

UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN AMERICAN LESBIAN AND GAY IDENTITY
DEVELOPMENT WITHIN A HISTORICALLY BLACK
COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT

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VITA

Yulanda S. Tyre, was born November 9, 1971 in Montgomery, Alabama to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Patton. She graduated from Jefferson Davis High School also located in Montgomery, Alabama in 1990. After graduating Troy Montgomery in 1995 with a bachelors of Science in Psychology, she received a Masters of Education in Agency Counseling in 1998 from Auburn University at Montgomery. She is currently a Licensed Professional Counselor in the state of Alabama and a Nationally Board Certified Counselor. Yulanda is currently married to Felix Tyre and is the mother of two daughters Brittany and Breanna.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT
UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN AMERICAN LESBIAN AND GAY IDENTITY
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The purpose of this study was to conduct an examination of experiences associated with LG identity development among African American college students. Specifically, the study focused on LG identity development within the environment of HBCU institutions. There were a combined total of 13 participants in the study. Participants were recruited from two Historically Black Colleges in the Southern region of the United States. The study was divided into two phases; phase I was a survey study completed online and phase II was a phone interview. A total of two males and eleven

females participated in the online survey of the study and a total of 8 participants, two males and six females participated in phase II of the study.

The current study found that LG African American students view HBCU environments as hostile toward homosexual lifestyles. It additionally renders support to the negative impact of this environment which could have hindering consequences to LG identity development

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	ix
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose.....	5
Significance of the Study	6
Research Questions.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
Summary	9
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	10
Introduction.....	10
Physical and Psychological Health.....	11
Homosexual Identity Development	13
Gay Male Identity Development.....	16
Lesbian Identity Development	17
Cultural Considerations and Homosexuality Identity Development	19
Race, Culture and Coming Out.....	22
Masculinity and Survival	23
Religion.....	25
Racism and Prejudice.....	26
HIV/AIDS, Homosexuality & the African American Community	27
Homosexual Identity Development and the College Environment	30
Impact of Negative College Environment	31
LG Students at Historically Black Institutions	37
Historically Black Institutions	40
Summary of the Literature	42
III. METHODOLOGY	43
Participants.....	43
Procedures.....	44

Measures	46
Data Analysis	49
IV. RESULTS	52
On-Line Survey Results	53
Phone Interview Results	56
Summary	59
V. DISCUSSION	61
On-line Survey	61
Phone Survey	63
Identity Development.....	66
College Counseling Implications	68
Limitations	70
Implications.....	70
Summary	71
REFERENCES	72
APPENDICES	81
Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Flyer	82
Appendix B: Informational Consent I	83
Appendix C: Informational Consent II.....	84
Appendix D: Phase II: Presenting Phone Script.....	85
Appendix E: Phase I: Demographic Questionnaire.....	86
Appendix F: Phase I: Reflection Questions	87
Appendix G: Phase II: Reflection Questions.....	88
Appendix H: Results Tables	89
Appendix I: Phase I: Survey Responses	92
Appendix J: Phase II: Participant Responses	99

Appendix K: Auburn University Institutional Review Board Approval to Conduct Study.....	180
Appendix L: Alabama State University Institutional Review Board Approval to Conduct Study.....	181
Appendix M: Alabama A & M Institutional Review Board Approval to ... Conduct Study.....	182

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	On-line Survey Participant Results	89
Table 2	Phone Interview Participant Results	90

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The college setting has customarily been a place where higher learning, new experiences and diverse peer interaction is gained. It is in this setting where students often find freedom from daily parental supervision and high school norms. College additionally provides a place for students to establish independent opinions, morals, values, beliefs and goals for the future. These acts of personal identity development create a foundation of self awareness and understanding which is commonly carried through out life. Although this phase of development is important to the psychological health of most every student it is especially so for lesbian and gay (LG) students.

College is said to be the setting where most traditionally aged LG students *come out*. Coming out is commonly defined as the process within homosexual identity development through which an individual progresses from an assumed state of heterosexuality to an open, affirmed state of homosexuality; or disclosure to others (Cass, 1979, 1984; D'Augelli, 1994). Various studies support that the perceived environment of a college setting has a great deal to do with a person's decision to come out or hide their lesbian or gay identity (Connelly, 2000; Evans & Broido, 1999; Fassinger, 1991; Lopez & Chism, 1993). In recent years studies sponsored by the division of student affairs, Greek life and campus housing reveal that due to this decision making process the needs of LG students are different from non-LG students attending college. In an effort to

address some specific needs faced by this population campus programs, curriculum inclusion, safe spaces, alliance groups, mentors and peer supports have been developed on many college campuses. Some colleges and universities have even implemented sexual orientation rights into school policy for students.

Coming out students who are not provided with adequate support are found to suffer with issues of depression, affective disorders, chronic stress, substance abuse, eating disorders and suicide (Balsam, Beauchaine, Mickey & Rothblum, 2005). They are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to experience suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts and self injurious behavior. These individuals are additionally found to have participated in psychotherapy, taken psychiatric medication and been in psychiatric hospitals at increased rates in comparison to the heterosexual population due to unique LG stressors. The LG population is also believed to experience alcohol and drug abuse in ways that are uniquely related to sexual orientation. Alcoholism and drug abuse were found to be used to cope with social stigma and internalized homophobia among the LG population (Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996).

Although progress is being made regarding the needs of the majority of LG students attending college, little attention has been given to LG African Americans with in the college setting. Unfortunately, the preponderance of studies completed to date regarding LG students in the college or university setting have been conducted among students of Caucasian descent or at predominately white institutions (Cass, 1984; Connelly, 2000; Evans & Broido, 1999; Fassinger, 1991; Lopez & Chism, 1993; Stevens, 2004). This latent research omits the specific needs and experiences encountered by

African American students who struggle to come out in like environments such as in Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs).

Only recently have college and general mental health counseling literature begun to address the particular concerns and issues faced by LG African American college students. This new found focus can be partially attributed to the documented cases of assault and violence inflicted upon LG African American individuals who outnumber incidents among their Caucasian counter parts and the growing awareness of increased suicide rates among the LG African American population (Rankin, 2005). Attention has also paralleled an increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases among African Americans. The Center for Disease Control reported in 2006 that AIDS was the leading cause of death among African American women between the ages of 25-34, out numbering newly documented cases among all other ethnic groups (Chng, Carlon & Toynes, 2006). It is believed that many of these women likely contacted the virus while attending a college or university (Ferguson & Quinn, 2006). Although the numbers of HIV/AIDS cases appear to be an epidemic across the United States, findings in recent years reveal that the majority of new cases are concentrated in the southern region of the United States. Seven of the top ten states with AIDS cases are located in the south and eighteen of the top metropolitan areas with AIDS cases above the national average are also located in the south (Chng, Carlon & Toynes, 2006).

Numerous studies have attributed the increase of HIV/AIDS infection increase to the sexual behavior of African American males who have unprotected sex with both males and females (Battle & Lemelle, 2002; Harper, Jernewall & Zea, 2004). Specifically, this research has suggested that the social and psychological stigma attached

to being gay in the African American community have led many African Americans gay males into hiding their sexual identity by engaging in hidden homosexual behavior while living in their environments as if they are heterosexual. This phenomenon, which has been coined “down low” has been identified as a contributing factor to the increase in HIV infection among heterosexual African American women (Lewis, 2003). Although there is no coined phase for African American women who have sex with both women and men, beyond bisexual, it is believed that African American lesbians and bisexuals may in fact lead hidden lifestyles due to the same homophobic and stigmatizing attitudes experienced by African American males in their community (Lewis, 2003). One of the environments in which we may see this is within the college environment, where the process of gay identity development is often at a critical stage (Stevens, 2004).

There are approximately 103 acknowledged HBCUs, most of which are primarily located in the southern region of the United States, making up about 3% of American colleges and universities. It is estimated that 28% of African Americans with bachelors have graduated from them. Their alumni account for 35% of all African American lawyers, 50% of all African American engineers and 65% of all African American physicians. HBCU’s are viewed as a source of empowerment and pride in the African American community. They were generally founded on faith, a desire for excellence and openly promote traditional family and community values. They are trusted extensions of social, economic and political structure, growth and development in the African American community aside from the church (Chng, Carlon, & Tonyes, 2006).

Considering the critical issues involved in LG identity development, specifically the stage of coming out, it is critical that we begin to more fully understand how this

process may be different for African Americans. This includes consideration of how this process may be different within an environment that is largely focused on cultural and social issues which are relevant and reflective of African American experiences. This includes examining how this process, LG identity development, may differ at a HBCU institution. In addition, this examination may provide some evidence of commonalities and differences among LG African American students within this environment.

Purpose

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of the college environment to healthy sexual identity development among LG undergraduate students. However the majority of these studies have focused on predominately white institutions (Connelly, 2000; Evans & Broido, 1999; Fassinger, 1991; Lopez & Chism, 1993). These studies clearly provide evidence that the college environment, including everything from the administrative, educational and social culture can have a profound impact on identity development among LG individuals. This includes the critical stage and process of coming out. However, to date information on LG development of African Americans students is limited.

The purpose of this proposed study is to conduct an examination of experiences associated with LG identity development among African American college students. Specifically, the study will focus on LG identity development within the environment of a HBCU institution. This will allow for consideration of both LG identity development among African American college students, and for consideration on how this may be related or influenced by being in a HBCU institution.

Significance of Study

Exploring the experiences of homosexual identity development among African American college students would primarily attend to the gap in literature regarding homosexual identity development specific to this population and how it may be impacted within an HBCU setting. This study has the potential to contribute to prior research which supports that African Americans encounter different social and cultural influences and experiences in the process of identity development and coming out and support new information regarding lesbian identity development among African American women (Loiacano, 1989; Icard, 1986; Lorde, 1984).

Secondly, information gained from this research could potentially contribute to the development of university programming, counseling services, and outreach to LG students. In addition, it may help colleges and universities identify environmental and social variables that negatively impact the lives of LG students in college settings. This may help address issues related to the college culture such as campus violence, promotion of diversity and enhancing the overall physical and psychological health of students on campuses in relation to LG issues (Sanlo, 2005). Finally, it could stimulate new research and counseling practices in treating the specific social, psychological, developmental and physical needs of LG African Americans.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. Describe your experience and perceptions of being lesbian/gay and African American attending a HBCU; these experiences and thoughts can include, yet may not be limited to discussions and encounters with family, friends, bystanders, peers, students and university personnel.
2. Reflecting on your previous response, do you feel that these experiences might be different if you attended a predominately white- institution? How or why?
3. Where there any benefits or draw backs to being an African American lesbian or gay student attending a HBCU?
4. How would you describe the coming out process within your family (family of origin, extended family ie. grandparents, aunts, uncles)?
5. Coming out/Being out can be stressful; how do you deal with that stress on a day to day basis?
6. Why did you participate in this study? What were you hoping to gain or contribute by participating?

Definition of Terms

1. Gay- (Cass, 1979, Colman, 1982, Troiden, 1989). A word used to describe men who participate in sexual activity with other men or who hold both an emotion and sexual attraction toward other men; this term is often used to describe women who participate with the same actions toward other women. This term can be self-identifying or socially inflicted.
2. Lesbian- (Chapman & Brannock, 1987, Sophie, 1986). A word used to describe women who participate in sexual activity with other women or women who hold both emotion and sexual attraction toward other women.
3. Bisexual- (Lever, Kanhouse, Rogers, Carson, Herter, 1992). A word used to describe both women and men who participate in sexual activity, hold sexual attraction and emotional attachment with individuals of the same sex as well as those of the opposite sex. This term can be self-identifying or socially inflicted.
4. Coming Out- (Cass, 1979, Trodien, 1989, Loiacano 1989). Commonly referred to as Gay Identity Development, can be defined as the process through which an individual progresses from an assumed state of heterosexuality to an open, affirmed state of homosexuality.
5. Internalized Homophobia (Black & Underwood, 1998). The experience of shame, aversion, or self-hatred in reaction to one's own feelings of attraction for a person of the same sex.
6. Cultural homophobia- (Martinez & Sullivan, 1998, Fullilove & Fullilove, 1999, Lewis, 2003, Ward, 2005). Refers to social standards and norms that dictate that being heterosexual is better or more moral than being lesbian, gay or bisexual, and that

everyone is heterosexual or should be. While these standards may not be stated directly, they are indirectly implied via social modeling, television and print journalism.

7. Institutional homophobia (Black & Underwood, 1998). Refers to the many ways in which government, business, religious institutions, other institutions and organizations discriminate against people on the basis of sexual orientation. These organizations and institutions set policies, allocate resources, and maintain both written and unwritten standards for the behavior of their members in ways that discriminate.

Summary

This chapter establishes a rationale for the need to explore the experiences of homosexual identity among LG African Americans students within a HBCU environment. Study purpose, significance and a definition of terms were additionally discussed. Phenomena related specifically to the cultural impact of coming out experiences for African American LG students living in a HBCU setting will be discussed in concluding chapters.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In 1995 Gelberg and Chojnacki estimated that there were 5-25 million people in the United States which self-identified as being homosexual. Cheng (2003), estimated that there were 30 million individuals self-identifying as homosexual; lesbian and gay (LG). Although the members of the LG community may appear to be large and increasing in numbers, they are however a minority and are unfortunately treated as such. Research supported by Sanlo (2005), contends that “sexual minorities are the most despised group in the United States today. In 2003 the Human Rights Campaign, as stated by Sanlo, reported that 37 states had not incorporated sexual discrimination into state law. In addition to acts of institutionalized homophobia by state government, members of the LG community are often faced with defamation of character, hatred, discrimination, rejection and ostracism by their family and friends.

Recent research supports that LG individuals utilize therapy at rates higher than the general population (Balsam, Beauchaine, Mickey & Rothblum, 2005). The emotional stress of facing various forms of homophobia in conjunction to the personal process of self-identification and coming out has been associated with delays in homosexual development and limits in self-worth and identity. These barriers have been known to heavily impact the emotional and psychological functioning of LG individuals leading to

issues of mental health. Knowledge of this phenomenon signifies a need for exploration into the physical and psychological needs of these individuals (Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996).

