Exploring the connection between same-sex friendships and the development of self-authorship in black undergraduate women

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EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SAME-SEX FRIENDSHIPS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-AUTHORSHIP IN BLACK UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN

Dissertation
By
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Abstract

By

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Against a backdrop of increasing diversity in the United States, the number of Black women undergraduates enrolled at predominantly white institutions across the country is growing. Yet while colleges and universities are eager to diversify their campuses, often the climate of these campuses has not changed in ways that support the success of Black women. Experiences of discrimination, social isolation and hostility are commonplace, leading these women to feel as if they are guests at the institution. This research project sought to explore how same-sex, same-race friendships among Black women helped them toward developing self-authorship. Self-authorship involves the development of internal mechanisms for self-worth and decision-making. Typically, achievement of self authorship occurs after the undergraduate years.

This phenomenological research study was conducted at a large religiously-affiliated university in the Northeast. Black undergraduate women were interviewed to identify their important friendships, the issues
they deal with on campus, and their developmental stage of self-authorship.

Findings showed that these women were dealing with racism and microinequities on campus every day. The women in this study turned to their Black women friends for support and advice to navigate the sometimes-hostile campus environment. Ethnicity related to national origin was an important factor in identity and friendship group composition. Study participants showed significant progression towards self-authorship prior to graduation. In addition to the strong positive role of same-race friendships, their experiences as Black women on campus encouraged them to become activists. Activism, in turn, enhanced their empowerment and self-authorship. This research shows that encouraging diversity on campus does not guarantee institutional climate change to meet the unique needs of these Black women. Implications from this study include the need for women of color to have opportunities for mentorship, leadership, and same-race, same-ethnicity residential environments.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Diversity is no longer something that the United States just strives for; it is a part of everyday life. Nowhere is that more apparent than on college campuses. While higher education is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, colleges and universities are struggling to support and recognize the unique experiences and contributions of students of color. Discussions of affirmative action and diversity are commonplace; the widely followed University of Michigan affirmative action case illustrates that passion around issues of diversity and equality runs deep and is complex (Hurtado, 2001). Hate crimes related to race and ethnicity are still happening at an alarming rate on campuses across the United States ("New Web Site Provides a Forum for Campus Racism," 2008; "Race Relations on Campus," 2005; "Race Relations on Campus," 2006).

Background of the Problem

In the midst of this are students of color who are striving to find a place for themselves at predominantly white institutions (PWI) across the United States. Black women in particular are searching for a place in higher education that is welcoming and supportive of their academic and social growth. Black women cannot separate being Black and being a woman; thus, they experience the world as both (Gasman, 2007; Jordan, 1997). Yet Black women have rarely been the focus of higher education research.
The racial climate at many PWIs is often hostile for students of color. Instead of feeling as if they are at home on these campuses, they often feel as if they are guest where “...guests are not family, whose foibles and mistakes are tolerated. On the contrary, guests must follow the family’s wishes without question, keep out of certain rooms in the house and always be on their best behavior” (Turner, 1994, p. 356). Furthermore, these guests are not a part of the history of the house that they occupy (Turner, 1994). This is a reality felt by many students of color on college campuses in the United States. As guests, Black women need to learn the rules of the house, rules which are often tacit and take time and mentoring to learn. Often these women have neither the mentors on campus nor the knowledge to access the resources on campus that may be able to assist them. Coupled with the lack of knowledge on how to access the resources for support as guests, the racial tensions and incidents that occur on campuses across the country on a regular basis often make PWI campuses unfriendly (Arnold & Murphy, 1994; Hurtado, 2002; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Martinez Aleman, 2000; Renn, 2000).

Recurring incidents of racial prejudice and violence show that a racial divide still exists in higher education (Chang, 2000). For example, in May 2005, a Dartmouth student doctored her picture on her Facebook account to appear Black and under the heading of “Favorite Book” the student typed in “I can’t read or write” (Race Relations on Campus, 2006). For a fraternity
party in 2005, a young man dressed as skinhead with the words “Southern by the Grace of God,” and accompanied a man in a Ku Klux Klan outfit; after this event he was named one of Oklahoma State University’s outstanding seniors (Race Relations on Campus, 2006). During Orientation, a group of Black students were assaulted with racial slurs as they walked back to their dormitory at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville (Race Relations on Campus, 2006). The word nigger and a swastika were painted on the hood of a car belonging to a Black woman at California State University at Chico (Race Relations on Campus, 2006). One fraternity at Central Missouri State University held a chicken and beer party while the college was celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Attending students dressed as African Americans and refreshments included 40-ounce beers and fried chicken (Race Relations on Campus, 2006). At Lafayette College in Pennsylvania in September 2006, the word “nigger” was spelled out with tacks on a residence hall bulletin board (Race Relations on Campus, 2006). In another example, at Ohio Dominican University, a Roman Catholic liberal arts college, a “Whites Only” sign was posted on a restroom door (Race Relations on Campus, 2006). Additionally, racism on the Internet is on the rise (Chang, 2000). Take, for instance, this post on a popular (recently defunct) website by a Vanderbilt University student:

In the midst of this continued racism, educators firmly believe that a diverse student body is key to creating a richer environment in which to learn
There are several reasons why it is important for institutions of higher education to be diverse. First, the interaction with people of different beliefs and identity aids in student growth. Students who attend desegregated, diverse schools are more likely to accept desegregation in life. Furthermore, for students of color, an increase in campus diversity improves the climate for them on campus. When the numbers of students of color on campus are small, there is a tendency to think of these students as token admits. This tokenism may lead to marginalization of underrepresented groups (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1998).

While these issues of racism are disheartening, there is reason to believe that relations on campus are getting better. The number of racial minorities that are attending colleges and universities is consistently rising (Chang, 2000, McAdoo 2007a). Currently Black students represent 12% of all students enrolled in higher education (“Solid Progress,” 2006). Students from different backgrounds are interacting on a more regular basis on campuses across the United States. Universities are making the effort to include the traditions of the ethnically diverse populations they serve in the curriculum and co-curricular programming.

However, institutional practices may be at odds with how they pursue institutional interests (Chang, 2000). By understanding the racial climate, there may be ways to develop policies and practices that would positively affect the racial climate on campus. Hurtado et al.’s (1998) research on
enhancing campus climates found that race is an oft-discussed topic but that policy initiatives are rarely enacted to work on these important issues. Hurtado et al. (1998) claims that one of the reasons for this is that leaders within higher education believe that people should be able to work these issues out among themselves. At the heart of the issue for students of color at PWIs is experiencing a majority culture is not welcoming or even open to them (Turner, 1994).

**Research Problem**

Given the information presented thus far, it is not surprising that the climate at predominantly white institutions frequently leads African American students to loneliness and isolation (Allen, 1992; Altbach, 1991; Fleming, 1984; Moses, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Black women often spend a great deal of time and effort trying to meet their relational needs at the sacrifice of other developmental areas (Baxter Magolda, 1992). It is necessary for them to learn the tools required to support themselves emotionally.

This research will explore the connection between the process of development toward self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004) and the nature of same-sex friendships among Black women at PWIs. Self-authorship is defined as “…the ability to collect, interpret and analyze information and reflect on one’s own beliefs in order to form judgments” (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). Self-authorship is especially important for
Black women undergraduates as they are often in uncomfortable and disruptive situations in which they must interpret and make decisions that may differ from those of the majority of their peers. Black women undergraduates need to understand that reality is in part socially constructed according to dominant social norms and understand how their voice and beliefs fit into and belie this social construction.

Although Baxter Magolda (2007, 2004 & 1998) asserts that the formation of self-authorship generally takes place after traditional undergraduate years, this study explores the probability that Black women’s incongruence on PWIs spurs earlier movement towards internal voice. Movement in the direction of self-authorship proceeds in four phases: Following External Formulas, The Crossroads, Becoming the Author of One’s Own Life and Internal Foundations (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Pizzolato, 2004). The following external formulas phase is characterized by an understanding of the need to develop one’s own internal voice but with no experience as to how to do it. In Baxter Magolda’ research, external formula students often follow plans that they had made in light of others’ patterns and expectations, after which they realize that it is not what they actually wanted. This brings them to the crossroads phase, in which one realizes the need to look inside for perspective rather than depending on external factors. The third phase, becoming the author of one’s own life, involves “…deciding what to believe, one’s identity, and how to interact with others” (Baxter
In the fourth phase, internal foundation, one is able to control the environment rather than being the object of control. Within this phase, one has developed an internal belief system and sense of self.

According to Baxter Magolda, the process of developing self-authorship involves a disruption of equilibrium (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Pizzolato, 2004). While college campuses typically offer situations that cause disruption in the lives of college students, support is available for the majority of students to deal with these often-predictable challenges. As the previous examples of racism show, students of color often experience disruptive situations without the adequate support on campus that is necessary to process the experiences. Baxter Magolda’s (2001) study on self-authorship included nearly all White students (97% in the first year); Pizzalato’s (2004, 2005) research regarding self-authorship involved high-risk students. As stated earlier, Black women on PWIs are facing special challenges that may necessitate the need to develop self-authorship earlier. Little is known about self-authorship in women of color and how it might be affected by friendships.

**Research Question**

The research question to be explored in this dissertation is:

- How do same-sex and same-race friendships aid in the development toward self-authorship among Black undergraduate women?

**Theoretical Rationale**
This research is framed by Baxter Magolda’s (1998, 2001, 2009) work on self-authorship in young adults. Post-adolescent development involves a progression from an external locus to an internal locus of influence. This developmental process occurs as a result of an individual’s interaction with his or her environment. This is particularly relevant for racial and ethnic minorities on white campuses. In order to explore these processes, I looked at the nature and development of women’s friendship and racial identity development. This theoretical backdrop helps frame the research questions of how Black women’s friendships aid them on the road to self-authorship.

Magolda’s theory (1992, 2007 & 2009) on the development of ways of knowing in undergraduate student is particularly relevant because her work shows ways that peer relationships affect the progression through the ways of knowing among college aged students. Even in the early stages of knowing, students use peers to help them learn what the authority knows (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Peer influence has been identified as a powerful source of socialization for both men and women. Ward (1989) found that African American adolescent girls experienced a feeling of difference as a result of being non-members of the majority group; this experience led them to identify with others who were similar to themselves. In addition, “Students’ stories about their most significant experiences were often in the co-curricular realm” (Baxter Magolda, 1984, p. 296). A large part of the co-curricular experience is the relationship between friends, roommates,
organizations, leadership roles, and employment (Astin, 1993). This research examines the connection between friendship and the development of self-authorship.

**Overview of the Study**

Qualitative research is most appropriate for this research project as it is descriptive, at times anecdotal, and allows the story to unfold during the process. Qualitative research is always rich in information and comprises multiple designs and approaches. Phenomenology is used for this study which answers the question “What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Phenomenology gives participants the opportunity to find voice about their unique experiences (Merriam, 2002). Understanding the lived experience for these women will help inform practice and develop policies on campus.

**Significance of Study**

As stated earlier, Black women are experiencing a variety of challenging issues at PWIs. No studies deal specifically with higher education as it affects the relationship between same-sex friendships and the development of self-authorship. This research seeks to reveal the experiences of Black women on white campuses and focuses on how they have used same race and same sex friendships to navigate the sometimes-hostile waters of predominately white campuses and start the journey towards self-
authorship. This work has the potential to help Black women empower themselves and to provide some suggestions for institutions to encourage and support the development of self-authorship in Black women. Self-authorship involves the ability to create one’s own views and act accordingly (Baxter Magolda, 1998). Student affairs professionals are in a unique role in which they challenge and support students as they grow. An understanding of the process by which peer relationships affect self-authorship may aid professionals in designing their educational programs to support self-authorship for an often overlooked student group (Baxter Magolda, 1998).
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Three major areas of literature frame this study: research on the experience of Black women in higher education, women’s friendships, and self-authorship. These areas are tied together by the research available that shows friendships and a sense of community aid in the retention of students (Tinto, 1987). Black women are often isolated on campus and have a difficult time finding a community in which they feel welcome and accepted. This review of literature details the history of Black women in higher education, current enrollment trends, and the college experience of Black women in higher education. Following a picture of the status of Black women in higher education, the review considers the nature of growth-fostering relationships and research’s the role that friendships play in this process. The review concludes by covering the theoretical framework of this research: Baxter Magolda’s construct of self-authorship and how racial identity theory and activism are related to self-authorship.

Black Women Undergraduates

The arrival of Blacks on campus does not guarantee their success. Research indicates that Black women face particular challenges in their undergraduate experiences. Black women have been participating in higher education since before emancipation (Hine, 2007; Perkins, 1983). There is considerable evidence that Black women have not felt at home in predominantly White institutions whose structures and traditions were
formed around White student populations. In order to understand the contemporary status of Black women in higher education, it is necessary to place their experience in a historical perspective. This section details the historic and demographic framework of Black women attending institutions of higher education since the early 19th century and their current post-secondary status.

Since their initial entrance into higher education in the 19th century, Black women’s postsecondary presence has grown slowly and steadily ("The Solid Progress of African Americans" 2006). While Black women have been present in the academy; much research has focused either on White women or Black men in higher education (Gasman, 2007). Although African Americans overall have made some gains in college enrollment and degree attainment, between 1974 and 2003 the gap between Whites and African Americans widened (Department of Education Statistics, 2005; Walpole, 2008). In the fall of 1996, 67% of white high school graduates and 56% of Black high school graduates attended college in the fall following high school graduation; 70% of those students were women. This changed to 69% for whites in the fall of 2006 and remained at 56% for blacks. The percentage of Black women rose to 66%.

Historical context is necessary to set current trends in perspective. This sections detail the research on the experiences of Black women attending institutions of higher education since the early 19th Century and
the current status of Black women in higher education. Their attendance has grown slowly and steadily since that time ("The Solid Progress of African Americans in Degree Attainment," 2006). While Black women have been present in the academy, much research has focused either on White women or Black men in higher education (Gasman, 2007). Though African Americans overall have made some gains in college enrollment and degree attainment, between 1974 and 2003 the gap in both of these areas between Whites and African Americans widened (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2005; Walpole, 2008). In addition, women of color often feel marginalized on PWIs (Fleming, 1984; Turner, 1994).

**History of Black Women in Higher Education**

On January 1, 1863, 4.5 million Blacks were emancipated; of those slaves 2 million were women (Noble, 1956). Prior to the Civil War less than 5% of Blacks could read or write (Fleming, 1981). As education was a way for ex-slaves to take control of their lives, Blacks were unwavering in their determination to educate their children (Anderson, 1988). Blacks first began attending institutions of higher education in significant numbers after the Civil War, and from 1865 to the early 1900's Blacks earned 1,195 baccalaureate degrees (Cross, 1996). Most funding for education during this period of time came from private sources (Sloan, 1977). Some accounts claim that by 1890, 300 Black men and 2500 White women had earned baccalaureate degrees compared to 30 Black women (Perkins, 1993). Other
accounts differ; according to Willie (2003) only about 200 Blacks received degrees in the 30 year period from 1865-1895. Whatever the true number, Black college graduates had increased to approximately 2,500 at the turn of the 19th Century (Willie, 2003).

Throughout their history Black women have experienced three primary forms of oppression in our society: racism, classicism, and sexism (Gregory, 1995). In the midst of this oppression, Black women have waged long battles for quality and equal opportunity in education (Perkins, 1993). These same women have been incorrectly stereotyped as “superwomen,” a label that derives from the resilience Black women have shown against tough life challenges (Gregory, 1995). This stereotype dates back to the times of slavery. In fact, during this period before emancipation Black women were often considered superior to men in the family, not just their equal (Noble, 1956). Yet, there are some accounts that noted that Black women were only considered equal in the fields. That is, they were able to do the same work as men while they were in the fields but when they went home at night women were responsible for the cooking, cleaning, sewing, and the wash, a role similar to their white “peers” (Brazzell, 1992).

Black women first began to learn in the households of the white families who owned them (Noble, 1956). Prior to 1835 many slaves were taught to read and write by their owners. After 1835, White society began to fear that educating Blacks would lead to a rebellion (Noble, 1956) and
educated Blacks would threaten White power in society (Perkins, 1983). Therefore, laws were passed making it a criminal offense for slaves and, sometimes, freedmen to be educated (Brazzell, 1992; Perkins, 1983).

