IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN BLACK UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

By

CHRISTA JANELL PORTER

(Under the Direction of Laura A. Dean)

ABSTRACT

This constructivist grounded theory study conceptualized how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) developed their identity as Black women. The examination of their notions of self and explanations of social interactions with others resulted in the co-construction of a theoretical model of their identity development. During two rounds of individual semi-structured interviews, 13 undergraduate women discussed their identities as Black women, the intersections of and relationships between their identities, who and what influenced their identity development, their interactions with other people, and the challenges they have encountered while attending a PWI.

Data were analyzed using grounded theory methods. The focused and axial coding process revealed 82 themes that were then condensed into 17 categories and generated the results of this study. Participants' ability to define and articulate their identity as Black women in relation to their environment and interactions with other people varied. As a result of the experiences of the participants in this study, the identity development in Black undergraduate women encompasses both pre-collegiate and collegiate socialization, articulation of identity, and interactions with others. Central to development is whether Black women are able to articulate

the intersections of their identities. The influences of media and role modeling throughout various stages of Black women's lives were also relevant. The implications for practice and future research relating to Black undergraduate women are discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Identity Development, Black, Women, Undergraduate, Grounded Theory, Intersectionality, Psychosocial, Cognitive, Student Development

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DEDICATION

I stand on the shoulders of giants – Black women who shed blood, sweat, tears, and even their lives so that I could learn in the educational institutions through which I have matriculated; so that I am able to sit at administrative tables or stand in front of classrooms in order to be a part of change. To the Black women past and present who spoke up when others tried to silence you; to the women who stood up when others tried to force you to sit down; and to the women who kept fighting, even if you were forced into isolation, I dedicate my work to you.

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To my Lord and Savior, who has provided me with the ability to acquire this platform, the strength to endure its trials, and the humility to walk out my purpose, I give you all the Glory. This journey has proven to be mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically draining, one however that I would not carry out any differently. I endured each challenge and success for a specific reason and with each came a new level of intrapersonal reflection and understanding. I am a better woman, professional, and scholar because of this journey, my cohort, and program faculty.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the thirteen women who permitted me the opportunity to engage them in dialogue and articulate their experiences through this work. It was in partnership with you, that I was able to co-construct a theoretical model of identity development that will speak to many other Black women around the country. I am grateful for your voices and experiences and it is because you that I continue this work. I hope to be the shoulders upon which you stand in the future.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Each spring semester, I return to an institution at which I previously worked to facilitate part of the annual Black Women's Retreat weekend experience. The weekend is for both graduate and undergraduate women; however the majority of the women in attendance are undergraduates. It is during this weekend that I am consistently reminded of how necessary a space is for Black women to express and receive affirmation of their individual and collective experiences. Often we are taught to hold in our pain, to not show our weaknesses or emotions, and to remain strong despite what life may throw our way. At times our multiple identities are not affirmed; we must be either/or in some spaces, while some of us are forced to distance ourselves from family members in order to remain whole. Black women are not monolithic beings with the same identities. We exist as individual mosaics – each with personalized stories, intersections of identities, journeys, and ways in which we have been socialized by our environments – each piece collectively painting the larger picture of who we are as Black women.

At the retreats, I challenge women to let go of what we have been taught; I offer the space to release pain, fear, anger, as well as joy, laughter, and receive positive affirmations. I teach them to acknowledge that their emotions are part of who they are as human beings. Wearing masks may be part of our survival, but our masks can cause us to be emotionally, spiritually, and physically unhealthy. We must afford ourselves some type of release. I had to learn this. It took me a long time and some unhealthy spaces, but wearing masks for the sake of

being strong for others can only last so long. We must heal and learn to value our experiences in order to grow into the women we are supposed to become.

Consecutively, for the past five years I have witnessed participants reveal the pains of their pasts, some for the first time. Abuse, insecurities, and fears have been uncovered, followed by counseling from retreat facilitators to guide steps in order to heal wounds. I have challenged women to find pride in areas of themselves where they may have never been proud. It is empowering to be in the room when women can reach down within in order to love and honor themselves. We have so much power when we recognize who we are and are able to define that for ourselves. When we are able to look past the pain or the hurt, we see that no matter what life may throw at us, collectively we can make such a powerful difference.

Although there are great moments of self-love at these retreats, there have also been heart-breaking moments of reality when we come back to campus. Moments when I realize that no matter how much we are affirmed and are able to find support in one another, or know that support is present on campus, we as Black women still wear the masks and carry the burden of being strong for those around us. Unfortunately it is at the detriment of our own well-being, and sometimes even our own lives. Within the past five years that I have served as a faculty member for the Black Women's Retreat, two Black women, one graduate and one undergraduate, have committed suicide. One of the victims was actually a previous retreat participant whom I had the pleasure of getting to know.

I was distraught and at a loss for words when I heard the news of each individual scenario. As an administrator I put my all into the lives of students, particularly Black women. But there is something going on in the lives of these women that calls for greater attention. These are not isolated incidents. Something is happening within the collegiate environment that

calls for us to examine the interactions that occur among women and those around them. From my retreat experiences, I am learning that for many Black women, there is a cycle of circumstances that affects self-esteem, awareness of self, and the interactions with men and women, that begins even before they even step onto campus. It is going to take much more than weekend retreats to get at the deeper issues.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Black undergraduate women are graduating college at higher rates that their Black male peers (2011). The percentage of Black undergraduate women (first-time, full-time degree seekers) who began not-for-profit institutions in 2003 and graduated in 2007 was 34.3%, while the graduation rate of Black men was 23.1%. However, there was still a distinct difference when comparing Black women's rates to the graduation percentages of other undergraduate women. The graduation percentages of other undergraduate women at not-for-profit institutions (first-time, full-time degree seekers) were the following: 58.4%, White; 46.6%, Hispanic; 63.6%, Asian/Pacific Islander; and 36.9%, American Indian/Alaska Native (NCES, 2011). The fact that the graduation rates of Black women were the lowest of all undergraduate women supports the need to more closely examine their experiences within the collegiate environment. Because foundational development theories are based upon the experiences of students in the collegiate environment, dialogue must include the journeys of Black undergraduate women, especially since the statistics support that some Black women are unable to make it through to graduation. When I think of my existence as a younger Black college student, I reminisce on my own inability to make sense of all that I was going through, let alone to define what it even meant to be a Black woman.

Subjectivity Statement: My Position in This Study

As a result of involvement in and exposure to social organizations on campus as an undergraduate student, I began to share my individual and collective experiences as a Black woman with my peers and mentors. It was during interactions with others, as well as in times of isolation and intrapersonal reflection, when I was able to initially articulate and make meaning of my identity. I had to define and examine for myself how I wanted to describe my identity as a Black woman. It was challenging. I found myself often having more questions than answers. I kept hearing my mother's voice. 'You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you,' she would remind me. I tried so hard, so many times to reach for the strength I attempted to exude, so others would not think I was weak. I found myself in daily battles with the external boundaries society challenged me as a Black woman to stay and fit within; I was angry, torn, but most of all, tired. I was angry because I found myself in isolation, often feeling as if I was the only one experiencing this journey of womanhood. I was torn between which image to portray to which audience and who would or would not be offended. At the end of most days, I was tired. Tired of explaining myself to my family, peers, and administration; tired of being called angry; tired of being the only one to speak up in class and show up when there was a racist situation on campus. But most of all, I was tired of other people not understanding my experience.

Mom always said, "remember who you are" and "whose you are." I was tired of trying to figure out how to show up and whom to be on which day. Just as I would encounter success or happiness in my journey through college life, I would quickly be reminded by instances of ignorance on campus or in the media, that I was still in fact a Black woman. I came into college believing the environment was supposed to be a place where my mind would be challenged,

where I would be nourished, my identity and purpose created, and where my interactions with others would lead to growth and development. Winkle-Wagner (2009) introduced the concept of *notion of self* in order to embody a Black woman's understanding of identity and behavior in public. To state that my notion of self was challenged would be an understatement. There was not a formalized theory to frame or articulate what my notion of self was during my undergraduate experience. As a result, my notion of self was unidentified.

My experience as a Black undergraduate woman and now as an administrator in a predominately White college setting frames this research study. However it is the legacy of Black women being spoken for by the dominant voice (Collins, 1986), the continual struggle to define what it means to be a Black woman, and the current challenge for Black undergraduate women to describe for themselves their own individual and collective identity development – by which this study is conceptualized. This study focused on Black undergraduate women at a predominately White institution (PWI) as opposed to a historically Black college or institution because at a PWI there was not a critical mass of Black women; and their development and interactions would therefore be influenced by the PWI environment. My assumption was that the dominant voice was prevalent in the environment, and I wanted to examine and conceptualize the experiences and interactions of Black women within this space of dominance. It is with this dissertation that I am honored to grant the women in this study the opportunity to help co-construct a theoretical model of identity development grounded in their own experiences, interactions, and socialization processes as diverse Black undergraduate women.

Statement of Problem

Theory is an integrated representation of complex phenomena, individual stories of students and a diverse representation of perspectives that guide the work and the profession (Jones & Abes, 2001; McEwen, 2003). Although theory has provided a common definition

among scholars, the diversity of all students has not been represented within theoretical models. Foundational theories of student development (e.g., Chickering, 1969; Kohlberg, 1976, 1981; Perry, 1968) did not effectively address both racial and gender diversity in their methods (Winkle-Wagner, 2009). More recently, scholars have studied the experiences of college students who were racially underrepresented and women (Banks, 2009; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Jones, 1997; Josselson, 1987; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). However, theories have not reflected how Black undergraduate women develop as holistic people. Racial and gender identity theories have disregarded additional components of identity such as class and sexual orientation (Jones, 1997).

Jones (1997) sought to understand the multiple identity dimensions of college women. She identified a racially diverse sample of women and focused on how they articulated identity in their own terms. Her findings suggested a few key categories: the multiple ways in which race matters; the multiple layers of identity; the influence of family and background experiences; current experiences and situational factors; and the search for identity. The implications of these findings suggest the intersectionality and multiple dimensions of identity among undergraduate women. McCann and Kim (2002) asserted that socially constructed identities (e.g., race and gender) are experienced simultaneously, not hierarchically, and thus the relationships among and interconnectedness between identities should be explored. Winkle-Wagner (2009) shared the voices of Black women at a predominately White institution and articulated their struggle to define and maintain their racial and gender identities. Her study challenged the participants' notion of self, the multiple layers Black women mentally consider before enacting certain behaviors in public; thus they must constantly negotiate their identity as Black women depending on the environment and interaction with others.

Winkle-Wagner (2009) wrote,

> The Unchosen Me depicts a Me or Me components that are institutionally bounded, culturally and institutionally imposed, and thus not necessarily freely *chosen* by people. The Unchosen Me reveals a *process* of accepting these aspects of identities into one's notion of self. At times this process occurs before one has the opportunity to choose, while at other times one may consciously accept these unchosen identities or identity characteristics as a strategy for success in a particular setting. (p. 36)

Winkle-Wagner's study not only confirmed earlier discussions on intersectionality, but also indicated the need for further examination of the multiple layers of identity and how it is influenced by interactions with others and the environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to conceptualize how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) developed their identity as Black women. The examination of their notions of self and explanations of social interactions with others resulted in the construction of a theoretical model of their identity development as Black undergraduate women. The epistemology of social constructivism guided strategies and methodological techniques for this study. Symbolic interactionism and Black feminist thought theoretically framed the methodological approach to conceptualize identity development among Black undergraduate women. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black undergraduate women enrolled at a PWI develop and describe their identity as Black women?
2. What does it mean to be a Black woman in college?
3. How does attending a PWI inform or influence their identity as Black women?

4. What unique opportunities or challenges does a predominately White institutional environment create for Black women and how do they negotiate these spaces?

Defining Identity

Definitions and discussions of identity development began with Erik Erickson, who is known as its pioneer. Erikson (1959/1980) defined identity as the way in which one organizes individual and collective experiences within a certain context or environment. His definition is often the beginning point for later developmental models and theories across varying academic disciplines. In student affairs, individual notions of self in relation to social group membership are commonly referred to as one's identity (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). Identity is socially constructed, thus one's notion of self and beliefs regarding social group membership are constructed through interactions within a broader social context (McEwen, 2003). Hall (1996) differentiated the following two positions to understanding identity: a) identities are natural; people are born with certain identities which structure their experiences; and b) identities are based upon individual experiences as opposed to shared origins, and as a result, they are evolving and relating to individual agency and power structures within society.

For the purposes of this study, identity was framed through both the psychological and sociological perspectives in order to forge a shift toward an interaction-based theoretical perspective where the intersections of identity were explored in the experiences of Black undergraduate women.

Psychological vs. Sociological Perspective

Much of the developmental research that has informed student affairs has origins in psychology and sociology. The definition of identity within psychology caters to the individual self – the individual self exists prior to being influenced by environmental factors and interactions with others (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Torres et al., 2009; Winkle-Wagner,

2009). Developmental theories may include and discuss membership in groups; however, the psychological perspective on identity assumes the self exists before the group. Erikson's (1959/1980) concept of ego identity development is rooted in the psychological tradition. The series of crises an individual must encounter and work through is evidence of individual growth and identity development. Similarly, Chickering and Reisser (1993) focused on the individual tasks of college student development within vectors. They articulated that students experience developmental tasks such as developing competence and managing individual emotions in college. Winkle-Wagner (2009) argued the limitation of only referring to the psychological perspective of identity in that it fails to consider social structures within an individual's environment as well as within society (e.g., the influence of discrimination). Although focus on the individual self fosters perspective and values the growth of the individual prior to the influence of others, it ignores the potential learning and development of identity based upon interactions with others.

The sociological perspective articulates the identity of groups of persons and their interactions within socially constructed roles (Torres et al., 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). In the sociological perspective, self-reflection is an important aspect in the developmental process (Hogg et al., 1995). Sociologists emphasized the role of identity development with regard to the college environment. Kaufman and Feldman (2004) viewed

> the college as an arena of social interaction in which the individual comes in contact with a multitude of actors in a variety of settings, emphasizing that through these social interactions and other social influences the identities of individuals are, in part, constituted. (p. 464)

Identity within the sociological perspective not only enables individuals to garner multiple identities, but also fosters the space to engage in discussion concerning the intersection of identities as well. Exploring the development of Black undergraduate women from both the psychological and sociological perspectives will offer a broader understanding of how their identity is constructed and manifested through the lenses of self, others, social organizations, community, and environment. For the purposes of this study, the following three frameworks were considered when discussing the influence of environment on the development of undergraduate Black women: challenge and support (Sanford, 1966), marginality and mattering (Schlossberg, 1989a), and academic validation (Rendón, 1994).

Significance of the Study

Scholarship has focused on racial identity development (Cross, 1971, 1991; Parham & Helms, 1985) and women's identity development (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987) as separate processes. However, the intersections of race, gender, and additional identities Black women hold have not been explored. It is important to acknowledge race as a "socially defined categorization system…[that] may have different implications for an individual's collective identity development" (Helms, 1994, p. 294). Thus, racial identity models have the ability to describe and examine an individual's sense of belonging to a group and the influence that being a part of that group has on one's actions and thought processes (Pope, 2000; Rotheram & Phinney, 1987). With that being said, however, undergraduate women may experience being Black very differently, in addition to their identities as women. Moreover, Black women experience the collegiate environment differently and graduate at lower rates than their peers (NCES, 2011). So in addition to navigating their identities and juggling the intersectionality, there is not a model or theory that is able to conceptualize the experiences of

Black undergraduate women. This study enabled the researcher to conceptualize how identity is constructed and developed in the experiences of Black undergraduate women on a predominately White college campus.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Historically, institutions of higher education were racially exclusionary to students of color (Anderson, 2002; Thelin, 2003; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). Predominately White institutions were created based upon dominant cultural values and sought to educate White males (McEwen, Roper, Bryant, Langa, 1990; Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). Thus, prescribed cultural values not only affected what was taught and how learning was assessed, but also the body of knowledge from which ideals were originated (McEwen et al., 1990).

The original Land Grant Act of 1862, named after U.S. Representative Justin Morrill from Vermont, made grants of land available for higher education, thereby the land-grant college practically belonged to the citizens of the state (Evans, Hamrick, & Schuh, 2002). Lucas (1994) estimated there were approximately two hundred colleges in the North for Black students in the 1870s and 1880s. Evans et al. (2002) argued the passage of an amended Morrill Act in 1890 intended to keep higher education segregated in the South. Opportunities were created for Black students to attend institutions currently referred to as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Pivotal acts of legislation (e.g., Brown vs. Board of Education) and civil rights movements in the 1950s and 1960s ignited an influx of Black students enrolled in predominately White institutions (Fleming, 1984; Torres, et al., 2003). Subsequently, campuses were ill-prepared with the necessary services to support Black students. Educators, who were primarily White, were taught to respond based upon a system that reinforced and supported dominant cultural values and were often unsuccessful when responding to the developmental needs of Black students (Bulhan, 1985; McEwen et al., 1990).

Therefore, the unique experiences of students of color, specifically Black undergraduate students at PWIs, were not considered when models of development were originally created.

Student Development Theory

Foundational student and identity development theories originally based in psychology and sociology guide the work of student affairs practice, and therefore how professionals carry out services to college students (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009). The identity development of Black women was forced to fit within the constrained dimensions of theoretical frameworks based on the "perceptions and agendas of members of the dominant society" (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 20). Previous theories have been unable to encapsulate the experiences of Black women because they do not capture a holistic perspective – one that is based upon their cultural, personal, and social contexts, as well as the intersection of race and gender.

Overview of Theory Families

Since the 1960s, sets of theories and models were identified to articulate how students develop during their college years (McEwen, 2003). Three families of theories – cognitive structural, psychosocial, and person-environment theories – will be introduced in the next section, followed by a discussion of identity development through the lens of race and gender. It is necessary to first review the families of theories in order to then identify the specific ways in which race and gender have been disaggregated via developmental models. The theoretical model of identity development proposed in this study attempted to fill the void in which foundational models of identity development fail to discuss specifically the experiences of Black undergraduate women.

Cognitive structural. Cognitive structural theories discuss how individuals think about developmental life tasks; theories involve the actual structures used to make meaning of daily situations. Jones and Abes (2011) described the structure as "an information processing filter" that provides the ability to make sense of experiences (p. 155). The stages of cognitive-structural theories are usually sequential in nature; the more advanced in one's learning, the more advanced the ability to make cognitive meaning (Jones & Abes, 2011). Perry's (1968/1999) research on ethical and intellectual development served as a foundation for later cognitive-structural works. Additional examples of cognitive structural theories include the theory of moral development (Kohlberg, 1976), women's moral development (Gilligan, 1977, 1982/1993), and women's ways of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Faith development (e.g., Fowler, 1981) is also included as a member of the cognitive-structural family.

Psychosocial. Psychosocial theories are a family of student development theories that focus on the interaction between an individual and one's world in the areas of feeling, behaving, valuing, and thinking (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The emphasis of development is across the life span and as a result includes theories that focus on adolescents, college students, and adults (Jones & Abes, 2011). Foundational psychosocial theories include eight stages of development (Erikson, 1959), ego identity statuses (Marcia, 1966), seven vectors of development (Chickering, 1969), and the revised seven vectors of development in college students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

McEwen (2003) asserted identity development theories are based upon socially constructed identities as well as their intersections (e.g., gender, race, sexual orientation), and thus are a part of the psychosocial family. Social identity development is considered the process by which individuals recognize and gain a greater awareness of their identities; they understand

how the identities influence other parts of their lives (McEwen, 2003). Cross and Vandiver (2001) advocated the idea that these identities describe a reference group instead of personality characteristics. Tatum (2000) recommended readers engage themselves in deep discussion about where they came from and challenge the complexity of their social identities. Examples of identity development theories include identity development in women (Josselson, 1987); model of Nigrescence (Cross, 1971, 1991); lesbian, gay, and bisexual development (D'Augelli, 1994); multiple dimensions of identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000); and heterosexual identity development (Hoffman, 2011).

Person-environment. The exploration of factors related to a student's environment, such as how one is living, working, and studying, as well as the interaction of these variables, is valuable in understanding student behavior (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Strange and Banning (2001) challenged educators to focus intentionally on the design of environments created as a result of policy implementation, program creation, and training of staff who interact with students. Three frameworks were considered when discussing the influence of environment on the development of Black undergraduate women: challenge and support (Sanford, 1966), marginality and mattering (Schlossberg, 1989a), and academic validation (Rendón, 1994). Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (1999) articulated the importance of creating diverse learning environments as well as environments conducive for supporting students of color. Although this study will be guided by these three frameworks, due to the nature of grounded theory, additional or different environmental conditions may be discussed as a result of participants' experiences.

Challenge and support. Sanford (1966) proposed three developmental conditions, readiness, challenge, and support, and argued that persons will not display certain behaviors until they are ready to do so. An environment that presents too much challenge may cause students to withdraw from or ignore the situation at hand, while too little challenge may invite students to remain in a state of comfort and lack further developmental behavior (Evans et al., 2010). The level of challenge a student can handle depends of the level of support present in one's environment (Sanford, 1966).