Physical and Psychological Health

Findings and exploration into the lifestyles of LG individuals reveal that LG individuals are at greater risk for emotional distress than their heterosexual counterparts. LG individuals exclusively encounter circumstances directly related to their lifestyle which puts them at a greater risk for emotional discourse. This stress which is specific to the lesbian and gay individuals is often referred to as “gay-related stress”. Gay-related stress can be experienced in a multidimensional fashion; external, internal and discomfort with homosexuality (Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004; Lewis, Derlega, Griffen, & Krowinski, 2003; Lewis, Derlega, Clarke, & Kuang, 2006; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996; Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, & Gwadz, 2002). Externalized gay related stress involves the experience of violence, verbal abuse, rejection and other stressful events committed by others toward someone who is or who is perceived to be LG. Internalized gay related stress involves the act of a LG individual harboring negative attitude regarding their own sexuality, generally done in reaction to or acceptance of socialized homophobia (Rosario et al., 2002). Discomfort with homosexuality is attributed to an individual’s fear of what others may do, think or say once it is “found out” that the individual is LG. This term is additionally referred to in literature as *stigma consciousness* (Lewis et al., 2003; Lewis et al., 2006). This fear of discrimination and rejection is commonly felt by many LG individuals who have recently become aware of their own sexual identity.

These various forms of gay related stress can lead to the inhibition of behavioral actions and/or social interactions, such as avoidance in talking to others regarding personal matters, or limit participation in social gatherings and activities (Gortmaker & Brown, 2006; Lewis et al., 2006). Social constraints enact barriers to communication outlets and access to desired services and supports. Individuals who are alienated from or perceive to be alienated from social outlets and supports have limited opportunities to address or normalize fears and seek comfort. This lack of mental health maintenance has been associated with negative outcomes in both physical and psychological well being in LG persons. Individuals struggling with high stigma consciousness or discomfort with homosexuality experience higher levels of depression and anxiety, limit their ability to cope with stress, experience negative thought process and suicidal ideations (Lewis et al., 2004; Lewis et. al., 2006)

LG populations commonly face issues of depression, affective disorders, chronic stress, substance abuse, eating disorders and suicide. Balsam, Beauchaine, Mickey & Rothblum (2005) found that LG clients were more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to experience suicidal thoughts, suicidal attempts and self injurious behavior before and after the age of 18. They were moreover found to have participated in psychotherapy, taken psychiatric medication and been in psychiatric hospitals, more than their heterosexual counterparts due to unique LG stressors. The LG population is also believed to experience alcohol and drug abuse in ways that is uniquely related to sexual orientation. These authors go on to state that alcoholism and drug abuse were found to be used to cope with social stigma and internalized homophobia among the LG population. Knowledge and understanding the needs of LG individuals has lead to a call for increased

research in evaluating the impact of environmental and social stressors in sexual minority development especially, among people of color (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996; Sanlo, 2005; Stevens, 2004). In addition there is a critical need to understand issues related to identity development and how this process is impacted by social, cultural and personal variables such as discrimination, acceptance and social pressure (Lewis et al., 2004; Rosario et al., 1996; Rosario et al., 2002).

Homosexual Identity Development

Over the past two decades several bodies of literature have been devoted to the study of homosexual identity development (Coleman, 1982; McDonald, 1982; Troiden, 1979; 1989). Unlike initial models which explored homosexual development to address issues of mental illness, recent models seek to gain understanding of the emotional and psychological process as experienced by individuals undergoing development (Cass, 1979). Recent general models of homosexual identity development share common foundational points which view homosexual identity formation against a backdrop of *stigma*, find that homosexual identities develop over long periods of time and involve a number of growth points or changes which may be stage oriented. Many models additionally support that homosexual identity formation includes an increasing acceptance of the self identified label of being homosexual and that the final process or stage of development includes disclosing personal sexual identity to others or *coming out* (Cass, 1979, Troiden, 1989, Loiacano 1989, Yarhouse, 2001).

LG individuals encounter several stages or phases of identity development in relinquishing their heterosexual identity (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996). The first stage

commonly includes an awareness of attraction to individuals of the same gender. The second includes self labeling as gay, lesbian or bisexual while at the same time making tentative contacts with LG individuals. The completion of these tasks includes the ability to self identifying as a non-heterosexual to others. Individuals may go through several degrees of disclosure or self identifying. This may involve first disclosing to one's closest friends or those that they have the highest level of trust with and believe the risk is lower. Additionally, individuals may first disclose to others they have encountered, who also identify as lesbian or gay as part of the process of exploring their identity through participation in gay organizations or social settings. For many persons who are LG disclosing to family members often occurs later because of the perceived emotional risk and fear (Gortmaker & Brown, 2006; Rankin, 1997; Rhodes, 2004; Stevens, 2004). The success or failure of these combined tasks determines if the individual will move to other stages. The risk and stress of completing this multidimensional process is so great that this evolution is viewed as a lifelong process (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996).

One of the earliest and most cited models of homosexual development was presented by Cass in 1979. In this model Cass contends that homosexual identity development occurs in six stages and incorporates many of the general premises presented in the previous paragraph. Cass stages include: (1) identity confusion, the questioning of one's attraction to the same sex; (2) identity comparison, one begins to look at the differences between self and non-homosexuals; (3) identity tolerance, one begins to make a commitment to self identification of homosexuality and begins to seek social support; (4) identity acceptance, the embracing of homosexual identity; (5) identity pride; experiencing of loyalty and satisfaction in homosexual identity and (6) identity

synthesis, a homosexual lifestyle is developed, the conclusion of self identification occurs and understanding that this is but one side of personal character. Original to this model Cass investigated the cognitive, behavioral and affective aspects of homosexuality development for both men and women. The cognitive component of the model focuses on cognitive constructs which include ideas of self perception and self concept. Cass supports that the idea of self and how one perceives others see them leads to the evolution of a typological identity, or ones view of a homosexual identity (Cass, 1984; Yarhouse, 2001).

Soon after Cass, Coleman (1982) published a five stage model which specifically focused on the stages of the coming out process to describe homosexual identity development. It was during this time that *coming out* came to be seen as the one of the most important steps in identifying as LG and in gaining personal and social acceptance. The five stages of this model included: (1) pre-coming out, ones preconscious awareness of homosexual identity; (2) coming out, one begins to tell others about their self identification as homosexual; (3) exploration, the beginning of social networking and partner seeking occurs within a homosexual context; (4) first relationship, seeing one's self as being able to love or carry out a true homosexual relationship and (5) integration, characterized by sexual exploration and first relationships. Coleman, like Cass saw homosexual identity development to be a linear, stage oriented process, identical for both men and women.

Troiden (1979), an early theorist, developed a model which is commonly referred to as the ideal-typical model. Troiden's model, similar to Cass was established on a sociological analysis of homosexual identity formation. Data obtained in the

development of this model was collected from surveys completed by gay males some 10 years prior to the release of the model (Yarhouse, 2001). Troiden included four stages in his model: (1) sensitization, a stage which begins prior to puberty and is marked by feeling of marginality and ideas of being different from peers; (2) identity confusion, experiences of confusion from society and self; (3) identity assumption, movement toward a acceptance of homosexual identification and (4) commitment, self acceptance in the self identification of the homosexual identity. Troiden described individual movement through this model as a horizontal spiral that progressed up, down, back and forth (Stevens, 2004).

Gay Male Identity Development

McDonald (1982) and Troiden (1989) expanded on the original models and attempted to look at biological differences and incorporate them in to new models of homosexual identity development specific to gay males. Troiden's work in this area is based on interviews completed among 150 men who self identified as gay. Findings, here as aforementioned lead to the development of a four phase model which included the stages of sensitization, dissociation and signification, coming out and commitment.

McDonald (1982) devised a model based on information gained from surveying 199 self identifying gay men. The men reported on "milestone events" of the coming out experiences. The *milestone events* were labeled as follows: (a) an awareness of same-sex inclination; (b) same-sex activities and experiences; (c) an understanding of the meaning of the word homosexual; (d) a homosexual self-description; (e) the first homosexual relationship; and (f) the adaption of a positive gay identity. Information derived from these mile stones translated into a seven stage process of development which included (1)

awareness, (2) first gay experience, (3) understanding the word homosexual, (4) self-labeling, (5) first, relationship (6) first, disclosure to non gay and (7) positive gay identity. Yarhouse, (2001) contends that these two early studies point out that the act of regular sexual behavior, defined as one or more times per week, facilitates the gay identity synthesis and moves one toward the coming out phase.

Lesbian Identity Development

Although the previous models provide some insight and understanding to homosexual identity development in the cognitive, social and psychological contextual frame, they all made the assumption that men and women experienced homosexuality development in the same way. This assumption was unfortunately drawn without data from women (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). Little has changed since the formulation of initial homosexual development models, women continue to be underrepresented in comparison to their male counterparts. However to date there are studies which attempt to give voice to the experiences of women and tease out the varied forms of development between groups.

Several theorists have attempted to take into consideration the unique challenges which females experience in homosexual identity development, taking into consideration the quiet duality experienced by the combined subcultures of women and homosexuals (Black & Underwood, 1989; Fingerhut, Peplau, & Ghavami, 2005). While others considered social factors such as gender-role expectations and the influence of the feminist movement (Loiacano, 1989). Chapman & Brannock (1987) evaluated the emotional differences between males and females in homosexual identity development.

They supported that unlike their male counterparts; lesbian identity development was more linked to “feelings” of being connected to other girls/women rather than shared sexual experiences as in male homosexual identity development. These findings submerged from a 42-item questionnaire completed by 197 self identified lesbians. This five phase model includes stages of (1) same sex orientation; (2) incongruence, awareness that these feelings are not the norm; (3) self-questioning & exploration; (4) self-identification; and (5) choice of lifestyle, which entails the decision to choose a partner or not.

One year earlier Sophie (1986) based the foundation of a new model on the bases of prior models and data collected from fourteen surveyed women. This non-linear model included the following four stages: (1) first awareness; (2) testing & exploration; (3) identity; and (4) identity integration. Unlike prior models Sophie contended that the combined aspects of personality traits, environment and family background had an impact on individual development. Sophie also found that women, unlike males, more strongly desired to pull away from heterosexual society and associate exclusively with the gay community during the final stage of development. Sophie’s study also provided support to Troiden’s (1989) findings which contended that women developed awareness of their homosexual feelings at a much later stage than men.

While these models represent only a sample of the many models developed to address biological differences in developing homosexual identity, several criticisms remain overall. One such criticism focuses on the suggestion that stages of homosexual development primarily occur in a linear progression (Yarhouse, 2001). Linear progression entails that the development or progressions through stages occur one after

the other, hence limiting the opportunity for variability. A second issue is the exclusion of bisexual, transgendered or individuals with disabilities from consideration (Bilodeau & Renn, 2001). Furthermore, the majority of theoretical research for which most models were founded is based on small sample sizes, white, middle class individuals who were generally well educated and male. A final issue is its limited ability to take into account multidimensional influences of multicultural variables (Groves, Bimbi, Nanin, & Parsons, 2006; Martinez & Sullivan, 1998; Stephens, 2004).

Cultural Considerations and Homosexual Identity Development

It is evident from the varied models of homosexual identity development that men and women encounter many experiences, stages and or phases in the coming out process. Although the differences between male and female identity development vary and are heavily impacted by simultaneous homosexual development, the impact is even greater for minorities (Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004). Often issues of race and culture were excluded in the development of early homosexual identity development models. Identity development models for minority individuals, specifically African Americans differ greatly from Euro American identity development.

Cross (1971) proposed that African American identity development occurred in five linear stages. These stages include (1) pre-encounter, the initial stage, here the Euro American culture is viewed as idealized and blackness is devalued (2) encounter; the stage in which, a critical incident or challenge occurs, causing the person to explore perceptions of his world view, to reevaluate ones personal identity and/or search for a new identity in stage three, (3) immersion-emersion, the person immerses in black culture

and experiences, idealizes black culture and denigrates white culture. In the fourth stage, (4) internalization, the individual incorporates a positive level of blackness is adopted, is non defensive and moves toward a more secure sense of self, is flexible toward a more holistic world view, no longer idealizes black or denigrates white. As noted in Cross's model most minority models include a stage of self/racial dissatisfaction with movement to pride and acceptance (Carter, 1995; Cross, 1971 & Helms, 1990). These cultural factors are found to negatively impact homosexual identity development and delay identity integration. It is hypothesized that racial minority LG, specifically African Americans are delayed in the coming out process in comparison to their Euro American counterparts due to two factors; (1) their culture/race favors heterosexuality seeing (and treating) homosexuality as wrong, sinful and shameful to the culture/community, and (2) racism which occurs between the majority Euro American race and themselves, even within the specialized LG community (Rosario et al., 2004).

It is estimated that by the year 2050 that half of the United States population will be made up of minorities (Kim, D'Andrea, Sahu, & Gaughen, 1998). The 2000 U. S. census as cited by (Flanagan & Flanagan, 2003) reveal that there is a steady growth in cultural and ethnic minorities over the past decade; of the 281 million individuals living in the United States an estimated 80 million self identify as other than white. Knowledge of this swift growth and change enhances the conclusion that the Euro American foundation on which original theoretical models were developed will soon be obsolete and or ineffective in addressing individuals from minority or non Euro backgrounds (Flanagan & Flanagan, 2003; Kim, et al., 1998). There is a plethora of research which supports the need for acceptance and competency in addressing the needs of individuals

from diverse populations. These requirements can be especially important in addressing the needs of LG African Americans (Flanagan & Flanagan, 2003; Grov, et. al., 2006; Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004).

Unlike their white counterparts African American LG individuals must face two areas of minority development at once, racial minority development and sexual minority development. Addressing issues of being simultaneous members of two oppressed groups can present dilemmas in addressing who they are as well as impact progression through the stages of their sexual identity development. Common issues include not knowing which part of them is most important, unsure of how to cope with these differences in oppression and having limited support or resources in which to discuss and work through these concerns (Martinez & Sullivan, 1998).