Attempts were made by Blacks prior to the Civil War to establish schools but no significant advances were made. In Philadelphia in the 1830's there was a meeting of the Association for Free People of Color, a group that consisted of freedmen and friends of the Black community. This group determined that education was the vehicle for Blacks to gain equality in the United States (Noble, 1956). This is when the theme of racial uplift entered the Black community (Howard-Vital, 1989; Perkins, 1983). The education of Blacks was seen as a means for the advancement of the entire race (Perkins, 1993). Black women especially were encouraged to become educated and help uplift the race by becoming teachers (Howard-Vital, 1989; Perkins, 1983). Prior to the Civil War, free Blacks often moved to areas where their sons and daughters could receive an education (Perkins, 1993). A theme that was prevalent in the Black community prior to emancipation was "we are one people-one in general complexion, one in common degradation, one in popular estimation. As one rises, all must rise, and as one falls, all must fall" (Perkins, 1993, p.271). Post Civil War the notion of race uplift began to be mainly the burden of Black women (Perkins, 1983). Women predominantly trained as teachers (Perkins, 1993) and were often the ones who returned to the south after being educated to help former slaves adjust to freedom. This
lead the Black scholar W.E. DuBois to believe that "after the war the sacrifice of Negro women for the freedom and Black uplift is one of the finest chapters in their history" (Perkins, 1983, p.25).

Yet this sacrifice was not rewarded by support from Black men. The gap between Black women and men and the gap between Black women and White women began to widen when Black men were granted the right to vote (Perkins, 1993). Black women were caught in the crossfire of rights for women and rights for Blacks. Black women were prominent in the fight for the rights of both Blacks and women, yet many Black men felt that women did not deserve the right to vote. This served to divide both groups who were seeking the right to vote (Noble, 1956). When Black men received the right to vote in 1870, they had a change in attitude about the role of Black women; they began to believe that Black women, like White women, should live the “cult of true womanhood.” This principle stated that a real woman was innocent, pure, and submissive and that education should be used to mold this ideal woman (Perkins, 1983). In reality, this ideology did not fit the role Black women had to play in their families and society even after Black men had the right to vote. During the 1880's many articles were written by Black men claiming that Black women belonged in the home and that education for Black women should prepare them for marriage and motherhood (Perkins, 1993). In reality, most Black women had to work outside of the home to contribute to the family in order for the family to survive (Perkins, 1993).
White women became the most vicious attackers of the rights of Black women. White women sought to be considered equal to White men in society and were willing to turn away from Black women to achieve their goals (Perkins, 1993). White women often barred Black women from their organizations; it was much harder for Black women to be accepted into White women's groups than it was for Black men to be accepted into White male groups. In her well-known book, *A Voice from the South*, Anna Julia Cooper acknowledged the fact that Black women had been left out of the movement for both Black men and White women. She, along with many of her peers, recognized that Black women had to be economically independent of Black men and White women (Cooper, 1988, Perkins, 1993). Interestingly, Black women were among the first to advocate for the rights of women (Perkins, 1993) and have subsequently been left out of the quest for equality. Black women have been struggling to be afforded the right to education and they are still struggling to find a campus culture that embraces them.

**Current Enrollment Trends**

Current information about the population of Black women attending colleges and universities is necessary to understand the issue. People of color made up 34.5% of the population in the United States in the year 1990; it is projected that this group will account for 43% of the population in the year 2010 (McAdoo, 2007a); by the year 2030 it is estimated that 52.6% of the people of the United States will be people of color (McAdoo, 2007a).
The total enrollment of Blacks in all forms of higher education in 2004 was 2,165,000 (The Solid Progress of African Americans, 2006). In 2004 Blacks earned 123,464 bachelor’s degrees, which made up 8% of the total degrees awarded (African Americans show a major increase, 2005). Blacks represented 12% of the US population of university students, illustrating that a lag in degree attainment still exists. The good news is that the number of degrees earned in 2004 was up 11% from 2003. In addition, Black women earned two-thirds of the undergraduate degrees. In the Fall of 2002 12.4% of Black students enrolled in undergraduate institutions attend a historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU). This means that 87.6% of Black students are enrolled at PWIs. Although the numbers are rising, it is important to note that while Blacks earned 9% of the degrees, they represented “nearly 12% of total enrollments in higher education” (The Solid Progress of African Americans, 2006, p. 54).

The importance of studying this group of students lies in the growing number of Black women on college campuses. In the period from 1970 to 2006 the enrollment of undergraduate women has increased twice as fast as the enrollment of men (Black Americans, 2006). An estimated 57% of all college students are women (McAdoo, 2007a). Black women earned two-thirds of the undergraduate degrees awarded to Blacks. In fact, the population of Black women attending PWIs is higher than ever before (African Americans show a major increase, 2005). In Massachusetts Blacks make up 6.9% of the
population and 10.85% of college enrollment ("The Fifty States and the District of Columbia," 2008). The three most popular degrees among Blacks in 2004 were business management, social sciences, and psychology.

**Contemporary Higher Education Experience**

As documented earlier, the number of women of color on college campuses is growing; these students are at a disadvantage even before they walk through the doors of higher education. Across racial lines the quality of academic preparation for all students has declined, and students of color are more likely to receive poor academic preparation (Arnold & Murphy, 1994). This lack of preparedness is yet another hurdle that Black women need to overcome at PWIs.

Jacqueline Fleming's (1984) study of Black students at PWIs and HBCUs is the seminal work in the study of Blacks in college. Black students are often isolated socially and academically, treated unfairly within the classroom, and must cope with emotional pain as a result of their experiences. When looking at college differences based on gender, men seem to be better equipped to succeed at both PWI and HBCU. Fleming's study found that Black women were afraid of using their assertiveness skills at traditionally Black institutions, which may lead to the stifling of their intellectual abilities (Fleming, 1984). On white campuses where there are fewer Black men; Black women do not feel the need to damp their assertiveness, yet they are faced with racism and microinequities that may
result in a deepening sense of isolation. Microinequities are behaviors that are often subtle but may result in excluding and marginalizing women and minorities and are often short-lived and cannot be proven (Rowe, 1990). Experiencing these microinequities can make a person feel excluded and different as well as damaging their self confidence (Rowe, 1990).

Furthermore, these inequities are often such a part of the policies and rituals on campus that it is hard for campuses to make changes without damaging so called “rich traditions” (Hurtado, 2002).

Walter Allen (1992) has also looked at the experiences of African American college students at both PWIs and HBCUs. His study investigated the interrelationship of academic achievement, social involvement, occupational aspirations, educational background and goals, demographics, and personal adjustment to college. (Allen, 1992). Like Fleming, Allen's work found, that Black students at HBCUs had the most successful experiences. Both Allen and Fleming found that Black women have the following experiences:

- Black women become less assertive when they are educated with men.
- Black women sometimes believe that they are less competent than men.
- Black women lose some social assertiveness skills in Black college, but not in white colleges where Black men are fewer in number.
Their research reveals that the needs of these women are not being adequately met at either type of institution (Allen 1992, Fleming 1984).

Black women often suffer from "emotional pain, social isolation, or aroused fears about their competence" (Moses, 1989, p.2) especially at PWIs. While college opens the door to many new friends and social contacts for most white students, higher education can be an extremely isolating experience for Blacks (Chang 2000, 2001; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Racial prejudice is a major issue on college campuses. While Black students may come to college feeling as if they will be accepted as equals with their white peers, this is not always the case. Specific incidents of racial prejudice lead to the creation of a hostile environment where Black students may not feel comfortable. Racism most often occurs against Blacks on campus (Altbach, 1991) and in general Black students feel that faculty, staff and students at PWIs are hostile towards them (Arnold & Murphy, 1994). This leads to the need to develop a mechanism to deal with the daily injustices (Cole & Yip, 2008; Mwaura, 2008; Stewart, 2008). As a result, many students spend more of their time developing coping strategies than devoting time to their studies (Fleming, 1981).

Success is critical to the experience of Black women on campus; success is not defined solely by academic achievement, for the definition includes a variety of different factors. The research available on successful Black students demonstrates that the students’ feeling of belongingness (Boyer,
1990), level of involvement in the community (Allen, 1992; Prillerman, 1989), and academic achievement (Allen, 1992) all play a part in the success of Black students on PWIs. According to Allen "Academic performance is...significantly correlated with student college satisfaction and level of involvement in college life" (Allen, 1992, p30). Yet for Black women on PWIs, satisfaction and involvement are hard to find because these women feel socially alienated on campus. Overall, research shows that non-cognitive variables have the most affect on the academic performance of Black students. These non-cognitive variables include the interaction between Black students and their peers, faculty, and administration (Prillerman, Meyers & Smedley, 1989). Tracey and Sedlacek’s (1985) research shows that academic ability was not the foremost predictor of academic success. In fact, positive self-concept (Cureton, 2003) and access to supportive people at the institution were more indicative of retention. Support has been shown to positively affect success, retention, and physical- and psychological-well being among both majority and minority college students (Prillerman, 1989).

While this research does identify several different types of support, most research illustrates that sources of support are different for White and non-White students. (Kenny & Stryker, 1996; Stuart & Vaux, 1986). Specifically, research has shown that there is a connection between social support networks and the success of minority students on PWIs (Steward, O’Leary, Boatwright & Sauer 1996). One of the key sources for support for
Black women is their family (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Kenny & Stryker, 1996; Martinez Aleman, 2000). Since the family is not always available for support while in college, these women turn to friends to recreate the support they usually receive from family. Stuart et al. (1986) found that Black women experienced greater closeness to network members while labeling fewer of them as friends, and they received significant support and guidance from family members.

Satisfaction and connection are tied to the understanding of the campus structure and rules. Much of this comes from tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is a facet of practical intelligence that consists of an understanding that is necessary to managing education and careers but which are rarely verbalized and not explicitly taught (Polanyi, 1966; Wagner & Sternberg, 1986). “Tacit knowledge, or cognitive mapping, is especially important for first generation college students, many of whom are minority students, because they lack sophisticated frames of reference to apply to the college setting and have no family member to turn to for advice and information about negotiating higher education environments” (Arnold, 1995, p.22-23).

Friendships

The term friendship has a variety of meanings. For the sake of this research I used Knickmeyer, Sexton & Nishimura’s (2002) definition, which explains that “Friendship will be defined as one type of social support
characterized by intimacy, self-disclosure, mutual concern, a sharing of resources, equality in power, and ultimately empowering” (Knickmeyer et al., 2002, p.38). This definition was chosen because Knickmeyer et al.’s (2002) work offers a variety of lenses through which to look at friendship.

Lack of tacit knowledge emphasizes the importance of the friendships and connections Black women make; this is because these relationships will, ideally, help them to gain this knowledge and pass it on to others. Women’s college friendships are often a topic in popular literature and movies (Donodio, 2006; Memmott, 2006). These friendships support women through various relationships, career choices, tragedies, and education itself. Yet these movies and books often just skim the surface of the importance and multifaceted purposes of these female relationships. Furthermore, popular culture tends to focus on images of young Black women facing welfare and early pregnancy rather than participating in higher education. Research has shown that social isolation is a major reason for underachievement and dropout in college (Tinto, 1987). Collier’s (1996) work states that there is a link between friendships and the development of cultural identity. Collier’s (1996) qualitative research concluded that non-Anglo American students saw the process of developing friendships as taking a year; for Anglos it was only a few months. “Overall emergent themes regarding ethnic differences in what is valued in friendship relationships include: ...African American respondents valued respect for the individual as a member of the ethnic
group and mutual acceptance” (Knickmeyer, Sexton, & Nishimura, p. 51, 2002). Collier (1996) concludes that “conceptualizing friendships as relationships with a history in which individuals co-create their cultural (ethnic and gender, among others) identities may be essential” (Collier, 1996, p 334). Given the current growth in this population (African Americans Show a Major Increase, 2005); further research needs to look at how these women are surviving at PWIs.

History of Women’s Friendships

Some researchers believe that the patriarchal nature of our society has played a large role in the absence of literature about women’s friendships and the possible stigma surrounding female relationships (Knickmeyer et al., 2002; O’Connor, 1992). Women’s dependence on men and not each other helps to continue the patriarchal model of our society (O’Connor, 1992). By attaching the stigma of lesbianism to close female relationships, men are further alienating women from developing strong bonds (O’Connor, 1992). Bernard (1981) states that many factors, such as geographical mobility and sexual suspicion, have played roles in the decline of women’s friendships (Knickmeyer et al., 2002; Raymond, 1996). Others assert that the feminist movement helped to re-emphasize the importance of friendships and to see their commonalities and to understand how the patriarchy was oppressing them (Shreve, 1989). The “sisterhood” that has emerged from this awareness has helped shape our stance on race, pornography, and women’s health
(Raymond, 1996). Same-sex friendships have a positive impact on women and may lead to “heightened mental, physiological, and sociological well-being whereas absence of friendships has been linked to loneliness, depression, and psychosomatic illness” (Knickmeyer et al., 2002, p. 1). Goldenberg’s (1996) research on female Holocaust survivors shows that friendships among women in concentration camps helped them to survive separation from families and the atrocities they had to endure. Overall, the literature regarding friendship has changed over the past twenty years. Early literature stressed the number of friendships (Bernard, 1981; O’Connor 1992). Now, the literature focuses on quality of the friendships, not quantity (Knickmeyer et al., 2002).

**Developing Friendships**

The previous sections discussed the importance of friendships for women and the value that friendships offer. However, the formation of friendships does not just happen. This section provides an overview of the development of friendships, the qualities necessary for growth-fostering friendships, and how friendships help women develop a sense of self. Some of the literature uses the term *relationship* rather than *friendship*: I use the term friendship in my research. For women of the age I am working with, relationship has a potentially sexual connotation for college-aged women, which is neither the intention of this research nor the reality of the vast majority of these connections.
Jean Baker Miller (1986) researched how the formation of self and relationships is different in women as compared to men (Jordan, Stiver, Kaplan, & Miller, 1991; Miller, 1986). Self refers to “…the organization of a person’s experience and construction of reality that illuminates the purpose and directionality of her or his behavior” (Surrey, 1991, p.52). For women to develop a sense of self, they must maintain and foster relationships (Miller, 1986; Surrey, 1991). While women use their relationships differently than men, it does not mean that they are necessarily more dependent on others (Miller, 1986; Surrey, 1991). Miller (1986) outlines the five good things of growth-fostering relationships:

1. Each person feels a greater sense of zest (vitality, energy).
2. Each person feels more able to act and does act.
3. Each person has a more accurate picture of her/himself and the other person.
4. Each person feels a greater sense of self worth.
5. Each person feels more connected to the other person(s) and a greater motivation for connection with other people beyond those in the specific relationship. (Miller, 1986 p. 3)

These five characteristics provide a framework for looking at the same-sex relationships of the students I am studying. Women need to be recognized in their actions and experiences. The response and empathy they receive from another person enables them to take action. Positive, recurrent
interaction leads to the desire for more connection, relieves the feeling of isolation, and supports the feeling of connectedness, thus allowing growth. Mutual empathy in a friendship helps the relationship to grow while giving the participants the support and connectedness they need to develop individually (Miller, 1996).

Veniegas and Peplau’s (1997) research demonstrates that power hierarchies can be present in friendships and affect satisfaction with the friendship. (1999) found that married women’s friendships with other women provided them with a place in which to feel secure in letting their guard down. This was the case even more so than in women’s relationships with their spouses. Relationships that are not emotionally supportive have been linked with depression in women (Knickmeyer et al., 2002; Nelson, 1996).

While the body of research on friendships among women of color is extremely limited, there are some key studies that help to inform this topic. Martinez Aleman (2000) has done research specifically on the friendships between women of color at a PWI. Martinez Aleman (2000) studied sophomore and junior women at a predominantly white liberal arts college in the rural Midwest. The 41 participating women were self-identified as African American, Black African, Latin or Asian American. Each woman completed a questionnaire with five open-ended questions, a 13-item Likert scale, and brief interviews with a trained student interviewer. A longer, semi-
structured interview happened at a later date. The data were analyzed for themes and then presented to the women in a group session.

Martinez Aleman asserts that cognitive development is aided by women's friendships in college. Yet unlike their white peers in an earlier study, women of color are using these friendships to combat their experiences of racism. Four themes emerged from the research that identify why women of color create these friendships.

*Developing a positive ethnic and/or racial self image:* Family often offers the support and aid in developing a racial identity (Baxter Magolda, 1992). In the absence of family, friends offer women of color the same type of support and are important in validating the women's positive self-image. This is a critical element for women of color who exist within a White environment that they perceive devalues them and their desired future self.

*Race talk:* In a world where she is often the “only one,” a woman of color can often find herself speaking for her entire race/ethnicity and engaging in conversations that can be stressful and draining. Maintaining friendships with other women of color provides them with a safe haven or a calm away from the storm (Martinez Aleman, 2000). With same-race friends, Black women are less likely to have to defend who they are. They have, in fact, developed a “rule book,” which is then passed on to younger women at the institution.
Boosting Academic Self-Worth: As mentioned before, students of color are often coming to campus less prepared than their white peers. Therefore, women of color are not turning to one another to gain academic knowledge, but to get the academic support, encouragement, and validation necessary to be successful (Martinez Aleman, 2000).