Marginality and mattering. Schlossberg (1989a) directed attention to the concepts of marginality and mattering as vital to the examination of the effect of the college experience on student development (Evans et al., 2010). She described marginality to be encountered "every time an individual changes roles or experiences transition" (Schlossberg, 1989a, p. 7). Students may feel self-consciousness, isolated, and on the margins of the larger population. For students who are members of the non-dominant group, such as Black undergraduate women in predominately White campus environments, marginality is often permanent. Feeling as though one matters, however, improves the conditions for support and levels of marginality. The five aspects of mattering include attention, being noticed; importance, being cared about; ego-extension, the feeling that someone else will be proud of one's actions and disappointed by failures; dependence, being needed; and appreciation, feeling appreciated by others (Schlossberg, 1989a).

Academic validation. Rendón (1994) discovered that students from underrepresented racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds held concerns about their academic ability, in contrast to their White peers. Validation can occur in a variety of settings within the collegiate environment (e.g., classroom, student organizational meeting, cultural/women's center) in order to enhance

involvement in campus life, self-esteem, and belief an individual student is valuable to the academic community (Evans et al., 2010). Interactions with others (e.g., family, community groups, peers, student affairs staff, and faculty) can positively impact academic behavior and result in validation within the various supportive environments.

Through the Lens of Race and Gender

In the early 1960s when student development theories were originally created, a large number of Black students were beginning to attend predominately White institutions (Fleming, 1984). Administrators were not prepared for the influx, and scholars attempted to describe the development of their behavior through a dominant lens (McEwen et al., 1990). Chickering (1969) was cited for his seminal work concerning seven vectors of development. McEwen et al. (1990) critiqued Chickering (1969) for not representing the experience of African American students in the seven vectors. McEwen et al. (1990) offered the following nine developmental tasks specific to the experiences of African American students – developing ethnic and racial identity, interacting with dominant culture, developing cultural aesthetics and awareness, developing identity, developing interdependence, fulfilling affiliation needs, surviving intellectually, developing spiritually, and developing social responsibility. Chickering's (1969) original work was later revised (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) to be more inclusive of the cultural factors and experiences of underrepresented college students. Other scholars indicated the need to increase the concept of student development to include attitudes of race, racial identity (Baldwin, 1984; Parham & Helms, 1981), and gender (Gilligan, 1977, 1982/1993).

Women's moral development. Kohlberg's (1976) work on moral development viewed morality as being centered on the concept of justice via the experiences of White male students. Noting these limitations, Gilligan (1977, 1982/1993) was the first to recognize her perception of

two differing moral orientations - care and justice (Evans et al., 2010). The focus of her theory was how relationships and interactions with other people were just as important as taking care of self when making moral decisions. Through her multiple studies, she demonstrated that women classify care as their moral compass. She identified three levels of reasoning with a transition occurring between each pair of levels.

During the first level, orientation to individual survival (Gilligan, 1977, 1982/1993), individuals were focused on their own needs and personal survival. The first transition, however, was from a level of selfishness to one of responsibility. Women became less involved with themselves and more connected to others; their moral judgement shifted from independence to responsibility. In the second level, from goodness to self-sacrifice, women developed a richer sense of engagement with others. They realized the importance of the needs of other people; the needs of others became more important than their own individual needs. The second transition, from goodness to truth, involved the examination of whether putting others first occurred at the expense of their personal self-care. The women questioned if they could maintain the high level of responsibility at the expense of their own needs. The final level, the morality of nonviolence, challenged women to assert a moral equality between self and other people. As a result of the second transition, women held a higher level of respect for themselves. Individual women found themselves to be worthy of care. They needed to heed their internal voice and listen to self.

Women's ways of knowing. In a study of the identity development of women, Belenky, Clinchy, Golderberger, and Tarule (1986) followed in Gilligan's (1977, 1982/1993) footsteps and sought to examine the development of self, voice, and mind. Their study included interviews with 135 women who ranged in age (undergraduate students, graduate students, and women who were affiliated with human service agencies) and focused on the following five

perspectives from which women view and know the world: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and contructed knowledge. Silence was characterized as a space where women found themselves to be obedient to external authority; they considered themselves mindless and voiceless. Women in this stage exemplified received knowledge by listening to others and holding a lack of self-confidence in one's own information. Subjective knowledge was defined as the truth residing in oneself and was often a result of a failed male figure in the women's lives. Many women participated in a quest to find themselves, in order to rely on themselves. Procedural knowledge involved the learning, comprehending, and conveying of knowledge. Characteristics of this perspective include critical analysis, reasoning, and the ability to serparate oneself from an issue (Belenky et al., 1986). The final perspective, constructed knowledge, involved a process of searching for an authentic voice. Women in the final perspective understood that knowledge was constructed and that they held a vital role in what was known. There was a liberation in knowing one's role in the ability to contruct and develop knowledge. It was a freeing experience for the women.

Neither of the empircal studies – Gilligan (1977, 1982/1993) and Belenky et al. (1986) – dissaggregated their sample demographically by race. When considering the cognitive, psychosocial, identity development, and environmental experiences of women, race must be discussed. Gender is often salient and can shape educational experiences; however, race has influenced historical and psychological dimensions of campus climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999), thus impacting opportunities and women's notions of self. Holding both identities of Black and woman can often place individuals in the middle of two forms of oppression – racism and sexism (Zamani, 2003).

Black identity development. Cross (1971) attempted to construct a model to depict the stages individuals experience while 'becoming Black.' In other words, Cross (1971) sought to articulate a process whereby Black people transitioned from a place of not acknowledging who they were racially, to a place of liberation and total recognition of their Blackness. During that particular time in history, Black people were experiencing change in several ways - liberation movements, legislation, and how they chose to identify. Cross's (1991) revised model of Nigrescence included four stages and three concepts. The stages are the following: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization/commitment. The concepts that influence the stages are personal identity (e.g., personal traits and characteristics), reference group orientation (e.g., group membership and associations), and race salience (i.e., whether race is a primary identity). When one is in the pre-encounter stage, the person carries anti-Black feelings toward other Black people. There is a need to abolish all cultural cues and mannerisms that concern race. In this stage, the individual wants to attach oneself to the dominant culture and exist within the human race as opposed to Black culture or the Black/African American race or ethnicity.

In an encounter (Cross, 1991), this person would endure some form of positive or negative incident that would make one confront one's Black racial identity. This encounter would cause the individual to realize the primacy of one's Black racial identity and ignite the desire to embrace the role it has in and on one's life. The immersion-emersion stage takes place in two parts. The first is the immersion phase, where after the individual is confronted with the encounter, there is not only an embracing of one's culture, but a romanticizing of all that is involved with culture – food, paraphernalia, and customs. One yearns to be encapsulated with

this new found identity of Blackness. The individual is internally immersed in what it means to be Black. The second phase of the immersion-emersion stage is emersion.

After the romanticizing dies down, the individual is mentally able to gain a better sense of reality and immerse oneself in the community. One then externally commits oneself to an association or group of other like-minded Black people or a collective of Black people who are able to support the individual in whichever way is necessary. The final stage of the model is internalization/commitment (Cross, 1991). After the individual has found a support system or a community of people with whom to associate, one then moves mentally to a space of communal uplift. There is an internal and mental shift in one's conversion experience, where the commitment is to community and the liberation of Black people. Although this revised model includes the three concepts, making it more inclusive for the diversity within the Black experience, this model lacks gender diversity. Cross' model of Nigrescence (1991) exists as a seminal work for the Black experience in general, but discussions must include multiple dimensions and the intersectionality of their identities in addition to their concept of Blackness.

Multidimensional model of racial identity. Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rawley, and Chavous (1998) provided a synthesis of two approaches to research on African American identity development. In their *Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI),* they attempted to capture both the significance of race (they termed as the *mainstream* approach) and document the meaning making processes (they named as the *underground* approach). Sellers et al. (1998) purposely made the decision to use both the terms *Black* and *African American* to be inclusive of individual viewpoints, reference groups, and socialization within the United States. The authors discussed the racial and cultural significance of both African and African American identity. They stated, "American society's somewhat arbitrary categorization of individuals into

this racial group has resulted in the psychological unification of many individuals who vary a great deal in their experiences and cultural expressions" (p. 18). As a result, there is not a collective definition of what it means to be Black and/or African American; this supports the diversity of experience and consciousness within the Black identity.

Sellers et al. (1998) communicated the difference between the approaches through which racial identity was previously discussed in relation to the African American experience. One approach (mainstream approach) concerned the salience of race within one's self-concept (Cheek & Briggs, 1982; Gurin & Markus, 1988). As a result of living in oppressive and racist environments, Black people began to internalize an unhealthy stigma of their own self-concept (Allport, 1954). In successive research that used this approach, African Americans also deemed self-hatred as part of their self-concept (Cross, 1991, Sellers et al., 1998).

Unlike Allport (1954), scholars who utilized the other approach (underground approach) argued although racism was apparent and African Americans were devalued and stigmatized within the larger society, a healthy self-concept could still be forged due to positive influences (DuBois, 1903). DuBois (1903) termed double consciousness as the struggle between existing as Negro and American; however, he did not view African American self-concept as being necessarily damaged as a result of racism.

> Because of the inherent conflict between America's overwhelmingly negative view of the Negro and the Negro's own view of him or herself, the essential task of healthy ego development in African Americans becomes the reconciliation of the discrepancy between his or her African self and his or her American self. Not surprisingly, the tension between the individual's "blackness" and the broader White society plays a central role in

> the way theorists from the underground perspective attempt to define the meaning of being Black. (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 21)

Scholarship has attempted to identify one's ability to reach a form of optimal level of Black identity by experiencing stages and measures of development in oppressive and racist environments (Cross, 1971, 1991; Parham, 1989). Theorists who identified with the underground approach understood the variability of not only how one makes meaning of being Black, but the identification with one's African self in the larger American society (Baldwin, 1984; DuBois, 1903).

Sellers et al. (1998) suggested the mainstream and underground approaches to studying African American racial identity are complementary rather than contradictory and should be integrated. The *Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity* assumes that individuals have a number of identities, that identities are constructed and placed in a hierarchical order depending on the perspective of the individual, and that emphasis is placed on the individual's perception of what it means to be Black (Sellers et al., 1998). Thus, the MMRI does not place value or judgment on whether racial identity is good or bad; it enables the individual to personally assess his/her own identity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The MMRI is concerned with the status of an individual's racial identity at a given point in time as opposed to its development at a certain stage (Sellers et al., 1998). The MMRI, however, is not in conflict with Cross's model (1971, 1991); the four dimensions of the model can be used as a complement to stages of Black identity development.

The foundation of the MMRI is based upon its four dimensions of racial identity – racial salience, racial centrality, racial regard, and racial ideology. "Race salience refers to the extent to which one's race is a relevant part of one's self-concept at a particular moment or in a

particular situation" (Sellers et al., 1998, p. 24). Being the only Black person in a particular setting may make race more salient for one individual, while it may not affect another Black person. Salience is illustrated by one's self-concept of the core identity based upon a particular social context. Centrality, on the other hand, is stable across situations and is not defined by an event. Centrality refers to the way in which an individual typically defines him/herself racially across numerous situations. There is an implied hierarchical order of identities in relation to an individual's definition of self (Sellers et al., 1998). For some Black women, gender may serve as a more central part of their identity than race, while for others the intersection of race and gender may justify centrality and define their core identity. While salience and centrality address the significance of race, regard and ideology discuss the cognitive processes of meaning making that individuals identify with being Black (Sellers et al., 1998).

Racial regard refers to the positive emotions one has towards his/her race and about being Black. This concept evolved from the literature on collective self-esteem (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, & Broadnax, 1994; Crocker & Major, 1989; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and is consistent with racial pride in other models (Demo & Hughes, 1990). Ideology, the fourth dimension of the MMRI, consists of opinions and attitudes concerning the ways in which individuals believe other Black people should live and interact with society and its members. Within this dimension, Sellers et al. (1998) delineated the following four prevalent ideologies: a) nationalist, b) oppressed minority, c) assimilationist, and d) humanist. The four ideologies have utility in cultural and social activities, intergroup relations, and perceptions of the dominant group. A person may function across ideologies and individual beliefs, and attitudes may be manifested differently at any given time. The nationalist ideology emphasizes the distinction of being Black; this person's image of the African American and/or Black

(depending on how the person identifies) experience is unique from any other group. Participation will most often occur in predominately African American organizations and one will carry a resistance to the underrepresented status within society (Parham, 1989).

People who hold the oppressed minority ideology primarily view their racial identity through the lens of a coalition of groups and the similarities among them. Depending on the individual, the type of minority group may differ (i.e., some may concern only racial/ethnic groups, while others may consider other identities such as gay men, women, and lesbian women) (Sellers et al., 1998). The assimilationist ideology values shared commonalities between African Americans and the dominant group of Americans in society. An individual who holds this belief would recognize one's identity as being Black, but attempt to enter dominant society by socializing and interacting as much as possible with Whites. Earlier Black identity models indicated assimilationist behavior as well (Cross, 1971, 1991; Parham & Helms, 1985). Lastly, people with a humanist ideology do not necessarily place as much value on individual identities (low race salience and centrality); more significance is given to issues concerning the larger human race (Sellers et al., 1998). Sellers and his colleagues (1998) juxtaposed this ideology with both the pre-encounter and internalization stages in Cross' (1991) revised model, where humanist attitudes are prevalent in both stages.

The ways in which the four dimensions of the MMRI manifest provide support to the complexity of Black identity development. The MMRI attempted to integrate the two historical approaches through which the Black experience has been examined. As a result of Cross' *Negro-to-Black Conversion Model* (1971) and revised model of psychological *Nigrescence* (1991), Sellers et al. (1998) were able to build upon and complement the body of literature by introducing the MMRI.

Black Undergraduate Women

Winkle-Wagner (2009) shared the voices of 28 Black undergraduate women at a predominately White institution by articulating their struggle to define and maintain their racial and gender identities. Her study challenged the participants' notions of self, the multiple layers through which Black women mentally considered before acting upon certain behaviors in public (e.g., a collegiate classroom). The constant process of negotiation as Black women often depended on the environment and with whom one was interacting. While spending time with Black women in focus groups, affectionately referred to as sister circles, Winkle-Wagner (2009) summarized their collegiate experience at a PWI. The participants shared feelings of isolation, culture shock, being a "good" woman, competing for Black men, being "too White" or "too Black," and being the only one in the classroom, while also feeling invisible.

Banks' (2009) study described the navigation processes related to social and academic success in higher education. Her sample included narratives of 19 Black undergraduate women from four different institutions (one community college and three universities). Banks (2009) argued that educational spaces were constructed around Whiteness, and students of color specifically had to negotiate how to create and articulate their own knowledge and identity. Banks (2009) claimed specialized work was needed to investigate the complex negotiation processes that Black undergraduate women experienced as members of these educational spaces. Because Black undergraduate women are so diverse in their identities, they often show up in the spaces very differently.

For Black undergraduate women in the classroom setting, exposure to microaggressions serves to oppress and perpetuate control. Microaggressions are intentional, unintentional, verbal, nonverbal, and visual forms of insults directed toward people of color (Delgado & Stefanic,

2001; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue & Constantine, 2007). On predominately White campuses, although Black women may be rather assertive, their levels of confidence and self-esteem are negatively affected by social isolation and fears (Fleming, 1984). Many Black women experience being called upon to speak in class as the primary spokesperson for Black issues because they are the only Black student in the class (Johnson-Newman & Exum, 1998). Black women have shared their experiences of being singled out by professors as the authority on the topic when for example, the class topic was governmental programs due to the stereotype of Black women being on welfare. Microaggressions unfortunately have the ability to silence Black women, forcing them to once again, negotiate their notions of self.

As a result of oppressive behavior, dominant views of what Black women should be and how they should act (Collins,1986), and the inability to articulate one's own notion of self through identity development (Winkle-Wagner, 2009), Black women remain silenced. Unfortunately, however, student affairs practice relies on a body of student and identity development research that is also unable to articulate the holistic experience of Black undergraduate women. The theories that guide the profession have yet to adequately encapsulate the diverse experiences of Black women. The historical sampling of White men to create theory, in conjunction with a lack of racially disaggregated data in contemporary identity development research, poses a larger challenge, specifically for Black women. hooks (1981) described the distinction that must be presented when considering Black women:

> No other group in America has had their identity socialized out of existence as have Black women. We are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from Black men, or a present part of the larger group 'women' in this culture…When Black people

> are talked about the focus tends to be on Black men; and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on White women. (p.7)

Black women enter college at different ages and at varying stages in their development. The diversity of experiences may include socioeconomic background and status, spirituality and/or systems of belief, visible or invisible disabilities, and sexual orientation (Rosales & Person, 2003). Boyd-Franklin (1989) and Hamilton (1996) acknowledged roles Black undergraduate women may play within their families and/or communities and the impact their responsibilities have on their educational attainment. The socialization processes (e.g., interpersonal, intrapersonal, academic, social, and cultural) Black women endure manifest in college in positive and negative ways and often depend on their identity development and interactions.

In an unpublished, phenomenological study previously conducted by the researcher, four Black undergraduate women shared their understanding of being Black and a woman on a predominately White campus (Porter, 2011). The following four clusters of themes were present and consistent among the voices of all participants: the presence or absence of support systems, maternal and familial influences, articulation of African American identity, and interactions with other African American women (African American as opposed to Black was the terminology used in the previous study). Although the previous set of interviews provided this study with a preliminary understanding of the current experiences of Black undergraduate women, the researcher remained open to the newfound themes, codes, and categories that she engaged in this grounded theory study. The previous, unpublished study only examined the identity of undergraduate students as Black and woman.

This grounded theory study did not attempt to look at various components of identity as separate features among Black undergraduate women. This study recognized the socially constructed spaces with biological connections (Banks 2009). "The way Black undergraduate women wear evidence of their membership in these socially constructed spaces, in connection with society's understanding of these spaces, is a root of the oppression Black women face and work to overcome" (Banks, 2009, p. 11).

Theoretical Context for the Study

As human beings engage in the world, meanings and interpretations are constructed (Crotty, 1998). In regard to research, these constructed beliefs or realities guide the actions of the researcher and influence one's worldview (Creswell, 2009). Thus, social constructivism requires that participants be involved in an interaction in order for knowledge to be constructed (Dewey, 1938). This construction of knowledge yields interpretations of one's actions or meaning making, and is always ongoing. Crotty (1998) summarized constructivism:

> Constructivism rejects the views of human knowledge. There is no objective truth waiting for us to discover it. Truth or meaning comes to existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of the world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (p. 9).

In the late 1950s, Blumer (1954, 1956) yearned for an understanding of the world, by obtaining first-hand knowledge of it (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Other scholars also desired an alternate view of the interaction of sociology (Mills, 1959; Sorokin, 1956). Mills (1959) tackled the structure of society from a critical perspective, while Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963) combined

interactionism through the lens of self, identity, and social organization. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued people constructed their social world through their regular dealings. They wrote,

> It is important to keep in mind that the objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity…In other words, despite the objectivity that marks the social world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it. (p. 61)

Recognition of individual understanding and participation in the social construction of knowledge is necessary in order to articulate interactions with others (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Theoretical Perspectives

Symbolic interactionism. Charon (2001) defined social action as what an individual does involving another person, thus an interaction between two people means "they take one another into account, communicate, and interpret one another as they go along" (p.150). It is this give-and-take process that accounts for the interactions between human beings. As a result of interactions, individuals have the ability to influence another person's goals, behaviors, decisions, and even identities. Interactions may be complex and for the most part symbolic. Symbolic interactionism is "the study of human beings interacting symbolically with one another and with themselves, and in the process of that symbolic interaction making decisions and directing their streams of action" (Charon, 2001, p. 151).

Within the epistemological framework of social constructivism, interaction between the individual and society must occur in order for meaning to be constructed. Symbolic interactionism, as a theoretical perspective, entails basic relations to language, communication, and community (Goulding, 1998). Symbolic interactionism accounts for the interactions through

which people enter environments and cooperate as a part of the process (Crotty, 1998). Originally introduced as social behaviorism by Mead (1934), it was an attempt to explain and provide meaning to human conduct as occurring prior to the organized social experience. Mead (1934) believed that the individual experience presupposes the interaction. However, Blumer (1986) articulated that people act and interact with others on their bases of meaning. "Thus symbolic interactionism sees meaning as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (Blumer, 1986, p. 5). Both arguments are necessary and provided the foundation for this study on identity development. Charon (2001) articulated that social interaction shapes identities.

