color despite recent successes in increasing the number of minority graduate students in the sciences. Personal stories help emphasize the need for change in the climate of environmental organizations themselves.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on the color of the climate in relation to community. Personal stories from women of color can help guide future leaders in developing community support, mentoring, and inclusiveness in environmental leadership. Mentorship and community appear to play a central role in the persistence of minorities, particularly in the environmental field. Women leaders appear to blend mentorship and community into their support structures and leadership styles differently than men. To add a personal touch, the authors embed their own voices to add perspectives from four women scientists of color from very different disciplines as well as different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Women of color are rare in the sciences, and the personal voices are meant to both encourage others to walk the same path and also to encourage all to question and address the color of the current climate.

Complexity of Color

The sky was that crystal clear blue I always associated with early morning in the Rocky Mountains. The small plane arched its wings as we soared high over sagebrush-covered plateaus reflective of the majesty of the Serengeti. I adjusted my radiotelemetry receiver, and the antennae flashed in the morning sun, trembling on their wing mounts as they searched for radio-collared animals scattered below us. My receiver suddenly beeped, breaking a comfortable morning stillness, and the pilot dove toward the river, rocks, and bushes flashing past the wings. He pulled the plane into a screaming turn, and we climbed back toward daylight, scanning the canyon walls for our collared animal. As we burst out into the sunlight, wheels brushing the sagebrush along the canyon rim, I saw a tourist standing in wide-eyed, open-mouthed amazement, his early morning contemplation of the canyon disrupted by a single engine aircraft emerging below his feet. As we climbed to our apex, preparing to dive again, I saw a grizzly bear watching the tourist watching us, and for a moment the tableau seemed frozen: bear, plane, tourist, and I in a rose-colored painting of dawn over Yellowstone National Park. (Gillian Bowser)

What is the color of climate? The discussion on environmental leadership for women of color differs from the traditional studies of gender in leadership for several reasons. Rarity is a dual pressure in leadership roles, and women of color in the environmental sciences uniquely face the interacting forces of both racism and sexism that are not part of

the typical female leadership model (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). My career as a National Park Service wildlife biologist is exemplary of that duality, and as the lead author of this chapter, I begin with a story typical of the adventures of any wildlife biologist yet atypical for an African American, Hispanic, or any other minority. A professional wildlife biologist and African American from Brooklyn, New York, is as rare a sight as a grizzly bear in Yellowstone Park, and my mere presence in a national park would elicit the same startled, open-mouthed, wide-eyed stare as the tourist in the story. That rarity is a common experience for minorities in the wilderness areas of the United States, but for minority women wildlife scientists, that same astonishment also comes from peers and colleagues even at the largest professional conferences within the field.

The color of climate refers to the duality and rarity of women of color in environmental leadership positions, yet the literature on this phenomenon is overshadowed by a deluge of articles on the lack of minorities in any of science, technology, engineering, or mathematic (STEM) disciplines and the apparent inability in the United States to shift this persistent trend (National Academy of Sciences, 2010). For example, recent reports by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and National Science Foundation (NSF) highlighted a troubling trend—minorities were an increasing majority in the U.S. population, and yet the number of minority students entering science disciplines in the undergraduate level, or those persisting into professional careers, remained disturbingly low. While the general field of biosciences is considered a “medium participation” field for women at the master’s and bachelor’s levels and the biological sciences for minorities as a whole has risen at the bachelor’s level, minority women are greatly underrepresented by their “share” of master’s or doctorate degrees (NSF, 2011). Further, minority women have higher unemployment rates than White scientists and much lower rates of federal support as faculty than any other group (NSF, 2011). Indeed, underrepresented minority (URM) persistence numbers, defined as the number of students entering college and graduating in a science major, was so low that the NAS referred to a “gathering storm” with the United States at “a crossroads” in the ability to be competitive in the global marketplace (NAS, 2009, 2010).