Defining ones racial identity is a process which is similar to defining ones sexual minority status. Both processes begin with embracing the stigma and movement toward a positive identity; for African Americans this process can be extremely difficult. Issues surrounding race and culture have a significant impact on how African Americans view and react to social and personal development (Carter, 1995; Cross, 1971; 1995, Helms, 1990; Lewis, 2006; Utsey, Chae, Brown, & Kelly, 2002). A large portion of homosexual models of sexual identity development focus on the “coming out” process. However this process for African Americans can be met with much more negativity, social rejection and isolation than among other cultural groups. This process can moreover be met with more violence than is found in other cultures. Two studies completed by Herek & Berrill (1990) and Cornstock (1989) found that homosexual African Americans were more often targeted for hate crimes and violence than whites. They were more over victims of being

verbally assaulted, hit, chased and physically assaulted than white homosexuals. These incidents of potential danger further increase an unwillingness, stress and inability to successfully address or complete homosexual development.

Race, Culture and Coming Out

Martinez and Sullivan (1998) assert that the complexities of race and culture have a significant impact of the coming out process for homosexual African Americans; even more so than their white counterparts. Additionally, various authors have noted that anti-gay attitudes and sentiments may be even more pronounced in the African American community than in others (Fullilove and Fullilove, 1999; Kennamer, Honnold, Bradford, & Hendricks, 2000; Lewis, 2003). Studies have attributed differences in attitude among African Americans to factors related to levels of educational status, socio economic status, gender, age, church attendance, religious commitment and to ideas of black masculinity and extinction (Fullilove & Fullilove, 1999; Kennamer et al., 2000; Lemelle & Battle, 2004; Lewis, 2003; Negy & Eisenman, 2005, & Ward, 2005). Horace Griffin (2001) maintain that while African Americans are not exceptional in there views of homosexuality, the structure of the African American community is more closely entwined to family, church and social community than many other racial groups, making the racial and cultural impact even greater. Additionally, findings support that ethnic identity for African Americans is closely related to positive psychological functioning and quality of life (Utsey et al., 2002). In the African American culture homosexuality is seen as a weakness or an embarrassment to the community (Lemelle & Battle, 2004; Lewis, 2003; Ward, 2005). Being of a homosexual nature falls in conflict with the standards, values and norms of what it means to be a man or women in the African

American community. It is due in part to these homo-negative beliefs that many LG African American individuals see coming out as a near impossible task.

Masculinity and Survival

Brown (2005) states that many African American men are in a state of content, hiding as a means of survival from racism and homophobia. “This situation” as stated by Brown “is problematic” this thought is linked in part to the label of *down low*. The label down low currently describes men who are aware that they are gay, however do not profess their sexual identity, to those who are convinced that they are heterosexual and only have sex with men. The later statement Brown feels is a movement toward masculinity. This idea encompasses the thought that anything female or feminine is a weakness. Connell (1992), as cited by Brown, 2005 contends that there is a social belief that to be a male in contemporary America is to be homophobic. He goes on to argue the belief that African American men in today’s contemporary society must be manically masculine and a sexist in an effort to avoid homophobia from heterosexuals, to be accepted and respected in the hierarchy of manhood and to maintain heterosexual privilege.

Research completed by Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter (2004), emphasizes that due to cultural pressures which favor heterosexuality more same sex attracted individuals, more African Americans label themselves bisexual, in comparison to their Euro American counterparts. Rosario et al.; (2004) go on to support that this title is preferred in lieu of lesbian or gay and is self inflicted to offset cultural stigma. These authors also found that African American LG reported that they were less likely to disclose their

sexual preference to others due to compounded stress felt from family, friends and community. These reports, revealed that this lack of reporting to be higher than their peer. Additionally, those that did report told fewer people than peer. LG African Americans were moreover found to participate less in gay related social activities and were less likely to belong to gay oriented organizations than other cultural groups.

Brown continued that African American men, more so than women, are socially limited to one sexuality preference. Men unlike women are not allowed to explore sexuality between men and women. However, any final choice of sexuality outside of heterosexism is seen to be dishonoring to the family and the community, unnatural and spiritually damning. Historically African American men and women have been painted as sexual beast. They have been exploited of their sexuality by slave masters for procreation and show (Griffin, 2001). Even today they are seen as highly sexually active in comparison to their white counterparts often supported by the number of young unwed mothers with children within the community, offsetting other possible contributing factors such as heightened respect for life, economic stability, or sufficient medical care.

On the other end of the continuum African American men and women are met with cultural pressure to carry on the African American race and various aspects of the culture and tradition (Ward, 2005). Culturally African American women are known to be strong caretakers, hard workers and depended upon for support, advice and direction. Men are known to be hard workers, supports of the family and imperative to spiritual leadership and direction. The idea of homosexual relationships diminishes this picture and leave to question the survival of the African American race and culture.

Religion

Many persons who are gay and lesbian report that disclosing and living out corresponds to their own expectations and stereotypes about others and organizations. For example, many persons who are homosexual report concerns or hesitations about disclosing to those in their churches because of both stereotypes and their own experiences that have indicated that they will not be supported in such environments (Miller, 2007; Stevens, 2004; Ward, 2005). Unfortunately, it is the African American church which constitutes the most significant force of homophobia in the African American community (Lewis, 2003; Ward, 2005). The African American Christian church is the primary means through which many African Americans express their religious, spiritual beliefs, morals and values. Historically the expression of spirituality in the church stemmed partly from enslaved individuals need to develop their own places of worship and to maintain a strong sense of community. At the same time the church also served as an educational center, a safe haven for those escaping slavery and a location for organizing political activities (Constantine, Lewis, Conner, & Sanchez, 2000). The role of the African American church maintains many of these same roles today. Church is often used as a fix all support system or coping strategy for almost every problem in the African American community (Constantine et al., 2000); including homosexuality.

Individuals attending African American church have been consistently associated with holding a negative view of LG lifestyles. Battle & Lemell (2002) found that those African Americans who report high church attendance are found to hold less tolerant attitudes toward the gay/lesbian lifestyle than their less church attending counterparts. Constantine, Lewis, Conner & Sanchez (2000) assert that the baseline rates of religious

involvement for African Americans tend to be higher than those of the general United States population. They also note that African Americans report higher levels of attendance at religious services than whites, read more religious material and monitor religious broadcasts and seek spiritual comfort through religion more so than whites. Negative views regarding same sex relationships within the church have contributed to a greater stigmatization of homosexuality in the African American community. The negative implications associated with these lifestyles have led many LG African Americans to more “closeted” behaviors subsequently producing high risk sexual practices, more stress, low notions of themselves, their identity and self worth (Constantine et al., 2000).

Racism and racial prejudice

Racism or racial prejudice, another commonly shared blight on the process of homosexual identity development is an occurrence which is often faced daily by LG African Americans. LG African Americans potentially face racial oppression and rejection from society at large and from the subgroup of European LG individuals. A study completed by Hemphill (1991), as cited by Martinez & Sullivan (1998), maintain that coming out as an African American does not mean that one will be accepted by all other LG individuals. Racism within the LG European community is an occurrence which can have an additionally negative impact on LG African Americans desiring to come out. The double edged sword of being rejected by both the Euro community and the African American community can present emotional and psychological problems for LGB African American in developing and maintaining a positive homosexual identity.

Parallel to this, a study completed by Icard (1996), revealed that LG African Americans often experience hostility and rejection from non minority LG. This occurrence of rejection has been sited to lead to feelings of isolation and confusion in both personal and sexual identity. LG African Americans often feel the need to choose which part of their person is most important. These individuals often find themselves torn between the struggle of gay rights and race-related rights. Regrettably, LG African Americans unlike their white counterparts are less likely to advocate for gay rights or compare the needs as similar; furthermore African Americans draw on the support of their family and community against racism (Icard, 1996). This significant need for family support and understanding is a conflict which is experienced in a dramatically different way with in white culture (Lewis & Derlega, 2003; Utsey et. al., 2002; Ward, 2005) Making a decision to take sides in either debate could be perceived to hold serious emotional consequences for an African American coming out. Because African Americans depend on the support of the culture of the family so heavily the lack of its existence isolates African American LG individuals from emotional, psychological and social supports, limits protection from racism, feelings of acceptance, belonging, self esteem, limits the ability to build close relationships, and hampers dating with in the race (Loiacano, 1989).

HIV/AIDS, Homosexuality & the African American Community

Aside from cultural pressure, racism and prejudice LG African Americans must also face the rigors of stigma. An unfortunate stigma which is commonly associated with homosexuality is the HIV/AIDS virus. A study observed by Valdiserri (2002), in The American Journal of Public Health published findings which stated that 1 in 5 adult

Americans *feared* persons with AIDS and that 1 in 6 admitted to harboring feelings of *disgust* toward this population. A comparable study also referenced by Valdiserri (2002), by the Center for Disease Control (2000), additionally supported this social perception. Survey responses yielded from 5600 participants revealed that 1 in 5 agreed with the statement that *people who got AIDS through sex or drug use have gotten what they deserve*. These convictions and attitudes toward LG individuals have been found to impact the coming out process as well as delay and prohibit the adoption of preventative behaviors, i.e. condom use, disclosures, promote barriers to HIV testing, and restricts the use of prevention programs among LG African Americans (Battle & Lemelle, 2002; Hogan & Ward, 2003; Brooks, Etzel, Hinojos, Henery, & Perez, 2005).

In the past several years African Americans have disproportionately represented a rising number of HIV/AIDS cases in the United States. Young African American men and women between the ages of 18 and 24 now lead the nation in HIV/AIDS cases. African American men account for 7 out of 10 new HIV/AIDS cases while; African American women are found to be 23 times more likely than their white counter parts to be HIV positive, due to injected drug use and heterosexual sex. These findings place African American women ahead of all other ethnic groups in new HIV/AIDS cases (Chng, Carlon, & Toynes, 2006).

The open social devaluation and hostility associated with HIV/AIDS stigma, often demonstrated through prejudice and discrimination can often become internalized for a number of LG African Americans. A study cited by Hoban Ward (2003), found a relationship between shame and internalized negative attitudes toward gay men and women which resulted in an avoidance of social support and the utilization of public

health resources. More recent studies report African American men's fear of social rejection and defamation as a reason for not seeking HIV/AIDS testing. For these men participation in the testing process is seen by them as admittance of participation in stigmatized sexual behavior. Moreover, demonstrating any concern for the disease such as in seeking education or in condom use is viewed as a threat to masculinity, evidence of sex outside of a monogamous relationship or complete affirmation of the disease (Brooks et al., 2005).

In association to internalized stigma, externalized actions of discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping toward LG African Americans can and are commonly associated with medical health care providers. Hoban & Ward (2003), concluded that in the area of health care African Americans are more likely to experience more negative treatment, than their European counterparts. These actions have negatively impacted the LG African Americans quality of life; they are noted to have poorer health, health care and understanding of the disease in comparison to other minority populations or heterosexual groups. The American Civil Liberties Union (as cited by Brooks et al.; 2005), found that individuals exposed to the HIV/AIDS virus have been denied medical treatment, had their privacy violated and were refused admittance to nursing homes and residential facilities. Knowledge of these actions continuously promotes stigma and apprehension among LG African Americans struggling to come out or disclose their sexuality. This externalized stigma furthermore impedes trust for medical personnel or medical educational professional in the African American community.

As literature supports the combined effects of internalized and externalized stigma create barriers which have a negative impact on LG individuals, their sexual partners and

the community at large. The lack of condom use among men who have sex with men and those who have sex with men and women generate a fertile path for HIV/AIDS transmission, largely impacting heterosexual African American women. Homophobia which exists in the African American community facilitates an attitude of fear and secrecy which limits communication, disclosure and social support from family, friends and the community. Heavily placed values in religion and cultural norms promote hiding and limits safe sex practices. Issues of racism and prejudice minimize understanding, the use of health care facilities and education.

Homosexual Identity Development and the College Environment

Literature has suggested that issues of homosexual identity development should be of significant concern for College Counselors and Student Affairs personnel (Bowen & Bourgeois, 2001; Evans & Broido, 1999; Gortmaker & Brown, 2006; Kim, et. al., 1998; Rankin, 1994; 2005; 2006; Rhoads, 1997; Wright & Cullen, 2001). It is during the college age years of 18-22 that many young adults are experiencing significant issues related to identity development and self identification (Cass, 1984; Evans & Broido, 1999; Stevens, 2004). It is during this time that LG individuals generally experience change in how they view themselves and how they choose to present themselves to others. This point of leaving behind a culturally defined heterosexual identity and developing a new LG identity is often a major challenge and transition (Evan & D'Augelli, 1996). At this phase new aspects of self, community, values, beliefs, and interest must be developed. This stage of identity integration incorporates a lesbian, gay and bisexual identity into a new sense of self worth. This transition in personal identity occurs in conjunction with a time that most youth are developing autonomy, purpose,

interpersonal relationship, integrity and competence. However, due to the negative cultural stereotypes and limited visibility of LG role models, college individuals often seek support, acceptance and understanding from other LG individuals on the college campus in an effort to create a new identity.

The college environment provides an opportunity for students to seek independence from parental involvement; promotes personal decision making and often provides a visible social network (Cass, 1979; Rhoads, 1997; Troiden, 1989). Due to these factors universities and colleges are often the setting where many students disclose their sexuality or “come out” (Evans & Brioido, 1999; Evans & D’Augelli, 1996; Gortmaker, 2006). However LG individuals participating in a college community often come face to face with many of the same homo negative issues as in main stream society.

Impact of a Negative College Climate

As aforementioned it is in the college environment that students make determination about coming out or disclosing their gay or lesbian identity, this is largely based on the environmental climate created on campus. This may include the presence of programs and organizations that support gay and lesbian students (Stevens, 2004). Any perceived negative consequences associated with campus climate and the coming out process can hamper a student’s willingness to come out. Developing LG students may experience covert and/or overt hostility with in the college environment. Climate and attitude of the college toward homosexuality can be implied and interpreted through the display of signs and symbols posted on campus grounds, discrimination projected by individuals, services provided to homosexual students and the visibility, or lack there of,

of openly gay staff, faculty and students on campuses in housing, class rooms, clubs, offices and university departments.

A covert way that LG students assess negative college climate is from the lack of established policies regarding the rights of LG individuals attending the university. Research conducted by Sanlo (2005), reported that findings from 37 states did not have sexual orientation listed as a concern in laws addressing sexual orientation discrimination. Additional findings revealed that of the nations 3500 colleges and universities that less than 10% had nondiscrimination policies which protected sexual orientation and that less than 2% had staffed centers which could provide information or address the needs of gay college, students, faculty and staff. The lack of such policies creates an environment where LG students do not feel safe to express their identity. Moreover, the lack of policies may help foster an environment where LG students feel oppressed and where non-LG students maintain negative beliefs towards LG students (Sanlo, 2005).