> Our identities matter in what we do; they matter in what we try to community to others and they matter to others. They are highly complex, but at the heart of identity is social interaction, for it is through social interaction that identities are formed, maintained, and changed. It is important to understand identity formation as a negotiation process that unfolds as we interact. (p. 160)

The identity development of Black undergraduate women is ongoing. Some women use Mead's (1934) paradigm and make meaning as an individual within their own environment prior to interactions with others; while others may find that Blumer's (1986) ideology makes more sense, in that they can only make meaning as a result of their interactions with others. As the researcher, I allowed for my participants to articulate their interactions through multiple lenses and contexts. I examined how Black women made meaning of their social interactions through the lens of self, others, and their environments. Blumer (1986) challenged researchers to think critically regarding the process of interpretation.

As a part of interactionism, Black undergraduate women should not only make meaning of their identity within themselves, but also as it relates to all of the defining factors/activities through which they experience life and exist as Black women.

Black feminist thought. In order to interpret and describe how Black women make meaning of their social interactions, one must first understand the dominant framework through which socialization processes have been determined. Collins (1990) argued,

> Theory of all types is often presented as being so abstract that it can be appreciated only by a select few. Though often highly satisfying to academics, this definition excludes those who do not speak the language of elites and thus reinforces social relations of domination. Educated elites typically claim that they are qualified to produce theory and believe that only they can interpret not only their own but everyone else's experiences. (p. xii)

Foundational student development theories have relied upon the experiences of the dominant voices in higher education. In doing so, Black undergraduate women have not been critically represented.

In her discussion of Black feminist thought, Collins (1986, 1990, 1998) claimed Black women hold an outsider status of marginality within academic settings. Black women are still invisible and remain voiceless in the dominant dialogue. The socialization of Black women has been explained through a narrow context and agenda of the dominant society (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Collins (1986) argued that many people besides Black women have articulated and shaped Black women's identity to include stereotypical images, aggressive behavior, and negativity. However, Collins (1990) explained, "oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and

comfortable for a dominant group" (p. xiii). Black feminist thought has provided an intellectual platform that privileges the standpoint of Black women. It "encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it" (Collins, 1990, p. 22).

Collins (1986) expressed three themes within Black feminist thought. First, the philosophy is guided by the experiences of Black women, despite the fact that others have documented their stories. This philosophy supports the importance of an identity development model grounded in the voices of Black undergraduate women. The second theme is the interlocking nature of oppression; the crucial intersections and similarities that connect Black women. "…[T]he more holistic approach implied in Black feminist thought treats the interaction among multiple systems as the object of study. Rather than adding to existing theories by inserting previously excluded variables, Black feminists aim to develop new theoretical interpretations of the interaction itself" (Collins, 1986, p. S20). The multiple identities of Black women are inextricably linked; one cannot be discussed as separate from the other. Third, Black feminist thought attempts to redefine Black women's culture (Collins, 1986). Commonalities may exist among Black women; however they experience life differently within various contexts based upon their social identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation, and class) and diversity of experiences.

> Black women have so much to offer our country, so many gifts to share with all of us. And yet, as a society and as a nation, we have never quite stopped to appreciate the truth of their experience, the verity of what it feels like to be Black and female, the reality that no matter how intelligent, competent, and dazzling she may be, a Black woman in our country today still cannot count on being understood and embraced by mainstream White America. (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p. 2)

As a theoretical framework, Black feminist thought attempts to redefine the narrative of Black women, illuminate the multiple dimensions of oppression, and articulate the importance of culture in the lives of Black women. The dominant representation of Black women throughout history, in addition to a legacy of subjugation to various forms of oppression and exploitation (Beale, 1979; Phillips & McCaskill, 1995), has made it difficult for Black women to experience the freedom to choose their individual representations of self.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Theory is an integrated representation of complex phenomena, individual stories of students, and a diverse representation of perspectives to guide the work and the profession (Jones & Abes, 2011; McEwen, 2003). Although scholars have provided a common definition of theory, theoretical models have been representative of the diversity of all students. Historical theories of student development (e.g., Chickering, 1969; Kohlberg, 1976, 1981; Perry, 1968) did not effectively address both racial and gender diversity in their methods (Winkle-Wagner, 2009). More recently, scholars have studied the experiences of college students who were racially underrepresented and women (Banks, 2009; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Jones, 1997; Josselson, 1987; Poindexter-Cameron & Robinson, 1997; Winkle-Wagner, 2009). The intersections of such identities have not been critically analyzed within the literature; therefore, the identity development of Black women remains to be examined.

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to conceptualize how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) developed their identity as Black women. The examination of their notions of self and explanations of social interactions with others resulted in the construction of a theoretical model of their identity development as Black undergraduate women. The epistemology of social constructivism guided strategies and methodological techniques for this study. Symbolic interactionism and Black feminist thought theoretically framed the methodological approach to conceptualize identity

development among Black undergraduate women. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Black undergraduate women enrolled at a PWI develop and describe their identity as Black women?
2. What does it mean to be a Black woman in college?
3. How does attending a PWI inform or influence their identity as Black women?
4. What unique opportunities or challenges does a predominately White institutional environment create for Black women and how do they negotiate these spaces?

This chapter discusses the various aspects of grounded theory (GT) as a methodology and specific methods that were used to answer these research questions, including choosing a research site, collecting data, and analyzing results. Moreover, I articulate my coding process by describing how I moved from 82 codes to 17 categories, researcher reflexivity, as well as various strategies to ensure trustworthiness for this qualitative study.

Qualitative Methods: An Overview

Qualitative research is interpretive, grounded in the lived experiences of its participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), and relies on the collection of primarily non-numerical data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Qualitative research designs entail the procedures of the study and introduce the methods of data collection through which analyses will occur (Creswell, 2009). Researchers who execute qualitative studies generally identify a phenomenon in an open-ended way and "develop hypotheses and theoretical explanations that are based on their interpretations of what they observe" (p. 388). Researchers often reflect on their roles within the research processes and are sensitive to how their individual biases potentially shape the research (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Broadly, qualitative research is an approach to the study of social

phenomena and may draw upon multiple methods of inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). A qualitative method was selected for this study in order to ascertain in-depth and rich experiences of the participants. In order to examine and conceptualize the phenomenon of identity development in Black undergraduate women, grounded theory methods were used to guide the data collection, analysis, and co-construction of a theoretical model.

History of Grounded Theory

In order to appropriately engage the constructed concepts from the data, the definition of theory must first be articulated. Strauss and Corbin (1994) defined theory as relationships that provide reasonable explanation of the topic. Additionally, Morse (1994) extended Strauss and Corbin (1994) and defined theory as the most complete, inclusive and simplest representation to link facts in a pragmatic way. She described the generation of theory as a means of constructing additional explanations until the most relevant and conclusive description of the data is obtained (1994). In order to ground this discussion within the context of student affairs, as the study will focus on the development of Black undergraduate women in college, it is important to also include a definition from the field. In student affairs, theories are grounded in the complexities of individual stories and experiences; they help make sense of the complex nature of a particular phenomenon by reducing the many aspects into an integrated representation (McEwen, 2003).

Despite the field, historically theory has remained a basis to explain and interpret social behavior. Glaser and Strauss' (1967) basic position acknowledges grounded theory generation as a way to discover specific theory and its potential usage.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) concluded that within sociology, theory holds the following five purposes:

> a) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; b) to be useful in theoretical advance in sociology; c) to be usable in practical applications – prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations; d) to provide a perspective on behavior – a stance to be taken toward data; and e) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behavior. (p.3)

Thus, GT is an approach for analyzing data and provides processes for description and articulation. Theory must be understandable; its categories must be indicated by its data and relevant in order to explain the behavior under study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During the process of theory generation, concepts should not only come from the actual data, but should be explored and created in relation to the data throughout the course of the research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data should be constantly analyzed for the duration of the study in order to produce an accurate understanding of the GT.

In the process of discovering theory, concepts are generated and examples from the data are used to illustrate the concept (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At a time when quantitative data was flourishing, Glaser and Strauss (1967), considered as first-generation grounded theorists, emphasized the importance of contextual interpretations, tradition of pragmatism, and usefulness of qualitative inquiry for both the verification and generation of theory (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009; Butler-Kisber, 2010). The thrust of their movement was to eliminate the gap between uninformed empirical research and empirically uninformed theory (Charmaz, 1983).

Glaser and Straus (1967) introduced the philosophy that theory creation or enhancement should be grounded in the actual data systematically gathered from social research. Grounded

theory is a constant interaction between data collection and analysis; it evolves throughout the research process (Charmaz, 1983; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 1998; Strauss, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1994). Grounded theory attempts to articulate where little is already known or introduce an alternative view on an existing body of knowledge (Birks & Mills, 2011; Goulding, 1998). Grounded theory does not exist without an understanding of related theory, and empirical studies are required to enhance sensitivity (Goulding, 1998). Glaser (1978) concluded the researcher must be sensitive to and acknowledge the conceptual significance of categories and concepts.

A major critique of Glaser and Strauss as first-generation grounded theorists is that they did not write about GT as a package of methods or as a methodological approach; instead they only discussed techniques or specific methods that could be used (Birks & Mills, 2011). Although Glaser and Strauss remain the founding authors of GT, they too have had variations in thought since GT's inception. Iterations and the evolution of GT included varying philosophical positions while the traditional Glaserian belief only considered GT as a method (Birks & Mills, 2011). Glaser believed that including alternative philosophical traditions and perspectives reduced the potential of his original GT method (Glaser, 2005). Contested meanings of GT were present and caused confusion – in some cases it referred to the result of the research process, while in others, it referred to the actual method used (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2003). This division in thought forced students to figure out what it meant to produce a GT study. As a result, many second-generation grounded theorists planned and executed research studies with varying methodological frameworks (Birks & Mills, 2011). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) suggested three schools of GT – Glaserian, Strauss and Corbin, and the Constructivist. The integration of methodological developments over time has facilitated the emphasis on the co-

construction of data, analysis, and methodological strategy, coupled with the researcher's context, position, and interactions (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) discussed an important point that can and should advance the GT conversation. A researcher's context, position, and interactions with their participants and site all play a role in one's specific methods or techniques employed data collection, and analysis.

Grounded Theory Methodology

Although variations were introduced, Bryant and Charmaz (2007) concluded GT should be considered as a collection of methods and techniques that may be defined differently depending on the researcher. Urquhart (2007) summarized the following criteria as vital to GT: performing a literature review; the coding process; use of theoretical memos; building the theory and connecting with additional theories; and accuracy of procedures and evidence. Conversely, Hood (2007) argued that only theoretical sampling, the constant comparative method, and use of theoretical saturation separate GT from other researcher methods. Birks and Mills (2011) on the other hand, broadened the scope of GT. A combination of techniques used by Birks and Mills (2011) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) were incorporated into this constructivist GT study.

Using Grounded Theory to Describe Identity Development

In the study, I applied GT methods in order to examine and describe the identity development of Black undergraduate women. Through the epistemology of social constructivism and symbolic interactionism, GT as a methodology allowed me as the researcher to intimately engage the data and co-construct a theoretical model absent from both the foundational and contemporary theories of student identity development. Despite the articulation of techniques, at the heart of each respective GT approach, the overarching, qualitative method consists of a set of research procedures that assist in the initiation, organization, and co-

construction of knowledge and theory generation. Specifically, my GT methods consisted of the use of memos, theoretical sampling and saturation, trustworthiness, triangulation, theoretical sensitivity and integration, reflexivity, and analysis via a two-part coding process (focused and axial).

Data Collection

Institutional review board. As required by the Human Subjects Office, this study was in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and institutional policies, and procedures. All paperwork was completed and submitted. Interviews did not begin until permission was successfully granted by the institutional review board.

Research site. The research was conducted at a large, research-extensive land-grant institution in the southeastern U.S., which is assigned the pseudonym Southeastern State University. Southeastern State is the flagship institution of the state and served as the host site for the participant sample of Black undergraduate women. Factors considered in the selection of the site were student demographics, proximity and convenience to researcher, and specialized services for Black undergraduate women. According to Southeastern State University's online Fact Book (Office of Institutional Research, 2012), the total undergraduate student population for fall 2012 was 26,259; 1,919 were Black/African American students, which accounted for approximately 7.3% of the undergraduate student population. The Fact Book did not disaggregate enrollment by both race and gender; therefore I was unable to identify the total number of Black undergraduate women.

Sample. In this study, purposeful sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2008; Patton, 1990) began from the initial pool of undergraduate participants with the following three criteria: 1) must identify as Black, 2) must identify as a woman, and 3) must academically hold sophomore

through senior level status. Due to the nature of this study, the interview required participants to examine both collegiate and pre-collegiate experiences; thus the ability to articulate experiences beyond the first year on campus was necessary.

Recruitment. At Southeastern State University, the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs (pseudonym for office name) had access to a listing from the registrar of all undergraduate students who identified as Black/African American on their admissions application. The official listserv was used to communicate both center-specific and university-wide programming as well as relevant academic information. I inquired about additional listservs containing email addresses of Black undergraduate women in order to access women who may not have identified themselves as Black/African American in their initial admissions application. The Director did have access to Black women on additional listservs and agreed to solicit them as well. Once the study was approved from Southeastern State's Institutional Review Board, I submitted the solicitation letter (see Appendix A) and interview protocol (see Appendix B) to the director. I requested an email (see Appendix C) be sent to the listservs with the initial information regarding the study included.

After the mass email was delivered to the student listservs by the director, I awaited the correspondence of potential participants as my direct contact information was present in the email. Once I was contacted by potential participants, I created a tentative interview schedule. I invited the potential interviewees who met the criteria for the study, based upon the order in which they responded to the initial email solicitation. I kept a numerical ranking (in the order that I received them) of participants in order to eliminate any bias in the initial solicitation process. Once I obtained the initial interview schedule of 12 women, additional names were numerically ranked so that contact could be continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

The total number of participants was tentatively 12, as the concept of theoretical sampling ultimately dictated that the exact number and rounds of interviews with the same or additional participants be determined as the study progressed.

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were utilized as a means to ascertain information about life experiences of participants (Johnson & Christenson, 2008; Kvale, 2007; Lambert & Loiselle, 2007). Interviews were semi-structured in order to allow flexibility for follow-up questions and additional issues to be explored by both the interviewer and interviewee (Esterberg, 2002). Only probes and points of clarification were offered in order for the women to share as freely as they felt necessary and comfortable (Roulston, deMarrais & Lewis, 2003). Interview questions were grounded in themes from theoretical frameworks - Black feminist thought (Collins, 1986), symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1934), challenge and support (Sanford, 1966), marginality and mattering (Schlossberg, 1989a) and academic validation (Rendón, 1994). Some of the prompts included the following: describe yourself as a Black woman, how would you define Black women's culture, what do your identities mean to you, discuss your interactions with others, describe the environment in which you feel supported, when do you feel that you matter at Southeastern State University, and when do you feel you matter.

After the initial interviews were scheduled, I provided an informed consent (see Appendix D) to each individual. This consent assisted in the participants' understanding of relevant information regarding the study and their ability to opt out of any question if they so desired. All interviews were scheduled in a private room, centrally located on campus. The timeframe of the initial interviews was as little as thirty minutes to as long as seventy-five minutes, and conversations were digitally-recorded. Each woman was given a pseudonym at the

beginning of the interview and informed that she would be acknowledged only as such for the duration of the study. The women were individually interviewed twice within a three month time period (first round of interviews were held in late September/early October and second round interviews took place early to mid November).

Online reflective survey. As a second point of data collection, all participants were requested to complete an online Qualtrics survey (see Appendix E). The purpose of the online reflective survey was for the participants to review the initial concepts of the identity development model and elaborate further on their experiences as Black undergraduate women. Questions included prompts such as how are your experiences adequately represented in this model, what else would you add to this model, and describe your pre-collegiate and collegiate socialization. This online reflective exercise provided space for women whose primary processing style was to describe their experience through writing. In December before fall semester final exams, participants were sent an email request to submit their completed online reflection within a week's time frame. Women were asked to include their pseudonym as the only piece of identification in the survey.

Writing memos. Memos were used as written records of my thought, distillation processes, and logic during the development of the GT; they illuminated potential gaps and guided where I should sample next (Birks & Mills, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Lempert, 2007). Each memo varied in the level of coherence, length, and theoretical usefulness to the completed product. However, each memo was equally important, and as a collective, they reflected the transformative process within theory construction and identified additional pieces of information required for the sample.

Theoretical sampling and saturation. As a result of the inductive process of adhering to the concepts, categories, and hypotheses directly grounded in the data, the sampling process must also be theoretically oriented (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). The theoretical concepts and research outline must be general in relation to the phenomena being studied (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In other words, the researcher must inductively be guided by the discovery and co-construction of data as opposed to his/her defined ideologies. An inductive approach to data analysis called for the theory to be constructed instead of the researcher predicting the importance of any one form of data (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced a definition of theoretical sampling:

> Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory… (p.45)

Throughout the analysis of data, more information may be necessary to saturate categories. As I gained more knowledge about a particular category, I decided which additional pieces of data and participants were necessary to appropriately construct and increase the abstraction of the theory (Birks & Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006). When the core categories were saturated and the data did not generate any new revelation, sampling was completed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In GT, saturation is acknowledged on a conceptual level. Glaser (1992) described saturation as the point when the researcher has arrived at the most complete degree of the data. Grounded theorists are able to rise above the descriptive level into a space of integration, whereby the emergent theory will remain under different situations and reach theoretical stability (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009).

Consistent with GT methodology, theoretical saturation required a second round of interviews after the interview questions had been adjusted during the first round.

Trustworthiness

Triangulation. The utilization of multiple methods in qualitative research is commonly referred to as triangulation (Glesne, 1999). Researchers seek corroboration of data results from multiple methods within the same study in order to increase trustworthiness (Johnson & Christenson, 2008). By using multiple rounds of interviews and a guided reflection, this study was designed to foster a theoretical model of the identity development of Black undergraduate women that was grounded in a trustworthy data set.

Theoretical sensitivity. Glaser and Strauss (1967, 1978) discussed theoretical sensitivity as a researcher's level of insight and a reflection of one's intellectual history. My capacity to remain sensitive to the data and ability to record events (through memos) without having my thoughts interrupted by pre-existing hypotheses was crucial to the co-construction of knowledge and theory development (Glaser, 1978). The level of theoretical sensitivity increased the more I grounded myself in the data (Birks & Mills, 2011). I clearly and constantly analyzed the data with as much sensitivity as possible.

Theoretical integration. Grounded theory usually provides a comprehensive description and its variations of a particular phenomenon and its variations. The phenomenon is introduced through the research design – data collection, memo writing, theoretical sampling and saturation, coding, and constantly comparing data while constructing a theory. Glaser (2005) employed theoretical coding to enhance the final outcome of a GT study in order to situate it in a larger body of knowledge.

As a result of this GT study, the co-constructed theory of identity development of Black undergraduate women at predominately White institutions was theoretically integrated as a necessary ingredient to the larger discussion of identity development in college.

Reflexivity

Researchers' ideological positions and frames of reference change over time and shift depending on situations and environments to which they are exposed. Butler-Kisber (2010) argued the individual perspectives brought to the research study need to be accounted for and addressed throughout the research process. My ability to co-construct knowledge and meaning is crucial, and therefore I constantly reflected on my position, beliefs, and biases. Dowling (2008) advocated a form of reflexivity through which researchers are required to epistemologically reflect on their methodological decision making and are challenged to critically analyze their decisions within a particular research study.

These memos created an audit trail to explain the relationship among data sources, interpretations, coding, and synthesis (Wolf, 2003), as it was important that I remained in a state of reflection and critical analysis of my individual perspectives.

Johnson-Bailey (1999) concluded from interactions with Black female participants in her study, "there were silent understandings, culture-bound phrases that did not need interpretation, and non-verbalized answers conveyed with culture-specific hand gestures and facial expressions laced throughout the dialogue" (p. 669). Thus, reflexivity pushed me to acknowledge and monitor any and all contextual dimensions that may have impacted the inquiry process.

As a Black woman studying the experiences of other Black women, reflexivity provided the space for me to question and confirm my logic, thought processes, and interactions with participants, as I co-constructed a model grounded in the data with a high level of credibility in order to yield theoretical integration.

Credibility

Johnson and Christenson (2008) suggested the term *trustworthiness* as an indicator of quality and credibility among qualitative research studies. However, in GT studies, due to the fact that theoretical sampling is different in every study, there is no definitive checklist to ensure the credibility of a GT study (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). Moreover, the validity or adequacy of a GT study would then be judged based upon the transparency of its process in generation and credibility of a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). "Mysticism arises in GT research when the researcher fails to describe adequately the complex and messy process of analytic abstraction whereby theory is developed from empirical data" (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009, p. 123). As a result of the techniques previously discussed – analysis and coding process, memo writing, theoretical sampling, saturation, and triangulation, I present co-constructed evidence by both myself and the participants, in order to show that the theoretical model is actually grounded in data. I permitted the opportunity for each participant not only to review her individual transcription of data, but also to verify the initial coding and categorization. Additionally, I used the assistance of external readers in my academic writing group to review initial coding and the co-construction of the theoretical model.

Data Analysis and Coding for This Study

The academic ranking of the participants ranged from sophomore to graduating senior, and there was diversity in their ability to answer the questions with and without clarification.