Is there a shortage of URM students interested in the environmental sciences within the STEM disciplines? Approximately 32,000 students graduate yearly from 184 multicultural eco-high schools located in 29 states (Weintraub, Park, & Jang, 2011). Moreover, in 2007, over 4,200 students of color scored high on the Advanced Placement Environmental Science test, while 2,192 students of color received degrees in agriculture or natural resources and similar disciplines. This shows that if colleges were more aggressive in recruiting students of color into their environmental programs—and following this, if environmental organizations used more effective targeted

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recruitment strategies—then the environmental workforce would ultimately be more culturally diverse, populated with ethnic minorities, including women of color. However, anecdotal reports suggest an increased interest by URM students and communities in environmental sustainability and the impacts on communities (Bositis, 2010). Such findings suggest that, far from the dire shortage suggested by the demographics of past degrees, many URM students now entering college are interested and engaged in the interdisciplinary approach of sustainability and see great value in the combination of making a difference for humanity while performing scientific work (Bowser & Brown, 2011).

Color of Leadership

As a young girl growing up in South Carolina, my mother, Estelle Simmons, told me that I could be anything I wanted to be. While these words seem simple, the pronouncement of the words still ignites wonderment and empowers me—I CAN BE ANYTHING. I enjoyed being outdoors and would stay out to play and explore as long as my parents would allow. I would watch the birds in my backyard and wonder why they ate our figs and where they lived. It would rain on one side of the street and not the other and I would wonder why. I would see water that bubbled up from my friend's backyard aquifer and wonder about the origin of the water. I used to question the who, what, when, where, and why of my surroundings, especially the natural phenomena I observed. Answers were often replaced with follow-up questions. (Denise Simmons)

At the 55th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the overarching discussion was on preparing the world for the impact of a changing climate on vulnerable populations and the need for women in science fields. U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton asked, “How can we address a global problem, using only half of the global intellectual capacity?”—the implication being that there is a lack of trained women scientists in the sciences as well as a lack of women's voices at the climate change negotiation table (Alber, 2010). The NSF's (2011) recently released decadal report on women in science highlights some interesting trends. While women have increased their presence in the sciences, there are differences by race where more women of color are entering engineering fields than White women, yet White women still dominate the biological and social sciences. Fields like physics and chemistry, for example, have made remarkable gains in the number of women in graduate programs; however, the number of women in the faculty has been slow to change. In some fields, such as natural resources, entire colleges of natural resources may have only one or two URM students in their graduate program (Bowser, personal observations). Indeed, NSF and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) both reported that women in the faculty ranks do have different experiences,

where women of color are less likely to have spouses in related fields (or in academia at all) and are subsequently more likely to leave the academy for corporate or government positions at a higher rate than White women (Shirley Malcom, personal communication, 2011).

Why are women of color so rare in environmental fields? A common assessment that women of color hear from their colleagues is that minorities are more engaged with issues such as health care, children, employment issues, or their general community than they are with broad environmental issues. However, two reports highlight different trends. Anthony Leiserowitz, Edward Maibach, Connie Roser-Renouf, and Nicholas Smith in their 2011 report, *Six Americas*, found that African American women were more likely to be part of the “concerned” segment of the population in relationship to global climate change. David A. Bositis (2010) found that African Americans listed environmental and climate change concerns high and did not differ significantly from White Americans. Kimberly K. Smith (2007) argues that African American environmentalism traces its roots to an early sense of place and regionalism (pp. 189–200). She also suggests that current African Americans focus on environmental justice issues rather than environmental science per se because of “patterns of [current] injustice and blacks struggle against [it]” (p. 190; see also Bullard, 2000). Contemporary African American women reflect personal histories tied to environmentalism and a connection with nature (Dungy, 2009) that is reflective of a shift in environmental conscience also seen in URM students and their own concern with climate change (Bowser, 2006). So the connection for women of color to environmentalism does not appear to differ from women as a group, and yet the gap between women of color in environmental leadership persists. White women, in contrast, have reached parity in graduate fields in ecology (and related fields) and in many cases, graduate schools in ecology and natural resources have more White female than White male graduate students (NSF, 2011).