Being Women of Color: Women of color are in a position unique and different from White women and men of color. A woman of color is always a woman and always of color. She is not wholly accepted in either group (Noble, 1993). Yet the conversations of these undergraduate women revolve around their race/ethnicity more than their status as a woman. Talk around being a woman is often centered on how they are treated within their own racial/ethnic group (Martinez Aleman, 2000).

Littleton (2003) studied community among African Americans at four PWIs. In this study he was looking at not only the minority community but also the minority sub-communities within the minority community. Littleton found that the experiences for men and women were different, and the experiences for Black athletes versus non-athletes were different. These different experiences created a “Minority within a minority culture” (Littleton, 2003, p.99). Many Black students were surprised to find that they felt closer to and more trusting of white students. At one institution, a Black women stated that the African American women on her campus were so
varied it was hard for them to get along and there really was no community among them (Littleton, 2003).

**Friendship and the Black Family**

One of the reasons that Black women were chosen for this study is my experience of close friendships of Black women in my family. Based on research done by Chatters, Taylor & Jayakody (1994), fictive kinship is often found in African American relationships (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994; Knickmeyer et al., 2002). Fictive kin may be defined in a variety of ways, but in this paper it is defined as people unrelated by blood or marriage but who are extended the same rights and status as a family member (Chatters, Taylor & Jayakody, 1994). The dynamic of fictive kin is more common among African American women than men and provides socio-emotional support. Studying and understanding fictive kinship may help other marginalized woman to find support among each other (Knickmeyer et al., 2002). “The family is one of the strongest and most important traditions on the Black community” (Franklin, 2007, p.3). Black families are often made up of blood relatives and friends that become kin. Black families teach future generations customs, traditions, expectations, and how to power through resistance (Hine, 2007). Poor, wealthy, and middle class Blacks are more likely to live together than are Whites in similarly differing social classes (McAdoo, 2007a). McAdoo (2007b) suggests that family (both blood and fictive) will be even more important in the future.
While parenting styles differ within every race and culture, in general the “African American parenting style ...promotes respect for authority figures, a work ethic, achievement, a sense of duty, obligation to kin, and a strong religious sense...” (McAdoo, 2007b, p.165). Furthermore, children are taught how to live and survive in a hostile environment. Black parents tend to encourage their students to pursue higher education for the economic stability it will eventually provide. Furthermore, Black children are taught that their education can never be taken from them (McAdoo, 2007b).

Often in modern American society the Black family has been incorrectly stereotyped as fractured and dysfunctional (McAdoo, 2007b). While it is true that a higher percentage of Black youths are growing up living with only one of their parents, their extended family is a major part of their lives. In the Black family, extended family not only refers to blood relatives such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles, it also refers to friends who have become family. The act of making friends part of the family dates back to the era of slavery when blood families were often separated by slave owners. This separation forced slaves to become family in order to survive the daily injustices they experienced. In our society, people who are different from the mainstream experience stress daily because of their cultural differences (McAdoo, 2002). Social networks, such as extended families, provide support in order to survive psychologically (McAdoo, 2002). Some of the characteristics of families of color are: supportive social networks, flexible
relationships within family units, a strong sense of religiosity, extensive use of extended-family helping arrangements, the adoption of fictive kin who become family, and strong identification with their racial group (Allen, 1993; Boyd-Franklin, 1989; McAdoo, 1993; Staack, 1974).

Girls and young woman in their late adolescence are seeking to find people in their college environment to replace the role of parents and friends that are no longer readily available on a daily basis (Kaplan, Gleason & Klein, 1991, Ward, 1989). These young women need friendships to help them to continue to grow and develop their sense of self (Josselson, 1987, 1996). The college years are a critical time for them in their development of self. Finding and maintaining these relationships are especially difficult for women of color on PWIs due to their small numbers. If, in fact, one needs mutual empathy in a relationship in order to grow, the presence of any type of racism in a relationship with a White peer will not result in mutual empathy (Tatum, 1997). Moreover, Haralson (1996) states that peer group is key to surviving at a PWI.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research seeks to find out how Black women’s friendships are connected to the process of self-authorship. Self-authorship is defined as “the capacity to internally define [one’s] own belief’s, identity and relationships” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. xvi).

**Ways of Knowing**
Baxter Magolda began a longitudinal study in 1986 with 101 college students at a Midwestern university. Her participants were similar in race and socioeconomic status with only three students claiming to be from non-dominant populations. These populations are not named in the research design. She interviewed the students for 5 years; at the 5th year interview 70 students were still participating. Based on data analysis, the interview protocol was changed in years two and three and remained consistent in years four and five. Through this study she identified four ways of knowing. Given the constructivist research method of this study, Baxter Magolda (2001) states that these ways of knowing are not necessarily transferable to all college students. Yet the ways of knowing offer an understandable model of student development without understating the complexity of student development and experiences.

The four patterns of knowing are: absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent knowing and contextual knowing. “Absolute knowers” view knowledge as certain or absolute and believe that the authority/educator has this knowledge and will give it to them (Baxter Magolda, 1992). In this stage, women are often in the receiving pattern; that is, information is taken from the authority as if it were a transaction (Baxter Magolda, 2001). A “transitional knower” is beginning to see knowledge as partially certain and partially uncertain (Baxter Magolda, 1992). According to Baxter Magolda, 32% of first-year undergraduates are in this stage, 53% of sophomores, 83%
of juniors, and 31% of graduates who are in their first year out of college.

Female transitional knowers typically use an interpersonal pattern. In the interpersonal pattern, the student wants a relationship with the professor that encourages one’s thoughts, to hear peers’ views and ideas, and ultimately, to use their own judgment to draw conclusions (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Baxter Magolda (2001) claims the following:

The interpersonal pattern voice diverges more from authority than does the impersonal pattern. “The discovery of uncertainty seems to be viewed by interpersonal pattern students as an opportunity to become involved in knowing, resulting in greater activity and exercise of personal judgment” (Baxter Magolda 1992, p. 31). They experience more distance from authority and are therefore more ready to develop their own voice. Interpersonal transitional knowers care about peer’s views; they want to know their peers and feel that their professors care about them (Baxter Magolda, 2001). “Independent knowers” believe that everyone has the right to his or her own opinion, which means that knowledge is uncertain. Peers are “a legitimate source of knowledge” (Baxter Magolda, 1991, p. 31) and should be rewarded for having thoughts that differ from those of the professor. Women most often showed patterns of interindividualism. In this way of knowing they listen to other perspectives and share their own, using this interaction to help shape their views (Baxter Magolda, 2001).
Similar to independent knowers, “contextual knowers” think for themselves. Yet they take this a step further by looking at knowledge generated by others as well. Contextual knowers integrate their views with others and actively seek out experts. They give validity and authority to the knowledge of peers as long as the knowledge can be supported (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Most first year and sophomore students fall into the categories of absolute and transitional knowing. Juniors and seniors are often in the transitional and independent knowing category. Contextual knowing is typically in graduate level or beyond. The role of peers changes when one is making the transition from absolute knowing to contextual knowing.

“Absolute knowers” share materials with peers and attempt to explain what was taught to them by the professor. In the transitional stage, peers take on a different role by providing a forum for active exchange of the knowledge that they are coming to understand, rather than just memorizing what the professor has told them. Peers in this stage also play a different role.

Transitional knowers believe that peers have opinions but these opinions are not the same knowledge that authority possesses. They collect the knowledge of peers without challenging their ideas. Independent knowers believe that there are different views that exist and that authority is not the only source of knowledge. For independent knowers, every voice is equal. Knowledge becomes uncertain because everyone has a right to his or her own beliefs and opinions. They share the knowledge they have with peers and share their
views. Knowledge from peers now becomes “legitimate.” Contextual knowers share their views and understand that peers can be a source of knowledge in addition to authority. Points of view now need to be supported by evidence (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Understanding the role of peers in the stages of knowing are as important as the changing roles (Baxter Magolda, 1992).

Self-Authorship

Self-authorship was chosen as the theoretical base for this research for two main reasons. Baxter Magolda asserts that the road to self-authorship most often begins after college because institutions of higher education are not providing experiences that cause disequilibrium in students (Baxter Magolda, 2001; Pizzolato, 2004) that would lead for the need to develop a more internal sense of focus. I contend that for Black women at PWI their experiences are fraught with situations that cause disequilibrium; therefore, they will begin the journey earlier than most of their white peers.

The students that Baxter Magolda studied “made little progress towards self-authorship while in college” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. xvii). She continued to interview these students after graduation; 39 students participated while in their 20s. As stated earlier, self-authorship refers to a shift to forming a definition of oneself that exists internally rather than relying on external influences. It is important to note that self-authorship does not just follow a forward trajectory. While someone may be progressing
towards the development of an internal voice, they may also, at times, slide backwards (Baxter Magolda, 2009).

The development of self-authorship has four phases: Following External Formulas, The Crossroads, Becoming the Author of One’s Own Life, and Internal Foundations (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Pizzolato, 2004). Furthermore, it consists of four dimensions: Trusting Yourself, Confidence to direct your own life, Acting on one’s environment effectively, and Maintaining your own identity.

In the years immediately following college, most students are in the following external formulas phase. This phase is characterized by an understanding of the need to develop one’s own internal voice, but lacking the previous experience required to know how to do it. Often these students followed plans that they had made and then realized that it was not what they really wanted. This brings them to the crossroads phase. In this stage, one realizes the need to look inside for perspective rather than depending on external factors to offer direction. The third phase, known as the process of becoming the author of one’s own life, involves “…deciding what to believe, one’s identity, and how to interact with others” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. xix). In the fourth phase, referred to as internal foundation, one is able to control his or her environment rather than being controlled by it. After identifying these phases, Baxter Magolda was able to identify three dimensions of development that were happening from formula to foundation.
The epistemological dimension concerns how we know or decide what to believe and is central to the current college experience. The intrapersonal dimension is about how we view ourselves, and while it is part of the collegiate experience, it is not a central force during this time. The final dimension, the interpersonal dimension, is about how we construct relationships with others. Surprisingly, collegiate curricular and co-curricular activities are not typically designed to help students to achieve this. Based on analysis of her interviews, Baxter Magolda (1991) was able to identify three factors in an environment that facilitate the development of self-authorship: knowledge as complex and socially constructed; self as central to knowledge construction; and authority and expertise were shared in the mutual construction of knowledge among peers.

Racial Identity Development and Self-Authorship

In addition to developing on the continuum of self-authorship, these young women are also dealing with racial identity development. Racial and ethnic identity development was first researched in the early 1970’s. Cross (1971) was one of the first theorists to discuss racial identity and to identify that many Blacks experienced self-hatred due to their role and status on the larger community (Cross, 1971, Hipolito-Delgado, 2007). Racial identity has been cited as a factor affecting adjustment to PWIs for African American students (Chavous, Rivas, Green, & Helaire, 2002; Mitchell & Dell, 1992). In the 1970’s, William Cross presented a model of racial identity theory. Janet
Helms (1990) updated this theory in subsequent work. According to Helms there are four stages of Racial Identity Theory: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion and Internalization/Racial Transcendence. While each of these stages is characterized by particular emotions and actions, people may move back and forth within the stages (Helms, 1990). Helms sees these stages as world views. In the pre-encounter stage, one seeks to identify with and be like Whites. A person in this stage may have poor self-esteem and be negative and defensive about being Black. In the first phase of the Encounter stage an event has typically triggered a reaction that illustrates the idea that they will always be viewed as inferior to the White standards. This acknowledgement leads to the second phase of the Encounter stage that “… is comprised of a mixture of feelings including confusion, hopelessness, anxiety, depression, and eventually anger and euphoria” (Helms, 1990, p.25). At the last part of this stage, the person’s ascribed identity is Black. In the Immersion/Emersion stage, individuals move from idealizing Blackness to belittling Whiteness. Individuals in this stage may experience rage and be self-destructive and act impulsively (Helms, 1990). The Internalization stage is characterized by “…the internalization of a positive personally relevant Black identity. That is, one blends one’s personal identity (i.e., what makes one unique) with a Black ascribed identity (i.e., acknowledgment that one’s Blackness influences who one is)” (Helms, 1990, p.28-29).
Helms has since updated this work in what is called People of Color Racial Identity Model (Helms, 1995; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Instead of stages, people experience a series of statuses. The term was changed to eliminate the idea that people were stagnant within one stage (Helms 1995, Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). “…the content of each status varies according to the sociohistorical and economic conditions and socialization process each group has experienced” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 26). The statuses are: conformity, dissonance, immersion, emersion, internalization and integrated awareness. Individuals in status one, conformity, define themselves based on the stereotypes espoused by Whites and seek to assimilate themselves into the White culture and denounce their own group. Dissonance, status two, begins when people encounter information or materials that signal that the person of color can never actually be wholly accepted by the White society. Immersion, status three, finds the individual fully immersed in ones racial group and rejecting all aspects of White society. In emersion, status four, “individuals more fully embrace the values, beliefs, and behaviors of their racial group” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p.27). In the internalization status, people are committed to their racial groups and they have an ability to look at their own race and the White race without prejudice. Integrated awareness, status six, the individual has a positive sense of racial identity (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

*Self-authorship & Activism*
Ebela Hernandez (2008) has done research on the connection between Latino students’ activism and their development of self-authorship. In her study, Hernandez summarizes Delgado Bernal’s (1997) four oppositional behaviors. She then applies the fourth category, transformational resistance, to the stages of self-authorship (Hernandez, 2008). Transformational resistance can be either internal or external. Internal transformation is demonstrated by behavior that is consistent with the normative culture coupled with a conscious critique of that culture. External transformational resistance is purposeful and overt.

**Conclusion**

There are a growing number of women of color attending colleges and universities, yet evidence demonstrates that these women struggle to feel comfortable on campus. In addition, research shows that diversity on campus is beneficial to all students (Chang, 2001, Cohen, 1994) by enhancing their experience while giving them a chance to experience the reality of the global world (Chang, 2001). Therefore, encouraging diversity and students’ participation in diversity activities is shown to have a constructive effect on students’ learning and development (Astin, 1993).

According to Miller (1986), the female’s development of self is linked to the maintaining and fostering of relationships. While research has been conducted to look at relationships among women of color and their cognitive development (Martinez Aleman, 2000), little work has been conducted on how
these friendships help to develop self-authorship. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge and provide strategies for both students and administrators to implement in order to provide a better experience for Black women at PWIs.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand the role that female friendships play in the development toward self-authorship among Black women at predominantly white universities (PWIs). This qualitative study uses the participants’ experiences and perceptions to illuminate the connection between same-sex peer relationships and self-authorship. Qualitative research was chosen because it provides a contextually rich picture and illuminates the lived experience of the women I studied. Through interviews students were able to talk about their experiences as well as react to the experiences of others.

Qualitative Research

I chose qualitative research for this dissertation for two main reasons. First, “A questionnaire is like a photograph. A qualitative study is like a documentary film. Both offer images. One however - the photograph captures and freezes a moment in time, like recording a respondent’s answer to a survey question at a moment in time. The other - the film-offers a fluid sense of development, movement and change” (Patton, 2002). I seek to show a film, one that has a beginning, a middle and is still in process (Patton, 2002). This film captured a finite period of time but this does not mean it is the end of the film. A film is particularly important in this research as it can show how fluid a situation is and that there are multiple agents within any given scene. The film allows one to see the picture from a variety of angles.
Development does not just happen; it is an ongoing and unfinished process that is unique for each person. The film allows you to capture the person and how that one person is developing.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) discuss five reasons for moving from quantitative research to qualitative research. *Context stripping* refers to the idea that singling out variables may mean that in other situations (for instance another lab) the results could be different. Qualitative research allows the researcher to look at a variety of interrelated variables as well as the nuances and subtleties of experience. For this research, context is particularly important to how the women are experiencing the situation.