Overtly, LG students are often targeted for harassment and violence, with derogatory comments noted as the most common form of harassment (Lease, Cogdal & Londono-McConnell, 1996, Rankin, 2005). In a campus climate study completed by Rankin (2005) results revealed that as many as 1/3 of the freshman LG individuals had experienced harassment. This harassment included cases of derogatory remarks, spoken harassment or threats, anti-LG graffiti, pressure to conceal ones sexual orientation or gender identity and physical assault. Individuals experiencing these actions where stated to fear for their physical safety, and felt that the university was unsupportive or uncaring of their needs.

Both forms of covert and overt hostility have been found to hamper LG individual's ability to move through or complete homosexual identity development. It is not uncommon for an individual exposed to homophobia to experience emotional and physical difficulty; which can negatively impact movement through the homosexual identity development stages. One going through the process may become preoccupied with an issue, resolve it and move to another, recycle a stage or phase until it is mastered, get stuck, delay addressing a task, all depending on their experiences, culture and environmental situation.

The emotional and psychological challenges faced by LG students have been found to prevent them from fully participating in campus communities, learning, and in achieving their full academic potential. Finding released by Lopez and Chism (1993), which focused on the concerns of gay and lesbian student in the college classroom revealed that the internal anxiety associated with societal and peer hostility, parental pressure and the coming out process presented a significant barrier to academic success. Students from the study revealed that in an effort to deal with the pressure academic responsibilities were ignored; several discontinued their educational aspirations. Students from this study also revealed that they did not feel safe disclosing their sexual identity in class, did not find that homosexuality was thoroughly discussed in class or in academic programs, that the campus did not provide adequate educational resources regarding the homosexuality and did not feel supported by either the faculty or the staff of the university (Lopez & Chism, 1993).

Several other authors have additionally explored the coming out experiences of LG students living in the college environment (Cass, 1979; Rankin, 1994; 2005; 2006

Rhodes, 1994; 1997, Stevens, 2004; Troiden, 1988). The lack of visual university support and poor residential staff were found to be sources of psychological stress for individuals desiring to come out in college as revealed by Evans & Broido (1999). They went on to argue that individuals who feel stifled in their ability to come out often experience feelings of guilt, anxiety, loneliness and isolation. The impact of these gay related stresses has been known to lead to thoughts of suicide, self doubt and self hatred. These thoughts and feelings encourage a need to stay closeted, in an effort to maintain safety and protection from homo negative violence. African Americans were more over found to conceal their sexual identity from others due to these reasons (Rankin, 2004). However, on the contrary individuals who do acquire safe and supportive coming out experiences are stated to be more outgoing, self confident and assured of themselves. These individuals often feel an obligation and willingness to educate and support others in the coming out process (Rhodes, 1994).

One of the most important studies that examined gay identity development within the college environment was conducted by Stevens (2004). Stevens conducted one of the few studies that have examined the specific influence of the college environment on gay identity development. Stevens conducted a series of interviews with 11 self-identified gay males. The focus of the interviews was the identification of critical incidents, within the college environment, that shaped or influenced gay identity development. After analysis of the series of interviews, the author was able to develop a conceptual model of gay identity development that consisted of one central category and five integrative categories.

The central category was dominated by themes related to finding empowerment. This was often reflected in the ability to find support, developing inner strength, and the ability to embrace their gay identity in such a manner that one is able to integrate it into one's perception of self. Steven (2004), reported that this was often supported by the ability to "securing power and recognizing one's locus of control" (pg. 198). Participants who were able to report high levels of empowerment also reported feeling less influenced by their college environment and better able to respond to negative influences or pressures in their environment.

The five integrative categories identified in this study were: self-acceptance; disclosure to others; individual factors; environmental influences; and multiple identities exploration. The self-acceptance category was related to the process of self-identification of gay identity. This was often initially identified as the sense that one was different and then often moved through the process of sexual exploration. Some participants also discussed the fears of being discovered. As participants moved through this stage they reported more integration of their identity and the ability to accept their gay identity as part of themselves. The college environment influenced this process directly and indirectly. Positive influences were the presence of an environment that openly provided support to gay students and offered programs, organizations and support groups. Negative influences included students who espoused negative beliefs and the lack of policies and programs.

Stevens (2004) reported that movement through this stage often corresponded to the next integrative category, disclosure to others. Specifically, as one moved to greater self acceptance they increased their comfort in disclosing to others and broaden the circle

of whom they disclosed to. Participants reported that initially their disclosures were limited to other gays and lesbians or immediate friends. As they reached higher levels of self-acceptance they were more likely to include more friends, colleagues and lastly family members. Participants indicated that reporting to family members was the most difficult and emotional risky due to fears of rejection.

The integrative category of individual factors included the personal supports and liabilities that individuals identified as influencing their gay identity development. This included the type and nature of support networks, self-assurance, personally held stereotypes (i.e., internalized homophobia), fears of rejection, and sense of isolation (Steven, 2004). These factors were strongly influenced by the college environment. This influence included the degrees and type of support available on campus, the presence of gay and lesbian social groups and organizations, and the presence of homophobic discrimination or stereotypes. There was also the recognition that individuals were also influenced by their own attitudes about gay men and the attitudes within their culture. Specifically, minority participants indicated that they felt there was more pressure to hide their identity because of lower levels of acceptance of being gay in the African-American and Hispanic cultures, this has also been reflected in other studies (Battle & Lemell, 2002; Constantine et al., 2000; Hunter, 2004, Lewis, 2003; Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2004 & Ward, 2005). Furthermore, the minority participants also felt less accepted by the gay community in general. Many of these factors were influenced by the presence of LG groups on campus and the perception of acceptance within these groups.

The one integrative category that was most linked to the college environment was environmental influences. Within the college environment participants identified

relationships, signs and symbols (e.g., hate graffiti, information about gay organizations), resources, and discrimination and stereotypes as factors that influenced their identity development. In general, participants recognized that the college environment, from classrooms to housing could influence one's ability to feel comfortable in developing and integrating one's identity as a gay male. Within these environments there is communicated, directly or indirectly, support for being gay and the ability to feel empowered in one's identity as a gay male (Stevens, 2004).

The last integrative category that Stevens (2004), identified was exploring multiple identities. This category reflected the process of developing one's identity in a more integrative manner. For many participants this reflected the ability to integrate their identity into a more complete identity that incorporated all aspects of their identity. Many participants reported that this was often the most challenging phase of identity development and many participants did not perceive that they had been totally successful in doing this. For example, African-American participants reported greater pressure to hide their identity from others in their community, including their church, based on their fear they would not be accepted. This has been reported in several other studies (Battle & Lemell, 2002; Hunter, 2004, Lewis, 2003; & Ward, 2005) and has been linked to the process of gay African American males living as heterosexual within their community and gay within the gay community.

LG students at Historically Black Institutions

There is clear evidence that LG students may be directly or indirectly impacted by their college environment. This impact may influence all aspects of their personal,

psychological and educational growth. This may include identity development and the ability to “come out” in a positive manner. Related to this is the reality that this process may be different for African American college students because of the challenges faced by holding double stigmas (e.g. race, sexual orientation), the cultural stigmas held within the African American community and differences related to identity development. This phenomenon is supported by, Stevens (2004), who found that disclosure and coming out was indeed an even more complicated issue for gay African Americans in his study. However, one significant problem in Stevens’s qualitative study was that he had only one African American male in his interview sample.

While there is a paucity of research on identity development within the college environment for lesbian and gay African Americans we can draw some hypotheses from research conducted regarding lesbian and gay development among African Americans. There are several parallels between Stevens (2004), work on identity development among college students and Loiacano’s (1989), work on lesbian and gay identity development among African Americans. Comparable to Stevens, Loiacano found that one of the critical aspects of identity development was the process of disclosure. This process, and how one perceived their level of acceptance often then related directly to another critical process – self validation. Self validation parallels Stevens’s stage of self-acceptance. In this process the individual begins to seek internal and external validation and support against discrimination.

Like Stevens, Loiacano also determined that community and environmental factors were important in the development of one’s identity. Both researchers found that individuals examined covert and overt messages of acceptance and negative stereotypes.

This process included their larger community as well as the LG community. In the Loiacano (1989), study participants reported that there was a lack of acceptance of African Americans within the LG community and a lack of understanding of the challenges faced by being African American and LG within the African American community. One participant reported that there was a pressure to fit into either the gay stereotype or the African American stereotype, but that in reality being African American made it hard “to conform to any particular ‘type’.” (pg. 23).

Stevens (2004) reported that the African American in his study, as with other participants who were from underrepresented groups, found the most challenging aspect of their identity development to be acceptance or disclosure to others in their racial or ethnic community. Loiacano also reports related issues in LG identity development among African Americans. Participants felt challenged by stereotypes and oppression that existed in the African American community towards LG individuals. This included the existence of limited role models and little support for open and/or long-term relationships.

All of these issues relate to another critical aspect of identity development, identified by both Stevens and Loiacano; integration of multiple identities. Loiacano discusses that the final stage of identity development is one for which the individual is attempting to integrate several aspects of themselves, including their sexual identity and racial identity, into one identity. This process includes self and external validation and seeking support from organizations and their community. This often includes organizations that focus on LG issues for African Americans and finding religious organizations that will accept homosexual identification.

While these studies identify similar stages of identity development there is still no research to consider how the college environment may influence this process for African American students. A critical part of future research is examining the experience of LG college students at Historically Black institutes and considering how their experiences may guide our understanding of LG identity development for African Americans.

Historically Black Institutions

There are approximately 103 acknowledged HBCU's, in addition to an estimated total of 50 predominantly Black institutions; institutions with more than 50% black enrollment. These institutions range in variety; private, 4-year and 2-year schools of learning. They are additionally diverse in curriculum, size and specialization. They can be found all over the United States; most of which are located in the southern region (Chng, Carlon & Toynes, 2006). Never the less there is one commonality which is shared, the historic responsibility as the primary providers of postsecondary education for African Americans in a social environment of racial discrimination (Brown & Davis, 2001). Walter Allen as cited by Brown & Davis (2001), cites that there are 6 specific goals of Historically Black Colleges and universities in the African American community: (1). The maintenance of black historical and cultural traditions, (2). the provision of key leadership for the black community, (3) the provision of an economic function in the black community, (4) the provision of black role models to interpret the way in which social, political and economic dynamics impact black people, (5) the provision of college graduates with a unique competence to address the issues between the minority and majority cultures and (6) the production of black agents for specialized

research, institutional training and information dissemination in dealing with the life environment of blacks and other minority groups.

Today's HBCUs act as both a social agency and social equalizer for society at large (Brown & Davis, 2001). They fulfill these roles by providing a good and service to descendents of Africa from America which was once with held through racism and slavery. These institutions additionally provide opportunity to individuals which face unique obstacles. African Americans student are challenged with barriers of social back ground, culture, limited finance and school failure which can impede participation and attainment within the college setting.

HBCU's furthermore provide social capital within the African American community. The origination of HBCUs occurred during a time when legal segregation was accepted and preferred; the development and maintenance of these institutions demonstrate the resources both, social and legal they hold in upholding the interest of African Americans. HBCUs have been found to be a viable form of social reproduction. This concept as cited by Brown and David (2001), from Bourdieu, (1977), theory of social reproduction contends that accumulated knowledge, accomplishments, formal and informal relations and networks can be gained, secured and passed on. The unique developments of HBCUs provide an opportunity for this reproduction through the works of its professionals, faculty, staff and alumni.

The existence of HBCU's provided a sense of advancement, opportunity education, support and pride to the African American culture and community. These institutions are viewed as a source of empowerment, generally based on religious faith, a

desire for excellence and openly promote tradition, family and community values. They are trusted extensions of social, economic and political structure, growth and development in the African American community aside from the church (Chng, Carlon & Toynes, 2006).

Summary

This chapter included a review of literature regarding the impact of gay related stress in conjunction with culture and environment on the coming out experiences of LG students. Various models of sexual minority development were discussed. An overview of stereotypes and negative outcomes related to sexual minority lifestyle, attitudes and beliefs surrounding homosexuality in the African American community was additionally provided. This discussion paralleled the findings of two authors who examined the impact of environment on the coming out experiences of individuals attending college evolving to support the purpose and significance of this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

It was the intent of this study to explore the perceptions and experience of self-identifying lesbian and gay African American students within a historically black college environment. The foundation of this study is grounded in factors identified by Stevens (2004) as components of identity development among gay males within the college environment and are paralleled by elements identified by Loiacano (1989), as critical aspects of identity development for gay and lesbian African Americans. This research was the foundation for the two primary research questions posed in the current study: (1) What are the experiences and perception of African Americans developing a LG identity; (2) What are the experiences and perceptions of LG African Americans living in a historically black college environment?

Participants

There were a combined total of 13 participants in the study. The study was divided into two phases; phase I was a survey study completed online. A total of two males and eleven females participated in the online survey. Participants were self-selected as the participation process was voluntary. As defined by the criteria established for the study all participants needed to meet these inclusion criteria; (1) self-identified as lesbian or gay, (2) African American, (3) stated to have attended a HBCU within the past year and (3) were age 19 or older. The pre-selected age requirement provided

participation without parental consent, as established by Alabama law. This age restriction moreover provided an element of confidentiality and emotional security as potential participants would not have to disclose their identity to parents/guardians to participate in the study.

Participants were recruited from two Historically Black Colleges in the Southern region of the United States. The estimated number of students enrolled at both universities average 5,000 individuals per semester. Estimated student racial identity make-up for both universities is 98% African American and 2% white and other (e.g., Asian, Hispanic, American Indian). It is also estimated by the universities that approximately 70-75% of the student population is female. Both colleges are accredited by the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS) and are public, state and government funded educational institutions.

Participants for phase II of the study were recruited at the end of the survey in phase I. At the end of phase I participants were asked to continue in the study by providing specific contact information. A total of 8 participants, two males and six females continued on and participated in phase II of the study.