This prompts an exploration of the barriers to women participating in environmental careers or in leadership positions associated with environmental issues. Are environmental organizations actively and sincerely trying to promote diversity and if not, why not? In this case there is an important distinction between environmental fields associated with ecology, bioscience, social science (e.g., human dimensions of environmental studies), health, and the environmental justice fields. When Robert D. Bullard (2000) first defined environmental justice (EJ), he was exploring the question of why toxic dumps appeared to be located in minority neighborhoods. The resulting EJ movement remained strong with the publication of *Dumping in Dixie* (Bullard, 2000) and the subsequent issuance of Presidential Executive Order 12898 by President Bill Clinton in 1994, which created a foundation for all federal agencies to consider EJ implications associated with their

policies and procedures. However, environmental organizations remained detached from the EJ movement; despite widespread attention to this disconnection in the 1990s, many environmental leaders still believed that the organizational culture and the documented lack of awareness and support had no impact on recruiting minorities nor created institutional barriers that hindered minority students from succeeding in environmental professions (Armstrong, Berkowitz, Dyer, & Taylor, 2007; Environmental Careers Organization [ECO], 1992; Taylor, 2007). Therefore, a genuinely diverse environmental workforce remained a mere vision, despite the reality that a significant number of minority students had suitable qualifications, interest, and experience to work in environmental jobs and chose not to do so (ECO, 2007). Many of these students went on to engage with the EJ fields as activists, while the staff and boards of environmental organizations continued to seriously lack respectable levels of minority participation (Taylor, 2007). Even the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), despite its diversity policy, has a low minority employee rate, and Taylor (2007, 2008) has revealed that minorities made up a meager 17.2% of the 20,218 workers employed in 243 environmental organizations.

The word combination “environmental leadership, women, and color (or minority)” defies Internet search engines. The subject of women in leadership roles has been studied for some time, particularly regarding the differences between women and their male counterparts in management style, emotional skills, and charismatic styles (Applebaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003; Groves, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). However, the specific question of the challenges faced by women of color in environmental leadership positions has rarely been examined. While women in leadership roles differ from men in their leadership styles, and environmental organizations tend to have different types of leaders than for-profit organizations (Ergi & Herman, 2000), the question of minorities in environmental leadership positions seems woefully understudied. Melissa J. Armstrong et al. (2007), for example, looked at minority persistence in ecological fields from the student perspective and found social and community reasons as the most often cited causes for leaving the field of ecology. Further, Bositis (2010) reported that African Americans have a higher interest in environmental issues than previously reported, with climate change impacts being one of their chief concerns. In contrast, Leiserowitz et al. (2009, 2011) in *Six Americas* found that for concerns regarding climate change, the largest group of disengaged Americans were exemplified by middle-aged women of color, and they were least informed and unlikely to consider climate change as a priority (Leiserowitz et al., 2011). Given these published perceptions, it is not surprising to find such a small number of women of color in environmental careers and that the path for this group to environmental leadership positions tends to be uniquely different from their White peers.

The Color of Community

My early career path was strewn with colleagues occasionally questioning how I got into this field and what I thought I could really contribute. Hence, even in the area of environmental leadership that relates to the human dimensions of natural resource management, I found my status as a woman of color to initially be challenged regarding my abilities to “get the job done.” The persistent lack of understanding for my personal and professional perspectives was frustrating and often ignored. To me, a lack of role models was unfortunate, and the reality is this can send the symbolic message that “people of color don’t belong.” My White peers constantly hired people most like themselves, thereby limiting opportunities to even give people of color a chance. Furthermore, my prior work in the area of outdoor and environmental education is a great example of the need to dispel a variety of myths including the environment as being a “White, middle class” domain only. (Nina Roberts)

Almost two decades have passed since Judy Braus (1995) argued that environmental educators needed to include the *urban poor* and other *disadvantaged* minorities in the educational activities and framework of their programs (Taylor, 2007). This call for a more diverse representation among students of the environmental sciences is shared by several important environmental education organizations, including the NAAEE, as well as professionals in the field. All of these groups have instituted initiatives tailored to recruit ethnic minorities into the environmental professions (Baker, 2000; Davis et al., 2002; Hudson, 2001; Jenkins, 2003; Lopez et al., 2006). Yet Taylor (2007) admits that data on diversity in the environmental field are incomplete and more studies are needed to shed light on the current reality.