“Exclusion of meaning and purpose” is the second reason. Human behavior, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and purposes attached by human actors to their activities. “Qualitative data... can provide rich insight into human behavior” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.106). Human beings experience the same event in different ways. For instance the reaction of a white Anglo student to a racially motivated campus hate crime may be very different than that of a person from a group that has been persecuted by the KKK. The third reason is the *disjunction of grand theories with local contexts: The etic/emic dilemma.*

Quantitative research takes an etic or outsider approach to research; a hypothesis is proposed and tested. Yet this outsider view may not be able to assess what is really going on inside the experience. An inside (emic)
perspective allows the researcher to understand the phenomenon through the eyes of those that experience it as participants are using their words to explain the phenomenon (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research allows the opportunity to use participant voices to illuminate the relationship of friendships to the development of self-authorship. This emic perspective does not allow for generalizability but gives a richer description of one person's experiences. It is possible to generalize data gathered quantitatively to a population. Yet this generalized portrait cannot necessarily be applied to individual cases. For instance, data may not show that 80% of all Black women on PWIs are unhappy with their experiences, yet it represents women who are happy with their experience, nor does it capture why women are dissatisfied. This Inapplicability of general data to individual cases is Guba & Lincoln’s (1994) fourth reason for moving towards qualitative research. The final reason is the exclusion of the discovery dimension in inquiry. In quantitative research one is trying to prove or disprove a certain hypothesis. The search for this proof leaves out what may be discovered during the process of research. Qualitative research can remedy this phenomenon by allowing the unique characteristics of individual experiences to be seen and explored by the researcher. This is particularly relevant when studying a phenomenon like Black women’s friendship that has little research available.

Qualitative research was instrumental in the development of student affairs theory (Manning, 1999). Understanding the meaning making of
women is necessarily bound to perceptions, narratives and rich context. My work seeks to add to the body of knowledge that informs student affairs work. The limitations of qualitative research include the limitations of generalizability of findings; yet gathering descriptive and rich accounts of individual experiences enables generalization to theory that can subsequently be tested in quantitative research designs.

**Methodology**

Among the many approaches to qualitative research, the phenomenological method of inquiry is most appropriate for this study. Phenomenology asks the question: “What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?” (Patton 2002, p. 104). The term phenomenology has grown to include many different things. “It can refer to a philosophy (Husserl 1967), an inquiry paradigm (Lincoln 1990), an interpretive theory (Denzin and Lincoln 2000b), a social science analytical perspective or orientation (Harper 2000; Schutz 1967, 1970), a major qualitative tradition (Creswell, 1998) or a research methods framework” (Moustakas, 1994, p.104). This study used phenomenology as a research methods framework to give detail to the lived experience of Black women’s friendships at PWIs.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is thought to be the father of phenomenology. In this research, I utilized transcendental phenomenology as described by Moustakas (1994) and inspired by Husserl. Transcendental
phenomenology refers to how meaning is made within the awareness of the individual. It is important that this method be descriptive in order to understand “how things are constituted in and by consciousness” (www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/3.html). Transcendental phenomenology is intertwined with intentionality. The act is only real because it is being experienced by an individual. The individual is making meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). Intuition is key to this process as well. As the process is reflective, the researcher’s intuition helps us decide what is happening without specific reasons or evidence (Moustakas, 1994). In this form of phenomenology, it is critical that the researcher engage in the epoche process (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is a Greek word that means to refrain from judgment. Often referred to as bracketing, this is an intentional process that requires that the researcher look at things from a vantage point of how it is actually happening and not through the lens of her own life experience, preconceived notions and personal biases (Moustakas, 1994). Part of the epoche process is bracketing. By bracketing, the researcher puts aside pre-judgments, biases, theories, everyday beliefs and assumptions. It is important to note that full epoche is hard to achieve and it is important for the researcher to understand this as they go through the process (Ivy, 2006; Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology gives meaning to a particular phenomenon as it has been experienced by a group of people (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002;
Rieman 1986). In this study, the phenomenon of interest is the experience of Black women’s friendships on a predominantly white campus and how these experiences lead to the development of self-authorship. Closely related to phenomenology are social construct and constructivism. The foundational questions of social construct and constructivism are “How have the people in this setting constructed reality?; What are their reported perceptions, ‘truths,’ explanations, beliefs, and worldview?; What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact?” (Patton, 2002, p. 96) This framework is based on the idea that reality is constructed by those that experience it: the same experience is unique to each person based on personal beliefs and ways of meaning making.

Social construct and constructionism give us a lens into the lives of people based on how they experience their reality. Thomas’ theorem claims that “What is defined or perceived as real is real in its consequences (Thomas & Thomas, 1928)” cited in (Patton, 2002). This rings particularly true when one is considering issues of racism and bias. The perceived reality is the lived reality for people and one must study the experiences and give them voice in order for others to attempt to understand what is happening. This is closely related to phenomenology because in attempting to understand a phenomenon one must look at it through the eyes of those that are experiencing it. The basis of social construct speaks to how people have
constructed reality. This reality informs the way a person or group of people experience a phenomenon.

**Data Collection**

*Site*

In order to conduct this research, I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board at Herndon University. Herndon University is a private, Jesuit research institution located in a Northeast United States suburb outside Boston. Herndon enrolls over 14,000 students with an undergraduate population of 9060. More than fifty percent of the undergraduate population are women. All fifty states are represented as well as 58 countries. Seventy percent of the first year class in the year 2008 received some type of financial aid. The academic program is made up of nine schools. Herndon is a Division I athletic school with 29 varsity teams.

A unique attribute of the Herndon University is its active AHANA (African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American) program. The mission of the Office of AHANA Student Programs is to provide a broad array of services that nurture students' academic, social, cultural and spiritual development. The Office of AHANA Student Programs provides quality programs and services aimed at responding to the continuum of students' needs. Specific programs include academic support, mentoring program, various publications and a pre-college academic program. Two thousand seventy three students were classified as AHANA students in the Fall 2008
semester. Fifty five percent of the AHANA students are women. Black or African-American women make up 26% of the female population of AHANA students.

**Sample**

The participants are seven traditional college-aged female students (18-24 years of age). All participants consider themselves to be African American or Black. McAdoo (2007a) states that African Americans fall into three different categories: 1.) descendants of slaves 2.) “immigrants and descendants from Africans in the Caribbean and Latin American countries” 3.) “…recent immigrants from the 52 countries of Africa” (McAdoo, 2007a, p.157). For the sake of this research, I allowed students to identify themselves as experiencing the world as Black. While they may not fall into one of the above stated categories, their appearance may have dictated that they have been treated as Black throughout their lives. This is important because phenomenology entails looking at how a phenomenon is experienced by a person or group of people. For women who identify themselves as Black, no matter their demographic classification, their reality has been socially constructed to shape their experience as a ‘Black women.’

Snowball or chain sampling was utilized (Patton, 2002) to obtain the participants. This method uses contacts and participants to identity other potential participants. I began recruiting students via an Associate Director in the AHANA program because I knew that she was working with a group of
students in the summer of 2009 that might be willing to participate in my study. I sent her a letter (Appendix I) explaining my study. She forwarded my student email (Appendix II) to the women in her program, I promptly received responses from two students. Students were told that they would receive a $15 gift card to a store of their choosing. My first interview, Jaffrey, gave me the names of three students to contact using her name. This netted me one student. After interviewing a student on the AHANA Leadership Council (ALC), I went to the ALC webpage and emailed all the women I identified by picture that may qualify. I admit that I was not comfortable doing this but I received responses from four students and interviewed two of those students. Most of the students I recruited after the first email was sent via the AHANA offices were from referrals I received from the women I interviewed.

I interviewed seven students. The interviews were conducted in a library study room or an empty classroom on the campus of Herndon University. I began the interview by having the students read the informed consent (Appendix III). I then went over the informed consent with them and stressed that they could end their participation in the study at any time. After we reviewed and signed the informed consent each student completed a Participant Information Form (Appendix IV) and an Informational Questionnaire (Appendix V).

The following is a brief description of each participant:
Jaffrey is a 21 year old senior from a major city. She identifies as African American/Black. She was raised largely by her grandmother and has two younger siblings. Jaffrey has suffered some major losses in her life including her mother at a young age and a younger sibling more recently. Jaffrey attended a racially diverse public high school. She has an on-campus job.

Angela was raised by a single mother with her older sister. She is a 21 year old senior who attending a predominantly white public high school. She identifies as biracial. Her faith is a major part of her life.

Tina is a 21 year old junior. She lists her racial/ethnic background as Black but talks a great deal about her African roots. She attended a predominantly minority high school in a major urban city. Tina is actively involved in many minority-focused organizations on campus.

Victoria is a 21 year old senior. She attended a predominantly white, private all girls school. She was raised in an upper middle class two-parent home with one sibling. Victoria identifies as African. She is involved in several organizations on campus.

Paige is the youngest participant in the study. She is a 19 year old sophomore from a major urban city. She attended a predominantly white boarding school. Paige was raised by a single mother and identifies as bi-racial. She is involved in several activities and works both on and off campus.
Diamond is a 20 year old senior. She was raised in a two parent home in a suburb outside of a major urban area. Diamond attended a religiously affiliated, all girls school. Diamond transferred from HU for one semester but decided to come back because the school she transferred to was not challenging enough. She is involved in a variety of activities on campus and has an on campus job. Diamond identifies herself as Black.

Tyler is a twenty one year old junior from a major urban city. She was raised with no siblings by a single mother. She attended a private coeducational, predominantly white high school. Tyler identifies herself as African American and African. She has moderate involvement on campus and works two jobs off campus.

Saturation is an important part of qualitative research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Saturation refers to the point at which no additional data will help to further define the subject matter (Guest et al., 2006). While experts differ on their opinion and exact definition of saturation (Guest et al., 2006); Morse (1994) claims that phenomenological studies should have at least six participants and Creswell (1998) feels that it should be between five and twenty-five. Unfortunately, neither researcher provides support for this recommendation. In their study of the sexual behaviors of West African women, Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) found that 92% of their codes for the interviews for one country were found in the first
twelve transcripts. When they added the transcripts from a second country only nine new codes were generated (Guest et al., 2006).

The semi-structured interview protocol consists of nine main questions with probes within the larger questions (Appendix VI). The questions are:

1.) Describe your three closest female friends on campus. Tell me about these friendships.  2.) Do you feel that you are living your life like you want to?  3.) Have you ever questioned what you were doing? If so, when did this questioning start?  4.) Have you ever felt as though you were living according to other’s desires for you? If so, when did this occur?  5.) Discuss a situation (use one of their examples if possible) in which you felt your beliefs or opinions were being questioned and/or challenged by a student or professor.  6.) How did you manage to remove yourself from the situation?  7.) Did you share this incident with your friends? What was their reaction?  8.) Have you had experiences or situations where you found that your friends have beliefs that are different than yours?  9.) Have you had experiences where your friends behaved differently than you did or would have?

These questions were designed based on questions from Baxter Magolda’s interviews with students about self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004) and studies researching self-authorship (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005, Pizzolato, 2003, 2004, 2005). In addition, I piloted my original questions with a young woman that fit my sample population. I realized that my original questions were too broad for me to gather the information that I needed,
After my pilot interview, I viewed a counseling tape that illustrated as an example of best practices in interviewing with Dr. Elizabeth Sparks, and with her assistance was able to develop questions that would garner the information I wanted to collect. All questions were open-ended in order to guide the conversation but also allow participants freedom within the discussion.

Member checking is critical in qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Merriam 2002; Patton, 2002). This step brings the analysis back to the participants in order for them to validate or negate the information. I asked students to read and react to their Textural Structural Description and the Composite Description (Both of these terms will be defined later in this chapter).

All students were given their Textural Structural Description and the Composite Description. If they desire, I will provide them with a copy of the finished dissertation. All interviews were audio-taped. In addition to using pseudonyms for participants, potentially identifying information from interviews and questionnaires are not be presented in the dissertation. In recognition of their time, each student was given a fifteen dollar gift card to a local store.

Data Analysis

As stated earlier, epoche is the first step in phenomenological process of data analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Epoche is a Greek word
that refers to the suspension of judgment. In this process of epoche, the researcher must first set aside personal bias and judgments regarding the phenomenon to be studied (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The researcher must “…eliminate, or at least gain clarity about, preconceptions” (Patton, 2002, p.485). The next step is called phenomenological reduction or bracketing. The researcher must ‘bracket out’ the world. The phenomenon is looked at on its own; not via standard meanings as already assumed or ascribed to it (Denzin, 1989; Holstein & Gubrium, 2005).

As part of this process I need to situate myself within the context of this research. I am a Black woman who has spent her entire student and professional career at predominantly white institutions. This includes the institutions that I have worked at over the past twenty years. My experiences of isolation from both White and Black students in college led to my interest in exploring the connection between friendships and self-authorship. Often in phenomenology, the researcher has experienced the phenomena that she is studying. I have spent a great deal of time researching this method and developing my research focus. This has given me an opportunity to reflect on my own experiences. I realized that while I was in college, I did use my different friendships for different reasons. Furthermore, I have lost contact with almost all of the Black women I was friends with in college, yet I have maintained strong and deep friendships
with my White women friends from college. Learning about phenomenology has provided me with the opportunity to reflect on these relationships and begin the process of epoche. While I do not believe I was able to put all my biases to the side, this process of reflection on my own experience enabled me to recognize them and appropriately disregard instincts in favor of close attention to the study data itself.

This research utilized the Modified Van Kaam Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Moustakas, 1994). The steps to this method are:

1. **Listing and Preliminary Grouping (Horizontalization)**
   In this step, the researcher identifies and views each experience equally (Moustakas, 1994). All transcribed interviews were put into HyperResearch to examine all the meaning-units.

2. **Reduction and Elimination** To determine the Invariant Constituents:
   Test each expression for two requirements:
   a. Did it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?
   b. Was it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. Expressions not meeting these requirements were eliminated (Ivy, 2006). For each interview I determined which experiences were included in the text. Each experience was then assigned a descriptive code that describes. These codes were reused as appropriate in all the transcripts.

3. **Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents**
This step involves identifying experiences that are related and labeling them under one theme (Ivy, 2006; Moustakas, 1994). Coding grouped all related interviews segments under the same label. Related codes were clustered together into themes.

4. **Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application** Use the research data to check that the themes are consistent with the data collected. Questions to be used to test this are “...Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? ...Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?...If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the co-researcher’s experience and should be deleted” (Moustakas, 1994 p.121). The themes were checked against the interviews to make sure they are compatible.

5. **Construct Individual Textural Description** Use the interviews to develop textural description of the themes for each co-researcher. In this description it was important to use quotes from the interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Each theme was described using examples in the participant’s words. This includes outliers and examples that are counter to the theme.

6. **Construct Structural Description** The structural description includes the dynamics of how the experience is evoked. This description focuses on the situation that sets the stage for the experience and “how the phenomenon was experienced (Ivy, 2006, p. 154).
7. Construct a Textural Structural Description for each research participant. This step brings together both the experience, including the invariant constituents, and the setting which evokes the experience for each research participant. I prepared a profile of each participant’s experience connected to the theme.

8. Develop a Composite Description for the meanings and essences of the experience representing the group as a whole. This step brings together the individual textural structural descriptions into one synthesized composite. (Moustaches, 1994). I looked across the textural structure descriptions to characterize the group as a whole.

This method allows for the richness of each individual story while ultimately describing a composite description of the essence of the experience.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Q: Do you find yourself often having conversations with your friends about issues of race on campus?
Tyler: Yeah.
Q: Can you tell me some of the things you guys talk about?
Tyler: Oh my gosh. It’s just like we always talk about it. It’s all the time.

This chapter will provide an analysis of findings from the interviews I conducted at Herndon University (HU). As I sought to make sense of the data I collected I realized that, in addition to looking at how the women’s friendships affected their development on the continuum of self-authorship, it would also be important to tell the story of how they chose to attend and remain at HU. The four areas that emerged as most significant in their journey are The Path to Herndon University, Experiencing the Environment, Making Environmental Change, and Looking Forward. The themes best illustrate what was communicated in the interviews. Each theme will be discussed in light of the role that friendships and the varying stages of self-authorship that the students are exhibiting. After describing the four areas that emerged, I will detail how friendships and the development of voice played a role in the participants’ ability to survive and thrive at Herndon University.

Analysis

I utilized the Modified Van Kaam Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data (Moustakas, 1994) and HyperResearch to analyze the data. The initial analysis of the data resulted in ninety seven codes.
Subsequent analysis and merging of codes resulted in a final list of seventy seven codes. Seventy nine percent of the codes were identified in the first two interviews analyzed. Following the Van Kaam method, I developed a composite description for the meanings and essences of the experience representing the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994). Through this process, I was able to identify the four major thematic areas listed above. I then went back and assigned each code to at least one major thematic area, in some cases more than one area. After assigning the codes to areas, I broke down the overall composite description into the four sections that best represent the journey. To discuss the friendship and self-authorship, I again applied the relevant codes to the section and used the students’ words to describe both areas.

Sample

As stated in Chapter Three, I interviewed seven Black female undergraduates at HU. The group consisted of four seniors, two juniors and one sophomore. While all the women identified themselves as Black, several considered their families’ country of origin as a large part of their ethnicity and cultural background. The majority of the women attended predominantly white high schools; only one attended a high school that was predominantly minority. Overall these women were very involved in the Herndon community as well as being strong students. Figure one provides an overview of the participants and the pseudonyms by which they will be
identified in the text. A written description of each participant is in Chapter Three.