The level of articulation in their responses, the depth of examples shared, the level of vulnerability, and their individual awareness of themselves all varied with each individual woman. Consequently, the amount of time and lines on the transcript it took for some of the participants to actually make meaning within their own story varied tremendously. For some women, this was the first time ever discussing identity development. For some participants, this was actually the first time they had this conversation out loud; others shared with me that our interview was a space of affirmation and release. There was so much power in their responses, their experiences, and their stories…as a whole, not fractioned pieces of information taken from their experiences.

Charmaz (2006) argued the advantage of initial coding is it "helps you refrain from imputing your motives, fears, or unresolved personal issues to your respondents and to your collected data" (p.54). This study was so much larger than me; my ability to remain cognizant of its greater purpose remained grounded in my original research questions. Memo writing and constant reflection pushed me to acknowledge and monitor any and all contextual dimensions that may have impacted the inquiry process.

In their original text, Glaser and Strauss (1967) did not describe in detail the coding process; they assumed the researcher would learn and understand the process. However over the years, GT scholars have identified initial coding as the first part of the coding sequence (Charmaz, 2006; Glazer, 1978; Holton, 2010). Charmaz (2006) mentioned that researchers who use field notes versus interview transcriptions may code incident-by-incident instead of line-by-line; however both remain a part of the initial coding phase. This step in the process enables researchers to name or code each line/incident in order to keep a detailed account of participants' actions and statements; thus each line and/or incident remains an important and useful part of the

larger story and become eventual categories developed in the next phase, which is focused coding.

As I began to analyze my data, I was challenged by the process of line-by-line coding (see Appendix F, Memo #14). For this study of the identity development of Black undergraduate women on a predominately White campus, I decided to bypass initial/open coding and move to focused coding, where I could code chunks of data. Focused codes are more conceptual and directed than line-by-line (Glaser, 1978). "After you have established some strong analytic directions through your initial line-by-line coding, you can begin focused coding to synthesize and explain larger segments of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). Initial or open coding enables the researcher break the data apart to identify important words, or group words together, and then label them accordingly (Birks & Mills, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Focused coding then leads to the eventual categories. Focus coding requires the researcher to decide which initial codes make the most sense. Categories are considered theoretically saturated when additional data aligns with the initial codes and sufficiently explains the original categories (Birks & Mills, 2011). Although I did not code each line individually, I conducted a thorough review of each couple of sentences, or what I considered smaller chunks of data. I remained reflective throughout the coding process and even more so in my memo writing. Through small chunks of data, I was able to establish strong analytical directions and categories that eventually led me to axial coding.

82 Codes to 17 Categories

I knew I reached saturation at 13 participants when the number of unique codes began to decrease and the topics of conversation with the women became similar. During the process of axial coding, the researcher is able to answer questions such as when, where, why, who, and with

what consequences. Strauss and Corbin (1987) argued the purpose of axial coding was to build relationships around the axis of a category. After the first round of interviews, I synthesized the 82 codes into 17 categories. Within my color-coded excel sheets participant pseudonyms were placed across the top horizontally, while all 82 initial codes were inserted vertically in the left column. I was able to visually see which codes were more saturated with quotes than others and which codes could be grouped together to create categories. I then transferred the codes onto a word document in order to see them without the quotes. I was able to more easily maneuver the codes around into initial categories. For example, I grouped the following five codes: *personal identification*, *personal identity as Black woman*, *learned how to be a Black woman*, *definition of Black woman*, and *other identities*, into one category labeled *Identity as a Black Woman*. I thought about the discussions with each individual woman and the stories they shared about certain topics or codes, in order to group codes together. The groupings then became the actual categories.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Findings of this study are presented in this chapter. First I discuss my participant sample, so that the reader can gain a better understanding of each individual woman as well as the collective sample. The 17 categories are illuminated by some of the original 82 codes and quotes from the participants, and conceptual relationships are displayed as a result of the axial coding process.

Memo #1: Ashanti
Date: 9/22/2012

She was my first interview. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I was hoping that my first would begin this process in a very positive light. I had big expectations. I double-checked all my technology, my batteries, and even came to the office early. I was prepared to begin this process. My mind however continued to wander as I sat in reflection, while waiting patiently in the office for her to arrive. Am I going to ascertain enough data for this model? What will this model even look like? How will the women show up? Will they share their experiences that I'm so anxious for? Our field, higher education, the world needs their stories. So much is dependent upon the success of this study and I just want to give my all to the women and be so ever-present with them in their individual experiences. I cannot fail!

I tried to keep my excitement inside as she walked in. She was wearing a hijab; I tried not to assume she was Muslim, but was hoping that she was. My prayer for this sample is to illustrate the diversity among Black women, to show not only the continuum of what it means to be a Black woman, but the intersectionality of identities on the continuum as well. My assumption was correct and she articulated the intersectionality of identities well. "It's a

juggle" she said. Throughout our conversation, she shared her experiences of being Muslim in an extended family of Christians, being both Black and Caribbean.

When talking about her mother, Ashanti, the pseudonym she selected, which she told me later, means resilience and strength, began to cry. It took everything in me 1) not to console her and 2) to hold back my tears. I was very present with her although we had just met. Our conversation was very genuine, relaxing, and even therapeutic. We laughed…a lot.

If this is any indication of how the rest of my first round interviews will go…I am in for an engaging, phenomenal, inspirational, and life-changing journey.

Participants

Each participant shared her own individual experience of identity development. Although I did not know anything about the women when we shared brief initial conversations through email, I grew to admire the 13 Black women whose stories are articulated throughout this chapter and model. During the second interview, the women individually wrote their own information into a participant demographic table (PDT). Participant ages ranged from 19-22 and academic ranking included four juniors, four seniors, and five sophomores. There was a range in academic major and racial diversity; however, 9 out of 13 women identified as growing up in the middle class socioeconomic status.

Table 4.1: Participant Demographic Table

Name (pseudonym)	**Class standing**	**Major**	**Socioeconomic status** (growing up)	**Neighborhood** (growing up)	**Raised by one or both parents**	**Identities**	**Age**
Ashanti	Junior	Fashion Merchandising	Middle class	Diverse	Mother and stepdad	Southern; Caribbean; Black woman; Muslim, natural hair	21
Erica	Junior	Middle School Education	Middle class	Diverse, suburban	Both parents	African American Black woman	20
Skye	Senior	Health Promotions and Behavior	Middle class	Diverse, suburban	Adopted; raised by both parents; one of whom is a Christian pastor	Black lesbian woman; member of NPHC sorority; honors student	22
Lula	Senior	Biological Sciences	Middle class	Black, suburban	Both parents	Black woman; member of NPHC sorority; science major	21
Rachel	Senior	Avian Biology	Middle class	Black, very rural	Mother and step-father	Black woman; Nigerian; Christian; athletic; older sister	21
Vivica	Sophomore	Biology, Pre-Med	Upper middle	White, suburban	Mother died when I was in middle school; lived with father, but mom had 7 sisters	Black woman	19
Jacqueline	Sophomore	Journalism	Upper middle	Black, metro, suburban	Both mother and father	Black woman; southern; American; older sister	19
Alice	Sophomore	Biotechnology	Middle class	White, suburban	Raised by mother and father	American; Jamaican and Chinese; woman; older sister	19
Delilah	Sophomore	Nutrition Science; French	Upper class	White, suburban, rural	Both parents	African American woman; Christian; Haitian; athletic	20
Alona	Junior	Publications Management	Middle class	Black, rural	Mother; parents are divorced; father is still present	Dark skinned Black woman; spiritual; athletic; only child	20
Iman	Junior	Child and Family Development	Middle class	Black, suburban	Father; Mother died senior year in high school; parents divorced when I was in 4th grade	Black woman; Christian; African American	20
Melanie	Sophomore	Biological Sciences, Pre-Pharmacy	Poor	Home life-Black, academic life-White	Raised by both parents	Black woman; West Indian; Catholic	19
Sally	Senior	Anthropology, minor in Biology	Middle class	Diverse; half urban, half suburban	Raised by both	Black woman; member of NPHC sorority; Canadian; parents are Jamaican	22

Identity as a Black woman. The level of awareness among the participants varied when we discussed their identity development, where they learned to be Black women, and their personal definition of being Black women. Erica shared,

> *When I think of who I am, Black woman is not necessarily the first thing that pops in my mind automatically…being a Black woman definitely has a certain impact on my everyday life but it's definitely not prominent to me on a daily basis. My identity as a Black woman is definitely still developing. I don't have a strong sense of my identity in general but especially as a Black woman.*

On the other hand, Lula articulated,

> *I come from an African American community that has been so supportive in defining who I am. They tell me that I am beautiful; they tell me that I don't have to be that stereotypical person on television; that I can make a name for myself by just being me.*

Alice did not initially identify as a Black woman. When asked about her racial identity, she answered, *"The first thing that pops into my head honestly is American because when you say America, it's such a diverse place, such a melting pot."* Melanie discussed her challenges with fitting into the 'American Black society'.

> *Being from the Caribbean, it's interesting trying to place yourself in American Black society and I get that a lot of the time…that I don't even look Black. People have asked me if I am mixed with Chinese and so, it's hard sometimes to find myself in American Black society. Being that I can't really relate to a lot of the things, a lot of the comments, or just casual jokes about slavery even though there was slavery in the West Indies, it's still different.*

Women were able to attribute certain experiences with racial and gender identity throughout their childhood and as young adults. Those experiences in addition to how they were developing in college assisted in their ability to define their identities as Black women.

Intersectionality of identities. As women were beginning to make meaning of their identities, they spoke to the intersectionality and relationship between identities. Ashanti mentioned how she looked as a Black woman intersected with her religion.

> *As a Muslim woman, it's the juggle of it all. It is the balance between an African American woman and a Muslim woman, because there are stereotypes about being a Black woman, there are stereotypes with being a Muslim, and those two do not even mix. I can't even begin to mix them. But that is who I am.*

She continued, *"That's the beauty of being in the religion and being African American, you don't have one distinct look."* When asked what all of her identities meant to her, Skye stated,

> *Well when I put them altogether, I feel like it makes me a much stronger person just because it's a lot to handle when you add being a lesbian on top of the Black woman; you have more pressures on you because of that. It's made me more aware, more open-minded, more accepting, and more forgiving. I know what it's like to be a woman; I know what it's like to be Black; I know what it's like to be gay, and I understand why you feel the way you do in your group and I know why you feel the way you do about whatever piece of identity you may not be comfortable with me about.*

> *I think it's made me a stronger person but it's definitely a challenge because you always have to think about 'well, ok if I didn't get something is it because I'm a woman or was is it because I'm Black; was it because I'm gay; because I'm Black and a woman or Black and gay.' Putting all those things together, it's definitely a challenge and I don't think people realize how much I have to think about.*

Skye was the only self-identified lesbian woman in my sample. Her level of sincerity when discussing how she navigated the intersectionality of her identities provided insight to this study. In addition to Ashanti, several of the women discussed the influence of religion or spirituality as a significant intersection to their identity as Black women.

Influence of religion and spirituality. Six of the 13 participants identified with either a doctrine of religion or as spiritual. Exposure to both Christianity and Islam, Black women and spirituality, fundamental values of religion and faith, and the manifestation of spirituality and religion on campus were the codes that made up this category. The women who shared doctrines of religion specifically discussed Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism. Ashanti asserted,

> *I would say I'm religious because I'm relying on my faith a lot but at the same time, spiritual because I'm not just relying on my faith. Because I had both experiences growing up [Christianity and Islam], I listen to a lot of gospel music. In Islam we don't have any real music, so I've just been trying to remember God as God and its constantly pumping through my ear buds.*

Rachel declared,

> *Oh that's like the biggest influence for me in everything that I do. I was raised in the church and I'm still in the church now so it's had an impact from childhood until my adulthood and it will always have an impact in my life.*

Delilah claimed, *"I'm a Christian and that's always been important for me."* Melanie testified to the influence of Roman Catholicism.

> *My parents are Roman Catholic; my mom was always very strict about going to church, first Communion, and we had to get baptized. It gave me a sense of security within myself. Growing up, I really didn't have that many friends and I wasn't really popular. I didn't think I was attractive or anything, so having that religious security really made me feel good, that I could fall back on something. And it was always there for me to fall back on. It would influence my morals and how I present myself to the world, not saying that people who present themselves differently aren't religious, it just affected me in a way that makes me stronger. When I feel depressed if I failed a test, I can look at my religion. It definitely makes it harder though to relate to other sects of Christianity, especially within Black society, because everything is predominately protestant.*

Alona explained, *"I grew up in the church and because of that, I've always had a fervor for spirituality because I saw the realness of it and what being so close to God really means."* Alice was one of the other women wherein religion or spirituality was not important while growing up. She emphasized,

> *I am not a part of a very religious household (atheist father and deist mother). Religion has not been a very strong influence in my life, and I only attend church when invited or visiting other family members who go to church.*

This sample provided diversity in doctrines of belief and provided a reminder that although some Black women are guided and influenced heavily by their faith and spirituality, there are some who are not, and still others who do not even believe in God.

Socioeconomic status. All of the women discussed how their parent's financial situation affected their experiences growing up and while in college. The majority of the women identified themselves as growing up middle class; however, Melanie reflected on how her socioeconomic status played a large role in shaping her identity development.

> *I have been poor too long. I really want to make it to where I can have a family and be comfortable and not have to really worry about whether or not I can pay the gas bill or whether or not my kids are going to be able to turn on the television or if it's cold are they going to be able to take a hot shower. All these things my mom and dad had to worry about. But when I say that I'm trying to make it, I'm trying to be okay with myself when I grow up.*

Sally shared that for a while during her childhood her family was poor. She said that as she got older her family *"went up the economic ladder."* She continued, *"I'm really grateful for where we are because I remember where we came from. So I guess that helps me to keep my feet in both realms of the world."* Despite their socioeconomic status, each woman shared an optimistic attitude about her future and determined to succeed in order to create a better or similar life for their family.

Influence of parents and grandparents. Participants shared stories of their childhoods and the influence their parents and grandparents made that continue to have lasting imprints as they matriculate through their undergraduate career. Alona spoke of her mother.

> *She was very adamant about being a parent first because she was a single parent even though my dad was present. She taught me to always, if you're going to speak your mind, don't ever be disrespectful regardless of who you're talking to. At all times I'm representing her and my family, even when I'm away from the house.*

One thing she instilled in me growing up was even when you don't think people are watching, people are watching so just be mindful of everything that you're doing.

Jacqueline recalled,

The values my mom taught me was to always be true to myself and always have a sense of independence. She told me to never depend on anybody to get you where you need to be or to make you feel good about yourself. That was a lot of my grandma's influence too.

Although Alice was raised by both of her parents, she passionately maintained,

My mom was very independent too financially, so she's very much equal to my dad and I looked up to that; I want to get a strong career and then also be stable myself and be able to help my parents and my family.

Both Iman and Lula shared specifically how their fathers played significant roles in their development. Iman insisted,

My dad taught me to carry myself like a lady. I think the main thing [that I learned from him] is my confidence. I feel like I have better self confidence than other females my age because I have a lot of friends who were raised just by their mothers and even with my sister I can see the difference between our confidence levels.

For Lula, her father played a crucial role in her academic development.

My fondest memories were when I was taking my pre-calculus class, and I thought I was doing it. My dad is a doctor so obviously he knows what he is doing and I would ask him for help with my homework, and he would be helping me and I just felt like he would be making me do 'the all get around', so I cried and I'd be like 'dad you're doing it wrong.' But then when I went back to school, my homework was correct. And when I took the classes in college, I breezed through it; like in my calculus class, I got an A no problem.

The parental experiences and home environments ranged from being raised by either both parents or one parent, being adopted, experiencing their parents' divorce, and even the death of a parent while in middle or high school. But the lessons taught and values shared were similar despite the women's family of origin – always do your best, you never know when others are watching; always be respectful; the importance of education; value yourself and remain true to yourself.

Birth order. Fathers, mothers, and grandparents were not the only influential people when it came to the family of origin for the participants. Many of the women shared anecdotal stories of their lives with siblings and the roles they played within their families. Rachel emphasized, *"I had parental responsibility."* She continued,

> *I remember being in maybe middle school and I was always the one who had to babysit. I was just like 'all these kids get on my nerves' and I remember talking to my mom and I said that, 'I was so tired of doing everything that your husband [her step-father] should be doing, ya'll are the parents.' She told me straight up, 'Rachel, he's my husband but you're my partner and we have to do this together,' and I was like that is so mean. I just felt like that was the most unfair thing ever but I grew up and I realized that yeah, she needed help.*

Alice affirmed,

> *I'm the eldest sibling. I only have one sibling - my younger brother - and so I always had that responsibility to watch after him. I really was my brother's keeper and it's still like that now. I'll call him randomly and be like 'did you eat dinner because I know you didn't.*

Alona stated,

> *I'm the only child on both sides, so that has a lot to do with wanting to go home all the time [out of state]. Because going home, I get to see my cousins or my aunts who are a little older than me…My mom was like 'I'm not having any more kids so you're going to have to make it work.' So I was a little standoffish to calling people my friends…it was instilled in me growing up that 'you can't trust everyone because everyone is not your friend.'*

Whether it was being the oldest daughter or an only child, developing and maintaining a level of responsibility for oneself and obligation to one's siblings at a young age remained a constant thread among many of the women.

Strength. All of the participants described Black women as strong. Whether we were discussing the present or the past, the history of Black women, their strength and resilience, or being the 'only one' in various settings on campus (all of which were in the initial 82 codes), the term 'strong' became synonymous with Black woman. Vivica shared with me of her mother's passing while in middle school. *"She is my definition of a strong Black woman."* She continued, however, to reflect on Black women having the strength to fight within society.

> *Also I feel like Black women have had to fight for who we are in society. A lot of people, I will just compare it to a White girl; a White girl, she can go to class and just be herself and everything is easy, but for Black women in general it's not always that way.*

Alona reminisced on the past when she discussed the word 'strong' and its connection to Black women.

> *We're just so strong. I can't think of any other word but strong because when I think about where we came from, from establishing ourselves, not just in workforce but all the*

> *way from slavery, the way that we were treated, battered, and raped and things that started a long, long time ago. We put so much on our shoulders and a lot of things may get us down, but we don't break. That's just how I explain our culture. We bend, but we don't break. When I get down or at any point when I feel any type of racial anything on campus here, anything that I've ever been through, I always think of that.*

Each of my 13 participants used the word 'strong' at some point when describing Black women. They were able to share examples and anecdotal stories of either themselves or other women; some even became very passionate in their descriptions. No matter how many questions I asked to get to the root or definition of the word 'strong' all of the women simply suggested 'that's just who we are' or 'that's a part of our culture.'

Culture. When we discussed Black women's culture, most of the participants described it as actions or behaviors by Black women as a collective group. Lula answered,

> *With any culture, it's just defining who you are, so Black women's culture, would include what we're known for. So our hair styles, our personalities, or things we like to do - some of them positive and some of them negative.*

Ashanti defined culture and described some of the negative traits that Black women's culture includes.

> *Our culture is just a culmination of our interactions and our experiences. Our culture is one of social media and… 'Love and Hip Hop' and 'Basketball Wives' and…that is our culture essentially…we find pride in arguing with people, or fighting with people or being the biggest baddest person and, we find pride in having long hair extensions and I don't understand any of those things. But that's what our culture has come down to, I guess in the collective sense.*

Culture was coupled with one's racial or ethnic upbringing in addition a compilation of trends within society. Often the discussion of culture transitioned into the influence of media.

Media. The role of media and specifically the impact of certain reality television shows became a focus in all of the interviews. Alona asserted,

> *The things that people portray on a reality show, some people cannot determine that's just entertainment so they take that and just think that's exactly how every Black woman is and who's to blame them, seriously if it's on TV? I refuse to acknowledge that in a negative manner because to me it's entertainment.*

Vivica mentioned,

> *I have a serious problem with the media. If you say 'name Black powerful women on television.' There's Oprah and recently there's Michelle Obama, and….then…yep, that's about it (laughs), which is not good. But I could name a bunch of Black men but as for positive influences and images, that I would say define me or are close to what I'm like, that's about it.*

Erica discussed her personal conflicts with media and its stereotyping of Black women.

> *I think that sometimes I definitely am outside of this stereotype of a Black woman as they've been portrayed in the media and how people expect me to act, so I struggle with defining my clear identity. Black women in the media are stereotyped as loud, obnoxious, kind of like always going to give their opinion and don't really approach situations in the right way. They're always quick to fight, or not necessarily physically fight but just snap at somebody, definitely assertive.*

As we were discussing the media, many of the women became frustrated with how influential it has been on how Black women see themselves. We discussed how some Black women are

impressionable to the media and mimic the behavior they see on television. Not all of the women agree that they personally have a clear identity of what being a Black woman is, but they do agree that there are certain expectations placed on them to behave a certain way in public.