In 1990, a letter addressed to 10 influential U.S. environmental organizations (i.e., “The Big 10”) was published in the *New York Times* (SouthWest Organizing Project, 1990, p. A20). This letter openly criticized the fact that these organizations had done little to promote diversity in the environmental workforce and blatantly ignored the environmental issues affecting racially diverse communities, such as pollution and industrial waste. This letter was written by activists of color. They called on these organizations to dialogue with professionals of color and other invested minority leaders regarding the environmental crisis impacting communities of color and to hire people of color to their staffs and boards of directors (Environmental Justice Resource Center, n.d.). Yet today, women of color are still absent from leadership roles in those same environmental organizations.

The Color of the Climate

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Engineer Research and Development Center is a research facility with a mix of researchers, contractors, students, and staff. After two years in

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an intern position, I applied for a job and was hired. When Human Resources called to offer me the job, they let me know I was the *eighth* Hispanic hired (of *approximately* 1,000 employees). At the time, I did not fully understand the comment. Later, seeing an employee matrix of males, females, and minorities by pay grade, I knew the *one* in the column was me. I realized that my job success would be tracked for the rest of my career. But I also knew that record keeping did not define me. My mentoring team members were supportive and never made me feel singled out or uneasy. They helped me transition into the larger corps career community. (Kathleen Perales)

The unspoken rule in Montana was that all African Americans would greet each other as family, knowing the rarity of seeing another black face in that state. One day, an old White Montana rancher said he wanted me to meet someone. As he was so courteous with his unusual request, I followed him out to his ranch truck. He brought from the front seat a toddler, clearly of mixed race, and gravely introduced the child. "This is my grandson," he said, "I want him to meet someone who looks like him so he knows." (Gillian Bowser)

"Knowing" is one of the more intangible aspects of differing leadership styles for minority versus majority leaders, much less for those who are also women. Women of color in environmental leadership positions know that URM students face struggles that their White colleagues are completely unaware of. Issues can be as simple as understanding that rarity in the workplace can be a burden or as complex as living in nondiverse communities. What are the roles of mentors, communities, and others who supply the support that allows women of color to excel in environmental leadership and to accept that they are the "one" on demographic scorecards? Leadership styles between men and women differ, and multiple studies have explored those differences (Ergi & Herman, 2000; Groves, 2005). Corporations and businesses appear to do a much better job at recruiting women in general; more women of color hold leadership roles in the corporate culture than the oft-perceived "casual" culture of most environmental organizations. Leadership style and persistence within those different cultures are most likely linked and yet women, characterized by more transformative styles of leadership (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996), are still less represented in environmental organizations as a whole than men (Applebaum et al., 2003; Herring, 2009). In addition, White women who persisted in environmental leadership positions tend to be educated in nonscience disciplines and often come to the leadership position through paths of advocacy (Ergi & Herman, 2000). Data on environmental leadership styles for women of color are highly limited. What exists suggests that not only do women of color differ in leadership styles from White women but that within underrepresented minorities there is also a difference in leadership style between Hispanic and African American women, which can sometimes be quite pronounced (Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). Moreover, within the Hispanic community, cultural and national differences contribute as well, and between

Asian and U.S. women, the differences are likewise profound (Chaco & Tian, 2011; Montoya, Hardy-Fanta, & Garcia, 2000).

The study of diversity within the workforce has been a longstanding topic of interest to scholars (Herring, 2009; Taylor, 2007). Yet affirmative action programs and equal employment opportunity legislation have clearly not been completely successful in advancing the presence, visibility, and imprint of women and minorities within organizations (Ng, 2008). Diversity management is still a concern of many agencies; however, Eddy S. W. Ng (2008) suggests that top executive support is offered to this cause only when the objectives of the business are correlated with the needs and requests of women and minorities. Ng proposes, in this context, that scholars involved in diversity research bear in mind the strategy-related factors that impact an organization's choices with respect to diversity in the workplace. Strategic choice reflects the priorities of CEOs, directors, and top organization executives, as well as provides insight into their specific organizational goals. Hence, it is important to delve into the psychological paradigms of diversity management to identify the link between the commitment of leaders and diversity outcomes within an agency, and to determine whether organizations truly make room for women of color in environmental leadership positions.