Procedure

Following approval from the Auburn University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects and consent to recruit from each of the two HBCU settings, participant selection ensued with the use of snowball sampling and postings. Postings included the use of an informational/invitational flyer (Appendix A). These flyers were posted in student inhabited common areas (i.e. resident halls, student centers, educational

buildings) and distributed among campus organizations known to have open contact with lesbian and gay students.

Each flyer included a web link that directed participants to the survey housed on Survey Monkey, an on-line survey tool. Information about participation was provided and participants confirmed agreement to participate by selecting to move on and complete the survey. The predicted completion time for the survey was estimated at thirty minutes. The survey consisted of four demographic (Appendix E) and two open-ended reflection questions (Appendix F). The demographic questions pertained to criteria for participating in the study and participants who did not meet the criteria were closed out of the data collection. Participants who met the criteria then moved on to the two open-ended reflection questions.

Concluding the completion of the two open-ended reflection questions, defined as phase I of the study, participants were presented with the opportunity to provide additional information for the study through a phone interview, referred to as phase II of the study. Participants declining this opportunity were directed to exit the survey.

Participants agreeing to provide additional information for part II of the study were provided an informational consent form specific to the second phase of the study (Appendix C). This informational consent outlined participant rights, risk, contact information and directions for participation. Potential participants were directed to leave a contact phone number, name or pseudonym, and five separate dates and times which they could be contacted for participation in the phone interview. Participants providing this information were contacted during the first date and time option provided. Those

unavailable or unable to be reached during the first date and time option provided where contacted during the second date and time option. No participant was contacted after the final or fifth date and time option provided by the participant.

The phone interview process included the reading of an informational consent and four open-ended reflection questions (Appendix G). Questioning was administered in a semi-structured format by the principle investigator. Completion of the phone interview concluded all contact with the participants and concluded data collection procedures for the study.

Measures

Part I: Online Survey

Part I of the study consisted of two open-ended reflective questions, they are as follows.

(1). Describe your experience and perceptions of being lesbian/gay and African American attending a historically black college or university. These experiences and thoughts can include, yet may not be limited to discussion and encounters with family, friends, by standers, peer, students and university personnel.

(2). Reflecting on your previous response, do you feel that these experiences might be different if you attended a predominately white-institution? How or why?

Due to the intention of the study to gain insight and understanding of the day to day lives of lesbian and gay, African Americans within the HBCU environment, the

reflective questions were patterned with a qualitative approach, modeled on the works of Stevens (2004) and Loiacano (1989) and implemented with the purpose of gaining knowledge about this group while simultaneously providing participants the opportunity to share their “stories” with minimal interference from the principle investigator (Glasser & Corbin, 1998, Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Loiacano (1989) examined gay identity development issues among six African American gay men and lesbian women. The study consisted of a six query, open-ended questionnaire and an interview. The study sought to explore the challenges faced by participant’s as it related to a sense of self acceptance both as African Americans in the predominantly white gay and lesbian community and as gay men and lesbian women in the predominantly heterosexual African American community. Questions one and two were specifically patterned after two of Loiacano (1989) questions (1) “What has been your experience of *coming out* to others? Who has been supportive? Say anything else you would like about this experience.” And (2) “How would you describe your relationship to the gay/lesbian community as you define it? For example, how supported do you feel by these two communities as a whole?” The questions were modified to address the specific purpose of this study through the incorporation of the works of Stevens (2004), who explored the experiences of 11 self-identified gay male college students; evaluating how the environment contributed to the exploration and development of a gay identity. The works of Stevens (2004) specifically focused on critical incidents of gay identity development within a predominately white college environment. This study attempted to take the combined works of Loiacano (1989) and Stevens (2004) and

model an exploration into the perceptions and experiences of lesbian and gay African Americans within the HBCU setting.

Part II: Phone Interview

The second and concluding portion of the study, the phone interview consisted of four open-ended reflective questions:

- (1). Where there any benefits or draw backs to being an African American lesbian or gay student attending a HBCU?
- (2). How would you describe the coming out process within your family (family of origin, extended family ie. grandparents, aunts, uncles)?
- (3). Coming out/Being out can be stressful; how do you deal with that stress on a day to day basis?
- (4). Why did you participate in this study? What where you hoping to gain or contribute by participating?

Questioning implemented during the phone interview were derived from responses provided from the initial two open-ended reflective questions presented in part I. Consistent with the purposeful and explorative nature of qualitative methodology responses from part I where reviewed for common themes. The exploration of these themes revealed opportunity for clarity and acquisition of a more detailed account of the perceptions and experiences of each participant. The implementation of broad questioning and probes allowed concepts and themes to naturally develop from participant data. The intent of this study support the use of this approach as it is

exploratory and is attempting to discover and or refine theories and concepts as it relates specifically to lesbian and gay African Americans within a HBCU environment (Devers & Frankel, 2000b, Glasser & Corbin, 1998 & Glasser & Strauss, 1967).

Data Analysis

Consistent with goals of this research quest to explore new theory and qualitative mythology, a grounded theory approach was used to analyze data collected in this study. Grounded theory as described by Glaser (2002) is the generation of emergent conceptualizations into integrated patterns, which are denoted by categories and their properties. This process as he further describes is accomplished through a constant comparison process, which is designed to generate concepts from all data. Central to grounded theory research is the concept of exploring meaning, action, and interaction. These concepts give meaning and direction to the main concern, how the participants resolve their main concern or the core category (Glasser, 2001 as cited by Artinian and Giske, 2007).

Using the following steps the researcher used emergent coding, making a deliberate choice to allow codes and themes to emerge from the data for each question as outlined in grounded theory methodology and additionally modeled by the works of Stevens (2004) and Loiacano (1989). Following analysis and coding of all responses, emergent codes and major themes developed.

Analysis Stage 1: The survey was closed at the inception of 13 participants. All of the 13 participants completed the on-line survey and eight of the 13 participants completed both the on-line survey and the phone interview. Data was taken from the on-

line survey titled and stored in a Microsoft Word document. The original text format from the on-line survey was maintained throughout the analysis process, including spelling errors, original grammar and punctuation. For ease of recognition, organization and autonomy in analysis a question number was assigned to each question and pursued by a participant number (ex. Q1P1 was participant one's response to question one). Additionally, part II audio recordings were transferred from the digital audio recording device and electronically stored on a locked, password sensitive computer and electronically transferred to a professional transcriptionist. Concluding transcription all audio recorded data was checked for accuracy, titled and stored in a separate Microsoft Word document; originally recorded data was destroyed. After all the raw data was secured each selection was annotated similarly to part I, a question number was assigned to each question and pursued by a participant number (ex. PQ1P1, was phone participants response to phone question one). Following this process participant responses were hand coded for keywords. It was the intention of the investigator to find as many codes as possible without consideration to relevance, as stated by Glaser (2002) in the process of open coding. Consistent with this process *personal notes* were taken and maintained for the purpose of recording thoughts, questions, relationships between interviews, emerging themes, and concepts (Artinian & Giske, 2007). *Personal Notes* were labeled according to each question and stored separately from the raw data. Although the *notes* were not initially considered part of the analysis process they were however referred to and added to within the process.

Analysis Stage 2: Following the initial coding process a second, extensive and reoccurring analysis of the data occurred. During this stage categories of data were

reviewed and gleaned for use and applicability to core themes. If a new phrase better described the theme, or the interpretations changed as more data was synthesized concepts were adjusted to best reflect the core themes or categories of the data. This process allowed for the eventual limiting in coding, which eliminated weak supporting themes. The process moreover supported the development of a table (Appendix H), providing a visual documentation of the progression of raw data, through the process of open coding, selective coding, categorization and proposed final concepts.

Analysis Stage 3: During this concluding stage relationship was drawn among coded themes completed in prior stages to categories and concepts as it related to the emerged core categories. For example fear of physical violence was one category which appeared during the initial process of open coding. As stated by various bodies of literature, this could be seen a valid area of concern for homosexual individuals. Given the negative cultural perceptions among the African American culture toward homosexuality it could be further assumed that instances of physical violence might be a major area of concern for lesbian or gay students in an HBCU environment. Although these assumptions may be drawn from other bodies of research or data, analysis of data reviewed in this study did not conclude fear of physical violence to be of significant concern. The process of categorization, axial coding and emergent core themes revealed other key themes as concerns for students in this environment.

Analysis Stage 4: Concluding themes and coding were transferred into narrative responses as data results and analysis

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter includes a discussion of the qualitative content analysis of data presented regarding the experiences and perceptions of the study participants. The ensuing information will be presented in a format surrounding themes discovered in part I of the study the on-line survey followed by part II the phone interview. For clarity and organization questions will be restated and clearly marked. Themes revealed from each question will be marked as $n=$ pursuant of a number. This number is representative of the total amount of times a theme occurred within total responses for each reflective question and *not* the number of participants providing reflection on a theme as participants may have voiced more than one theme in any given response. Themes for each reflection question are presented in an order of prominence; those obtaining the most responses will be reflected first with less prominent themes following. Supporting participant responses will be displayed in annotated form as previously discussed. Questions will be marked with a Q pursued by P for participant responses (ex. Q1P1 was participant one's response to question one). Likewise phone interview responses are denoted in similar format, PQ representing phone question, followed by P for participant response (ex. PQ1P1, was phone participants response to phone question one). Themes revealed in participant responses are demonstrated in Appendix H in table format. Tables are listed separately in response to data analyzed for part I and part II of the study. Data listed in each table reflects response questions, the unit number of participant responses (the number of times

a theme occurred within a response) and the number of participants responding to each unit.

Online Survey Results

It was the intention of the researcher to address two primary questions (1) What are the experiences and perception of African Americans developing a LG identity; (2) What are the experiences and perceptions of LG African Americans living in a historically black college environment? These questions are primarily addressed in reflection question one of part I and further explored in part II.

Reflection Question 1

Reflection question 1 asked participants to “Describe your experience and perceptions of being lesbian/gay and African American attending a historically black college or university. These experiences and thoughts can include, yet may not be limited to discussion and encounters with family, friends, bystanders, peer, students and university personnel”. Participants responding to this question in the on-line survey primarily focused on peer interaction within the college setting. The majority of the participants stated verbal ridicule (i.e. criticism, verbal gay bashing, judgments) as a common experience in the HBCU setting (n=8). Participant responses that demonstrated this theme include the following.

Q1P7. “I heard the guy shouting "Ay lil mama." Once I didn't answer him, he started verbally gay bashing my best friend. We said nothing back...”

Q1P13. “Being at a HBCU is difficult. There is a lot of talk about going to hell and not being worth anything.”

Q1P3. “ i do see my straight friends judging or otherwise criticizing other people that are gay or lesbian. they dont criticize them directly only behind their backs.”

Although the greater part of the participants responding reported verbal ridicule as a common experience a few participants reported that they felt loved or supported by friends (n=3). One participant shared the following response in support of this theme (Q1P7) “Honestly, it is quite an unique experience. Some individuals are supportive and loving...”

While some participants reported feelings of being loved or supported by friends others reported feelings of distrust toward peer within the student body (n=3). One participant (Q1P10) of the online survey shared “ Its is very hard being out on campus. You really have to watch your back, its hard to know who to trust.” A participant additionally reported experiences of being “picked on” by university staff (n=1); this final statement is supported in the following statement.

Q1P8. “Being a lesbian at an historically black college was tough. Especailly as a female who dresses in young man clothes. University personnel in female dorms seemed to always single me out and pay more attention to me. The girls who dressed like girls and that are feminie have no troubles whether they live there or not. Unlike me, they would make sure they go out of they way to make me sign in and out the sign book. While the girly girls seem to just breeze on by”.

Reflection Question 2

Reflection question 2 asked participants the following: “Reflecting on your previous response, do you feel that these experiences might be different if you attended a predominately white-institution? How or why?” Exploring the perceptions and experiences of lesbian and gay African American students within an HBCU environment against what they believed their experiences might be in a predominately white college environment revealed mixed findings. Several participants reported that they felt that their sexuality would be more accepted in a predominantly white learning institution (n=4), while others provided responses which reflected that there would be no difference in acceptance (n=5) and others were unsure of what to expect (n=5). A sampling of the participant responses are as follows.

Q2P1. “Yes. I feel like an all white environment may be more accepting and open to the idea.”

Q2P2. “That is hard to say . . .”

Q2P3. “um prob not because people are going to be people no matter where you are.”

Phone Interview

Phone Interview Question 1:

“Where there any benefits or draw backs to being an African American lesbian or gay student attending a HBCU”? Participants addressing this question spoke to negative interaction among both peer and staff . Positive themes of resiliency (n=2) arose, as evident in the following response, PQ1P4; “The benefit to it? It's good to be different. Because I mean, there, of course, is an assumption on the college campus and you don't want to be part of that stereotype. You don't want to be like everyone else -- everybody

else. I feel like if you are not afraid to be who you are in one of the harshest environments that you will ever be in then that's great. If you are not afraid to be yourself and show your true colors at a HBCU then you will make it in the rest of the world, no problem.”

Other participants commented on the benefit of observing professional lesbian/gay African Americans instructors (n=2) and feelings of acceptance for individual skill (n=1). One independent respondent reported the opportunity for equal educational (n=1), “They provide me with the same opportunities as any other individual. Gay or straight we are all getting the same education. I don’t see any benefits beyond that. ”

Phone Interview Question 2:

“How would you describe the coming out process within your family (family of origin, extended family ie. grandparents, aunts, uncles)?” Participants willingly shared responses as it related to coming out with their family of origin and to extended family such as grand-parents, aunts, uncles. During the time of the interview several participants had not disclosed to family (n=3). Of the participants responding to this question that had not come out to their families, most feared a loss in family relationship. This statement can be supported in the following participant responses.

PQ2P5. “I have not been able to tell my family. They are very religious and I know that they would not go for that. I fear that I would be kicked out of the family. I am sure that none of them would understand. I have several brothers. I just don’t see them taking it well at all.”

PQ2P6. “Family. I am not out to my family. I don’t want to put the extra pressure on my grandmother. She is old and really all that I have in my life. I just don’t think that she would understand. She is better off not knowing. My family life is already a mess, I just would be making life hard for myself.”