Stigma placed on Black women. Whether influenced by media, history, or current events, the women articulated their concerns with the stigma placed being on them. Women discussed the stigma including a Black woman's place in society, her behaviors, and the status of Black women.

Sally reflected on historical concepts she learned in a Women's Studies course.

> *There are definitely stereotypes of the sassy attitude, the caring mammy figure, and the hyper-sexualized idea [placed on Black women]; so there are all those intertwining concepts that come with being a Black woman. It's hard because you don't want to succumb to them, but at the same time they all have some truth.*

Vivica stated,

> *It's being different; being different than what I'm surrounded by…having a stigma put on me and having to really work on breaking the stereotype of what I'm expected to be like by society especially being here at [host institution]. I guess just breaking the stigma, and being my own individual.*

Ashanti declared,

> *For some people this is their only experience with a Black woman, and for some people they think all Black women are unprofessional, going to be late and they're going to need to go to beauty salon every week. It amazes me every time I hear these things, I realize that there is the pressure, that you just have to be on top of everything and you have to crush those stereotypes, not even overcome them, you have to smash them. When you're*

> *in class, you have to be on top of your readings, you have to speak well. People think you're always going to be using horrible vernacular when you're speaking, and people feel like you're not going to carry your weight in projects and in class. You have to show them that, 'I'm not like every other Black person or Evelyn [Basketball Wives], and I'm not going to go off on you or roll my neck every time I talk. I think that's just what I've learned all together, is that people have these expectations and you have to go into situations not with heaviness on your heart, not with guns blazing, but you have go into them and just be ready to be the best that you can be. I'm not saying that sometimes you can't ever slack off, but in some instances it is that way. By far from my experiences, I've learned that sometimes you just can't let them [White people] see you sweat.*

Participants agreed that for the most part, they cannot control the stereotypes other people carry of them. However, we discussed how their actions, interactions with others, and involvement in certain organizations can combat or perpetuate the stereotypes and images presented by media.

Involvement on campus. The majority of the women communicated at least some level of involvement in clubs or organizations including sororities within the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC). Alice commented pointedly about her reasoning for joining a service sorority on campus.

> *I originally wasn't going to join any sororities. I just didn't like the stereotype they have, especially the social sororities, the selectiveness of it all because what's the fun in being in a group that's all the same. It's like talking to a clone of yourself and I would get so tired of myself so quickly. I don't think I could stand another one of me. But [sorority] is known for their non selectivity. They're all about service.*

Erica explained,

> *I'm overcommitted, it's ridiculous but I get a good balance. I'm the vice president of the [a Black student organization] and in that capacity we work with mostly with Black people. I'm in the [a predominately White student organization]. We're basically the official hosts for the university, so we serve the university however it needs us. I got to hold the banner that the football players ran through at the game on Saturday. I'm also really involved in [program], which is like an extended orientation program for first year students.*

Ashanti emphasized,

> *[There's] a lot of pressure on a lot of African American student leaders to keep up these organizations because ultimately there's nothing keeping us here…we're only here as long as we stay active and we have members, but the people at the top couldn't care less that we have these organizations. They care that we're here because they want to say that were diverse, or that we're a diverse campus, but there's nothing keeping us here and people don't realize that…and I think there's a lot of pressure.*

Melanie and Iman were two of the women, however, who did not have experiences that were representative of this category. Melanie discussed how she spent her time when she was not in class,

> *Honestly, I just sleep. I'm either cleaning or sleeping. Last semester, I went to a lot of different events on campus and living on campus, it was easier. But I live off campus now, so it's really stressful trying to get on campus to make sure that the bus is coming to get off campus. So if I'm not studying or sleeping, I'm just watching tv or I like to cook. I'm trying to balance my life a little these days.*

Iman asserted, *"I'm actually not involved with anything [on campus]. I just do my work and that's it."*

Although the types of involvement varied from not being involved to being heavily involved, women's interactions with other people within organizations, the support (or lack thereof) from administration, and attending college in a predominately White environment were three of the codes about which women spoke for this category. Despite the differences among the participants however, all of the women agreed within their responses to the model, involvement on campus influenced one's identity development in college.

Social interactions on campus. This category encompassed interactions with peers in and out of the classroom and members of faculty and staff, as well as members of the local community while serving as a student leader. Lula and Delilah shared specific experiences.

Lula described her experience as the only Black person in her Women's Studies class.

We got to the point where we were talking about how the women's rights movement was the same as the civil rights movement. I really had to just…I felt like I shut it down, because I explained to them that it wasn't the same, so at that point I was proud to first off had gone to my private school where we learned about the civil rights movement in detail.

We had to read all of this civil rights stuff and being educated on the facts and tell the facts and names and dates, really made me proud in myself to be an African American female.

Delilah expressed,

> *I'm a leader in a religious organization and it's the largest religious organization on campus. It's a Christian organization and in my small group we go out and feed the homeless. We feed the homeless every week and in my small group I'm the only Black person and so it's kind of difficult.*

She continued,

> *I knew the first time something was probably going to happen because when you get a whole group of White people and then you're the only Black person and we go to Black people to help them out… it's kind of weird. The first day he [a Black man] was like 'I'm so proud of you and you know why. Don't ask why, you know why but I'm so proud of you.' And I'm pretty sure it was because of my race because I was a Black girl helping them out and I'm talking to them and teaching them Christ. He said that in front of the whole group and I was like 'ok, thanks.' But I'm sure they knew why. But that's still just kind of that awkward moment because you're helping out Black people in a group of White people.*

Interactions among Black women on campus. Participants found solace, affirmation, and sisterhood among Black women on campus. Although not every interaction was positive, participants painted a positive picture of interacting with Black women, whether among friends or with other Black women in a classroom setting. Erica stated,

> *I have found a like-minded group of people; my closest friends are Black women and it's just so much easier to talk with them and mention race to Black women. My interactions are a little bit more laid back; I'm not thinking about something I could say that might not offend someone else.*

For Skye interactions were,

> *Very much centered on sisterhood. I feel like being a Black woman especially in the south or at [host institution] you just need a sisterhood because you're already a double minority because you're Black and you're a woman and so that already excludes you from those main groups and then being in a area where you know has a history of not really respecting women or not really respecting African Americans, that's additional pressure.*

Not all of the women shared experiences of having a supportive group of Black women who they could call friends, but for the ones who did, they spoke highly of the level of affirmation and emotional stability they receive when they are with their group.

Challenges of Black women on campus. Although participants discussed positivity while interacting with other Black women, they also articulated the challenges of being a Black woman, in addition to a variety of other identities, within a predominately White campus environment. While discussing her experiences on campus, Iman asserted,

> *I feel like an outsider. But when I say that I feel like an outsider I don't feel inferior here. It's a different type of segregation; I don't feel inferior to White people, but I do feel different.*

Delilah offered another challenge that Black women face.

> *I think it is being a really small minority here and not being around people that look like you. I also think some people already have an image of you, ideas and thoughts of who you are. If you were to be involved in an organization or club, you're more than likely going to be one of a few African Americans or minorities inside of it and a lot of Black girls may not be used to that, like how I was used to it.*

She continued,

> *And living situations, I was ok with it but in my hall of sixty girls there are only two Black girls. It's kind of hard being with so many other [White] girls that you know don't have the same morals or ideas or thoughts as you.*

Jacqueline commented on personal challenges Black women have with their sense of self and self-esteem.

> *In my experience with Black women, a lot of the issues begin with molding yourself to fit how men are supposed to see you. I guess instead of being focused on things that really mattered, a lot of women are doing things that they don't necessarily feel proud of or, are being a certain way to impress men in general and it's a sad thing because we have so much more potential than that.*

The women revealed psychological, emotional, and racial/cultural challenges relating to the predominately White campus environment and interactions with their peers.

Cultural climate on campus. In addition to personal challenges, participants delved a bit deeper by exploring systemic issues concerning climate. Decision to attend host institution, choice of / interest in major, pursuit of predominately White major, climate, and role that PWI played in development as Black woman were the codes that led to this category. Jacqueline affirmed,

> *It's very obvious that the campus is built towards Caucasian students; the history that the school has, it was created for White males and females, so coming back to it, a lot of the alumni with of money and of course their kids and grandkids go to the school.*
>
> *The school is geared towards what they do and what they want; they have more of a voice more so than the Black students or the Hispanic students or the Asian students.*

Iman summarized,

> *I would say it's segregated. It's a different type of segregation though. It's not like how it was back in the day where you got somebody that's going to call you a nigger in your face. It's just segregated; Black people hang with each other, Asians hang with each other, Indians hang with each other, and they even live in the same dorms. I remember my freshman year when I came for orientation, they paint this picture like [host institution] is a diverse school but it's really not; [host institution] isn't diverse.*

Black women were learning how to not only survive as Black women, in addition to all of their other identities (e.g., sexual orientation, religion/spirituality, socioeconomic status, and birth order) but they were also navigating a predominately White climate that may not present the most welcoming space.

Support for Black women on campus. Participants spoke specifically of the Office of Multicultural Affairs, particular faculty and staff members, and their close knit groups of friends as their support systems on and off campus. Our discussions included characteristics of supportive environments, mattering, academic validation, and whether they spoke up or were silent in class. Skye mentioned,

> *From the faculty aspect, like faculty who actually do want to know you and be that kind of professor who interacts with their students, they're also very supportive. I have professors who I'll go and ball in their offices. Some of the professors are in different majors, so I would never take another class with them but they're just an open ear to hear so it's a very supportive community for having a different identity and trying to understand what that means.*

When asked about specific characteristics that describe a supportive environment, Rachel answered,

> *Because you don't have to explain yourself. It's like you walk in and you're already accepted, people already understand and you don't have to go through how did I get to this point. We can move on and just have a normal conversation. I don't have to stop and explain myself every five seconds. Why would you say these words, what does this mean, where did you come from with this attitude towards something going on, on campus? It's just that you're already accepted.*

The participants shared the supportive spaces and their groups of friends were the reasons why they were thriving at this university. Some of the women spoke specifically of wanting to be supported by a Black woman role model or mentor, one to whom they could look to for support and guidance.

Mentorship. Only about half of the women were able to personally speak on the subject of mentoring – whether their experience involved actually having a mentor or being a mentor to someone else. However when asked, all placed value on the influential role mentorship can have in one's life. Sally reflected,

> *I think it's really important to have because its gives you an example. When I got here I didn't know what to expect and my peer mentor helped transition freshman students or transfer students into the [host institution] environment.*
>
> *I was like I definitely need to do that for other students because it's not easy if you don't have that.*

Lula communicated the importance of mentoring from someone older.

I just feel like I still have a lot of learning to do. I love being mentored by older Black women - people who I can see, talk to, who I can call, and who can give me advice on things. I really love meeting older Black women who have everything together, or they might not have everything together, but to me it looks like they have everything together, and I want to try to emulate and be just like them or even better.

Throughout each of the conversations with my participants I began to not only gain a better sense of their individual notions of self and explanations of interactions with others, but also a broader perspective of identity development in general. I gained an understanding of what influenced their upbringing and values, how they learned about themselves, and who or what continues to play important roles in their lives.

Coding to Find Conceptual Relationships

During a researcher's process of axial coding, Strauss and Corbin (1998) applied the following scientific terms to make links between categories visible: "conditions – the circumstances or situations that form the structure of the studied phenomenon; actions/interactions – participant's routine or strategic responses to issues, events, or problems; and consequences – outcomes of actions/interactions" (p. 128). I applied this organizing scheme to frame the 17 categories in this study. While doing so, I found that depending on the development of each individual Black woman, a few of the categories were placed in more than one column. I placed an asterisk on the codes that showed up in more than one in scheme.

Table 4.2: Axial Coding

Conditions	Actions/Interactions	Consequences
Influence of religion/spirituality	Involvement on campus	Identity as a Black woman
Socioeconomic status	Social interactions on campus	Intersectionality of identities
Influence of familial figures/parents/grand	Interactions among Black women on campus	*Challenges of Black women on campus
Birth order	*Strength	*Support for Black women on campus
*Strength	*Challenges for Black women on campus	*Mentorship
Culture	*Support for Black women on campus	Stigma placed on Black women
*Media	*Mentorship	*Media
*Cultural Climate at PWI	*Media	
	*Cultural Climate at PWI	

**Category mentioned in more than one column*

The following codes were placed under the *conditions* scheme because of the structure that they created in the lives of the women: influence of religion or spirituality, socioeconomic status, influence of familial figures/parents/grandparents, birth order, *strength, culture, and *media. Next, I situated the codes involvement on campus, social interactions on campus, interactions among Black women on campus, *strength, *challenges for Black women on campus, *support for Black women on campus, *mentorship, and *media under the scheme *actions/interactions*, because of their effect on the women's behaviors and interactions with other people within the environment. The codes *strength* and *cultural climate at PWI* were present in both *conditions* and *actions/interactions* organizing schemes. Lastly, I believed the following codes to fit within the *consequences* scheme because they were a result of codes in previous schemes: identity as Black woman, intersectionality of identities, *challenges of Black women on campus, *support for Black women on campus, *mentorship, stigma placed on Black women, and *media. The code *media* was present in all three schemes – *conditions*, *actions/interactions,* and *consequences*.

Challenges of Black women on campus, support for Black women on campus, and mentorship were codes in both *actions/interactions* and *consequences*.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) contended that displaying the relationships between categories occurred on a conceptual level rather than a descriptive one. In addition to using the three scientific terms/schemes, researchers have found it useful to convert text into a visual display or figure that can visually illustrate conceptual relationships. In order to gain a conceptual view of the relationship between both the 82 focused codes and the 17 axial coding categories, I placed them into a figure (see Figure 4.1 in Appendix). The figure displays the original 82 codes from the focused coding technique lined up next to the 17 categories into which I collapsed them, and then vertically sectioned into the three schemes offered by Strauss and Corbin (1998) – conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences. Although all researchers may not use axial coding to organize their categories into Strauss and Corbin's organizing scheme (Charmaz, 2006), I found their structure to be helpful and it made sense with my categories.

Conclusion

The 82 initial codes from the focused coding were compiled into 17 categories after axial coding. I integrated the categories into Strauss and Corbin's (1998) three-part organizing scheme and displayed the conceptual relationships in Figure 4.1 (see Appendix). When considering the identity development of Black undergraduate women, the *conditions* they described ultimately influenced their actions and interactions (or lack of action) before coming to college or while in the collegiate environment. It was clear that some *conditions* or influences, such as media and role modeling, remain an influence or a constant throughout the collegiate experience. Influences such as parents and values that were taught in the home lay the foundation for one's development and identity as she enters college. The *actions or interactions*

within the collegiate environment then influenced a *consequence*, such as the way in which Black women chose to identify and whether they were fully aware of the intersections of their identities within their predominately White environment.

CHAPTER 5: THE MODEL

This chapter discusses the final point of data collection garnered through an online Qualtrics survey. This chapter integrates Figure 4.1 (Appendix G) into a theoretical model of identity development in Black undergraduate women on a predominately White campus. Referencing Strauss and Corbin's (1998) organizing scheme of conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences, I integrated participant data from transcriptions and the reflective survey into a model that articulates the women's experiences. The construction of the model is discussed in detail throughout this chapter. The model is broken apart in order to discuss each component individually while displaying the categories that represent each particular component.

After two rounds of interviews, member checking, reviewing of transcripts, and data analysis, participants were asked to evaluate my initial framework for a model of identity development via an online survey (see Appendix E). I provided an abbreviated version of the model description (minus the visual image) for their evaluation and feedback. The following six questions accompanied the model description: (1) How are your experiences adequately represented in this model? If not, please discuss; (2) What else would you add to this model? (e.g., specific experiences, support systems, etc.); (3) Describe your pre-collegiate socialization; (4) Describe your socialization in college; (5) How has the role modeling of someone else been influential in your life? Particularly the actions of another Black woman; and (6) Please identify your pseudonym. All 13 women responded to the online survey.

Model of Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women

Student development theories and models were created to guide the practice of administrators and faculty members working with college students (McEwen, 2003). Theories

can be grouped within the families of psychosocial, including social identity; cognitive; and person-environment. Models are necessary because they assist administrators and faculty members by providing a link between theory and practice (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). The model presented here is placed within the context of the few models that discuss multiple dimensions and intersectionalities of students' identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000) in student development literature. The purpose of the *Model of Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women* (MIDBUW) which was developed from this grounded theory study is to serve as a point of reference that will assist in supporting the experiences of Black women on our respective campuses. When asked how her experiences were represented in the model, Melanie responded,

> *Very adequately. In general, these are the different steps in life that we as Black women go through. The way that my experiences fit in the model are probably different than the way other women's experiences fit, but the processes are great chapter headers in our life stories.*

Although some of her experiences did not fit into the 17 categories and while she identified differently racially than her peers, Alice agreed that *"Everything in the model seems to be an accurate representation of the things that influence my life."*

This model is not a prescription to treat all Black undergraduate women the same, nor is it a reason to generalize their experiences. It presents three key assumptions in order to conceptualize the identity development of Black undergraduate women. First, the multiple identities of Black women are inextricably linked and must be discussed holistically (Collins, 1986). Second, the development of Black women and the articulation of their identities are influenced by social interactions within and as a result of their environment (Blumer, 1986;

Mead, 1934). Third, due to the legacy of marginalization and Black women being spoken for by the dominant voice (Collins, 1986), Black women eventually develop a mental state of multiple consciousness (King, 1988), in which they recognize their multiple oppressions as well as the relationships between them.

The three tenets of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) organizing scheme – conditions, actions/interactions, and consequences, along with the 17 categories from my axial coding process, are present throughout the model in addition to the women's voices. Although the original 82 codes were compiled into 17 categories, each woman articulated her experience differently and thus all 13 women are not representative in each category. However, all participants agreed that the 17 categories are accurate representations of how Black women develop their identity.

Each experience within the model is cyclical in nature in order to represent the ongoing journey of psychosocial and cognitive development within the lives of Black women. Thus, this model is not linear and progression does not necessarily occur in stages. *Personal foundations* is at the base of the model because it grounds the experiences of Black women and its components – history, legacy, and strength are present throughout one's identity development. At the root of one's experiences, the personal foundations do not change; it embodies one's historical frame of reference. *Pre-collegiate socialization*, *collegiate socialization*, and *interactions with others* all stack on top of the other to symbolize additional processes of development. As one works through her identity development, progression may happen in a very compartmental way for some individuals, while for other women, it can be integrated throughout all of the processes. Some identities may be more salient and thus one is better able to integrate those throughout the various processes. Other identities may not be as primary or developed and as a result one may

need to retreat back to one's *personal foundations* or *pre-collegiate socialization* for example, in order to understand or to better articulate that identity.

Articulation of identity sits on the top of the model as a culminating process through which Black women act upon what they have learned as a result of previous socialization processes and the consistent influences of media and role models in their lives. The four processes of development – *pre-collegiate socialization, collegiate socialization, interactions with others*, and *articulation of identity* all surround a Black woman's identity. It is within her identity where the intersections of her identities are discovered, challenged, and supported; throughout each process she is able to learn more about who she is, how she chooses to present herself, and interact with others depending on the environment. A Black women's development may occur throughout multiple experiences, just as meaning making may occur during and after pre-collegiate and collegiate socialization. Sally shared, *"the broad categories allow room for my experiences."* The broad categories or processes of development provide the appropriate outline for each individual Black woman's experience to be examined. Figure 5.1 combines the base, processes, and constants - personal foundations, identity, pre-collegiate socialization, collegiate socialization, interactions with others, articulation of identity, influence of media, and the influence of role modeling into the full model.