The Climate of Women

Travels to the Dakotas in the 80s allowed me to realize I looked different. I experienced acceptance by Native Americans inviting me to join them for a meal and prejudice by others refusing me hotel accommodations. The first national Corps Natural Resources Management Conference I attended had over 200 participants. The women at the conference organized a ladies' night out. We all fit in a single van and went out to dinner to discuss job success and challenges. The corps provided experience, education opportunity, and community. The people I worked with became family, not only those at the office but also those I met from across the nation. (Kathleen Perales)

Throughout my professional career, I have benefited from mentors that steered me through difficult situations, offered advice and encouragement, identified opportunities for growth, introduced me to key persons inside and outside of the organization, and explained company culture, appropriate behaviors, attitudes, and protocols. Such relationships gave me a trusted source for professional support, got me more involved in the organization, allowed me to learn more about myself, developed my skills, helped me to become acclimated to organization culture, and built my self-confidence. (Denise Simmons)

Leaders are thinking about climate change in the management of our natural resources, yet are these same people considering the cultural climate that needs to influence their

decisions? Change is imminent, so how can we make all our collective changes more intentional yet gentle and inclusive? (Nina Roberts)

Women leaders in environmental organizations act as mentors for other women following in their footsteps, but is this mentorship role specific for gender, or is it more ethnically biased in the case of women of color? Only 1.9% of the environmental profession within organizations such as the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society were represented by ethnic minority employees and even fewer minority women. This, too, was challenged by the letter to the Big 10 as previously mentioned (SouthWest Organizing Project, 1990). The reasons offered by these organizations were that the number of minority applicants for jobs was insufficient, that the qualifications of minorities were inadequate for the jobs offered, or that the minority applicants were not satisfied with the low wages paid by these organizations. Nonetheless, these same organizations admitted a desire to reverse the situation and to hire more minorities (Shabecoff, as cited in Baugh, 1991) and women, especially in leadership positions. From then on, discussions at different high-profile conferences and events, as well as articles in industry publications, focused people's attention on this important issue (Taylor, 2007). In Taylor's (2007) words, the most important factor that rose from these discussions was that

descriptions of minorities as unconcerned about the environment, ignorant, and unaware of environmental issues no longer went unchallenged. Also contested were the notions that minorities did not want environmental jobs, were unqualified for them, and demanded salaries too high for nonprofit organizations. (p. 21)

This was a turning point when scholars started to study how environmental organizations handled diversity. Despite some commitment toward the process, the environmental workforce does not yet mirror the increasing racial diversity in America (Weintraub et al., 2011), and the proportion of women of color still remains dreadfully low. The matter of how to make the workforce more culturally diverse is the difficult part (SouthWest Organizing Project, 1990), and it presents a challenge to this day (Bonilla, 2010).

The Climate of Color: Finding and Engaging Community

By the time I joined academia full-time in 2004, my perspective on environmental leadership was from that of environmental stewardship informed by experiences in industry. My perspective, at that time, considered climate but not color. Since then, my focus has been on preparing future generations to solve environmental issues and on increasing the science literacy of the public as the director of the Savannah River Environmental Science Field Station (SRESFS), the only

undergraduate environmental sciences field station in the nation. SRESFS has a record of success in producing outstanding minority environmental scientists. I believe my past experiences have prepared me for my current role in increasing the involvement of underrepresented groups in science and engineering related careers. As the goal to diversifying the technological workforce is being realized, I now look forward to witnessing the color change in the sciences. (Denise Simmons)

I'm the product of parents that sacrificed for their children and an extended family that provided additional support. My Hispanic heritage is at the root of my experience and my career. It is only in reflection that the influence becomes clear. I was raised in a traditional Hispanic household. Education was paramount to my parents, and so was a strong work ethic. They ingrained in me a strong belief in government and service. My mother's parents nurtured strong family bonds and a strong independent work ethic. I attended Catholic school from kindergarten through my second year of college. My parents gave me the opportunity to explore dance, music, speech, and travel, which nurtured my independent *spirit*. (Kathleen Perales)

The first time I sat at a table with more than one other black woman with a degree in ecology or any of the biological sciences was not within the United States but at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. I was in a room with 15 black women PhDs—all in the sciences and natural resources. When I commented on the fact that I had never had a black woman professor in my entire undergraduate or graduate career there was general astonishment around the table. (Gillian Bowser)