Several participants which reported disclosure to family stated that initial disclosure was difficult, however that acceptance had occurred (n=3), while others reported themes related to loss of relationships with parents (n=2). A participant response which supports the loss of relationship with a parent is as follows:

PQ2P1. “Like we had -- my mom and I had an argument one night and I was just like tired of holding in how I actually felt. Now, I've been told her that I am lesbian. First, she said that it was nasty and I was going to hell and it was wrong, you know, and I was a freak. It was a lot of tension in my household for a long time. Because the tension was so strong, I actually moved to my grandmother's and I stayed with her for two years until I came to college.”

Phone Interview Question 3:

“Coming out/Being out can be stressful, how do you deal with that stress on a day to day basis?” Individuals responding to this question revealed attempts to suppress ideas of stress associated with lesbian and gay lifestyles; “try to forget about it” was a common statement expressed among responding participants (n=6). Demonstrations of these responses are as follows.

PQ3P1. “...I guess, I kind of like smuggle a lot of stuff and just try to forget about it for the time being. I don't really think blogging even helps because sometimes I don't fully

or accurately express myself through blogs so I just say forget about it or at least attempt to forget about it at that certain time and go on with my life.”

PQ3P3. “It was just like people are going to be people regardless and no matter, no matter who you take it to, they're going to do the same actions. It may not be the same actions from them but it's always going to be somebody else. So it's just like pointless. So I didn't really do anything to counter my anger or say anything about it. It was just whatever. I forget about it.”

PQ3P6. “I really try to forget about things. I focus on my school work. I use to hang out, but I don't do that anymore. I just relax and let it go.”

50% of participants responding found friendships (n=4) to be of great importance when addressing feelings of stress. Infused with the appreciation of friends others reported the use of artistic outlets (ie. listening to music, drawing, theater) (n=3), blogging/journaling (n=3), and involvement in religious activity (n=2) of great importance. Demonstrations of statements which support the importance of friendships are as follows: PQ3P2. “I cope through my friends. If something is going wrong or I get unhappy about my mom or she said something, I talk to my friends or art has always been an outlet for me. I paint. I draw. That's my outlet or sometimes I just have to sit down and just think things through or pray about it, you know, even though I am gay. A lot of people think that just because we're gay we aren't religious. I'm still religious.”

PQ3P5. “I hang around friends that accept me. I attend a church which accepts me. I try to participate in as many activities as I can which displays my talent. Displaying my talent. Dancing, developing plays etc. really makes me feel good. And it provides an opportunity for others to see other parts of me outside of being gay. I really enjoy.”

PQ3P8. “Stressed. When I get stressed I hang with friends, go out or go shopping.”

Phone Interview Question 4:

“Why did you participate in this study? What were you hoping to gain or contribute by participating”? Half of all participants responding to this question expressed a sense of responsibility to promote understanding for those in the community toward lesbian and gay issues (n=4).

PQ4P1 “I hope to at least give some form of clarity with people, you know. I have friends that live across the United States where there are HBCUs and they have concerns about what actually goes on with HBCU campus with lesbian and gay.”

PQ4P3. “I was like well, we'll see. And I read it and it was like, oh, wow. I would be able to help people see what is going on in black schools and gay and lesbian community.”

PQ4P6. “I wanted to let the community know that all gay people are not the same. We are more than what statistics make us out to be. We are smart, love others, and are God fearing, hard workers.”

Others responding stated to have felt drawn to the study and wanted to be a part of something (n=3) while others expressed a desire to provide a voice on behalf of other lesbian or gay individuals (n=2).

Summary

To summarize the findings from this study, participants' narratives were examined for common themes and expressed in groupings which demonstrated the most

prominent and proceeding themes. Examples of participant responses which supported themes were used to support the analysis of participants' data. All responses from the participants are provided in Appendix H.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Several authors acknowledge the need for additional exploration into gay identity development among racial and ethnic groups; specifically, into the aspects of how the dimensions of sexual, racial, cultural identity and environmental factors intersect and overlap. (Bourgeois & Bowen, 2001, Bryan, D'Andrea, Gaughen & Sahu, 1998, Chan, 1989, 1995, Cogdal, Londono-McConnell & Lease, 1996, Garcia, 1998, Loiacano, 1989; Rankin, 2006, Stevens, 2004). This study attempted to explore the experiences and perceptions of African Americans with consideration of race, culture and environment in conjunction to homosexual identity development. This chapter will discuss findings from the attempted study.

Results

Online Survey

Participants sharing their experience and perceptions of being lesbian/gay and African American attending a historically black college or university revealed that they found the environment to be verbally hostile and none accepting of their lifestyle. Several respondents provided statements related to being less valued and less respected than their heterosexual counterparts. These findings were not surprising as various bodies of research speaks to the African American culture as being less accepting of homosexuality

due to variables of education, faith, economic status, gender, age and ideas of masculinity (Fullilove & Fullilove, 1999; Kennamer et al., 2000; Lemelle & Battle, 2004; Lewis, 2003; Negy & Eisenman, 2005, & Ward, 2005). A few participants did speak to the development of close relationships within the HBCU environment and one divulged the existence of an unofficial homosexual brother hood of sorts which supported their homosexual lifestyle; these anomalies might support a growing tolerance and understanding within the African American culture or it may signify a subcultures approach to addressing the need for physical and emotional support within the majority community.

The hostile feeling associated with the HBCU environment toward homosexuality promoted several students to limit disclosure only to those who were considered close friends. Those who had not revealed their sexually identity to family appeared to have been even less likely to have disclosed to close friends. Although limited disclosure is not uncommon among various cultural groups due to violence, discrimination, harassment and intolerance of homosexuality by university students (Bourgeois & Bowen, 2001, Bryan, D'Andrea, Gaughen & Sahu, 1998, Chan, 1989, 1995, Cogdal, Londono-McConnell & Lease, 1996, Garcia, 1998, Rankin, 2006, Stevens, 2004) consequences of limited disclosure within the African American culture have been linked to decreased sexual safety and associated with the spread of HIV. Rankin (2004) found people of color to be (more) likely to conceal their sexual identity to avoid harassment. This stigma consciousness behavior is closely associated with emotional distress and has even been more negatively referred to as "down low" behavior when referring to African American males. Down low has been used to describe males who have sex with other males, but do

not self identify as homosexual (Battle & Lemelle, 2002; Harper, Lewis, 2003; Jernewall & Zea, 2004).

An exploration into the perceptions and experiences of participant views regarding lesbian/gay acceptance within a predominately white college setting revealed minimal variability. Themed responses to this question divulged that several participants felt that things would be better (less negative), due to the existence of cultural diversity within a predominately white institution. Others responded that there would be no difference (equally as negative) in the level of homophobia displayed at predominately white institutions due to social conditioning; inferring that homophobia is consistent across cultures. Yet equal in the amount of responses, others had no clear opinion (did not know or had no opinion). Due to the close proximity of the number of responses provided across themes these findings yielded insignificant results.

Phone Interview

Due to acts of hostility and stigmatization lesbian and gay African American students reported minimal benefits in the mono-cultural environment of a HBCU. Lesbian and gay students living in the environment found the culture to be judgmental and critical of their lifestyle. Several respondents articulated that culture, religious values and ignorance were contributing factors to homophobic behaviors on campus. However those who did perceive advantages or benefits sited the support of friends, an appreciation for individuality, modeling of homosexual professionals who served as either faculty or staff to the university and promotion of resiliency. Due to the limited

amount of research conducted in this specific setting this data is not compared with research findings in like settings.

Consistent with current research on homosexual identity development the process of coming out to family (family of origin and extended family) was similarly difficult for African American students attending an HBCU ((Gortmaker & Brown, 2006, Rankin, 1997, Rhodes, 2004, Stevens, 2004). Results of these reports did not reveal any significant differences between African American students and those in current research. Respondents shared instances of severed relationships with both parents and extended family members such as aunts and uncles. Several respondents stated that initial exposure of their sexuality to family caused conflict, tension and awkwardness however that family members “came around” to acceptance. Additionally supported in current research several participants had chosen not to come out to family due to fear of rejection and disappointment. Students stating that they had not come out to family sited lack of understanding, religious values and fear for the loss of relationship as rational for not disclosing to family. Although student rational for not coming out to family maybe arguably more profound in the African American culture it was not found in this study to be dissimilar to what other cultural groups experience in the coming out process.

Data collected in this area did however reveal that a high percentage of respondents found refuge and acceptance among grandparents. Several respondents stated to have gone to live with grandparents after parental relationships where severed or found support from grandparents when parent where unwilling. It additionally appeared that respondents who had not come out to family where less likely to feel comfortable in the HBCU environment, limiting their ability to trust or come out to others.

Lesbian and gay individuals are cited in research to suffer from increased levels of emotional distress often coined in research as *gay related stress*. This emotional pressure coincides with internal dissatisfaction and the external fear of violence, harassment and discrimination associated with homosexuality (Harper, Jernewall, & Zea, 2004; Lewis, Derlega, Griffen, & Krowinski, 2003; Lewis, Derlega, Clarke, & Kuang, 2006; Rosario, Rotheram-Borus, & Reid, 1996; Rosario, Schrimshaw, Hunter, & Gwadz, 2002). Responses provided by participants on how they address stress day to day support these prior findings. Participants spoke to emotional distress when interacting with family, peer and university staff. Responses spoke to emotions of being undervalued, oppressed and marginalized both within the college environment and among family members. Coping strategies stated by students were limited to support of close friends, parents, grandparents and artistic outlets. Use of neither community nor university programming, counseling, nor support groups were mentioned as venues of stress relief by respondents. These limited outlets provide evidence to aforementioned research which state that gay related stress can impede behavioral actions and social interactions. Social constraints enact barriers to communication outlets and access to desired services and supports. Individuals who are alienated from or perceive to be alienated from social outlets and supports have limited opportunities to address or normalize fears and seek comfort. This lack of mental health maintenance has been associated with negative outcomes in both physical and psychological well being in LG persons (Gortmaker & Brown, 2006; Lewis et al., 2006).

In conclusion of the survey participants were asked why they wanted to participate in the study. Participant stated that rational for participation included a

desired to promote understanding, a desire to provide a voice for other lesbian and gay individuals and to connect to a cause. In addressing this question participants demonstrated placement in one of Cass (1979) final three stages of homosexual identity development; stage 4, identity acceptance, the embracing of homosexual identity; stage 5, identity pride; experiencing of loyalty and satisfaction in homosexual identity and stage 6, identity synthesis, a homosexual lifestyle is developed, the conclusion of self identification occurs and understanding that this is but one side of personal charter.

Identity Development

There are several areas which the results of this study support the simultaneous impact of culture, race and environment on the progression of racial and sexual identity development among participants. Because these instances were so intertwined it is difficult to note which at any particular time had a greater influence or where one influence began and ended. In reviewing the Cross (1971) model of African American identity development each stage of identity development was encountered by a participant in the study. Although Cross originally developed his model with the idea that stage progression occurred in a linear fashion, increased research revealed that individuals actually progress through stages in a variety of patterns which are evident in this study. Individuals supporting presence in the pre-encounter stages provided statements which supported the devaluation of African American values toward homosexuality to be related to lack of education and personal interaction. Those in the encounter stage were faced with challenges (and critical incidents) of verbal discrimination, hostility, oppression and rejection (i.e. loss of friends and family members) associated with the homosexual lifestyle. These challenges prompted several respondents to reevaluate

personal identity or search for new ones; some became stuck, unsure of what to do, some remained hidden only disclosing to a select few within the environment while others remained hidden within the environment only disclosing to close family and friends outside of the college environment. The very enrollment of participants in to a HBCU signifies a desired immersion into the African American culture and experiences as the foundation and values of the institution are grounded in historical cultural facts and struggles. Although in this context whites are not denigrated, a honoring of culture and traditions for the race is valued. While participants were not questioned on rational of attendance to an HBCU several spoke to the benefits of role models, appreciation, and resilience in attending these institutions. These statements speak to the stage of internalization as in this stage the person begins to incorporate a positive self concept, a positive level of blackness omitting the denigration of white culture. Each participant demonstrated what is believed to be initial encounter with the final stage of development, internalized commitment as each stated that they desired to share information, provide understanding and a voice to LG individuals, demonstrating a desire to bring about social change and to solve a problem. It is evident that the racial makeup of each individual and the cultural influences of the African American environment had an impact on each respondent's ability to navigate each development stage. Individuals became stagnant in some stages due to both the environment (hostile) and the culture (non-accepting); while several demonstrated aspects of resiliency through participation in the study and the development of friendships within the environment.

Similar to Cross (1971) stages of African American development, Cass (1979) developed six stages of homosexual identity development. Cass stages include: (1)

identity confusion, the questioning of one's attraction to the same sex; (2) identity comparison, one begins to look at the differences between self and non-homosexuals; (3) identity tolerance, one begins to make a commitment to self identification of homosexuality and begins to seek social support; (4) identity acceptance, the embracing of homosexual identity; (5) identity pride; experiencing of loyalty and satisfaction in homosexual identity and (6) identity synthesis, a homosexual lifestyle is developed, the conclusion of self identification occurs and understanding that this is but one side of personal character. Participation criteria established for this study determined that participants had completed the initial stage of the Cass (1979) model. Differences discussed within the study solely focused on treatment and acceptance variability among heterosexuals and homosexuals in the college environment. Participants appeared to seek and develop social support through the development of friendships. Several cited the importance of friendships in coping with daily stress in the college environment. Pride and identity synthesis, two of the final stages of homosexual identity development according to Cass (1979) were demonstrated by respondents in congruence with the racial identity stages of internalization, internalized-commitment, demonstrated via study participation and self identification as homosexual.

College Counseling Implications

Colleges are settings for which the leaders of society are developed. Yet this is the same setting where homosexual students experience challenges which impede adjustment, development, physical and emotional safety. University counseling centers can be a foundational force in developing and implementing programs for lesbian and gay students. Counselors maintain the capability to be what literature defines as

“heterosexual allies” by providing students and university administration with outreach and “social-change-oriented” activities. These activities can include advising to LG student organizations, the development and implementation of educational programming to enhance understanding LG concerns, assistance in the development of procedures and policy and engagement in advocacy which address LG issues (Anderson, Bullard, Croteau, DiStefano, Kamp-Kokesch, 2000).