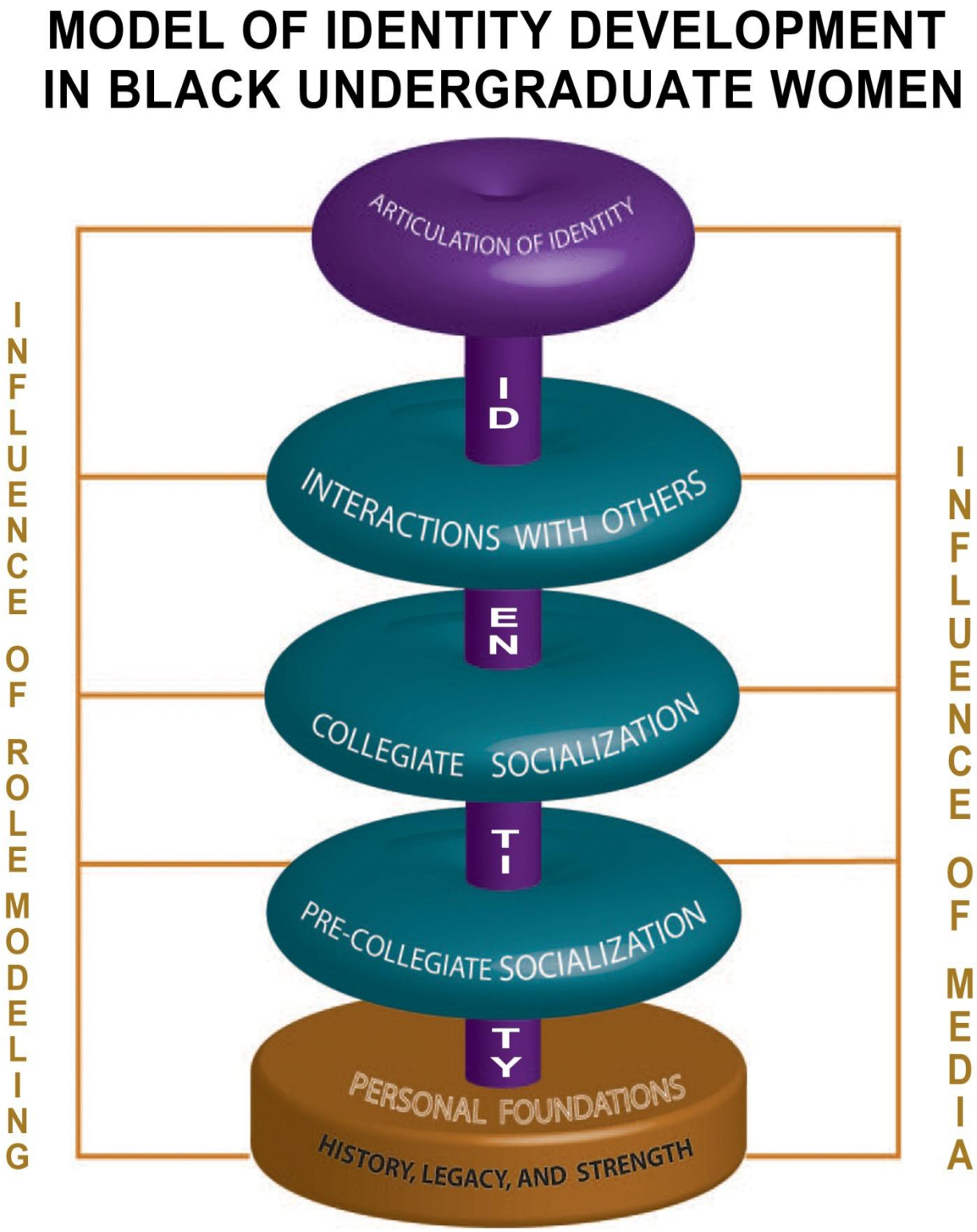

Figure 5.1: Model of Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women

Model created by C. J. Porter (2013).

Personal Foundations

The base of the model represents personal foundations of the history, legacy, and strength that ground Black women's experiences. Strength was the category from the participant's experiences that embodied their personal foundation.

Rachel shared,

> *Black women in general are pretty spiritual and strong for everyone, all the Black women I know have a lot going on but I don't see a lot of people being able to just give up. The Black women I'm around, we take it and we just keep going, we keep going...I guess it started way back when, probably in Africa.*

Alona asserted,

> *We're just so strong. I can't think of any other word but strong because when I think about where we came from, from establishing ourselves, not just in workforce but all the way from slavery, the way that we were treated, battered, and raped and things that started a long, long time ago.*

This history is ever-present and foundational in one's life and a reminder of the strength from which one is rooted. Regardless of Black women's nationality, the legacy of strength permeates the African Diaspora and remains a fundamental layer of existence. The category *strength* was included in personal foundations; its visual is represented in Figure 5.2.

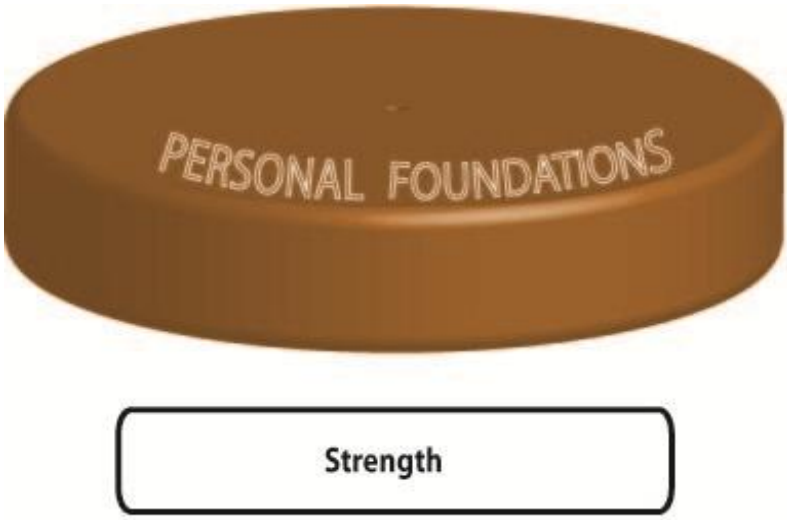

Figure 5.2: Personal Foundations

Model created by C. J. Porter (2013).

Identity

The identity column in the middle of the model represents the wholeness of a Black woman's self and the intersections of her identities. Identity extends throughout the entire model because Black women are present as whole individuals throughout their processes of development. Certain identities may be more salient or primary during certain processes throughout one's socialization; however all are still valuable and valued (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). Black women do not exist as a monolithic group of people, and thus each woman's identity and individual process will look different.

Pre-Collegiate Socialization

The first process of the model is pre-collegiate socialization. In this process of socialization women are influenced by their conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories such as religion or spirituality, values, beliefs, influence of familial figures/parents/grandparents, and birth order are introduced during this period and may have specific roles in the socialization process.

How a Black woman is raised, what and by whom she is taught, to what she is exposed, and the environment in which she is nurtured are all important factors in this pre-collegiate process.

Direct or indirect discussions of socially constructed identities (e.g., socioeconomic status, race, gender, class, and sexual orientation) and the value placed on each of them individually as well as collectively are introduced by people and/or institutions that have the power and influence to socialize Black women. In her early years, the role each person/institution plays in a woman's life can lay a foundational set of principles that will guide her for many years. Whether race is a salient identity (Cross, 1991) and part of one's early socialization, or if a Black woman's multiple identities are discussed (Collins, 1986) by influential members of her community, can set a tone for her ability to articulate her identity.

In some women, however, the socialization that takes place prior to entering the collegiate environment can affect whether they know who they are or what they should believe. Vivica articulated, *"The demographics of one's environment growing up have an influence on one's adaptation to college life."* Environments that Black undergraduate women are exposed to before attending college may not prepare Black women for the transition into college life, particularly at a predominately White institution. Figure 5.3 represents the categories the participants discussed during the process of pre-collegiate socialization.

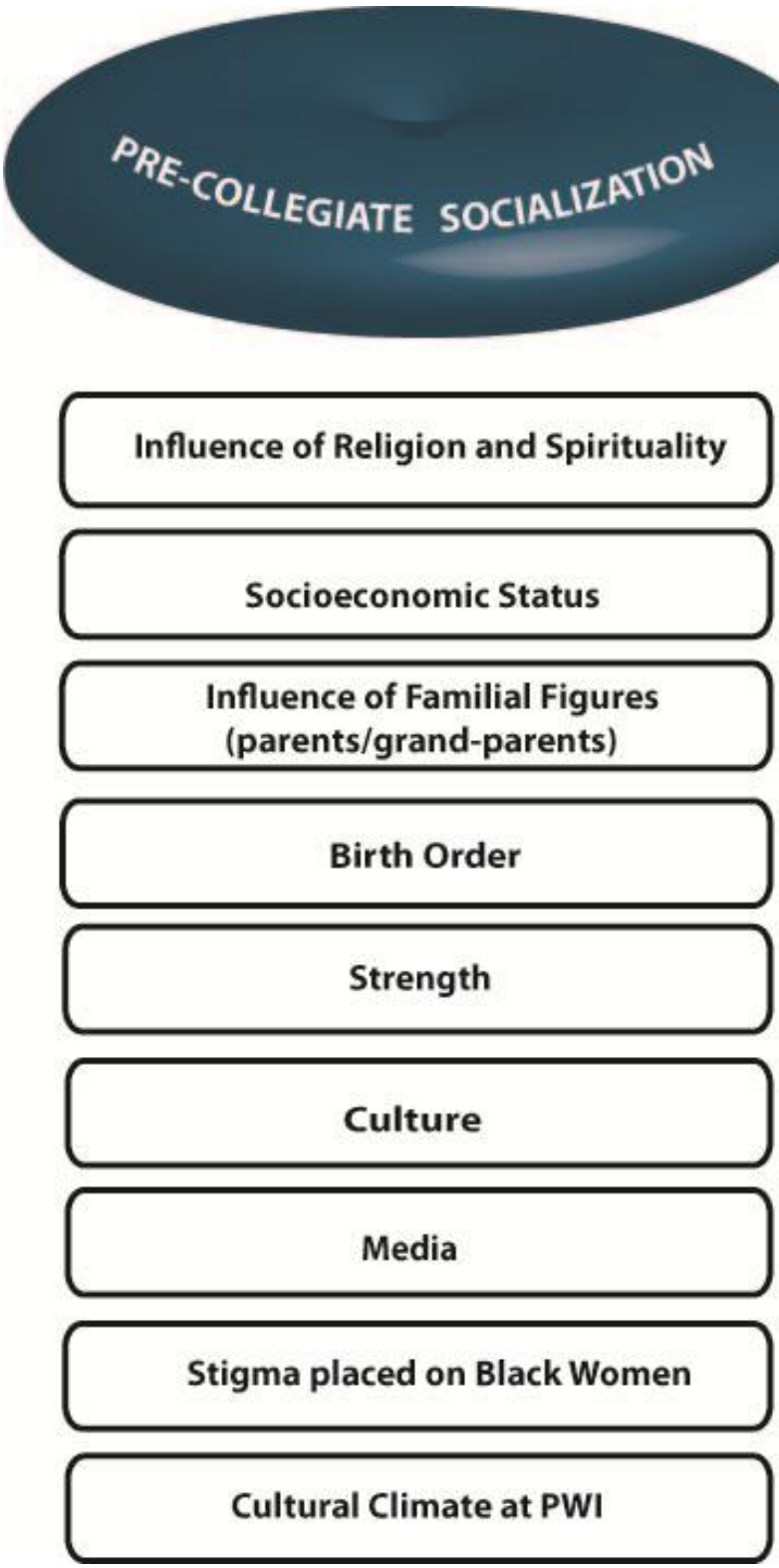

Figure 5.3: Pre-Collegiate Socialization

Model created by C. J. Porter (2013).

Collegiate Socialization

The second process in the model is collegiate socialization. Within the collegiate environment Black women interact socially and academically with other students, staff and faculty members who may not look like them. For some this is the first time, and may be what some call a culture shock. Six of the 13 women spoke to their experiences coming from predominately Black environments before attending the host institution.

For the other Black women, this PWI collegiate environment was similar to their high school or previous institutional experience. The traditional collegiate environment socializes students to become involved on campus – whether the involvement is social, academic, or civic, the environment is conducive for Black women to interact with their peers on a variety of levels. It is important to note, however, that some Black women choose to solely focus on their academic studies and remain in community with a selected group of people on and off campus. The reason for some is simply because they choose to, but for other Black women, the choice is symbolic of the predominately White environment; they do not feel a sense of community or a welcoming cultural climate. Peer groups, friendships circles, and/or smaller communities play a major role in the development of Black women. For some, they are the extension of family; for others, they represent a supportive space where Black women do not have to explain themselves or their actions, and where their identities are affirmed.

Within the classroom, some Black women find themselves one of a few or even the only one within their academic major (i.e., particularly disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The academic socialization process for each student may be different; however, the support from faculty and interactions with staff members are critical for the academic success of Black women. As a result of often being the ‘only one’ and feeling

marginalized (Schlossberg, 1989a) by peers in classroom settings, validation from faculty members becomes even more important for Black women (Rendón, 1994). Iman affirmed,

> *I've actually had some great teachers here, but I do notice in some of smaller my classes where I'm the only Black person or it's only like maybe two of us in there, I notice the teacher as she is lecturing she'll kind of look at us to make sure that we're getting the information or try to read our faces and make sure we're not confused about anything. They don't blatantly just say are you getting this?*

Whether there is a critical mass of Black women and Black students overall on campus is also a factor in one's socialization. The campus climate for cultural diversity is also a crucial indicator of a challenging or supportive environment conducive for the learning and development of Black college women. Figure 5.4 represents the categories the participants discussed during the process of collegiate socialization.

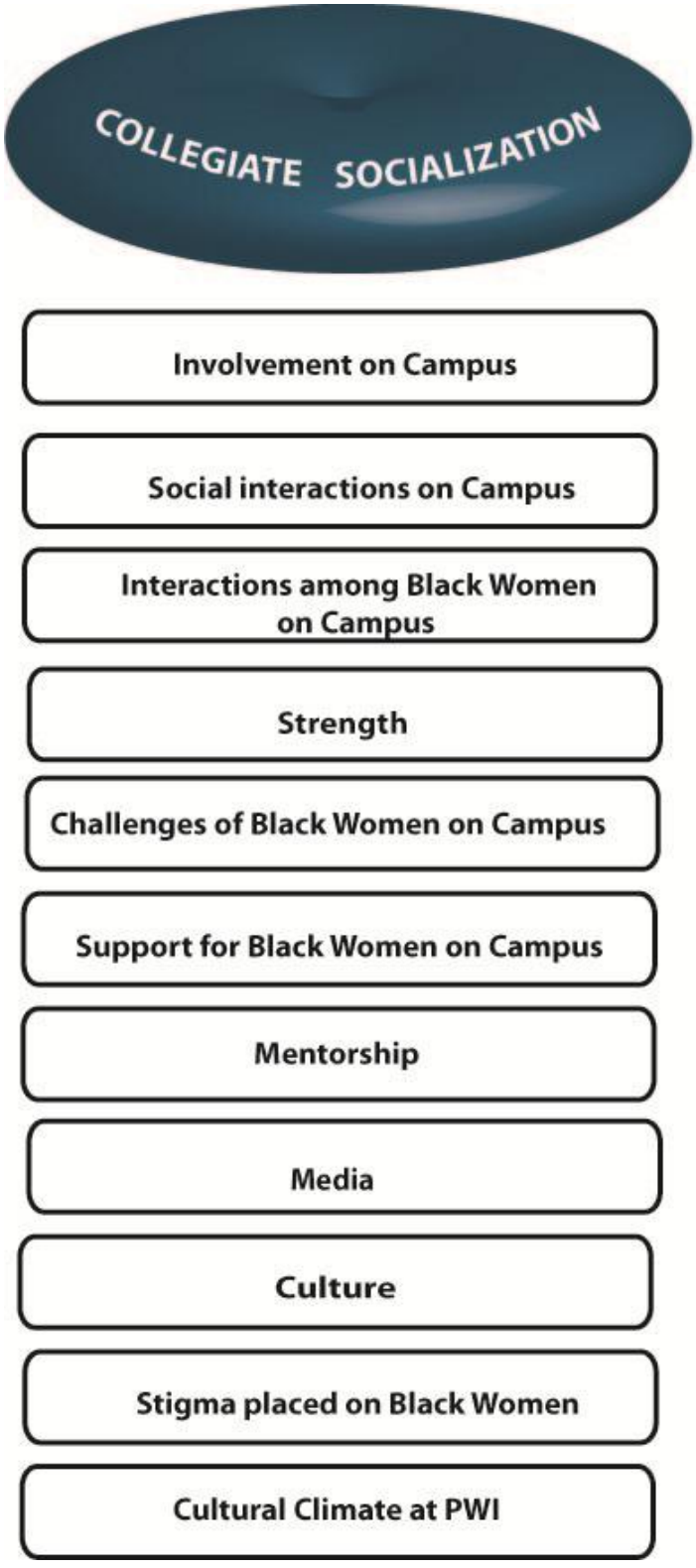

Figure 5.4: Collegiate Socialization

Model created by C. J. Porter (2013).

Interactions with Others

Personal foundations as the base of the model and the experience of each process of socialization all influence how Black women will respond to and interact with others. Interactions occur at all points of development; however, it is the variations of these interactions within different environments that dictate the level of effect on how women articulate their identity. Rachel commented specifically on interactions with Black men,

> *Fathers, figures of authority, friends, and romantic partners, all play a part in the cultural development of the resilient Black women. The absence or presence of a Black man in a Black woman's life is influential, especially during periods of pre-collegiate and collegiate socialization.*

Figure 5.5 displays the categories related to interactions within the collegiate environment - involvement on campus, social interactions on campus, interactions among Black women on campus, strength, challenges of Black women on campus, support for Black women on campus, and mentorship. Strauss and Corbin (1998) labeled this scheme as actions/interactions. Black women make meaning of their experiences both prior to and as a result of interactions with others in their various environments. Each interaction influences how and when women are able to articulate their identities.

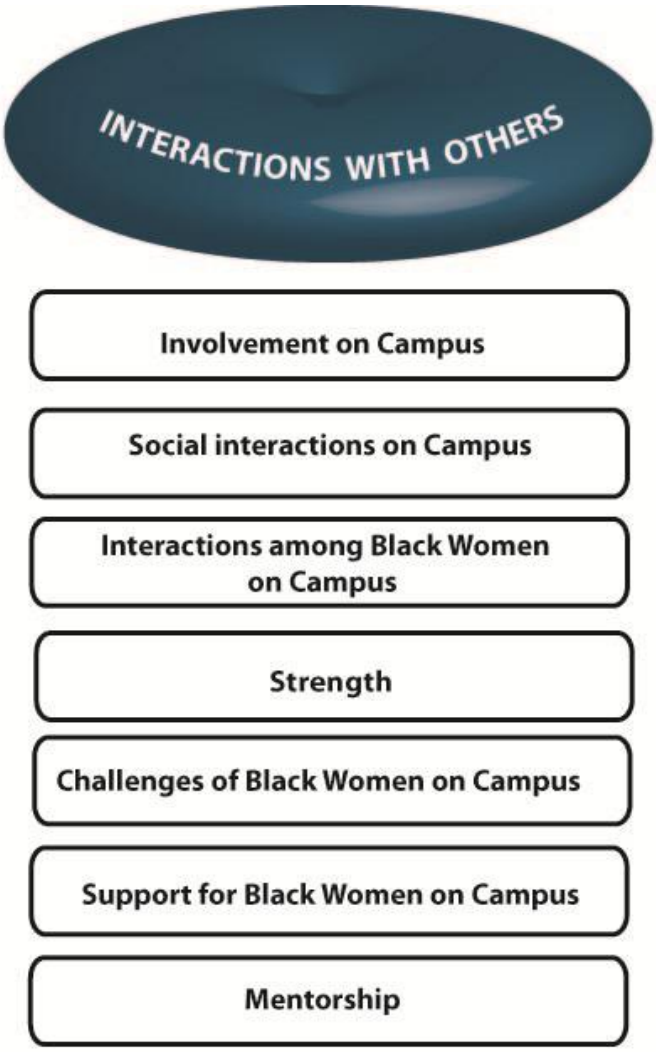

Figure 5.5: Interactions with Others

Model created by C. J. Porter (2013).

Articulation of Identity

Cognitive meaning making may occur during both pre-collegiate and collegiate socialization processes. However, as Black women mature, interact with others on campus, and are exposed to deeper levels of understanding of themselves, their environments, and society, they are able to better articulate their identities. I paralleled *articulation of identity* with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) scheme *consequences*. Skye spoke to the intersections of her identity on in a predominately White environment,

I would definitely agree that my experiences have been strongly due to the various intersections of my identities. Experiences, both positive and negative, that I've endured have mostly occurred due to me being Black, gay, and woman on a predominately White, conservative, male-dominated university.

Sally shared her perspective on the challenges Black women experience in college and what she has learned throughout her development.

Definitely the stereotypes, the expectations regarding how we're supposed to act, how we're supposed to talk, how we're supposed to dress, and feeling comfortable with just being you, whatever that 'you' is. Because there are all these expectations, a lot of them [women] are uncomfortable with just being themselves. I see a lot of Black women succumb to other people's expectations of them, unfortunately. I think it really boils down to why they're doing the things they do, versus what they are doing. My Women's Studies class really put things into perspective and has made me just think more critically about the social structures and how people interact. Being really aware is really exhausting. (laughs) But it has also helped me realize why I do the things that I do and I'm learning to not care about whatever people say because someone is always going to have a problem with it.

Below, figure 5.6 displays categories that represent the articulation of identity – identity as a Black woman, intersectionality of identities, challenges of Black women on campus, support for Black women on campus, mentorship, stigma placed on Black women, and media.