Figure One  
Participant Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year of Graduation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>High School Type</th>
<th>Number of Extracurricular Activities/Leadership Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaffrey</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Three/Zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Predominantly White</td>
<td>Three/Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Predominantly Minority</td>
<td>Four/One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Predominantly White</td>
<td>Four/Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paige</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Predominantly White</td>
<td>Four/One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamond</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Predominantly White</td>
<td>Four/Zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyler</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Predominantly White</td>
<td>Two/One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews lasted from thirty minutes to one hour. Using a semi-structured protocol enabled me to ask what I wanted to know in addition to giving the women the latitude to discuss what they thought was important and wanted to share with me. Each interview had a different feel and, while some conversations flowed better than others, all the participants seemed to be open and honest. During my third interview, Tina brought me a copy of a widely discussed editorial from a conservative student newspaper published by HU alumni and current students. It is important to say that this newspaper is not sponsored by HU and does not receive any funding from the
college. The timing of this controversial article enabled me to explore a concrete race-related campus experience common to all of the participants. During each interview following Tina’s I asked the women if they had read the editorial and what their reaction was. The editorial will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Ethnicity & Cultural Background**

I was surprised to learn during my interviews that there is a divide between students who consider themselves to be ‘just’ Black and others who consider themselves to be Black and African and/or from some other country. On campus, there are both an African and a Black student group that at times have experienced friction.

Diamond is a light skinned Black woman who has often dealt with people who had no idea that she was Black. She laughingly discusses her mother’s response to people who do not realize that she is Black. Diamond is especially frustrated when this response comes from other Black people. When Diamond told her mother about one particular incident, her mother’s response was “Well, did you tell them, like, that your ancestors were raped by white people?” And she [Diamond’s mother] goes on and on. And I was like, ‘No, Mom, I didn’t go into that story. I was kind of on my way to class. Like I didn’t have time.’ So, yeah. I guess that’s actually probably my biggest pet peeve is when, you know, people sort of just automatically assume things about my race. Yeah. I find it really annoying, actually.”
Each woman who considers herself either first or second generation from Africa discussed her African heritage, expressed pride in that heritage, and talked about how that influenced her home life or her personality. (Any woman who considered herself to be Black was allowed to participate in the study. It was important that any woman who felt that she experienced life as a Black woman was considered eligible for the study). For example, Tina discussed how her family’s culture influenced how affection is demonstrated in her household and how she would like it to be different. “It was my culture being [African], we're not very like, ‘oh, I love you.’ Like we don't express you know love in those terms. And me growing up in America, seeing everybody saying, "I love you," to each other, it's like hey, how come I don't have that? With my relationship with my mom its always been different and just, I don't know, not as close as I want it to be.” Tyler, plainly and simply, stated that she is from two African countries that are currently at war but she loves them both. According to Tyler, there are very few Black people, other than male athletes, on campus that do not know where their family is originally from. She claims that there is a known tension between African Americans and Black Africans and while she is not part of the divide, it has been divisive to the Black community.

The Journey

The Path to Herndon University

Family Support
Each participant talked a great deal about her family and how her relationships with family members affected her on the journey to college. Five of the seven participants grew up in single family households headed by their mothers. Three of those women have little or no relationship with their fathers. Most of the women stressed the important role their mother played in getting them to college even if their mother had not attended herself.

For Diamond, her mother plays an instrumental role in Diamond being able to make educational choices for herself. Diamond is from a two-parent home and her father has his own ideas about the choices that Diamond should be making. Even in making her decision as to what high school she was going to attend, Diamond knew what she wanted. As opposed to her father, her mother supported her in the decisions about the schools that she wanted to attend. “My mom, on the other hand, unlike her father] is always really supportive of whatever I want to do. She’s the reason that I got to go to [Diamond’s high school]; she’s the reason that I’m at HU. She just -- academically speaking -- is willing to do whatever it takes to make me happy. Because she feels that -- well, she felt that when she was a kid, she didn’t get to make those decisions. And looking back on that, that really upsets her, so she doesn’t want me to be able to be like, ‘You guys did this.’ Like: ‘It’s your fault.’ So she really tries to do whatever it takes to get me to where I want to be.” While the support of Diamond’s mother has caused friction in Diamond’s relationship with her father, Diamond wholeheartedly believes that she is
making the right decisions regardless of what her father thinks. Angela credits her older sister with having a great deal of influence on the choices that she has made and is making. Her sister is the only other person in the family who attended college and she understands what Angela needs to do to be successful and the struggles and difficulties that may accompany getting a degree at a PWI.

The support extends outside their immediate families as well. Paige related that while her mother had not gone to college, she is very supportive of Paige’s education decisions. Paige credits successful aunts and uncles as an inspiration for her to pursue her education and be the best that she can be. She even attended the same boarding school one of her aunts attended. Paige exhibits obvious pride for her successful family members, including her mother.

High School Experience

Most participants stated that they had a diverse group of friends in high school and thought that it would be the same at HU. Several were shocked at the lack of inter-racial friendship groups. According to Tyler, she had a diverse group of friends in high school and thinks that was due in large part to the type of city she grew up in. “I think because, like -- and being in [big city], it’s very liberal, so I don’t think I necessarily thought about racial issues too often, like especially pertaining to myself and being different. I clearly noticed that I was different, but I had a very accepting group of
friends who had, like, different backgrounds, and their parents were very open-minded, so that definitely helped. But it was clear that I was different, like my opinions about things. But I didn’t really find it to be a huge problem.” This has changed at HU. All of her closest friends are Black American and/or African women. At HU she feels more comfortable with women from similar backgrounds. Similarly, Victoria discussed a good friend that she had in high school that was white. “...I realized that the reason I could be so close to her was because she was so open-minded and her family was ridiculously liberal.” Paige attended a predominantly white boarding school and although she experienced culture shock when she first attended, she ended up loving the experience. Her high school experience changed her outlook on the world and exposed her to opportunities and world viewpoints that she had never experienced before. “And I just really got so much out of it. It was a lot better than I'd hoped it was going to be. I remember getting there and just really not knowing what to expect. And I just was so happy with my experience. I just learned so much about myself. So that was really good for me.”

Friendships

While the friendships that these young women had in high school were important, especially socially during high school, these young women most often turned to their families for support and advice. The participants rarely mentioned their friends when they discussed the decisions they were making
about colleges. Family approval and distance from home were much more important in choosing colleges. An important distinction to note is that the women referred to their friends in high school with fondness but were able to talk about their college friends with true passion.

*Self-Authorship*

The participants were definitely experiencing moments of disequilibrium in this part of their journey. While most had the support of their immediate families about attending school, only a few had people in their lives that had either been through the process or really understood what the college application process entails. Diamond appears to be entering the Crossroads phase. While she knew that she did not want the school that her father chose for her, she had a hard time expressing exactly why she wants to go to Herndon University. The school her father wanted her to attend was a competitor school of HU that is similar in many ways. She did not yet have the words to communicate with her father as to why she wanted HU and needed her mother to help explain it to him.

*Experiencing the Environment*

*Diversity on Campus*

As stated earlier, the majority of these young women attended high schools that were predominantly white yet many were shocked by the climate when they first experienced HU. Overwhelmingly, these women thought the diversity on campus and interaction between different types of people would
be greater than it actually is. In fact, most women said that the white
students that they come into contact with on a regular basis have had little or
no contact with people of color prior to attending HU. Jaffrey knew that she
was attending a PWI but the ways the numbers actually played out really
surprised her. Angela was disappointed in what she feels is a culture of
sameness at HU. People are afraid to branch out and that can affect what
she wants to do. “I think HU just has like such a culture of not being an
individual, not being able to branch out. And sometimes, I do get sucked into
that. Because a lot of times when I am doing stuff that I do like to do, I'm
doing them by myself. So when you want to be around people, you kind of
have to do things that you don't like to do.” Diamond’s feelings are a lot
stronger. When discussing issues of racism in the classroom, she says that
more often than not white students are the ones making comments that are
racist or ignorant. She goes on to say that she thinks that professors don’t
say the wrong thing because they are concerned about getting in trouble yet
white students are not concerned about repercussions. “Whereas students
aren’t held to that standard. It’s like they can say whatever they want, and
be as ridiculous as they feel. But then, that’s the other thing: a lot of them
actually believe the stuff that they are saying. And it’s like, are you really
that ignorant? Like... But then at the same time, is it that they’re ignorant,
or is it just that no one ever told them, and it’s just the lifestyle that they
grew up with? And it’s like, they’re here at this school, which isn’t really
helping, because it doesn’t do much to, you know, really inform them of the way things really are.” According to Diamond the curriculum requirements of the college do not help to emphasize the importance of diversity. There is only one course on diversity required as part of the curriculum core. Furthermore, the history, theology and philosophy core courses are all European based.

Victoria spoke in a very matter of fact manner when she mentioned issues with other students in class. As a pre-med major she had many group assignments in lab classes. More than once when she was partnered with two white men, they would do the work before the agreed-upon meeting time to talk about how they would go about doing the project. This meant that the two men had communicated about the project prior to the meeting and purposely left her out. Tyler adds that often white students are ‘scared’ at the contributions of black students for group projects.

Jaffrey feels as if people at HU just don’t care about things that do not relate to them. They have a worldview that they believe in and if it does not relate to them, students are either nonchalant about the topic or just don’t care. Angela feels that this is a result of the culture; HU students do not want to be individuals.

*Social Life*

Social life on campus has been a challenge for all of these participants. Tina was the only one who mentioned a long term boyfriend. The others
claimed that social life on campus was different for them as compared to what they see for their white peers. At these students’ assessment of their social life comes from actually comparing themselves to what their white peers are doing. Tyler feels that, as a Black woman, she does not have access to the same parties and events on the weekend that her white peers do.

Many participants found a sense of belonging by joining a club and/or group on campus. Angela’s role in the Student Government Association (SGA) provides her with an opportunity to be involved in a group in which she feels welcome, can make a difference on campus and connect with administrators. Through this connection with administrators she feels that her voice is being heard. Paige has a similar feeling about SGA. Her experiences give her a great deal of pleasure and she has obvious pride about being part of the organization.

At least three of the young women just fell into their extracurricular activities and then found that they had a great deal in common with the other women in the clubs. Angela decided to attend an audition for acting club because another young black woman she met was involved. She reluctantly went the first time and never left. The connection to the women in the group as well as her desire to express herself through her acting keeps her actively involved in the group. Diamond talks about dragging a friend to a meeting of a singing group. As it turns out Diamond left the group after a
year because of the time commitment; the friend not only remained but became president of the organization.

Jaffrey has struggled in one of her extracurricular activities that she really enjoys. She is the only person of color in the group and when they make decisions about what to do it is always with an ethnocentric lens. She talked of her frustration in trying to get other members to think out of the box and feeling as if one person in particular was being purposely obtuse when Jaffrey made suggestions. By the end of the experience she felt drained and silenced. “I think eventually we worked it out. But it was so taxing, because like OK, from now on, like I actually asked not to be a part of the process of voting. I was like, I'm just going to get upset. Like I put a lot of time and energy into like bringing like groups and names to the table. And are you still, I just wanted to cry...I'm like, I don't even, can I just not go. Can I just not go. Like whatever, whoever we pick, I don't care. Just don't make me go there. I'll just start to hate you.”

Current Race-Related Issue on Campus

The most heated part of my interviews came when I brought up an editorial that was written in a conservative newspaper on campus. The title of the editorial suggested that the author was interested in interacting more with students of color. The author, Jane, is a first year student who had been on campus three weeks when the editorial was published. In this article, Jane claimed that it was “not hard to spot those who are considered to be
‘white’.” She compared minorities (her word choice) to magnets that attract each other. According to Jane, these groups of people from the same race, ethnicity or culture travel in packs; groups of white people are not considered packs. She goes on to say that it is intimidating to walk past these ethnic packs and, in fact, most of the members are not interested in being a part of the pack and are only part of it as a result of “presumptions, associations, social stigmas, and deceptions.” Jane believes that the cultural groups that exist are just replicating the packs and serve to widen the gap between nationalities and races. While most of the editorial puts the blame on students in these ethnic packs, Jane ends the article by stating that HU needs to address the issue of socialization and that different races, cultures and classes should be embraced.

Participant reaction to this article varied. All the subsequent participants had read the editorial prior to their interview with me. Diamond, in particular, could barely get the words out when I first asked her about the article. She was particularly frustrated with the editorial because it made it seem as if all of the ethnic and cultural groups wanted to stand alone and not participate with the community. In fact, Diamond claims that these groups are interested in interacting with the entire community and are constantly trying to get white students to attend events. “I feel like the people in this article, the person who wrote this article, just, they’re all assuming that these groups are -- like the campus groups are segregating
people. It’s like, ‘Oh, this is for us. This is our thing. You can’t come over here.’ When it’s actually the exact opposite. The purpose of these groups is to educate people, and the problem is that people like her automatically assume -- or don’t listen when people say to them, ‘No.’ Like come to our events. Like try this stuff out. We want to share this with you. That’s the purpose of this: to, like, get a dialogue going so that, you know, we can become more integrated and more knowledgeable about each other.”

Paige was offended by the editorial, mainly because it seemed to place the fault on students of color, even though it is clear to Paige that White students tend to stick together as well. Paige went on to say that it is hard for her to accept the credibility of the author when so many of the facts stated in the article were incorrect. Most important to Paige was when Jane referred to the acronym used on campus to identify students of color as a club rather than the group of people. Tyler also felt that the editorial lacked a researched perspective and attempted to simplify a very complex issue. The reference to packs made Paige feel as if Jane felt that students of color were like animals. Tyler was most concerned about reaction on campus. She feels the editorial has created tension and, both white students and students of color, are making assumptions about how people feel and what they are thinking. Paige did express sympathy for Jane as she is a new student and Paige feels as if she did not give it enough time to realize what HU is like and what Jane might learn from the community she claims has self-segregated.
Tyler admitted that after her first three weeks she could see that there seemed to be some segregation but did not feel at that point she knew enough to comment on it. Diamond, on the other hand, questioned the writer’s ability to make an educated statement when Jane had only been on campus three weeks. Diamond was able to sum up her feelings about the author’s perspective by saying: “Three weeks. What do you know? Nothing. You barely even know how to get to your classes.”

**Friendships**

In this leg of the journey, new friendships made a huge difference for the participants. Almost all of the participants expressed dismay over what they considered to be a lack of diversity on campus. By this they were referring to the lack of interaction and connection between different racial and ethnic groups. In this part of the journey, it made a huge difference in their lives when they discovered friends that were similar to them and shared similar interests. These friendships were found in the residence halls, clubs and organizations. Most of the women can describe the day and how they met their three closest friends effortlessly.

**Self-Authorship**

The moments of disequilibrium that resonate the most in this part of the journey relates to the realization of a lack of interaction between different groups on campus and the editorial in the campus newspaper. Women from predominantly white high schools rarely had the type of race-based social
divide they claim exists on HU’s campus. Support during these experiences came from the women of color with whom they have become friends. The home that they have created in their residence halls offers them a safe space to discuss their issues and be supported. Another key moment was the editorial written in the newspaper. Earlier I stated that Baxter Magolda identified three factors in the environment that facilitate the development of self authorship. One of those factors is understanding that knowledge is complex and socially constructed. The editorial was a great way for the women to see an example of this. As I mentioned, their reactions ranged from anger to empathy yet all of the women with whom I discussed this article were able, even if they were still angry, to see in some small way, why Jane has this perspective. They understood that they are experiencing the world differently than she is and that her knowledge is complex and socially constructed.

**Making Environmental Change**

Most participants are active in the community in ways that would help change the normative culture on campus. Their efforts to make change are in both formal and informal arenas.

*Formal Change Agents*

Angela is actively involved in a division of the student government association that plans social programs meant to bring together the community. According to Angela, the mission of her organization is to uplift
the community socially, politically, and educationally. She uses her role in this organization to try to effect change and it gives her a real feeling of having power on campus and the ear of administrators. She is proud of the work that this organization does but expressed her disappointment that the white students only seem interested in coming together around social events and not engage in real conversations about race and racism on campus.

Diamond took a course entitled *The History and Development of Racism*. Through this class, she was able to witness students evolving into a better understanding of racism in our society. While it was “very cool” to witness this transformation, “it took someone who makes it his life work to do this type of thing.” The class has since been cancelled and Diamond is disappointed that the content of the course will not be available to more students. Paige participates in a program that is specifically designed to work with first year students. Through this program, first year students are afforded the opportunity to dialogue with others about race. Angela participates in this program as well and for her it was quite eye opening to hear how some of the white students thought and what their stereotypes of people of color are.