Counselors participating in work with LG students are cautioned to possess an understanding of heterosexual ally development. Understanding of the developmental undertaking will assist in the normalization of thoughts, feels and actions; and moreover offset emotions of confusion and anxiety associated with working with LG students. Sullivan (1995) presented a basic model of heterosexual ally development which included movement from naïveté about sexual orientation to acceptance of heterosexual status, followed by conflict or resistance and concluding with redefinition and internalization of oneself as heterosexual ally. Chojnacki and Gelberg (1995) additionally present a six stage model of ally development to include awareness, ambivalence, empowerment, activism, pride, and integration. Each model takes into account the need for personal and professional development and address the parallel of coming out for both the counselor and the client. College counselors addressing the ally development phase in an HBCU setting will have to consider the impact of the culture and traditions of the environment. Like students counselors may need to seek assistance to address these concerns. Counselors may choose to gain support from community gay/straight associations, PFLAG chapters, other area college counselors, or through professional affiliations.

In conjunction to understanding the developmental process of being an ally for LG students, counselor must additionally possess a basic understanding of school, local and state policy and law regarding issues of harassment and discrimination as it relates to LG issues. They should also obtain training in ethical policy and standards as it relates to counselors and circumstances of diversity, possess in understanding of sexual identity development and seek professional development on intervention and training to enhance knowledge and understanding of issues facing LG individuals. These combined efforts will help to ensure that services rendered are provided in an efficient and ethical manner.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the limitations within a small sample size information collected must be deemed exploratory and of limited generalizability (Loiacano, 1989). Existing research in the area of homosexual identity development in university settings have focused primarily on gay white males in predominately white institutions. In the current study participants were predominately female, self identifying as lesbian and attending a historically black college.

Implications for Further Research

This study focused on lesbian and gay sexual identity development of African Americans with in an HBCU setting however much can be learned about African American experiences with in predominately white institutions as there is very limited research in this area. Additionally future exploration into the impact of African American culture on initial awareness of same sex feelings and experiences of coming out to oneself among African Americans. A replication of this study is suggested in an expanded, culturally inclusive and potentially longitudinal process. This would allow for

variations, changes and development in experiences and perceptions among various students as they transition from the college setting into society.

Summary

This chapter includes a discussion of the research study and implications that may be drawn from the findings. Limitations and implications for further research are discussed. Suggestions for future research include a more detailed look into the impact of culture on lesbian and gay African Americans initial awareness of same sex feelings and experiences of coming out to oneself; a greater sample size, a longitudinal aspect and an expansion of the study to predominately white institution, and other cultures are also suggested.

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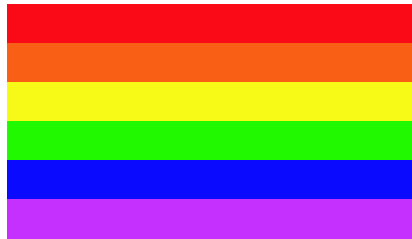
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Flyer

Understanding Lesbian & Gay development among African Americans within a HBCU Environment



Currently there is limited research focusing on the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African Americans who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Yulanda Tyre is conducting a study to more fully understand these perceptions and experiences. The results of this study will be used to help increase understanding and possibly influence the development of services and programs on college campuses. To participate in this study you must be 19 years old or older and self identify as African American and lesbian or gay.

To take part in this study or to learn more go to the following web address
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=t0f0M8qmFMmamwq37HjjaO_3d_3d

Participation takes about 30 minutes. No identifying information will be collected and, therefore, participation is anonymous. This opportunity ends 9/22/08; so click on the web link today.

This study is a part of a dissertation requirement for doctoral candidacy in the area of Counseling Leadership at Auburn University. The Auburn University Human Subjects Committee has reviewed and approved this study as adequately safeguarding participants' confidentiality, rights, welfare, and civil liberties. Any concerns or questions regarding your rights as a participant in the study can be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, and the principle investigator, as listed below. Thank you for your time and consideration. It is with people like you that this important study can be effectively carried out.

Yulanda Tyre, LPC, NCC, Primary Investigator/ Doctoral Candidate
Jamie S. Carney, PhD, Dissertation Chair/Professor
Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psych., &
School Psychology, Rehabilitation & Special Education , 2084 Haley Center
tyreyul@auburn.edu carnejs@auburn.edu

APPENDIX B

INFORMATIONAL CONSENT FORM I

Understanding African American Lesbian and Gay Identity Development within a Historically Black College Environment

You are invited to participate in a research project designed to examine the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African Americans attending a historically black college or university (HBCU). Yulanda Tyre is conducting the study, under the supervision of Dr. Jamie S. Carney, Committee Chair and Professor in Auburn University's Department of Counselor Education, School Psychology, and Counseling Psychology.

The criteria to participate in this study entail that you are 19 years or older, self-identify as lesbian or gay, African American and have attended a HBCU institution for a minimum of one semester or quarter. The ensuing survey includes four demographic and two qualitative questions. The completion of this survey is estimated to take approximately 30 minutes. Participation of this survey can be a one time commitment for which you will not be asked for any further information once you have submitted your responses. However an option to provide additional information regarding your responses will be presented at the end of this questionnaire.

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. The survey website does not collect the URL or the email address of participants. You may stop taking the survey at any time, however, once you submit your anonymous information you cannot withdraw your data later since there will be no way to identify individual information.

Information collected in this study will be used to complete a dissertation, and may be published in a professional journal or presented at professional conferences. There is a minimal risk associated with participation in this study. Emotional discomfort and increased awareness may occur regarding the coming out process. Although, they are not beyond what participants are likely to experience on a daily basis. Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or your attending university. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: Yulanda Tyre, tyreyul@auburn.edu, or my faculty advisor Dr. Jamie Carney, through the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology, 2084 Haley Center, Auburn University, Auburn, AL 36849, (334) 844-5160, carnejs@auburn.edu or the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

COMPLETION OF THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL SERVE AS CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS SURVEY

APPENDIX C

INFORMATIONAL CONSENT FORM II

Understanding African American Lesbian and Gay Identity Development within a Historically Black College Environment

You are invited to provide additional information regarding your experiences and perceptions of being a self identified African American, lesbian or gay individual who has lived on the campus of a HBCU through telephone interview.

If you are willing to participate you are asked to provide your first name or a pseudonym, a phone number and 5 times and dates for which you consent to be contacted for the phone interview in the designated space provided. You will be contacted based on these dates and times, if you cannot be contacted based on your first identified time your additional dates and times will be used. You will not be contacted after the 5th time even if the phone interview has not been conducted.

The phone interview will be taped and transcribed in an effort to maintain accuracy. The estimated time of completion is expected to be 45-60 minutes. Completion of the phone interview will be a onetime commitment. All contact information will be destroyed after the completion of the interview or if you are unable to be contacted after the 5th contact time. All recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process.

Information collected through your participation in this study will be used to complete a dissertation, which may be published in a professional journal, and may be presented at professional conferences.

There is a minimal risk associated with participation in this study. Emotional discomfort and increased awareness may occur regarding the coming out process. Although, they are not beyond what participants are likely to experience on a daily basis. You may decline participation of the phone interview at any time during the interview process. Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or your attending university.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: Yulanda Tyre, tyreyul@auburn.edu, or my faculty advisor Dr. Jamie Carney, through the Department of Counselor Education, Counseling Psychology, and School Psychology, 2084 Haley Center, Auburn University, Auburn, AL 36849, (334) 844-5160, carnejs@auburn.edu or the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu .

LEAVING YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION WILL SERVE AS CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SECOND PHASE OF THE SURVEY.

APPENDIX D

Phase II: Phone Interview

Presenting Phone Script

Hello Caller:

I am contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African American college students attending HBCU institutions. Let me go over some general information about the study and then we can begin the interview.

I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on responses from the first phase of this study. You are asked to once again consider your experiences and provide some additional information, clarification, or expansion on the issues identified in the first phase. Please realize you can refuse to answer any individual question or provide perspectives or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes and taped to insure accuracy in data collection and analysis. Information obtained during this second phase of the study will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview is completed and all recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process.

If you have any questions, or concerns regarding this study after we complete the interview please feel free to contact me Yulanda Tyre at: tyreyul@auburn.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Jamie Carney, at carnejs@auburn.edu.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

APPENDIX E

Demographic Questions

- Are you 19 years of age or older? (*forced-choice yes/no response format*)
- Do you self identify as lesbian or gay? (*forced-choice yes/no response format*)
- Do you self identify your ethnicity as African American? (*forced-choice yes/no response format*)
- Do you currently live or have you lived in a Historically Black College or University for at least one semester/quarter with in the last academic year? (*forced-choice yes/no response format*)

If a “yes” response is provided to all of the four questions, the participant will continue with the reflection questions. If the participant provides a response of “no” to one or more items, they will be asked to confirm the responses. If the “no” response stands they will be thanked for their time and participation. The participants will be informed that they will not be asked any further questions due to incompatibility with the research criteria.

APPENDIX F

Phase I: Reflection Questions

As you respond to the questions, please reflect on your experiences and thoughts as it relates to being lesbian or gay African American while attending a HBCU.

1. Describe your experience and perceptions of being lesbian/gay and African American attending a HBCU; these experiences and thoughts can include, yet may not be limited to discussions and encounters with family, friends, by standers, peer, students and university personnel.
2. Reflecting on your previous response, do you feel that these experiences might be different if you attended a predominately white- institution? How or why?

APPENDIX G

Phone Interview Questions

1. Where there any benefits or draw backs to being an African American lesbian or gay student attending a HBCU?
2. How would you describe the coming out process within your family (family of origin, extended family ie. grandparents, aunts, uncles)?
3. Coming out/Being out can be stressful; how do you deal with that stress on a day to day basis?
4. Why did you participate in this study? What where you hoping to gain or contribute by participating?

APPENDIX H

TABLES

Themes Identified by Research Questions

On-line Survey Question I & II

Table 1

Experiences/Perceptions on Campus

Reflection Question	Response Units*	Participants**
Question 1: A.A. L/G at a HBCU		
(Messages from Peer)		
Loved/Supported	3	3
Ridiculed Directly/In directly	9	7
Felt picked on (non-verbal)	1	1
Distrust	3	3
Question 2: Acceptance		
More Accepted	4	4
No Difference	5	5
Uncertain	5	5

APPENDIX H

TABLES

Themes Identified by Research Questions

Phone Interview Identified Themes

Table 2

Phone Interview

<u>Reflection Question</u>	<u>Response Units</u>	<u>Participants</u>
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Question 1: Drawbacks & Benefits to HBCU's

Resiliency	2	2
Observation of Professionals	2	2
Feeling of Acceptance (skill)	1	1
Equal opportunity for Education	1	1
No significant drawback/benefit	2	2

Question 2: Coming Out to Family

Not Disclosed	3	3
Relationship w/Parent		
Initially Hard Moved to Acceptance	3	3
Loss of Relationship w/parent	2	2

Table 2 *Continued*

Phone Interview

<u>Reflection Question</u>	<u>Response Units</u>	<u>Participants</u>
Question 3: Addressing Stress		
Suppression (forget about it)	6	6
Support of Friends	4	4
Religion	2	2
(Blog) On line Journaling	3	3
Artistic outlets/ (music, painting, acting)	3	3
Question 4: Study Participation		
Promote Understanding/Info	4	4
Provide a Voice	2	2
Desire to be a part of something/	3	3

**Response Units* refers to the number of content units associated with each theme in the participants' responses. More than one response unit could have come from a participant's response to one reflection question.

**The number under *Participants* represents the number of participants in the sample that responded with messages associated with each theme.

APPENDIX I

Phase I Participant Responses

On-line Survey Response: Reflective Question One

Describe your experience and perceptions of being lesbian/gay and African American attending a historically black college or university. These experiences and thoughts can include, yet may not be limited to discussion and encounters with family, friends, by standers, peer, students and university personnel.

- Q1P1. I haven't experienced any personal discriminations; however, I have witnessed the reception the gay community on campus receives. Observing from an outside point of view, because none of my peers know my orientation, I've noticed that the LGBT community on campus stick together even though they (we) are frowned upon and ridiculed.
- Q1P2. Well I can say that being on a HBCU campus I see there are more phobia's on campus that at a all white campus. I feel as though I have to hide who I am on campus. I dont feel as though I can just go and walk around with my girlfriend and still be seen as the person I really am. I know that it would hender me in many ways because of me just being gay.
- Q1P3. Being an lesbian at an HBCU, has not been an bad nor a good experience.Maybe because I am originally from the South, I can fit in

most crowds at my university. I know alot of people so life as a lesbian at a hbcu is not hard for me at all. But! i do see my straight friends judging or otherwise critizing other people that are gay or lesbian. they dont criticize them directely only behind their backs. although my friends are the ones making the jokes at other gay people. It affects me because i am apart of the same Lesbian or Gay community...

- Q1P4. Being gay at an hbcu is great. its all about your personality and maturity level. I enjoyed the hbcu life and met hosts of great people. The people and friends that I gained were both gay and straight. I can truly say I found more straight male friends than gay friends.
- Q1P5. My experience being a lesbian at a historically black college been very hard. people look at you different, not even caring about who you are or how smart your are. historically black college to me is very hard on the students who are gay or a lesbian. just because i am a lesbian and i come out and tell my peers they will look at me different and have something to say. being a lesbian is very hard at a historically black college.
- Q1P6. My experience being lesbian at an hbcu hasn't been bad at all. Coming in as a freshman, I didn't know exactly what I was. After a few years at the university, I realized everyone has their own lifestyle & not one person was going to be identical. I sat down & thought about it & I discovered that I was lesbian. I never really had a true feeling for a male. Just the feeling of a woman made me feel some type of way. But as far as my family, my mom & I had it out with each other. Still to this day my family thinks that I'm into males. So I just let them think that way. As for my friends I've lost 1 friend but I could careless. All the other friends stuck around.