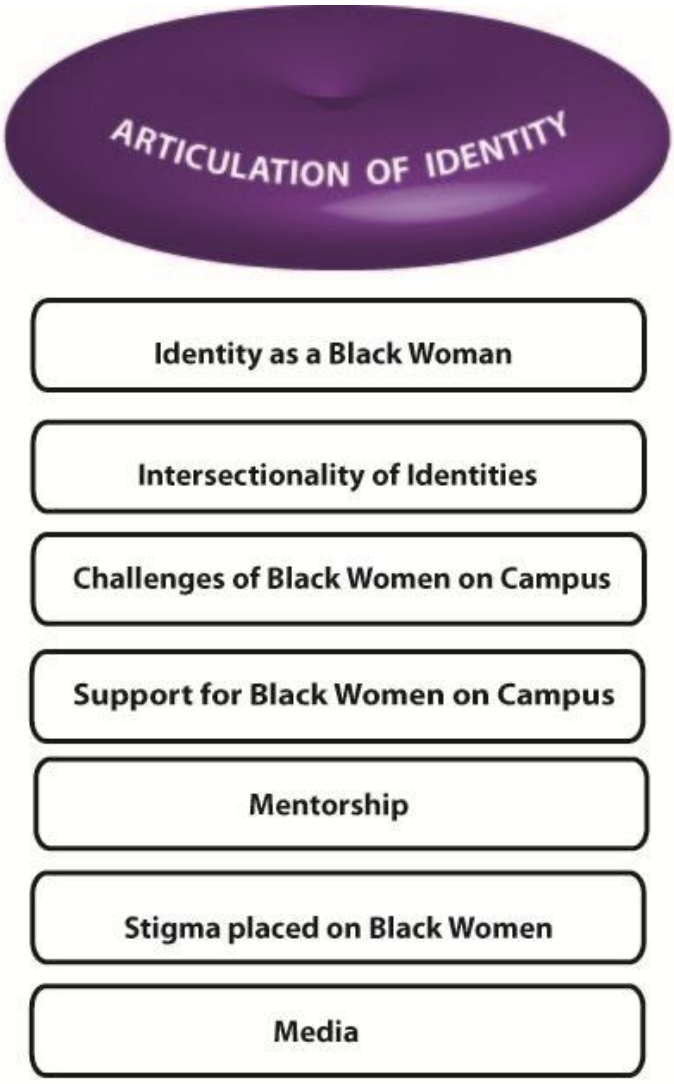

Figure 5.6: Articulation of Identity

Model created by C. J. Porter (2013).

Constants

Influence of media. Media has had a significant role in the lives of Black women for many years. Its influence remains a constant reminder of stigmas/stereotypes that Black women embody. The lack of positive images and the abundance of negative images of Black women present in the media reveal the telling story of Black women's place in society. Negative images dominate pop culture and perpetuate what Black women should look like and how they should behave. Many of the women in this study emphasized their frustration with the media, but

agreed that it remains an influence. When asked where she learned how to be a Black woman, Ashanti responded,

> *Well definitely from my mom, definitely from my grandma, definitely from the people who have been in my life since day one, you know my sisters and everything. But a lot of it has to do with the media too. It kind of made me question myself as a Black woman just because of what I saw, what I've grown up looking at. I asked myself, 'is this how I'm supposed to be as a Black woman as opposed to what my mom is telling me to be – independent, strong, beautiful. But then I see these women on TV and they're sexualizing themselves and you kind of question 'well is this how I have to be,'' is this how society me as' and if so, 'am I being you know true to myself?'*

Influence of role modeling. Role modeling at various stages throughout the lives of Black women can be beneficial to one's development. Whether Black women are the ones modeling for others or looking to another for guidance, role modeling has been beneficial in the lives of Black women. Melanie expressed, *"Instead of having a role model, I like to try to make myself into someone somebody would want as a role model."* When Black women have mentors, specifically other Black women, who they can look up to and call on for support and guidance, their self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-awareness are positively impacted. Ashanti discussed,

> *Mentors often provide me with a sounding board to vent, a shoulder to cry on, and sometimes just someone to listen to me while I word my own problems out.*

> *A strong Black woman helps me see what strength looks like, how to better express myself without being an 'angry Black woman' and many time brings me down a few notches when I go too far to the left.*

Lula simply stated, *"The Black women in my life paint a picture of how I want my life to be."*

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this constructivist grounded theory study was to conceptualize how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) developed their identity as Black women. The examination of their notions of self and explanations of social interactions with others resulted in the co-construction of the theoretical model – *Model of Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women* (MIDBUW). Symbolic interactionism and Black feminist thought theoretically framed the methodological approach I used to conceptualize identity development among Black undergraduate women. This study addressed several research questions including: (1) How Black undergraduate women enrolled at a PWI developed and described their identity as Black women, (2) What it meant to be a Black woman in college, (3) How attending a PWI informed or influenced their identity as Black women, and (4) What unique opportunities or challenges a predominately White institutional environment created for Black women and how the participants negotiated these spaces.

Chapter four reviewed the data collection, data analysis, and findings from the study. Participant demographics, focused and axial coding processes and relationships among the categories were visually displayed in order to show the conceptual integration and transition into the theoretical model discussed in chapter five. Chapter five integrated the participants' experiences and quotations, and as a result of axial coding, I constructed the MIDBUW. This chapter is structured via Strauss and Corbin's (1998) organizing schemes with relation to the four processes of the MIDBUW. This chapter will discuss the findings of the study and answer the four research questions.

Lastly, implications for practice and recommendations for future research studies on Black undergraduate women and their identity development will be discussed.

Discussion of Findings

I examined the development of Black undergraduate women from both the psychological and sociological perspectives in order to offer a broader understanding of how their identity is constructed and manifested through the lenses of self, others, and their environment. I found that both psychological and sociological perspectives were relevant to the experiences of Black undergraduate women as some experience self prior to interactions with others, while some experience self as a result of their interactions with others within their social environment. Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1982; Mead, 1934) theoretically framed part of this study as many of their interactions on campus with administrators, other Black women, and their peers played a role in the articulation of their identities. Black feminist thought (Collins, 1986) provided a counter-narrative to the dominant framework whereby the perspectives of Black undergraduate women could be highlighted.

Conditions: Personal Foundations and Pre-Collegiate Socialization

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested a three-part organizing scheme of *conditions, actions/interactions*, and *consequences* for the axial coding process that was used in analysis for this study and correlated with the MIDBUW. The conditions that influenced and grounded the experiences of Black women before they stepped into the collegiate environment are located within the base of the model. I identified these pre-collegiate socialization categories as the influence of religion/spirituality, socioeconomic status, influence of parents and grandparents, birth order, strength, culture, media, and cultural climate at PWI.

I included cultural climate at a PWI because I learned that the women were impacted by the cultural climate differently, based upon their experiences with people who had different racial identities in high school.

I include the constant, the influence of media, in this section because my participants shared their experiences with media as younger adults and their ability or inability to discern which messages were appropriate to follow. They expressed frustration with the media's constant ability to negatively impact them and other Black women throughout their lives. As a result of their discussion, I found it necessary to place media along side of the spheres since it was a consistent backdrop throughout which their identity development occurs.

Actions/Interactions: Collegiate Socialization and Interactions with Others

Being a Black woman in college. Six of the 13 women were raised in predominately Black environments and thus, when arriving to campus, were in fact surprised by the cultural climate and lack of critical mass of Black students, or students of color for that matter. The *actions/interactions* that influenced collegiate socialization were identified as the following categories: involvement on campus, social interactions on campus, interactions among Black women on campus, strength, challenges for Black women on campus, support for Black women on campus, and mentorship.

Not all of the participants were involved in social or academic organizations on campus. Iman chose to focus specifically on her studies and interact primarily with their specific group of friends as opposed to a social organization or sorority. Melanie decided to live off campus and commute to campus for work and class. For those women who were involved on campus, interactions with their organizations included holding an executive officer role. We discussed interactions intra-racially with other Black women and with their peers across race. Participants

spoke highly of the support they acquired within their groups of Black women friends as well as from women they did not personally know. For example, because there was not a critical mass of Black undergraduate women on campus, participants spoke of the need to help and look out for one another, particularly in classroom settings when they accounted for one of a few Black women, Black students, or even students of color in the class (i.e., getting each others' cell phone numbers to make sure they could keep one another informed about class material).

Strength as a category was present in both the c*onditions* scheme and in *actions/interactions*. Participants spoke throughout their interviews of their individual ability and our collective ability as Black women to remain strong. The base (personal foundations) of the model encompasses our rich history as Black women, the diversity and pain of our past in addition to the legacy we carry into the future. Our collective experience grounds our individual journeys and many of the participants, particularly the older women, were able to draw upon that legacy of strength and understand its impact on who they are today. Most of them referenced the word strength when speaking of their mothers and their own resiliency to overcome situations and challenges on campus and in their own past. They recognized that all of who we are as Black women embodies who we are as individuals. Some of the challenges they referenced were low self-esteem, being a minority on campus, existing in an environment with people who may have had few interactions with Black women, being the only one in many of the spaces they encountered on campus, and trying to define for yourself who you want to be.

Opportunities and challenges of attending a PWI. This study confirmed the three environmental frameworks – challenge and support (Sanford, 1966), marginality and mattering (Schlossberg, 1989a), and academic validation (Rendón, 1994) – related to the identity development of Black undergraduate women at a PWI.

Participants shared that during interactions across race with their peers, depending upon their majors, they were not perceived as smart, were not validated, and therefore felt that they have to prove themselves to both their professor and peers. Lulu mentioned,

> *Most people don't really see me as smart until after I get my test scores back, which is quite interesting, because when I get my tests scores back and I'm making the Bs and the A's and people are like, 'oh snap, let me study with you.' I do feel like people don't really take me seriously sometimes when I'm in class, for different reasons, even though I do talk and I do speak up in my smaller classes. But until I get my test grades back they're like, 'oh she got a 94,' then they're like, 'she's smart.' I'm like, 'yeah, been this way the whole time.'*

Students shared specific examples of when they were in group-like settings in which they were perceived as not carrying their weight for a group project and even called out for their inability to perform the delegated tasks based upon racial stereotypes. Sue and Constantine (2007) stated that these microagressions served as insults directed at people of color to oppress and indicate dominance.

We discussed the topic of navigating the academic rigor within this environment, and regardless of their majors, each woman found her own strategy. Whether it was joining study groups across race or staying up all night to study, the women were passionate about graduating from the institution. Our conversations revealed similarities to Banks' (2009) study of Black women's ability to negotiate their academic social success in the classroom. Black women were dedicated to doing whatever it took (within legal bounds) to succeed academically, with or without the support of their advisors or faculty members, and whether they felt of value (or that they mattered) to the institution. My participants mentioned the importance of their relationships

with their professors, when it was appropriate to disclose their need for assistance, and whether or not they felt they would be supported or challenged.

Women felt most validated in classes for their academic major. Ashanti asserted, "*In my discussion-based classes and in my [major] classes. I mean that might sound crazy, but when I'm in my major classes, I feel so smart (laughs).*" It was affirming to hear them articulate where they felt they mattered most. Alona expressed,

> *I feel like I matter because of my self esteem. I pretty much feel like I matter at all times. It just varies in the how much I matter at different times. I'm not just taking up space so if I'm there, I'm there for a purpose. I matter in the sense that I'm there for that purpose whatever it is. I feel even in the classrooms just because of the type of student that I am; I love to raise my hand and give feedback. Those are my favorite classes, where participation is a big part of your grade. So in the classroom even when I am the only Black person or if I am one only out of three Blacks, it isn't even like I'm about to raise my hand for the intention of standing out or anything, that's just me. And I think that just all comes from being comfortable in who I am.*

Skye shared, *"I feel like I matter just in a lot of my leadership opportunities, interacting with administrators, alumni, future students."* Some of the women found the support they needed, and that they mattered most in their friend groups. Other women who spoke highly of the support they received from departments or individual members of faculty and staff appreciated the outlet and guidance. Some even named specific departments or administrators and faculty members who have played vital roles in their identity development.

Those who shared specific names also discussed how those individuals challenged them to remain strong and strive to be the best they could despite whatever circumstances they were facing at the time.

Black undergraduate women in this predominately White environment shared experiences that affirmed each of the three frameworks – challenge and support (Sanford, 1966), marginality and mattering (Schlossberg, 1989a), and academic validation (Rendón, 1994). Regardless of the conditions and challenges in the collegiate environment, the participants found support where they needed, assumed spaces/positions through which they mattered, and identified factors by which they felt validated.

PWI's influence on identity development. The predominately White environment continued to play a role as they navigate these challenges and articulate their identities as Black women. When we discussed how the environment has influenced their development, Vivica commented, *"Interacting with people every day is making me aware that I'm a Black woman. It makes me watch how I carry myself. I make sure I carry myself to the utmost standards."* Jacqueline described learning from other Black women on campus.

> *I became surrounded by these strong academically gifted, leader-oriented Black women who also were going through things that I was going through, but they had their lives together. They were still very focused on their school work. They didn't let their issues control them and that inspired me to be a better Black woman for myself; to get my issues in check and to just focus on what's important while you're here.*

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined their scheme *actions/interactions* as a participant's routine or strategic responses to issues, events, or problems. The women in this study articulated their decisions to be involved on campus, influence of strength and its impact on their actions,

their interactions with other Black women both in and outside of the classroom, and interactions with their peers, faculty members, and administrators. Their personal foundations and pre-collegiate socialization processes influenced responses to their experiences and interactions they encountered while in the predominately White collegiate setting. It is as a result of the actions/interactions in relation to the processes of development that Black women are able to make meaning of their identity, its intersections, and articulate those identities to others.

Consequences: Identity and Articulation of Identity

Descriptions and development of identity as Black women. Audre Lorde (1984) expressed, "It is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others – for their use and to our detriment" (p. 45). All of the participants were appreciative of the interview process and thanked me for the opportunity to reflect on their personal definitions of what it meant to be Black women. For many, this was not the first time they thought about being Black women, but for a couple of the participants, this experience challenged them to evaluate how their friends define them and examine more closely the derogatory actions and behaviors of their White friends towards them.

We discussed how they viewed race and whether it was a primary identity for them. Cross's (1991) revised *Model of Nigrescence* transitioned his original model to acknowledge the saliency of one's racial identity, group membership, and associations (reference group orientation). Participants who held a high race saliency tended to identify themselves as Black women first, acknowledged the importance of their racial influences growing up, could identify minority-specific support services and organizations on campus, and held a higher level of comfort interacting with other students/administrators of color on campus, in addition to having a supportive group of Black friends. This high race saliency may have been initially introduced

during the pre-collegiate socialization period or during the collegiate socialization period. Either way, Black women who are able to make meaning of their racial identity and its intersections are more likely to understand and thus respond to their marginalization within the predominately White environment.

The categories reflecting *consequences* from the Strauss and Corbin's (1998) model included identity as a Black woman, intersectionality of identities, challenges of Black women on campus, support for Black women on campus, mentorship, and stigma placed on Black women. These categories were included in the *consequences* scheme because they represent the outcomes of actions/interactions. Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007) challenged scholars to move beyond race and gender in their re-conceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity. In addition to identifying themselves as Black women, a few of the women were able to articulate cognitive meaning of the intersections of their identities. Conversations consisted of one's ability to balance all the identities and the pressure to show up authentically in certain spaces as opposed to others (e.g., friendship group vs. place of worship). Winkle-Wagner (2009) introduced this as a Black woman's *notion of self* in relation to the environment. Her study illuminated the multiple layers through which Black undergraduate women have to mentally sort before deciding which 'self' they want to reveal in the environment, depending upon the type of interaction. I further Winkle-Wagner's idea and identify this notion as Black women's ability to articulate their identity as a result of socialization processes, interactions, and with the assistance of support and role modeling.

Mentorship or the influence of role modeling serves as the other structural constant on the model. Whether or not the participants had role models to assist in their negotiation of identity was crucial to where they ended up at the conclusion of our interviews. Those who did have

someone whom they considered an influence in their life shared their appreciation for guidance, support, and having someone who helped them along in their journey through womanhood, particularly for those who had a Black woman role model. Other conversations of mentorship or modeling consisted of the participants serving in the role to someone else. Whichever the case was, all of the participants indicated the importance of role modeling throughout one's life and its value in the development of identity.

Boundaries of Study

I do not believe this study has limitations as traditionally defined; however, researchers and administrators should contextualize the boundaries of this study. This study was conducted at Southeastern State University, a predominately White institution in the Southeast, also considered the flagship in the state where the institution is located. Experiences and interactions related to cultural climate, a PWI environment, and a lack of a critical mass of Black women students may be different on another campus in a different region of the United States. Although the participant sample was diverse considering broader terms of diversity and identities (e.g., nationality, color, religion, and age), it is necessary to acknowledge that the MIDBUW is grounded in the experiences of the 13 women from this particular study.

Implications for Practice

Although this was my first time meeting all of the women who served as my participants, trust was built very quickly in the private space. I cannot be certain whether it was my ability to make them feel comfortable, their desire to share about this particular topic, or their yearning for a space just to be their authentic selves. However, I am very sure the tears shed in our private space, the laughter, and the passionate anecdotes of pain, success, and strength were genuine, and for many of the women, it was their first time sharing. Even after I solidified that I would no

longer interview more women, I still received emails from interested Black undergraduate women on campus concerning this study. The continuous emails provided support not only to the level of interest in the topic, but also to the very fact that Black women need the space to dialogue about their experiences.

Spaces for Black Undergraduate Women

On predominately White campuses there must be a space(s) for Black undergraduate women to call 'home,' to consider safe enough to dialogue about their frustrations concerning academics, to describe interactions with their peers and one another, and to feel they matter. Black undergraduate women are graduating at lower rates than other women (NCES, 2011); their success is dependent on more than just enrolling them into the institution. We must provide intentional and supportive spaces on campus for them to dialogue, be affirmed, and be validated as Black women.

The spaces do not necessarily have to exist as women's services centers or cultural centers. Targeted programming would play a significant role in affirming the holistic development of Black women; this could include efforts by student organizations or departments, NPHC sororities, and Residence Life and could focus on topics such as the influences of media and role modeling, how to negotiate our multiple identities as Black women, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. As discussed by participants in this study, each of them was at a different point in her development, from considering herself primarily an American to fully embracing the intersectionalities of all of her identities.

As a result, there is not one single solution for administrators and faculty to support all Black undergraduate women (Howard-Hamilton, 2003); however, the first step is to gain a deeper understanding of their needs on campus in order to effectively create better support systems and practically apply the MIDBUW.

Conduct a Needs Assessment

Conducting a needs assessment (Schuh & Upcraft, 2001) would assist in exploring the experiences of Black women on campus, particularly if there are not any relevant or current data available in the Division of Student Affairs or Office of Institutional Research. Typically, needs assessments determine whether factors, services, opportunities, and conditions are present for students to meet their educational goals (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). In the case of Black women, however, it is important to specifically examine their collegiate socialization processes, factors influencing their identity development, and their interactions with others on campus. The assessment could be both quantitative and qualitative. It would be beneficial to host focus groups of Black women in order to hear their campus experiences and afford them the opportunity to be in community with one another, especially if there is not a critical mass of them on campus.

Mentoring Programs

Black undergraduate women need to see successful women older than them, who look like them. Mentoring programs can be peer-to-peer, faculty/staff-to-student, or even alumni-to-student, whatever works best for the students and community on a particular campus. Participants from this study spoke specifically to their desire of having someone guide and help them transition through the academic environment as well as assist in their personal and professional development. Once the structure of the program is formed, then goals and outcomes

should be established for the program. Throughout the process of development and implementation of the program, students should feel validated and valued. Thus, holding the mentors accountable for their commitment to the students involved will attribute to the overall success of the mentoring program.

Use of Models

The current models and theories of student development were not created to be used as prescriptions to treat students. However, they are useful as guides to assist when coordinating supportive services, developing programs, training members of staff and faculty, and working one-on-one with students. The implications for the MIDBUW are no different. The purpose of the model is to serve as a point of reference when working specifically with Black women. When teaching graduate students in student affairs/higher education preparation programs, this model should be situated within the context of both the psychosocial and cognitive families of theories and with the few that focus on multiple dimensions of identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). This model adds new perspectives to previous theories/models of women's development (Belenky, Clinchy, Golderberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1977, 1982/1993) by grounding the participants' experiences in race in addition to incorporating the intersections of additional identities the participants identified as important to who they are as Black undergraduate women.

Gilligan (1977, 1982/1993) spoke to women's moral development and the various transitions women persist through while making decisions. In this study and articulated on the MIDBUW, Black women make meaning and decisions based upon both their interactions with themselves and others. As Black women experienced the four processes, specifically within the collegiate environment, they identified a need to only not take care of self, but more importantly

they were concerned about how their decisions ultimately impacted those with whom they were in relationship. The Black women's ability to make decisions was affected by their ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1986). All of the women held various perspectives in the ways in which they viewed and knew the world; each attributed their knowledge to pre-collegiate and collegiate socialization processes, as well as interactions with others. Whether they were searching for their own knowledge or truth, or making a decision that affected them or their family, Black undergraduate women searched for their personal voice in order to articulate who they were throughout the process.