Tina was surprised at some of the events/speakers that HU would not host on campus. She thought that as an academic institution the college should be willing to bring controversial people to campus for students to hear different viewpoints and challenge those views. Instead, she feels as if the
college does not want to allow for diversity of thought. Tina is very excited to be on the committee that is planning the 30th Anniversary of Multicultural Programs on campus. She hopes that all students will take advantage of the special events planned to learn more about multicultural programs as well as ethnicities and cultures that are different than their own.

**Informal Change**

Jaffrey discusses the small things that she can and does change and, while she knows it won't change the whole system, it does make a difference. “If it's something I don't want, alternatives, finding alternatives...OK, I'm only here four years. I can't change the whole system. But like since I've been here, not just me, but just working with other people, you see how small things change, even if it's just someone's opinion and this given situation. It's like OK, that's a step. I feel like as long as you're doing something, it counts...”

Angela discussed the conversations she likes to have one on one with people and how she acts in these situations. The last thing she wants to do is force people to agree with her. She wants them to understand where she is coming from but not feel forced to agree with her. “Sometimes like I do get shaken up when like I just, I'm not like getting through to somebody. Whenever I do start these conversations, I try to tell people, like I want this to be a conversation. I don't want this to be an argument. Let's just like present our beliefs to each other and you could take what you think are OK
from mine, and I'll take what I think are OK from yours. But like we're not going to argue. We're not going to force or anything. When it does come down to them forcing, that's when I just stop. Because I know that, like, I really don't like people to do that to me, so I'm not going to do it to the other person, so. That's where I kind of fall back. Because I'm, like, if I keep on going with this, I'm going to end up forcing.”

*Friendships*

Friendships for these women not only offered support in a sometimes hostile environment, it provided exposure to avenues to make change on campus. It is through friendships that most of these women became involved in the various organizations on campus that look to change the culture on campus.

*Self-Authorship*

Being a change agent campus is directly connected to self-authorship. In order to get others talking about sensitive and difficult issues such as racism and diversity, one must understand or at least acknowledge their own biases and have a strong sense of self and what they believe in. At the very least these women appear to be cultivating their internal voice. As formal change agents, they are in a position where they hear opinions that can be very different from their own and they need to be able to acknowledge those differences and communicate in ways that do not alienate others in the discussion.
Looking Forward

When asked about their education and career goals, the participants did not hesitate in their answers. It was obvious that these areas were something that they had thought about and had made conscious decisions about what road to take. Interestingly, while several of the women had little or no guidance from family members about their college choice and the application process, most of the women have received pressure about what major to choose and/or negative feedback on their major choice. Overall, from their comments, it seems as if their families are concerned about their ability to get a job or have a career that will enable them to live a good life.

Educational Goals

Diamond and Victoria started out as pre-med majors. For both of them it seems as if it was almost a given that they would go to college and then on to medical school. Victoria realized early on that she really did not want to be a pre-med major. Interestingly, it was not because of the slights she received from others mentioned earlier; she was just not interested in attending medical school. It took her two years to tell her parents that she did not want to be pre-med and she started the process by telling them how hard a class was or how she was struggling. When she finally told them, she realized they just wanted her to be happy in her chosen profession. Diamond knows that pre-med is not what she wants, though at times she thinks that maybe she should go back to it as the decision not to be pre-med causes
friction between her and her father. Yet, when discussing her
Communications major, she says “I am obsessed with my major.” She talks
with passion about her major, the great classes she has been able to take and
what she wants to do once she graduates. Her major is one of the reasons
that she decided to return to HU. The school she attended for the spring
semester did not have the depth of class offerings in Communications that
HU has.

Jaffrey is a first generation college student that came to college with
few expectations. What she really wanted, coming from a racially mixed high
school, was the preparation to live in a world that is similar to HU. Jaffrey’s
assessment of what she could get out of her education was very insightful. “I
guess prepared to live in a world that's similar to HU. I come from [major
city], which is predominantly Black. Most of my life before high school was
completely Black. Completely all together. My high school, it was pretty
much 45, 45, and then there was a smaller group of like Hispanics and like
Asians, Southeast Asians. And that like gave me a taste of what like the
bigger world would be like. But just HU, like to really be able to maneuver
through different groups, which I think I've picked up on, and being out of my
comfort zone, but also still being able to function like adequately if not like
excelling in general. A quality education. That diploma. ...also like just
connections with people, like not necessarily friendships, but like connections
with people who like are going to do things in this world. I hope to be one of
those people.” Jaffrey’s comment connection shows a real understanding of some of the things she will need to be successful in life.

Overall, all of the participants, except for one, has thought long and hard about their major and what they want to do. Each person has faced some resistance from a parent or family member about their chosen major. Yet, when the young women are able to explain their rationale for their choice, the family member seems to offer support and express that their concern is really over the future of the women and their ability to support themselves.

Career Goals

These young women have been making a difference on the HU campus and also want to make a difference in their careers. Tyler states that college is necessary for her to achieve her goal of helping people. While Tyler is pre-law, immediately after graduation she would like to teach in an underserved population for a few years. Tina wants to pursue a master’s degree in public administration so she can understand the ways in which she can effect change in our society. After Victoria decided not to be pre-med she realized that all along she wanted to pursue a career in the music business. It has been a passion for her all of her life and it just makes sense and makes her happy. Angela is in a five year program that will prepare her for a field that will have a direct effect on people.
For these young woman, graduation is close but still somewhat of an abstract concept. Overall, the most interesting theme that ran through my interviews with them about the future is that they never mentioned race and how that may play out in their chosen field. Jaffrey discussed how learning to live in the HU environment will help her in a world that she seems to think resembles HU, yet no one expressed concern over what obstacles they may find in those fields.

*Friendships*

Interestingly, friendships were not mentioned during this leg of the journey. Life after graduation is still somewhat of an abstract concept for these young woman and talking about how their current friendships may change did not occur to them.

*Self-Authorship*

The choosing of a major is a defining moment for most students informing what they will do after graduation. As mentioned, both Diamond and Victoria changed their majors from pre-med. For Victoria, this was a two year process that required the laying of a foundation with her parents about how tough pre med was for her and how unhappy she was with her classes. Her parents’ ultimate affirmation of their desire for her to be happy in her chosen field has made her feel confident in her decision to switch from pre-med. Diamond’s experience was different than Victoria’s. Her father’s desire
for her to still be pre-med had made her question whether or not she should ‘just do it’ even though she is not interested in the major.

Surviving and Thriving At Herndon University

As seen throughout the four areas already discussed in this chapter, the participants have had both good and bad experiences at HU. Yet, while at times it has been a hard university at which to be themselves, they have managed not only survive, but thrive at HU. The driving forces behind their strength have been their friendships and their ability to find their voice in an environment that is not always supportive.

Friendships

The overarching theme of this dissertation is the relationship between friendship and self-authorship. It is important to discuss the friendships that these women have, what these friendships mean to them, and the purposes that the friendships serve. Without providing an in-depth description of each of the participant’s significant friendships at HU, the interviews provided me with a particular view of these friendships and what they mean to the women.

Nature of their Friendships

Although Herndon University is predominantly white, when asked who their three closest female friends on campus were, all of those women were also Black women. Paige did state that she had white friends; however, only Diamond and Jaffrey considered a specific white woman to be a good
friend with whom she consistently interacts over shared interests. After
their first year, Herndon University students are allowed to choose the
classmates with whom they wish to live. All seven of these women chose to
live in suites with other Black women. The case of a non-Black roommate
occurred only when there was an empty spot and the non-Black student was
placed there. Several of the participants live in suites in a residence hall that
is considered “Minority Central.”

These young women met their friends in a variety of ways. One thing
that they have in common is that they all met at the beginning of their time
at Herndon College. Angela talked about how she met her three closest
friends through the acting group she joined as a first year student. According
to Angela, these women were not interested in the typical social culture and
party atmosphere of HU. Angela stated that “…there’s kind of a cult culture,
where everybody’s kind of the same…So through the acting group [I] just met
these three girls that didn’t really think like that either. They didn’t indulge
themselves in the HU culture. They found their ways to be their own person,
get out of it...So it was really comforting for me.” Angela also stated that she
was surprised at the lack of diversity in friendships at HU. In high school
she had a very diverse group of friends and as she puts it “I naively thought
it was going to be like that over here.”

Victoria describes her friend Heidi as being like no one she has ever
met before. Heidi pushes Victoria and all of their friends to be the best that
they can be. Victoria discussed how she and Tyler were similar because they are both Africans that went to private high schools on the west coast.

According to Victoria, Tyler is one of the funniest people she knows which makes being with her so much fun

*Meaning of Friendships*

More than one student brought up the idea of friends as family. This family that they have created has helped them to become comfortable at HU and have a sense of community. Noelle referred to one of her friends as her sister. Noelle has a bond with this woman that makes her feel as if she is family. Diamond returned to campus this fall after a semester at another institution. For financial reasons, she thought she would be transferring to a state school. After spending a semester there, she realized that she was getting the best education at HU and decided to return. Given the timing of her decision to return, she did not have a space on campus to live. She ended up staying with friends on campus until she had a room. Diamond states “If I need somewhere to stay, I know that they’ll let me crash in their room. If I need something to eat and I happen to lose my card, I know they’ll feed me. Like just, they’re the people on this campus that I would consider my family.”

*Role and Purpose of Friendships*

These friendships offer solace and comfort in an environment that at times can be hostile. When asked, each participant said that she spoke with
friends about issues of race and racism that happened on campus and to them individually.

Paige, who does have many white friends, says that there is something about having Black friends because they understand what it is like to be a Black woman; the experience isn’t something that you could explain to a non-Black woman. Tina’s friend Beth is fun loving and loyal and Tina values the fact that there is no pressure in the relationship. This is especially important to Tina right now as she is going through a rocky period with another close Black friend. The strain is due in large part to Tina’s not feeling comfortable sharing the ups and downs in her life as she thinks this friend may not understand. It feels strange to Tina to have a good friend in her life that she cannot share her personal problems with; this is an uncommon friendship trait among these women.

Living together just makes sense for these women. They all expressed relief about being able to go back to their rooms and be with people that understand what they go through on campus every day. As Diamond states “And also, people that I know if I’m having a bad day and I just need to vent, they’ll listen. And they’ll agree with me even if I’m wrong, and then later tell me, ‘OK, you were overreacting,’ and it’s fine. So, yeah. That would cover it.”

The trajectory of the role of friendships in the lives of the participants can be visualized by Figure two.

**Figure Two**
The Progression of the Role of Friends in the Black Female Undergraduate Experience at Herndon University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Early College Years</th>
<th>Mid to Late College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Social Life</td>
<td>• Social Life</td>
<td>• Social Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposure to new things</td>
<td>• Exposure to new things</td>
<td>• Confidante</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Confidante</td>
<td>• Support in a sometimes hostile environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support in a sometimes hostile environment</td>
<td>• Integral part of home on campus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a real change for the women participants who had a majority of white friends in high school. Here at HU, their good friends are mostly Black and have shown them that the relationships they had in high school were not as deep as they thought they were. Victoria stated when “..I think [of] the extended group of friends that I had [in high school], it just doesn't even remotely compare to the friends I have now, even though in high school I thought those were my best friends, you know. Because there are certain things that I could just never talk to them about.” Diamond captures the true essence and meaning of having friends at HU. “I love my friends. They make everything a lot easier.”

Voice

In addition to the development of true friendships, these women were finding and using their voice. By finding their voice, I am referring to an understanding one has that they have the power to develop their own sense
of identity and use that voice to communicate who they are to other people. While many students think they know how to make decisions on their own, they may mistake making your own decisions for actually having a voice. A voice implies that there is thought behind what you are saying and what you believe in. Voice develops over time. In all of these women I identified moments when they were in the process of finding their voice and, for some women, when they really believed in their voice.

Finding her voice

The women in this study first began finding their voice in the college search process. This was particularly true for the women that are first generation college students; they needed their voice to navigate through the college selection process. For Tyler, finding and using her voice was a direct response to issues of racism on campus. Tyler feels that the actual attitude on campus is quite different than the mission of the college which supports everyone helping and learning from one another. Because of this attitude she has not only sought out people she can talk to about race and religion on campus, she also seeks out those that have differing views than hers. And while she was unable to articulate it well, she knows when not to push a conversation in which everyone does not agree.

Victoria switched from pre-med to liberal arts with her eye on having a career in fashion. As mentioned earlier, it took her two years to tell her parents that she did not want to be a pre-med major and while she knows
that the fashion industry is a hard industry in which to make a name for
yourself, she says that the finding her path has been scary but it feels nice
and good as well as comfortable.

Paige, the youngest woman in the study, felt very strongly that she is
living the life that she wants to live. She finds real joy and excitement in the
choices she has made in life and the opportunities that she has had. She
confidently states “...it used to be more about what other people wanted for
me. But I think it was also because I was young. I was naïve. So I kind of
needed that guidance. And I think now that I'm a sophomore in college, now
that I understand who I am as a person, now that I understand more about
what it is that I want out of life, I think it's a lot easier for me to take control
of my own life and goals.” Angela’s older sister has been through the
college process and often has advice for Angela. This advice has helped
Angela see herself through another person’s eyes and helped her to identify
her strengths. This feedback from her sister provides affirmation for Angela.

Believing in her voice

Diamond talks about believing in her voice when dealing with her
father and want he wanted for her. As discussed earlier in this chapter,
Diamond and her father disagreed about which high school she should attend
and then which college would be the best choice for her. In both cases,
Diamond chose the school that she felt was right. Diamond’s answer when
asked about standing up to her father was insightful. “I take a lot of pride in
my decisions, and I don’t do anything that’s a major decision lightly. I take everything that I do very seriously. I weigh the pros and cons of situations. I try to look at it from everyone’s point of view. And I try to do what I know is best for me, while at the same time not, like, completely pushing anyone else’s feelings to the side.”

Jaffrey seemed the most grounded in understanding who she is and the power of her voice. This may be in large part to her upbringing and her needing to take care of herself and younger siblings at times. When asked if she was living the life she wanted to live, part of Jaffrey’s response included “Whatever you want, you have to really fight for it here I've realized, which is good in some ways, analyzing this over the summer. It's good because it makes sure I don't become complacent and like accustomed to, like, the status quo. But sometimes when you like simple things, and you have to really fight for, I guess that makes you a better person, idealistically.”

Earlier in this chapter I discussed a situation in which Jaffrey had decided that she could not be a part of the voting process for the organization any longer due to the way nominations were collected. Rather than this being an example of quitting, it shows that Jaffrey understands that there is an issue and has tried to confront the issue but in the end realized that she could not continue to fight a battle in which the other side was not listening. Jaffrey still believes in her voice but understands that the other side is not ready to hear it.
Similarly for Angela, part of believing in herself means not having to force others to agree with her or even talk about something they are not comfortable with discussing. When dealing with these types of issues, Angela is comfortable. “I feel like I know that like I’m being very true to myself...” Furthermore, through her minor she has learned how there is more than one reality for people and that some of the students who are making racist comments or engaging in racist behavior may really not understand what they are doing and their reality is quote different than hers. This has helped her when she has engaged in dialogues about race as well as in her efforts to understand the actions of her white peers.

Tina discussed in detail an incident that occurred involving her boyfriend. He was the victim of racism at the hands of a campus administrator. Tina knows this administrator and has to interact with him often because of her role as a student leader. This is a struggle for her as she wants to say something but knows approaching the issue could possibly jeopardize her good relationship with the administrator and make it hard for her to get things done as a student leader. While it is hard for her to maintain a professional relationship with this administrator, Tina understands the complexity and charged nature of a situation deemed to be racism and is able to behave in a way that stays true to her ideals while still allowing her to get her job done as a student leader. Tina decided recently to declare African Diaspora Studies as her minor. The minor has opened her
eyes to many new issues and provides her with a forum to discuss these issues.

Conclusion

The young women who participated in this study came from a variety of backgrounds with varying support. Individually, they share many similar traits but one thing they all shared is being a Black woman at a predominantly white institution. Developing voice is not an easy process. At almost every stage of their journey at HU, they have encountered barriers from peers, faculty and staff as well as institutionalized barriers. A central role in their development of voice has been the safe havens they have created for themselves with other Black women on campus. Regardless of their friendship groups in high school, these young women have chosen to surround themselves with other Black women in order to survive and thrive at HU. As Victoria stated “…We’re first generation. We have parents that are from other countries. And we all have funny stories of about what our parents did to us or how strict they were. So I think that you know that as well brings us closer together, because my friends from high school wouldn’t understand that.”
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research sought to explore the relationship between same-sex, same-race friendships and self-authorship among Black undergraduate women. When I first began this research, I had hoped to be able to place each participant in a developmental phase of self-authorship. What emerged was actually more interesting. While for some participants the information collected aided me in categorizing them within the trajectory of self-authorship, what became more salient to their experience and relevant to student affairs were the factors at play in their lives and on campus that affected the development of self-authorship.