Oceans are rising, species extinction is rampant, and mountain glaciers may cease to exist. As climate chaos strikes the natural world, I'm sensing the climate of justice is in equal upheaval. People I thought were my allies have been threatened by my mere presence. And when I long for collaboration, the truth is, my white colleagues would rather maintain power and control. Are scientists acting in time to save our environment? Are professionals and scholars in the field behaving in ways that lead us to progress and not continue to push intelligent women of color away? I am often disheartened by the fact change is inescapable yet our leaders would prefer to deny the composition of our collective reality. (Nina Roberts)

The U.S. State Department hosted a workshop on women in science called Changing Mindsets (June 2011), which highlighted the importance of a global community for women. The workshop focused on the priorities of food security, climate change, gender, and the incorporation of these topics into the U.S. positions on negotiating international environmental treaties. Yet within the United States, those priorities for gender have hardly been met. The climate change community is still dominated by White male scientists, despite the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identifying the need to consider climate impacts on women and vulnerable populations, as well as the importance of scientific voices providing a feminine perspective. Gender mainstreaming, in

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the language of the climate change debates, should refer to including gender as part of the impacts of climate models, scientific voices, vulnerable populations, or unintended victims (Alber, 2010).

The environmental leadership style of women is characteristically different from that of men, and White Americans have a leadership style different from other nationalities (Appelbaum et al., 2003; Chaco & Tian, 2011). The dual classification of women of color is different yet again, and this should be celebrated in the environmental fields and not ignored (Achor & Morales, 1990; Montoya et al., 2000). Mainstreaming gender may work to increase the advocacy of women in the field of climate change but within environmental organizations there needs to be acknowledgment of the different styles, approaches, and needs that women of color may have. The Latina voice is poorly represented in environmental organizations and the leadership style of Latinas is known to be different from other minority women (Montoya et al., 2000). African American women may be characterized by a leadership style that thrives in the for-profit culture but is not the common style in the environmental nonprofit world (Groves, 2005; Parker & Ogilvie, 1996). In contrast, when a community of practice is used, such as in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, even non-diverse organizations can identify and nurture leadership for women of color (Bryson, Perales, Jackson, & Dickerson, 2009; Perales, personal communication). However, there is scant evidence that the environmental professions recognize or embrace these differences and without such acknowledgment there is little hope for substantial change.

The color of climate addresses the need to accept and mentor women of color in science with clear understanding that the resultant leadership styles will be different from White women's. The importance of community and social aspects of transformative leadership are dominant themes in the personal backgrounds of the authors, and these individual voices highlight the common experiences despite cultural differences. Studies of White women in leadership roles often cite academic mentors or learning the leadership styles of White men. In contrast, women of

color initially share the need for community to explore environmental fields, while their different styles of leadership may impact their persistence in those same fields. The lessons learned from the personal comments shared here point not to aptitude in science but to a supportive family and community. The mythical separation of communities of color from the natural world appears artificial and yet seems to play a part in contributing to the lack of women of color in environmental leadership positions. W. E. B. Du Bois argued against primitivism and celebrated the bioregional connections as part of Black heritage and a long historical connection to nature and environmental issues (Dungy, 2009). Yet today, the most common mantra cited by environmental organizations is that urbanism separates minorities from the wilderness.

Summary

The growth of racial minorities in the field of environmental science will ultimately depend on political ideology, cultural awareness of decision makers, and the varied perspectives they hold about race and gender. If support for values of diversity is correctly assessed by the voices in this chapter, then environmental organizations need to exponentially improve how they operate in the future. America is indisputably becoming more ethnically diverse and there need to be more opportunities for women of color in environmental leadership. In closing, as lead author, I reflect on my own history as a Brooklyn native who grew up with a small dirt garden broken into the concrete as "wilderness." I went on to become a wildlife biologist tracking elk and moose in the most wild areas in the United States despite that urban beginning, and I still find myself challenging environmental organizations that quote urban heritage as the explanation for the lack of diversity within the ranks of environmental scientists (Bowser, 2006). My coauthors and I still dream of the day when a professional scientist woman of color, tracking wild animals in our national parks, is not as startlingly rare as a grizzly bear observing a tourist watching an airplane at dawn in Yellowstone National Park.

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