This study confirmed Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (2001) second revision of the *Model of Nigrescence* because the women's earlier experiences of socialization influenced their identity development in college. Cross and Fhagen-Smith (2001) argued that Black identity development takes place across the lifespan as opposed to being limited to a particular stage. Additionally, this model validated the *Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity* (MMRI) (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998) because there is no judgment placed on whether a women's racial saliency is positive or negative. The MMRI is not a stage model, and thus does not elevate individuals through stages of development based upon whether they have successfully 'passed through' a level of Black identity development. The MIDBUW, similar to the MMRI, does not place judgment on racial saliency and enables each woman to personally assess and articulate for herself, her own identity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) at any given point in time as opposed to at a certain stage (Sellers et al., 1998).

Psychological Counseling and Services

Some Black women come into the collegiate environment with pre-existing issues and personal challenges. Those issues may include addiction, low self-esteem as a result of battling

with stereotypical images of what Black women are 'supposed to be' in the media, and the inability to be one's authentic self in a certain environment. Some Black women enter the new environment and are unable to effectively transition, and so need the support of psychological and counseling services. Counselors must be equipped to acknowledge the diversity within the community of Black undergraduate women. They must be culturally sensitive, able to learn and empathize with the personal foundations that Black women carry, and ready to acknowledge the factors that are influential to the women's experiences. Formalized support groups for Black women or women of color are a way for women to come together, in addition to the one-on-one counseling. Such opportunities offer the spaces that participants in this study identified as crucial for their ability to succeed in the predominately White environment. Some Black women may not trust a counselor they do not know, but if they have the opportunity to go to a group session with a friend, they may be more likely to attend.

Creating space(s) on campus, conducting a needs assessment, developing a mentoring program, using theoretical models to guide practice, and enhancing psychological counseling and services are just a few suggestions that will assist in supporting both the individual and collective needs of Black undergraduate women. Black women respond to services differently, as each woman is on her own journey of development. Therefore, administrators and faculty members must actively seek a variety of ways to assist Black women as individuals and as the larger collective. The first step however, is to recognize that the collective experiences of Black women need to be examined further. The individual chapters may be different, but there are commonalities within the collective story line.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provided the data to support that the identity development of Black undergraduate women can be conceptualized into a theoretical model. Thirteen women's experiences ground the model that will guide future research. The identity development of Black undergraduate women at other predominately White institutions outside of the Southeast should be examined to confirm that this model holds true for students in other institutions and regions. The range of possible research studies that explore the identity development in Black undergraduate women at PWIs is vast. This model can be examined through qualitative studies conducted on Black undergraduate women in student organizations such as a sorority, Black women in a particular major (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics majors), or Black women athletes on campus. Each of these studies would focus on a specific sub-set of Black undergraduate women and contribute the specific socialization experiences of these women to the growing body of literature. Different conceptual and theoretical frameworks (e.g., critical race theory, phenomenology) and data collection methods (e.g., photo elicitation, focus groups, narrative analysis) could be used to move beyond semi-structured interviews and a survey reflection. Including various frameworks and collection methods would provide the opportunity to examine the women's experiences through multiple lenses and engage creative forms of sharing/hearing their stories.

Black Undergraduate Women at PWIs vs. HBCUs

A comparative study should also be conducted to explore the identity development of Black women at PWIs with those at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The socialization process should be examined specifically to compare and contrast the differences and similarities of Black undergraduate women who experience college in the two differing

environments. What are factors that influence the identity development and collegiate socialization of Black women who attend a PWI versus an HBCU? Within the MIDBUW specifically, the collegiate socialization process, interactions with others, and one's articulation of identity could be influenced based upon whether a woman attended a PWI or an HBCU. An additional study exploring the within-group differences of Black undergraduate women attending HBCUs could also provide insight to the specific experiences of the differing environments on those campuses.

Black Women's Self-Authorship

Recommendations for future research extend beyond the collegiate environment. This study could serve as a foundation to explore how the identity development of Black undergraduate women influences their self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004) post-graduation. A longitudinal study could examine how socialization processes have not only affected their articulation of identity, but also their life choices (personal and professional), values, behaviors, and ways of knowing, after they have graduated from the collegiate environment and transitioned into different environments years later. Examining the self-authorship of Black women after graduation would enable women to reflect more deeply on how their socialization processes, interactions with others, and articulation of identity influenced their development into their adult years. A longitudinal study could validate whether the MIDBUW holds true across the lifespan (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, 2001).

Quantitative Studies

The study of the identity development in Black women should also be examined through quantitative methods in order to gain a macro-level snapshot of socialization, interactions, and how identity is articulated. Once the empirical scholarship has developed and the model (or

variations of the model) has gained its footing, there would be implications for the creation of a quantitative instrument to supplement qualitative methods by providing statistical analysis of the data. Having both qualitative and quantitative data to explore the experiences and identity development of Black undergraduate women in college could provide additional opportunities for grant funding and enable the results to reach broader audiences.

Conclusion

The *Model of Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women* offers a way of conceptualizing the development of Black women in college, and it reflects the reality that their identities are affected by a variety of factors, both pre-collegiate and collegiate. Some of those factors are internal (psychological model, self before others), while others involve interactions (sociological model, self in relationship with others). Each interaction leads to new learning, and each environment has the ability to impact another level and deeper understanding of self and others. The predominately White collegiate environment fosters tremendous opportunity for growth. It is a space where Black undergraduate women feel that they matter but also may experience marginalization (Schlossberg, 1989a), and a space where they may be challenged yet also supported (Sanford, 1966). But in that space, in those challenging environments, although Black undergraduate women have been taught to wear masks and show themselves strong, they have the opportunity to surpass the external and internal pressures, and to graduate with an ability to effectively articulate their identity. Black undergraduate women who learn to navigate their way will succeed in their classes, with or without the validation of others (Rendón, 1994), even if they are the only one. They will stay true to their values and not perpetuate the stereotypical images placed on them by the media; they will persist each year despite the sometimes unwelcoming climate and the constant microagressions by their peers; and they will

remain strong despite what life has thrown their way. As Alona stated so boldly, *as Black women, we bend, but we don't break.*

The Black undergraduate women in this study proved their ability to survive, to remain resilient, and to ask for help when needed, but most importantly, they allowed themselves to open up in ways I would have never imagined. They wanted their experiences shared; they believed their stories were worthy of being captured and conceptualized in a model. *The Model of Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women* will always be a part of them, and my goal is that it serves as the collective storyline of many other Black undergraduate women on campuses around the country.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SOLICIATION LETTER TO GATEKEEPER

Dear Director of Multicultural Services:

My name is Christa Porter, a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. I am seeking your assistance as gatekeeper in my dissertation study titled, *Notions of Self, Interactions with Others*: A Grounded Theory Study of the Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to describe how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) develop their identity as Black women. I will examine their notions of self and explanations of social interactions in order to describe their identity development.

My formal request is that you distribute email request(s) to your listserve(s) in order to solicit Black undergraduate women as potential participants for this study. My contact information will be included in the email solicitation and after they have contacted me directly, I will proceed with scheduling of interviews.

All information we discuss will be confidential and their identity will not be revealed on any documentation associated with this study. No identifiers will be used for this research with exception of a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and the documentation of their demographic information.

Participation will include the following:

Individual In-Depth Interviews (target participants: tentatively 20 Black women who hold sophomore through senior academic status)

- I will audio-record interviews and take reflective notes throughout the conversation.
- I will transcribe interviews verbatim and provide each participant a copy of the transcribed interview for her records and review.
- Each participant will be interviewed separately.
- Interview length may range between thirty to ninety minutes; participants may be asked for a second interview.

Reflection
After all participants are interviewed and initial themes have been coded, women will receive a question to facilitate personal written reflection concerning identity development.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call (517) 712-3448 or send an e-mail to cjporter@uga.edu. The study has received approval through the UGA IRB process.

Christa J. Porter	Laura A. Dean, Ph.D.
Primary Investigator	Faculty Advisor

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello.

My name is Christa Porter, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. The purpose of this study is to describe how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) develop their identity as Black women. I am looking to examine Black women's notions of self and explanations of social interactions in order to describe their identity development.

I am utilizing the voices of Black (sophomore to senior status) women at UGA. With your permission, I would like interview you today about your experiences as an undergraduate Black woman at a predominately White institution and the influences that have impacted your development as a Black woman. Throughout the interview I will ask you questions related to your personal background and your experiences (academic and social) in college. I will also ask about your influences and experiences growing up as a Black woman.

All information we discuss will be confidential and your identity will not be revealed on any documentation associated with this study. No identifiers will be used for this research with exception of a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and the documentation of your demographic information.

I anticipate this interview will last between thirty and ninety minutes. I will audio-record our interview as well as take reflective notes throughout our conversation. I will transcribe this interview verbatim and I will send you a copy of the transcribed interview for your records and for your review.

You may end the interview at any point and may decline to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You may also feel free to take a break during any portion of the interview. Please let me know if you need additional clarification or explanation about any of the questions. Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

1. Describe/define yourself as a Black woman.
2. What did you learn about being a Black woman?
3. How would define Black women's culture?
4. Discuss your identities. (e.g., race, gender, etc).
5. What do your identities mean to you?
6. Tell me about a time when you were proud of your identities.
7. Tell me about a time when you were ashamed of your identities.
8. Describe your interactions with other people? Social organizations? Community?
9. Describe the type of environment in which you feel supported? Challenged?
10. Tell me about a time when you were not supported based upon your identities.
11. When and where do you feel you matter? When do you feel as though you are marginal/an outsider?
12. When and where do you feel academically validated?

13. What brought you to the University of Georgia?
14. Think about a time in your college experience that influenced your development as a Black woman?
15. What challenges do you face as a Black woman at UGA?
16. How are you supported as a Black woman here at UGA?
17. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about your experience as a Black woman?

That concludes our interview. The information you provided me will be extremely useful to my research. After all participants are interviewed and initial themes have been coded, you will receive a question to facilitate personal written reflection concerning identity development. I will be in touch with specific details regarding the timeline and deadline for submission.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns pertaining to this interview.

Thank you again for your participation. Have a great day.

APPENDIX C

SOLICIATION EMAIL TO STUDENTS

Good Afternoon,

My name is Christa Porter, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. I am planning to conduct a qualitative research study exploring the identity development of Black undergraduate women at UGA (sophomore to senior status). The purpose of this study is to describe how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) develop their identity as Black women. I will examine their notions of self and explanations of social interactions in order to describe their identity development.

Details about the study are listed below. The names of the participants will be confidential and at no point will their names be taken or documented on any part of the study. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality. Following the analysis of the study all interview transcripts will be destroyed.

My study will involve:

Individual In-Depth Interviews (target participants: tentatively 20 Black women who hold sophomore through senior academic status)

- I will audio-record interviews and take reflective notes throughout the conversation.
- I will transcribe interviews verbatim and provide each participant a copy of the transcribed interview for her records and review.
- Each participant will be interviewed separately.
- Interview length may range between thirty to ninety minutes; participants may be asked for a second interview.

Reflection

After all participants are interviewed and initial themes have been coded, women will receive a question to facilitate personal written reflection concerning identity development.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments, or concerns. I hope to hear back from you soon regarding your participation in this study. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Christa J. Porter, M.A.
cjporter@uga.edu
Cell: (517) 712 3448
Ph.D. Candidate, Counseling and Student Personnel Services
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
University of Georgia

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled *"Notions of Self, Interactions with Others: A Grounded Theory Study of the Identity Development in Black Undergraduate Women"* conducted by Christa J. Porter, Investigator from the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Laura Dean, Advisor and Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, University of Georgia. I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. If I decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as mine will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless I make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

The reason for this study is to describe how Black undergraduate women enrolled at a predominately White institution (PWI) develop their identity as Black women. The researcher is looking to examine Black women's notions of self and explanations of social interactions in order to describe their identity development.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to answer questions in two thirty – ninety minute, audio-recorded interviews about my experiences as a Black woman, notions of myself and explanations of social interactions regarding my identity development. After the researcher has finished interviewing participants, I will be asked to complete an online reflection via a Qualtrics survey, in order elaborate on my experiences as a Black undergraduate woman and share additional stories reflective of my experience on a predominately White college campus. I will be asked to complete the online reflection within one week. I will also be asked to participate in member checking by reviewing my interview transcriptions as well as the researcher's codes and themes to make sure I agree with what has been said and interpreted. I may end the interview at any point and may decline to answer any questions I do not feel comfortable answering. I may also feel free to take a break during any portion of the interview.

The benefit for me is the opportunity to share my voice about my identity development as a Black woman. The researcher also hopes to identify themes to describe the variations in Black undergraduate women's development in order to create a theoretical model.

While there are no foreseeable risks associated with this research study, some questions will be asked about situations in which I may have been marginalized because of my identity as a Black woman, which may cause discomfort. Experienced staff members are available to discuss any discomfort I may experience. Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) is located in The University Health Center and the contact number is (706) 542-2273. However, as a way to mitigate any potential discomfort, I am able to skip any questions I am uncomfortable answering.

I acknowledge that I will not receive any financial incentive or compensation for completing the interviews.

The only people who will know that I am a research subject are members of the research team and transcribers. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if necessary to protect my rights or welfare; or if required by law. If the researchers use any direct quotes from my interviews or written reflections in any professional presentations or publications, the researchers or transcribers will remove or alter any information that could identify the quotation as mine. I will be assigned an identifying pseudonym that will be used on all individually-identifiable written and verbal communication. Internet

communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However once the materials are received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed. All individual information obtained will be treated confidentially. The audio records will be destroyed after the researchers transcribe the recordings and replace my name with a pseudonym.

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

Christa J. Porter, M.A.
cjporter@uga.edu
Cell: (517) 712 3448
Ph.D. Candidate, Counseling and Student Personnel Services
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
University of Georgia

Laura A. Dean, Ph.D.
ladean@uga.edu
Associate Professor, Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
University of Georgia

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Telephone: _____
Email: _____

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX E

Thank you again for participating in my study! Your experiences have facilitated the beginning stages of the model and I wanted your input as I develop it further.

The foundation of this model represents the collective history, struggle, and resiliency of Black women. Central to the model is the individual (I refer to this as the core) and represents the intersections of all the identities of Black undergraduate women. The core extends throughout the entire model because Black women are present as whole individuals throughout their process of development. There are two socialization processes that take place for Black women and influence the core – one occurs pre-college and the other takes place during college.

In pre-collegiate socialization, women are influenced by families, communities, and societal institutions (e.g., places of worship, religion, and educational systems). Individual family members or a collective family unit (i.e., being raised by a single parent or guardian and/or the influence of a relative such as a grandparent or aunt) may have specific roles in the socialization process.

The second process is collegiate socialization. Black women interact socially and academically with other students, staff and faculty members who may and/or may not look like them while they are in college. College socializes students to become involved on campus in a variety of ways: socially, academically, or civically; it is the college environment that is conducive for Black women to interact with their peers on a variety of levels. Thus peer groups, friendships circles, and/or smaller communities play a major role in the development of Black women.

Within the classroom, Black women may find themselves one of a few or even the only one within their academic major (i.e., disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The academic socialization process for each student may be different, however the support from faculty and interactions with staff members remain valuable for each student.

As a result of the collective history as a foundation and each process of socialization, Black women are able to respond to and interact with others. Lastly, there are two constants that appear to play a role in the identity development of Black undergraduate women: the influence of media and the influence of role modeling throughout various stages of Black women's lives.

Questions:

Please respond to all of the questions below. Your feedback will assist as I move forward.

1. How are your experiences adequately represented in this model? If not, please discuss.
2. What else would you add to this model? (e.g., specific experiences, support systems, etc.)
3. Describe your pre-collegiate socialization?
4. Describe your socialization in college?
5. How has the role modeling of someone else been influential in your life? Particularly the actions of another Black woman?
6. Please identify your pseudonym.

APPENDIX F

Memo #14: Completion of Round One Interviews/Summary of Coding
Date: 10/17/2012

I decided not to do initial coding line by line. Instead, I started with axial coding by coding larger chunks of data. As I began reading the first transcript, and then the second, and so forth, I realized that some of my participants were unable to make meaning from what their own experiences until they were well into their story. Maybe it was my line of questioning; maybe it was their level of comfort. I'm not sure, but…I didn't feel it necessary to label a code for each individual line, nor valuable to my experience throughout this process. I didn't feel I was hurting their story, nor did I feel that it lessened the value of the coding process.

So I started with Ashanti. As a first step, I color-coded her themes. She had a total of 38 as my first interviewee. I wasn't sure how to strategically set up the coding process in my brain, nor on paper. I finally figured out that an excel sheet would work best. Then I coded Erica and added 6 unique themes. I began to move the codes around in the spreadsheet. I figured that I should put the names of the women across the top and the codes on the left-hand side. I needed to make two separate sheets, because this thing was going to get too large with 13 women. So I had 6 on the first sheet with all the codes and 7 on the second sheet with the codes.

My unique codes were:

Ashanti – 38; Erica – 6; Lula – 9; Rachel – 5; Skye – 11; Vivica – 0; Jacqueline – 1; Alice – 2; Delilah – 3; Alona – 5; Iman – 0; Melanie – 2; and Sally – 0

To equal 82 total codes

APPENDIX G

Code	Category	Scheme
Personal identification Personal identity as Black woman Learned how to be a Black woman Definition of Black woman Other identities	**Identity as a Black woman**	*Consequences*
Meaning of identities Intersectionality of Identities Culture/Identity as a compilation	**Intersectionality of identities**	*Consequences*
Challenges as a Black woman at PWI Challenging environment Challenges from faculty Outsider/marginal	***Challenges of Black women on campus**	*Consequences*
Outlet Supportive environments Specific characteristics about supportive environments Support from/interactions with faculty Supported at PWI as Black woman Mattering Academic validation Decision to be silent or talk in classroom	***Support for Black women on campus**	*Consequences*
Influence of mentorship	***Mentorship**	*Consequences*
Stigma placed on AFAM/Black women Family as outsiders in society The Black woman's place in society Status of Black women	**Stigma placed Black women**	*Consequences*

Code	Category	Scheme
Influence of media	*Media	*Consequences*
Leadership characteristics Involvements/Student Orgs Frustration with lack of AFAM student involvement on campus Lack of support from administration at PWI Lack of support from SGA Obligation as Black student leader on campus	**Involvement on campus**	*Actions/Interactions*
Interactions with other Muslims on campus Interactions among African American student organizations and the African student organization on campus Interactions with White students Interactions with students in general on campus Interaction among her leadership involvements/org communities Interactions among Black students on campus Interaction among Black students in organization Community/Interactions in the classrooms at PWI Interactions with friends/non-Black women Interactions with Black men Interactions among Black Greeks on campus Community/interactions among Greek Life on campus White/Multicultural Greeks response to Black Greeks on campus Black Greek women and non Greek Black women	**Social interactions on campus**	*Actions/Interactions*
Betrayal by AFAM women/sorority sisters Point of pride as Black woman Empowerment/Inspiration for/within Black women Interactions with Black women Colorisms among Black women Ashamed of being a Black woman Shame/Frustration as a Black woman on PW campus Not supported/discriminated against based on identity as Black woman	**Interactions among Black women on campus**	*Actions/Interactions*

Code	Category	Scheme
Being the only 'one' Personal perseverance/strength Perseverance/Strength as a collective History of 'strength'/'resilience'	***Strength**	*Actions/Interactions*
Challenges as a Black woman at PWI Challenging environment Challenges from faculty Outsider/marginal	***Challenges of Black women on campus**	*Actions/Interactions*
Outlet Supportive environments Specific characteristics about supportive environments Support from/interactions with faculty Supported at PWI as Black woman Mattering Academic validation Decision to be silent or talk in classroom	***Support for Black women on campus**	*Actions/Interactions*
Influence of mentorship	***Mentorship**	*Actions/Interactions*
Influence of media	***Media**	*Actions/Interactions*
Decision to attend host institution Cultural/campus climate at PWI Choice of/interest in major Pursuit of predominately White major at PWI Role that PWI/host institution has played on development as Black woman	***Cultural Climate at PWI**	*Actions/Interactions*
Influence of/Exposure to religion/spirituality Black women and spirituality Exposure to both Christianity and Islam Fundamental values of religion/faith Manifestation of spirituality/religion on campus/ in college	**Influence of religion/spirituality**	*Conditions*

Code	Category	Scheme
Influence of socioeconomic status	**Socioeconomic status**	*Conditions*
Influence of family Other values learned from family Role/value of education in family Role of grandmother Influence of father Role of birth mother Role of adopted mother Role of parents Role of parents in expression of identities	**Influence of familial figures/parents/grand**	*Conditions*
Being the oldest child/sibling Being the only child	**Birth order**	*Conditions*
Being the only 'one' Personal perseverance/strength Perseverance/Strength as a collective History of 'strength'/'resilience'	***Strength**	*Conditions*
Culture African American Muslim Culture	**Culture**	*Conditions*
Influence of media	***Media**	*Conditions*
Decision to attend host institution Cultural/campus climate at PWI Choice of/interest in major Pursuit of predominately White major at PWI Role that PWI/host institution has played on development as Black woman	***Cultural Climate at PWI**	*Conditions*

Figure 4.1: Conceptual Relationship between Codes and Categories