This chapter will discuss how this research relates to the existing literature, what information is new, and what this research suggests about ways in which student affairs practitioners may aid in the successful experience of Black women at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

Interpretation of Results

This study confirmed some of what is already known about women’s friendships and the important role that friendships can play in the lives of women. This research also shows that while these women may appear to be thriving in the current campus culture, they are frequently encountering racist situations. With the support of their “family” of close Black women friends, these women are actively attempting to change the normative culture by being activists on campus.
Issues of Race and Racism

For the women in this study, race plays a huge role in their daily lives. They are constantly put in situations that are heavily defined by the color of their skin. The themes identified in Chapter four are all tied together by the role that race plays in their lives. In my first two interviews with Jaffrey and Angela, questions about race and racism were not included in the protocol, yet these issues seemed to play a factor in their everyday life. The salience of race and racism was the same with the other women; in most cases race came up in the conversation even before I asked a question about the editorial in the student newspaper.

Campus Diversity

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen (1998) collected research done by others regarding the climate of diversity on college campuses and developed a framework of how to enhance campus climate through policy and practice. Their research states that the prevailing mindset on campuses is that different groups should be able to work issues out among themselves without direct intervention from the college. Furthermore, colleges are hesitant to interfere in the identity development of students, as it is associated with the domain of parents.

While colleges have sought to increase the number of minority students on campus, many institutions have paid little attention to their sociocultural history that affects all members of the community. The history
of how minority groups were treated is part of today’s climate (Hurtado et al. 1998; Turner, 1994) and must be addressed in order to move on to create, in society generally and in particular at higher education universities, a more inclusive community. According to the participants in my study, Herndon University has a history of being a white Irish Catholic party school. This pervasive understanding of the culture excludes the women in this study. In a culture such as this, underrepresented student populations are often viewed as tokens (Hurtado et al., 1998) and experience the stigma that goes along with being a token member of a community.

**Friendships**

Given the universal experience of race-based exclusion, it was especially poignant to listen to the women in this study discuss how their friendships help them to succeed. All the women discussed going back to their residence halls as going home and stated the women there provided them with a safe place to be themselves. In Chapter two, I used Knickmeyer et al.’s (2002) definition of friendship. The friendships among these women embodied this definition. Most salient in the definition are both self-disclosure and power. The participants used their friendships to discuss what was happening to them on campus academically, socially and personally. The ability to self-disclose to their friends about anything is a hallmark of their relationships. Both Tina and Angela mentioned strained friendships with women with whom they were unable to share their thoughts.
and feelings without feeling judged. Martinez Aleman's (2000) research revealed that race talk is an important part of the friendships of women of color. The safe haven that they have in which to talk about issues of race and racism provides them with an outlet in which to voice their frustration. This was certainly true for the women in this study.

An equal sense of power is necessary in friendship (Knickmeyer et al., 2002; Veniegas & Peplau, 1997). As members of a group that is largely disenfranchised from the predominant culture on campus, the friendship between two Black women is not weighed down by the power differential that may exist between a Black woman and a White woman. The equality in power provides a level of comfort for the process of sharing and developing a friendship.

Jean Baker Miller (1986) defined the five “good things” of growth fostering relationships (friendships). All five of these “good things” resonate in the friendships of these young women. For example, “Each person has a more accurate picture of her/himself and the other person” (Miller 1986, p.3). Diamond discussed how, at times, she will get frustrated and rant on and on about something. She says that her friends are willing to listen to her in the moment but are not afraid to later tell her if she was overreacting to the issue at hand. “Each person feels more connected to the other person(s) and a greater motivation for connection with other people beyond those in the specific relationship” (Miller 1986, p.3). Angela joined a group because she
met one Black woman that was a part of it and hoped to be able to meet more Black women that way. Many of the important friendships of the women in this study started through another friendship.

In viewing friends as partners in the development of self-authorship, there are three factors that make a good partner (Baxter Magolda, 2009). A good partner “respected their thoughts and feelings” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 12). The women in my study talked at length about going back home (the residence halls) and talking about the issues they were facing on campus. Their friends listened to them and validated what they were feeling. The second and third characteristics are someone who “Helped them sort through their experiences, and collaborated with them to help solve their own problems” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 12). Often the women in this study would be angry and/or upset about an incident that had occurred on campus. Their friends let them vent and be angry and when the time was right, helped them to reassess the situation and decide how to handle the problem.

The women in this study have all been able to find friendships that are growth fostering both for relationships and the development of self-authorship. For the women in this study, they were able to elaborate about how the friendships benefitted them but did not discuss how others were benefitting from them as friends. In fact, based on the particular situations they discussed, such as introducing a friend to an organization or another friend, the women in this study were providing as much support to their
friends as they were receiving. In addition, the women in this study had eliminated those relationships that were not growth fostering for them or the former friend.

**Fictive Kin**

Fictive kin was also discussed in the review of literature. Three of the women in this study mentioned that they viewed their friends as family; the other four implied a fictive kin relationship. While fictive kinship is often found in the Black community (Chatters, Taylor, & Jayakody, 1994; Knickmeyer et al., 2002) it can be especially important for Black young women. According to Kaplan, Gleason and Klein (1991) and Ward (1989), girls and young women are looking for people at college that can replace the friends and family they have left at home. Perhaps the prevalence of fictive kin in the Black community was one important factor in the racial composition of Black women’s friendship groups. Interestingly, most of the women in this study had a diverse group of friends in high school among which the majority were typically White. Yet, even those who came from a predominantly white school now do not have any close friends that are White. As discussed in Chapter four, they have realized that they feel more comfortable with other Black women with whom they are able to be themselves.

**Supporting self-authorship**
Baxter Magolda compares the journey through adolescence with that of a tandem bike ride in most cases a parent, teacher or coach is in the front seat and the adolescent in back. The adolescent is then expected to take the front seat after high school (Baxter Magolda, 2009). What I found in my research is that the women in my study had taken the front seat at some point in high school and were already starting to steer the bike prior to college. Coupled with the issues that they are facing on campus that cause disequilibrium, the participants in this study are on their way to developing self-authorship prior to the completion of college.

Factors in the development of self-authorship

As discussed in Chapter Two, Baxter Magolda (1991) identified three factors in the environment that facilitate the development of self-authorship. Based on the interviews conducted in this study, it is apparent that all three of these factors are present in the participant’s environment. The first factor is knowledge as complex and socially constructed (Baxter Magolda, 1991). As has already been stated, five of the participants attended high schools that were predominantly white. These women all had friendship groups that were predominantly white and saw this as no big deal. It was not until they arrived at HU that they realized that a predominantly white environment, which was even more mixed than their high school, could have such a division between racial groups. Diamond mentioned that it was a shock to her to realize some of the stereotypes white students at HU believed about
people of color. For Angela, her role in the Racism Council gave her first hand knowledge of the beliefs of some of her white peers. Both women had an epiphany when they understood that racism is socially constructed and that some of their white peers honestly believed the stereotypes about people of color. In addition, Diamond and Angela realized that someone could be “smart” and still be racist based on their own reality and life influences.

The second factor, self as central to knowledge construction, can be described as a “careful process of combining logic and personal goals, beliefs, and values” (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007, p. 207). The ability to look at things from multiple perspectives is key to self-authorship. For instance, when discussing the editorial in the conservative paper on campus, Paige was able to see the author’s point of view as well and have empathy for the situation the author now finds herself in on campus. The third and final factor, authority and expertise, were shared in the mutual construction of knowledge among peers. This environmental factor harks back to the role of friendships in the lives of these young women. Their friendships offer not only home and solace but also a forum in which to discuss the issues of racism and isolation that they are facing every day on campus, what they can do about it on a macro level, and how to deal with it personally.

Phases of Self-Authorship

The women in this study seem to have developed friendships that would aid in the development of self-authorship. Furthermore, they are
encountering situations of disequilibrium on campus, with little formal support, that cause one to start developing self-authorship (Baxter Magolda 2004, 2007, 2009; Baxter Magolda & King 2004; Pizzolato 2003, 2004, 2005). Figure one provides you with the phases of self-authorship as well as the elements within this phase.

**Figure Two**
**Key locations in the journey towards self-authorship** (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p.4) and Participant’s Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>External Formulas</strong></th>
<th>Trusts authorities to decide what to believe, follow others visions for how to succeed. External Voices (those of others) in the foreground drown out the internal voice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paige:</strong></td>
<td>“...I knew that I wanted to go to a great high school, and I did that. I knew that I wanted to go to a great university and I did that. I knew that I wanted to be very involved on campus. I did that. I knew that I wanted to have a great group of friends. I have that. I knew that I wanted people to know who I was and to really respect me as an individual, to hold me in high esteem. I think people do do that. I wanted to just be successful and to be powerful and knowledgeable about things. I just really wanted to be a successful person on campus.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Crossroads</strong></td>
<td>Torn between following others’ versus own visions and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening to Internal Voice</strong></td>
<td>Recognize the importance of hearing one’s internal voice and began to work to identify it. Attempt to get internal voice into conversation with external voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Angela:</strong></td>
<td>“I try to tell people, like I want this to be a conversation. I don't want this to be an argument. Let’s just like present our beliefs to each other and you could take what you think are OK from mine, and I’ll take what I think are OK from yours. But</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
like we're not going to argue. We're not going to force or anything. When it does come down to them forcing, that's when I just stop. Because I know that like I really don't like people to do that to me, so I'm not going to do it to the other person.”

**Diamond:** “take a lot of pride in my decisions, and I don’t do anything that’s a major decision lightly. I take everything that I do very seriously. I weigh the pros and cons of situations. I try to look at it from everyone’s point of view. And I try to do what I know is best for me, while at the same time not, like, completely pushing anyone else’s feelings to the side.”

**Victoria:** “So I feel like now I'm kind of really following a path that, I found my path and I'm starting to follow it, starting to walk it, which is scary but at the same time, it's nice and feels good. Feels comfortable.”

**Cultivating Internal Voice**

Use internal voice to sort out beliefs, establish priorities, and put the puzzle of who you are together. Work to reduce reliance on external authorities.

**Tina:** “So [my mother] just wants me to have a job that I'm very comfortable and stable. And she just wants the best for me. But yeah, she's not happy about [my becoming a teacher]. But she has no control over it...So like I'm confident enough that I'll be OK in life. I'll be OK. And I'll be OK enough to take care of her too?”

**Tyler:** “[Racial division and stereotyping is] scary, but I also think, like, this is just to prepare me for the workforce. Like that things like this are going to happen, and I just have to learn
to, like, find people who I can talk about it. And like, it’s helped me strengthen my opinions, and like, also how to voice my opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Self-Authorship</strong></th>
<th>Trust yourself to decide what to believe, to follow your vision for how to succeed. Internal voice in the foreground coordinates information from external voices.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trusting the Internal Voice</strong></td>
<td>Realize that the reality is beyond your control but you can control your reaction to reality: use internal voice to shape reaction. <strong>Jaffrey</strong>: “[HU], it’s give and take. Whatever you want, you have to really fight for it here I’ve realized, which is good in some ways, analyzing this over the summer. It’s good because it makes sure I don’t become complacent and like accustomed to like the status quo. But sometimes when you like simple things, and you have to really fight for, I guess that makes you a better person, idealistically.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Building an Internal Foundation</strong></td>
<td>Use internal voice to make internal commitments and build them into a foundation of philosophy of life to guide action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Securing Internal Commitments</strong></td>
<td>Live out internal commitments in everyday life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**
**Bold** = phases
**Italics** = elements within phases
Based on the interviews, it is clear to see that none of these women are
in the External Formula phase. Rather these women range from Crossroads
to the beginning of Self-Authorship. For instance, Paige is in the beginning
of the Crossroads phase. Paige, the youngest member of the group, has clear
ideas about what she wants to achieve and, in fact, has achieved a great deal
in her short time at HU. Yet part of her list of accomplishments has to do
with what others think of her. While this can be a part of your internal voice,
she appears to be more concerned about how others feel about what she does
and how she is viewed rather than a concern for what she feels internally.
On the other hand, Jaffrey is in the self-authorship phase. As discussed in
Chapter four, Jaffrey has had to rely on herself for decision making about
college and taking care of her younger siblings. Having to make decisions on
her own was the result of her personal circumstances. Her ability to
coordinate the internal and external voice speaks to her development of self-
authorship. She discusses the college search process as something that she
did on her own. In our interview, she discussed the importance of having the
degree and making the connections at HU. Jaffrey said that she is fiercely
independent but over the years has been able to realize that others do have
valid information that she can use to make her decisions. She uses this
information and weighs it with what she believes in order to make decisions.
Jaffrey’s friendships at HU have made it possible for her to have daily
intimate support that she did not have at home. These friendships have
provided her with a safe haven in which to have support to continue to develop her internal voice.

*Activism*

The interesting connection to Hernandez’s research and this study is her application of Latina student resistance to the stages of self-authorship. According to Hernandez, one must be transitioning from External Formulas to Crossroads in order “To be able to identify oppression requires the task of recognizing and making meaning of racism...” (Hernandez, 2008, p.84). In External Formulas one accepts stereotypes whereas in Crossroads one is able to understand power and oppression and the role that ethnicity plays in one’s life. For the women in this study, it seems as if they had to go through the process of feeling isolated and alone when they first arrived on campus to realize that they needed to have friends that were similar to them in background. For the majority of them, this was different than their high school experience. Once they had found solace and a home with this friendship group, they were able to use the support to become activists on campus. When we discussed their activism on campus, the women stated that their activist role at Herndon College was new to them. They had not been involved in activities such as these in high school.

**Ethnic & Cultural Identity**

Ethnic and cultural identity was not a focus of this research study yet the development of this identity came through as a theme in the interviews.
Collier’s (1996) research suggests that there is a link between cultural identity development and friendships. Collier found that friends co-create their cultural identity. Torres & Hernandez (2007) looked at Latino/a students and their development of voices. Three factors that seem to bear on the development of an internal voice were identified during the course of this study: “...recognizing their cultural reality, incorporating an informed Latino/a identity into their daily lives, and renegotiating their relationships with others based on their Latino/a identity” (Baxter Magolda, 2009, p. 283). For these students, racism both stifled and aided in the development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009, Torres & Hernandez, 2007). This study helps to bear out that disequilibrium can cause the journey to self-authorship to begin earlier for students of color at PWIs. Herndon University is not known to be a politically active institution. As mentioned before, several of the women came to HU knowing that they wanted to be pre-med or pre-law. Yet, their experience here has altered their goals. All but one participant is actively involved in an organization that either promotes the culture of underrepresented populations or actively engages in conversations to combat issues of racism. Six out of the seven women changed their intended major since arriving at HU; while this fact is not surprising, what is surprising is their reason for changing. For all the women who have declared a new major, their underlying reason for doing so is that they would like to effect change in the larger community. HU has raised their social awareness and, in part
through the support they receive from friends, they feel that they can be a part of making change happen.

*Racial Identity Development*

Racial identity development is also at play for the participants. Not only are they dealing with developing through the stages of self authorship, they are also going through the statuses of racial identity development and these processes interact. While my protocol did not seek to elicit the stage of each participant in the racial identity model, their answers give me some strong clues as to where they might stand on the racial identity development scale.

There are some similarities between the stages of self-authorship and the statuses of People of Color Racial Identity Model. In the conformity status, people ascribe to the dominant white culture in deciding who and what they should be. The external voice of society tells them what is acceptable and how they should act. This directly correlates with the external formula phase of self authorship. Who I am is dictated by what society and/or external voices are telling you who to be. Dissonance, immersion and emersion are not as directly related to self-authorship as the first status. These statuses focus on the inferiority one may fell as a person of color in white society. In these statuses the individuals are exploring what their role in our society is as a person of color, taking pride in being a person of color while derisive to the white society, and embracing the values and
beliefs of their group. While one could make the argument that the crossroads phase may be reflected somewhat in these three statuses, the difference seems to be that in addition to starting to find their own voice, they are attempting to find the voice of their race. Internalization seems to be happening with the latter elements of the crossroads phase, listening to and cultivating internal voice and the beginning elements of self-authorship, trusting the internal voice and beginning to build an internal foundation. Internal awareness, status six, is characterized by having a positive sense of racial identity. The final elements of self-authorship are building an internal foundation and securing internal commitments. One would not be able to achieve this without having experienced the integrated awareness status.

For the most part, these women have chosen to surround themselves with other women that are similar to them and understand what their daily lives are like. While not everyone has said this, there is at least the implication from most participants that there is one culture at HU and very few white students live outside that culture. Obviously, this is a simplistic view of an entire population of white students at HU. This desire to be with other Black students and understanding how their Blackness is part of who they are would place the women in this study in the beginning of the Internalization stage with movement in and out of the Immersion/Emersion stage. This is definitely a simplistic overstatement. The information I
collected through interviews does not provide enough information to firmly place anyone in a racial identity development stage.

As stated earlier, cultural and ethnic identity development was not a focus of this research yet issues surrounding this surfaced in the interviews. The women in my study were proud to say that they identified as Black but, when applicable, also defined themselves by their African and/or Caribbean heritage. They were proud to be first or second generation and discussed how being African or Caribbean was different than being Black alone. The groups of women who lived together seemed to live with other women with African and/or Caribbean backgrounds rather than women who identified themselves as Black African-Americans. The interviews made it clear that there is some friction between these groups on campus. It would be interesting to study where this divide originates and how it is affecting students on campus and the way that staff and faculty are reaching out to these groups.

**Implications for Student Affairs Practitioners**

The results of my study suggest some conditions for benefiting women of color. Below I briefly outline some suggestions for practitioners that may help Black women on their campuses be successful, navigate a sometimes hostile environment, and continue the journey to self-authorship.

1. *Creating purposeful environments in which women of color may interact.*
a. Most campuses have organizations that serve the variety of needs of specialized populations. Yet, most of these organizations are open to anyone who wants to join and/or views themselves as an ally to a particular group or cause. I would argue that it is necessary for some of these organizations to be restricted to only those students that fit the criteria. The Black women in this study have benefitted greatly from networks of friends that are similar to them. It is obvious from my interviews with these women that they are well connected and leaders on campus. Because my study respondents are all leaders, it is probable that there is a group of disenfranchised Black women on campus that have not found friends with whom they relate and could very much use the support offered by this group.

b. The women in this study all chose to live with other Black women. They went about these arrangements informally and, luckily for them, they knew people like them that they wanted to live with. Colleges should be concerned about those women that may not have found a cohort to live with and create a home on campus that seems so important to their survival. Practitioners should research the option of
providing environments for students to live that may be of all one race and/or ethnicity.

2. *Dedicated personnel to address the needs of students of color.* The experience of students of color differ on many levels, including race, ethnicity and gender. In this time of budget cuts and a desire to believe that we have achieved diversity on our campuses, there may be a push to eliminate those staff members that are dedicated to the support of students of color. These staff members are especially important to those students seeking to make sense of their experience, attempting to create friendship groups or may not even know that they need these friendships to help mediate the culture of the campus. In fact, I believe that some type of program that mandates students of color come together in their first year would be beneficial.

3. *Create formal mentoring programs for women of color.* The benefits for women of color to have significant relationships with other women of color at PWIs cannot be overstated. This research and other research cited shows that these supports can make a difference in the lives of young Black women. As stated, this study failed to reach the disenfranchised Black women who may have not made connections with other Black women. A formal peer mentorship program will guarantee that all students, at the very
least, have the opportunity to make connections with others who had or are having similar experiences on campus.

4. *Create more leadership opportunities for women of color.* The women in this study are all considered to be in some type of leadership position on campus. These positions have given them access to fellow students, staff and faculty that they may not have met had they not been in these positions. By their own words, these positions have helped them to become who they are. It can be intimidating for students of color to seek leadership positions at PWIs. It is incumbent on administration to make sure these positions are available and that they are actively recruiting a diverse population.

5. *Looking beyond race and ethnicity to incorporate gender as well*

Over the years, studies of students of color have often pointed to the differences between the experiences of men and women. Yet on at many PWIs, we attempt to serve men and women in the same way. Colleges and universities need to be cognizant of the differences in the needs of men and women and utilize that information to set up appropriate opportunities and support networks.

6. *Help to increase structural diversity and appropriate support.*

Hurtado et al. (1998) provide us with reasons for the importance of diversity on campus. In addition, they emphasize the need for
certain structures to accompany growing structural diversity. Institutions “...can begin by designing and implementing systematic and comprehensive educational programs to help all members of the campus community to identify and confront the stereotypes and myths that people have about those who are different from them. While much of what is known about the development and reduction of prejudice and bias comes from the research of college and university faculty, many businesses and organizations in the private sector have shown a greater willingness to apply these findings in the hope of strengthening their organizational effectiveness” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p.291). In increasing structural diversity institutions must understand that it can lead to more intergroup conflict. This is to be expected and is not necessarily a bad outcome, but students will need support in dealing with conflict.

7. Create avenues for students to report negative experiences. For students to feel comfortable on campus, they need to know that the issues they are facing on campus are not acceptable and that the administration wants to address these issues (Hurtado et al., 1998). All campuses should have a systematic way for students to report racist acts, issues and classroom behavior.

Limitations of the Study
The first limitation to this study is the sample. I used the snowball method to recruit my participants. I first requested participants through a highly selective research program that happened to be meeting this summer. Students from that population forwarded my name to friends and gave me the names of friends so that I could contact the friends on my own. In addition, as stated before, I solicited women who participate in the Student Government Association (SGA) on the basis of their picture and my thought that they might qualify for the study. This group overall was high achieving, highly motivated and considered to be student leaders on campus. There are populations of disenfranchised women and women in the middle who have found their niche on campus that does not include leadership roles but they are not feeling disenfranchised that I was not able to recruit. While I did try to reach out to this group, cold calls did not work well. After meeting with the first couple of participants, I realized that I should have put in my letter of introduction that I was a woman of color. It is not an overstatement to say that the women were thrilled upon meeting me to discover that I was a woman of color. I strongly believe that 1.) I could have recruited more students if I had identified myself as a woman of color and 2.) The participants trusted me from the beginning of the interview because I was a woman of color.
Another factor about this sample is socioeconomic status. Through the interviews, I was able to ascertain an approximate socioeconomic class for each student but this was not a formal part of the information gathered from the students. Prior research (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Walpole, 2008) research has shown that socioeconomic status can play a factor in the success of students in higher education. In face, Diamond almost transferred due to financial reasons. This huge decision had to have affected her academic performance. In this study, it appeared that even the students in differing socioeconomic classes chose to hang out with other Black women regardless of their socioeconomic status. This could mean that the commonality of race trumped the difference in social class. In addition, it could be that Black students are more use to living with people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. As stated earlier, in the United States, it is more likely for Blacks of varying socioeconomic statuses to live together than whites of varying socioeconomic status (McAdoo, 2007a). It would be interesting to know their socioeconomic status and how it has hindered or helped them to succeed at HU and what role the participants feel it plays in their friendships.

Protocol

Another limitation was in the questions that I asked. In a study such as this, participants are asked about situations that have already occurred. While I do not mean to suggest that the students were being purposely
inaccurate in their descriptions of givens situations, your viewpoint when you are not in something can and often does change. The stories that they shared with me are a view from a different lens than when they were actually in it.

The first question of the protocol asks participants to name their three closest friends on campus and tell me why they considered them close. I failed to ask them about any rocky friendships either with other women of color white women. Only Angela and Tina brought up on their own issues that they are dealing with regarding a onetime close friend. The clip of their life that I saw only included the support of their good friends with whom they have no conflict.

Length of Research Study

Qualitative research seeks to show a film of the lives of the participants and phenomenological research seeks to unveil the lived experience of its participants. Ideally, I would have interviewed my participants more than once for an extended period of time to truly capture the lived experience on film. Deadlines precluded this from happening.

Conclusion

This research sought to add to the small body of research that is available about Black women’s friendships. It is clear from this research that there is a unique dynamic that is occurring among Black women at PWIs that bears further discussion. This study suggests a link between same-sex, same-race friendships among Black women and the development of self-
authorship. The women in this study found strength and support through friendships that offered safety in the journey towards self-authorship. In this age of hovering parents and overscheduled students with little time to think on their own, self-authorship would seem to be an important journey to begin in college.

As stated earlier, racial identity development was not a focus of this study. Yet as I look at the shift in racial attitude that these women made after arriving on campus coupled with the phases of self-authorship, I believe that there is a connection between the two processes.

These women experience racism and microinequities every day on campus. If college seeks to be a place where students learn and develop intellectually and socially, it is necessary for administrators to pay close attention to the climate on campus and be purposeful in reacting to the racial issues that arise. The strength of a university lies both with its history and future. It is important that all students and alumni feel they are equal members of the community.
Appendices

Appendix I

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today. As I told you, I am a doctoral candidate at Boston College and I am conducting a study on the effects of informal friendships for Black women on predominantly white campuses for my dissertation. Currently, there is little available research on the ways that friendships affect the experience of Black women. I hope that my research will help students, faculty and staff to better understand the role that these friendships may play in the lives of Black women on a predominately white campus. I am inviting Black women from Herndon University to participate in this study,

I am writing to request your assistance in recruiting participants for my research. I understand from Dr. Shaw Horton that you may have some students on campus this summer that would qualify for participation in this study.

I am attaching a letter which will be sent to the students I identify as potential participants so that you may see more detailed information about my study. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your help in the completion of my dissertation.

Sincerely,
Jamie Glanton Costello
51 Clark Road, Brookline, MA 02445
617-943-3346
jamie.costello@massart.edu
Dear Student,

I am a doctoral candidate at Boston College. I am conducting a study for my dissertation on the role of informal friendships for Black women on predominantly white campuses. Currently, there is little available research on the ways that friendships affect the experience of Black women. I hope that my research will help students, faculty and staff to better understand the role that these friendships may play in the lives of Black women on a predominately white campus. I am inviting women from Boston College to participate in this study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will participate in a one to two hour interview with me. After the data collection, I will invite participants to review my data analysis to comment on the accuracy. As an incentive to participate in the interview, I will give you a $15 gift card to Target. If you choose to review and comment on the analysis, you will receive an additional $20 gift card.

I hope that by participating in this student you will be able to reflect on your experiences in college and be able to put in to words some of your experiences and how they have affected you.

Students and institutions will remain anonymous in the presentation of the results of this study, identifying characteristics/details will not be presented and pseudonyms of your choosing will be uses. If at any time you would like to withdraw from this study you may so by contacting me at the address, phone number or email listed below. Furthermore, if you have any questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me or my advisor, Dr. Karen Arnold, at any time.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Jamie Glanton Costello
51 Clark Road
Brookline, MA 02445
617-943-3346
jamie.costello@massart.edu

Advisor
Dr. Karen Arnold
Higher Education Administration Department
617-552-2649
arnoldkc@bc.edu
Appendix III

Informed Consent

Introduction
My name is Jamie Glanton Costello and I am a doctoral candidate at Boston College. I am in the process of collecting data for my dissertation entitled Exploring The Connection Between Same-Sex, Same-Race Friendships And The Development Of Self-Authorship In Black Undergraduate Women. My advisor is Dr. Karen Arnold, Associate Professor, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the effects of informal friendships for Black women on predominantly white campuses for my dissertation. Currently, there is little available research on the ways that friendships affect the experience of Black women. I believe that the friendships for Black women are an integral part of our ability to succeed. You are being invited because you are a Black or African American woman enrolled in a predominantly white institution. Participation in this study is voluntary.

Purpose
I hope that my research will help students, faculty and staff to better understand the role that these friendships may play in the lives of Black women on a predominately white campus.

Procedures
If you choose to participate in this study, you will fill out an informational questionnaire and participate in a one to two hour interview with me. After data collection, I will invite all participants from your institution to a focus group at which refreshments will be served. After the focus group, I will then provide you with a summary of the data and invite your comments.

Students and institutions will remain anonymous in the presentation of results of this study. Identifying characteristics /details will not be presented and pseudonyms of your choosing will be used. If you have questions about my research, please do not hesitate to contact me or my advisor, Dr. Karen Arnold, at any time.
Potential questions include:
Describe your three closest female friends on campus.
Who do you turn to for support in resolving a difficult issue? Can you tell me how race affects your college experience if at all? Any examples? Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Risks**
The interview may cause you to remember some experiences that were not positive ones for you.

**Benefits**
I hope that by participating in this study, you will be able to reflect on your experiences in college and be able to put in to words some of your experiences and how they have affected you. In addition, your experiences will help others who choose to study at a Predominantly White Institution.

**Cost**
There is no cost to you, besides your time, to participate in this study.

**Compensation**
Each participant will be given a $15 giftcard to a local store.

**Withdrawal from the study**
If at any time you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so by contacting me at the address, phone number or email listed below. Withdrawal from the study at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Confidentiality**
Consent forms and interview forms will be kept separately. Pseudonyms will be used for identification on surveys and audiotapes. Audiotapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home to which I will be the only person to have access. Audiotapes will be transcribed by trained personnel. Audiotapes will be destroyed after the completion of my degree. The transcripts and surveys will be kept for future use in other research projects.

I will maintain your confidentiality in all cases except those in which you indicate that you may harm yourself or others.

**Questions or Problems**
If, at any time, you have questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my advisor at the contact information listed below. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in research, you
should contact the Boston College Office for Human Research Participant Protection, 617-552-4778.

**Researcher**
Jamie Glanton Costello  
51 Clark Road  
Brookline, MA 02445  
617-943-3346  
jamie.costello@massart.edu

**Advisor**
Dr. Karen Arnold  
Higher Education Administration Department  
617-552-2760

**Certification**
- I have read and I believe I understand this Informed Consent document. I believe I understand the purpose of the research project and what I will be asked to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and they have been answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that I may stop my participation in this research study at anytime and that I can refuse to answer any question(s).
- I understand that the interview and focus groups will be audio taped and I agree to the taping.
- I understand that my name will not appear on the survey or the audiotape.
- I have received a signed copy of this Informed Consent document for my personal reference.

**Signatures**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Consent Signature of Participant</th>
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<th>Person Providing information and witness to consent</th>
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Appendix IV

Participant Information

This information needs to be completed so that I may contact you as needed for this study. This information will be kept separate from other data collected to maintain confidentiality.

Name ____________________________ Year of Graduation_____

Mailing address at school: ________________________________
______________________________

Email address:__________________________________________

Telephone:____________________________________________

Mailing address at home: ________________________________
______________________________

Email address (if different): ______________________________
Telephone:____________________________________________

Chosen pseudonym:______________________________

☐ I would like a summary of the results sent to me.
Please send to my  ☐ school address  ☐ home address  ☐ email
Appendix V

Informational Questionnaire

Pseudonym____________________________________

College/University:______________________________

Major:________________________________________

Age:______ Class Year:_______

Are you in good academic standing at your college/university?  Yes  No

What do you consider to be your racial/ethnic background?

______________________________________________

Which best characterizes your high school? (Please circle one)
   Predominantly white  mixed  predominantly minority

Campus involvement:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Do you work on campus?______ Where?____________________
   off campus?______ Where?____________________
Appendix VI

Interview Protocol

1. Describe your three closest female friends on campus. Tell me about these friendships.
   a. Probes
      • Are they women of color?
      • Are they from a similar background?
      • Where did you meet?
      • Why are they your best friends?
      • In what ways are they similar to you? Different?

2. Do you believe feel that you are living your life like you want to?
   a. Probes
      • How do you know this is what you want?
      • How do you know this is not what you want but is what someone else wants for you
      • When did you realize this was not what you wanted?
      • When did you realize that this was what you wanted to do with your life?

3. Have you ever questioned what you were doing? If so, when did this questioning start?
   a. Probes
      i. Are you still questioning the direction of your life?
      ii. If not, how long did it last?
      iii. What was the outcome of your questioning?

4. Have you ever felt as though you were living according to some others desires for you? If so, when did this occur?
   a. Probes
      i. What was the experience like for you?
      ii. How did you work through this feeling?
      iii. How did it get resolved
      iv. How do you think about that experience now?
5. Discuss a situation (use one of their examples if possible) in which you felt your beliefs or opinions were being questioned and/or challenged by a student or professor.
   a. Probes
      i. How did this interaction affect you? Did this experience cause you to question your sense of self?
      ii. In what way(s)?

6. How did you manage to remove yourself from the situation?
   a. Probes
      i. What was this experience like for you?
      ii. If you encountered the same situation today how would you handle it?

7. Did you share this incident with your friends? What was their reaction?

8. Have you had experiences or situations where you found that your friends have beliefs that are different than yours?
   a. Probes
      i. Please tell me about this situation/experience.
      ii. How do you deal with this when it occurs with your friends?

9. Have you had experiences where your friends behaved differently than you did or would have?
   a. Probes
      i. Please describe the situation
      ii. How did you deal with this situation/experience when it occurred with your friends?
References


Chang, M. J. (2001). The positive educational effects of racial diversity on campus. In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Diversity challenged: Evidence on the


Ivy, K. African American female perceptions regarding career development opportunities and career decisions: A phenomenological study focused on career decisions within the information technology industry. Ph.D. dissertation, Casella University, United States -- Minnesota.