Q1P7. Honestly, it is quite an unique experience. Some individuals are supportive and loving while others "throw the rock and hide their hands." Such statement meaning, they often act as if they are okay with my lesbianism, but in actuality, they give off a discomforting vibe around me. It is obvious in some people, while in others, it may take a while to discern such deeply rooted phobia. On the other hand, some people aren't accepting at all. I remember this one time during freshman year (I'm a junior now.), my best friend and I were walking pass one of the male dorms. I, being a feminine female, was shouted at with the typical harassing lines, "Ay lil mama." as if I'm a size two, while it is clear that I'm plus size or "Ay shawty." My best friend is a masculine female, one who dress like a guy and is identified as the dominant female, who maybe referred to as a stud or dom. Well, her and I were delving into a conversation about my freshly permed and washed hair when I heard the guy shouting "Ay lil mama." Once I didn't answer him, he started verbally gay bashing my best friend. We said nothing back; we merely continued to walk up the street to the cafeteria. It is agonizing to experience the denial or neglect from a parent who is not accepting of your lesbianism. I remember coming out to my mother. I remember the way she looked at me with disgusted. She told me I was nasty, and she told me I was a freak. It hurt my soul. Such torment of the heart caused me to shut people out slowly but surely. A few years passed, and we had another conversation about my lesbianism. I was surprise to hear her say that she accepted me for who I am. That was last summer. But it felt like cancer in remission to hear her go back on her word one day during this summer while she was being noseay as I texted. I remember her asking me what was so funny as I laughed at a text from a potential female lover. I didn't reply; I simply gave her a look as if I were saying, "Don't ask me that." She replied, "I don't want to know. It might blow my ears off." Some people may say that meant nothing. However, it meant a lot to me. You see, when you already know your parent has a problem with your sexuality, no matter how hard

they attempt to cover up their phobia, it still seeks through like a deadly colorless gas. I have felt like the outcast of my family every since my lesbianism was no longer a secret. That was approximately four or five years about. They don't literally attack me, but I've heard the horrendous things they've had to say about me. It has caused me to exclude myself from their presences. I'm not often around them. When I am, I barely utter ten sentences at times. It created a strong anguish feeling within to know the unpleasant comments they've made. So, I tend to shelter myself by not including myself directly.

- Q1P8. Being a lesbian at an historically black college was tough. Especailly as a female who dresses in young man clothes. University personnel in female dorms seemed to always single me out and pay more attention to me. The girls who dressed like girls and that are feminie have no troubles whether they live there or not. Unlike me, they would make sure they go out of they way to make me sign in and out the sign book. While the girly girls seem to just breeze on by.
- Q1P9. From my perception we are the standouts on capmus. We make heads turn n people wonder. Girls wonder if studs are guys and dudes critcize gay boys for bein feminine. Its funny though how girls befriend gays and the dudes befriend the masculine girls(studs).
- Q1P10. It is very hard being out on campus. You really have to watch your back, its hard to know who to trust. Guys are ok in the dorm I live in this semester. I have a good roommate. His brother is gay. Last semester life on campus was hard. I would not wish that dorm on anybody.

- Q1P11. I hate being here. People are so mean. They say so many mean things. Girls say they are your friends and then they turn their backs on you. Why does everybody think that you want to sleep with them. I have a girlfriend back at home. Friendship would be nice.
- Q1P12. I have made lots of friends on campus this semester, so right now things seem to be ok. Dorm monitors seem and resident hall managers seem to despise me. I know that they talk about me when I pass by. I can just feel it. I think you just have to be careful of who you tell and how you carry yourself.
- Q1P13. They say what does not kill you makes you stronger and I am not dead yet. However getting away at times would be a dream. Being at a HBCU is difficult. There is a lot of talk about going to hell and not being worth anything. However I always wanted to go here. I am going to tuff it out.

Phase I Participant Responses

On-line Survey Response: Reflective Question Two

Reflecting on your previous response, do you feel that these experiences might be different if you attended a predominately white-institution?

- Q2P1. Yes. I feel like an all white environment may be more accepting and open to the idea.
- Q2P2. That is hard to say . . .
- Q2P3. um prob not because people are going to be people no matter where you are.
- Q2P4. I think as long as you have the right attitude and personality you can go anywhere in the world and advance both achedemically and socially.
- Q2P5. well in a white institution i think it might be more different because everyone that attend there mind there own business. base on my experiences yes i feel like it might be more accepted if i attended a white-institution.

- Q2P6. I don't think so because I'm pretty sure there are others the same as me who attend that university too. There are gays & lesbians every you go. Even hasbians. So no I don't think so.
- Q2P7. Honestly, I have no clue. Maybe people are a little more accepting predominately white-institution.
- Q2P8. Nope i feel my experience will be the same just because they do not see what they think they should see!
- Q2P9. IDK da only wayto find out is to go
- Q2P10. I don't know, I have been to a few white clubs and it is hard to read them
- Q2P11. Honestly-I don't think it matters. People hate gays where ever you go. We just
have to deal with it.
- Q2P12. I think it might be better. More diversity, maybe not so much hate
- Q2P13. Not sure....

APPENDIX J
Phase II Participant Responses
Phone Interviews

INTERVIEW #1 – PIP1

A Hello.

Q XXXXXX?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Hey, this is Yolanda Tyre.

A Okay.

Q How are you?

A I'm fine.

Q Are you available for talking now?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q Okay. You just sound so sleepy. Okay. Well, my name is Yolanda Tyre. I am a student at Auburn University. However, I do work at Alabama State University in the

counseling center. So thank you for, you know, posting and allowing me the opportunity to give you a call. And let me apologize for not calling you your first two option days because I was sick and my voice was kind of groggy. I didn't think we would be able to have a successful discussion during that time?

A Okay.

Q Okay. So I have a little statement that I have to read and I will try to go through it fast. But, of course, I'm contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study, examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. Let me go over some general information about the study and then we can begin the interview. I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on responses from the first phase of the study. You are asked to, once again, consider your experiences and provide some additional information, clarification or expansion on the issues identified in the first phase, those first two questions. Please realize that you can refuse to answer any individual question or provide perspectives or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the question. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes. I don't see it taking us that long and it is being taped to ensure accuracy in data collection and analysis. Information obtained during this second phase of the study will remain anonymous.

Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after the interview is completed and the recorded data will be destroyed as well. Do you have any questions before we get started?

A No, ma'am.

Q Okay. Well, my first question is going to be the first question that was in the survey. So how has your experience been being on an HBCU campus and, you know, being considered lesbian or self-identifying as lesbian?

A It has been, like I said in the survey, a unique one. I have experienced -- at one time I remember so well, my friend and I were walking down the street and these guys started shouting stuff to us -- well, directly to her but to me as well -- because we were lesbians. And it kind of made me feel embarrassed for her. It made me feel, you know, unsafe because I didn't know whether or not they were going to attack us or what was going to happen. That's like the biggest thing that I have experienced. It used to be considered as gay bashing. As far as anybody else, I know like some people they treat you differently once they find out that you are gay or lesbian. They are kind of distant from you as if you may attempt something on them, I guess. I was part of this group or whatever and I feel as if some of the people kind of sort of -- well, like one person --

became kind of distant once it was known or once she found out that I am lesbian, it seems like that she has that phobia that many people have --

Q Yeah.

A -- for gay and lesbians.

Q You talked a little bit about strangers and you talked a little about friends because you said it was part of a group, you know, friends or associates. How has it been within your family?

A Well, with my family each day is something new. Everyday you think that you are making progress or they are accepting you but it seems like it's always yet another issue that comes up. I know my mom -- just recently I thought I had made progress with her. I thought she had come to terms with it. But once I spoke to my sister not too long ago I found that that she really hasn't. Like we had -- my mom and I had an argument one night and I was just like tired of holding in how I actually felt. Now, I've been told her that I am lesbian. First, she said that it was nasty and I was going to hell and it was wrong, you know, and I was a freak. It was a lot of tension in my household for a long time. Because the tension was so strong, I actually moved to my grandmother's and I stayed with her for two years until I came to college. Once I came to college, my

grandmother died, which means I had to go back home. First it was okay as long as she didn't see a need or she didn't have an opportunity to bring up the fact that I am gay. Once she noticed that, you know, nothing had changed, it was little comments made. It does hurt to see that you think you are making a progression, but it's not. Just recently once we had the argument, I actually said to her that I was hurting about her not accepting who I am or what's a part of me. She told me that she did but as she really doesn't because once I spoke with my sister about something totally different. She just told me that my mom was saying stuff about me and my lesbianism and it hurt once again and to think that you are making progression with your family and they always renege on me. It's just like my sister in the conversation, she act as if -- she said, I don't have a problem with you being gay, but I have a problem with you being gay. I was like how can you say that, either you do or you don't. It made me question everybody. Now, a lot of times my family they said I accept you for who you are and I love you but they always tend to -- you know, behind my back I hear something or it's, you know, Shannon this or that.

Q Wow. Thank you for sharing that. So, Shannon, tell me something about what you do to try to keep yourself mentally healthy. What do you do for relieving stress or coping skills to kind of work your way through this?

A I usually write blogs. The blog is like a new journal on the Internet and you actually have sites where you can write blogs for gays. You can choose for them to be private or open. It's actually a gay/lesbian website that you can write blogs on. So most of the times I write blogs on those sites and a select few of my friends I share with but in actuality, it's not -- I guess, I kind of like smuggle a lot of stuff and just try to forget about it for the time being. I don't really think blogging even helps because sometimes I don't fully or accurately express myself through blogs so I just say forget about it or at least attempt to forget about it at that certain time and go on with my life.

Q Do you think that having a GLBT group on campus might be helpful to you or maybe to any of your other friends that may identify as gay or lesbian?

A Yes, it can be helpful.

Q Could be helpful. What other things do you think would be helpful, would be the most impactful?

A I'm not sure because the one problem that I would have with any group is being able to come there and be open about it and feel safe about it. Maybe if it was a specific individual counseling session that is held or something for gays and lesbians. I think that could work. I would actually go to an individual counseling session for gays and lesbians

because I think I could trust me and whomever I am talking to other than, you know, a group. It'll be in the group and you are expressing some of the same things but when it comes to your deepest feelings, I believe that maybe an individual session would work.

Q Would be better. I understand that. I do. Hey, something interesting you said. You said that your mom was not as accepting or it's difficult to live with her. So you have the opportunity to go stay with your grandmother who, you know, was from an older generation; however, you're saying that she was more understanding?

A Yeah, my uncle is actually gay.

Q Oh, okay.

A Accept him very well. You know, for years we didn't even know he was gay but she would always -- I can remember her taking him in her room and they would say nobody come in the room. They would stay in there for hours.

Q Oh, wow.

A Yeah, we didn't know what went on. We used to always try to guess and, you know, say names because thought they were talking about females and one night he finally just told us, you know. And for so many years what we thought was really wasn't. So she was accepting because of the simple fact that her son was gay. I thought, like, that

was best place for me to live because I could be free or be who I am. I don't have to hide anything or feel as though I have to hide anything.

Q So did you have the opportunity to sit with your grandmother for hours and discuss how you felt and, you know?

A No, I didn't have the opportunity but she always would say in the general conversation that she will always love us no matter what.

Q Right.

A It was her way of telling us that it was okay, you know.

Q So you felt comfortable and free staying with her?

A Yes.

Q Awesome. Have you had any positive interaction on the HBCU campus? Do you think that there's something special or different or worse about, you know, being African-American and, you know, being gay or lesbian on an HBCU campus? And I can elaborate a little bit. It might have been a redundant question or kind of wordy. You know statistically or research wise, it is stated that African-Americans are more homophobic, not as understanding due to masculinity or religious reasoning, you know,

cultural issues, a variety of things. You know, I know you are not within your family but you are still on a campus, you know, there's predominantly African-American. Do you see any pros or cons when you are thinking about -- when you consider being out on campus?

A Well, the problems I think besides the incident during my freshman year. I think - has a way it's easier or something to be identified as lesbian on campus for females. I think that's a good thing. I haven't encountered or, you know, I haven't seen anyone else being called -- names or anything as a lesbian. The comments of the guys -- I heard a lot of people call them derogatory names. That's kind of bad, you know.

Q Definitely.

A I had a lot of them call and say out loud: Look at that faggot or this faggot did this, this faggot did that or this sissy this or this sissy that. I can tell that it makes them uncomfortable because I do have gay friends, you know. They are not going to express it, but I know that it makes them feel uncomfortable. One of my friend's friend said the first few days of school that they had had an activity where they had to say everyone's name in the class that they remembered and this one guy told him, Don't say my name or whatever. And then he asked the next person's name, he said, Nope, don't remember my name. You know, it's childish things. Stupid. But it's still to me a sense of phobia.

Q Definitely.

A I think one of the best things that it hasn't been any hate crimes on the campus. That's a good thing.

Q Beyond, you know, derogatory statements -- but you said you were off campus when that happened?

A No, I was on campus.

Q Okay.

A Walking past one of the male dormitories.

Q Okay.

A Male dorms. A guy was -- well, when this happened to me my friend and I were walking and we were talking actually about my hair and he said, Hey, Lil Mama or Hey, Shorty or one of them. I didn't respond. He was like I'm talking to you, you're playing in your hair. And he was like, I'm talking to you, you playing in your hair. He was like you can't speak because you with your (inaudible). Clearly, she wasn't a guy. He said some other stuff. But I just looked at her and I can tell it made her feel uncomfortable. So we

just sped up or whatever. And I didn't pay any attention to anything else he said. I wasn't paying attention, but I could hear him and his friends laughing and still shouting stuff.

Q Yeah. What did you hope to contribute when you saw the sign? What made you interested in participating?

A I hope to at least give some form of clarity with people, you know. I have friends that aren't here at Alabama State and that live across the United States where there are HBCUs and they have concerns about what actually goes on with HBCU campus with lesbian and gay. I felt like I was not only speaking for myself but speaking for them as well. It can be a voice for us gays and lesbians. I was excited that someone -- just because somebody wanted to take the opportunity to understand or get some form of clarity themselves. It really excited me because of that.

Q I have had another student tell me that same thing. Actually, she saw the flyer and she came in to the counseling center to see me. One of her things was that -- and I noticed it like I have my signs up, you know, they have the little tear pieces off where you can get the survey monkey, you know, very long list label off. I noticed that a lot of people take them off but sometimes -- you know, but not as many people have completed the survey, you know, as is reflected by the slips that are missing. What do you think might prevent someone from wanting to participate in a study such as that?

A I don't know. I think -- honestly, I don't think that gays or lesbians are taking those down.

Q Okay.

A I really believe that there are some guys or some girls that don't agree with it because people can say -- they will read it maybe and they will say why do they have this up here and they may snatch it down, not snatching down the whole sign but just the link to it.

Q Right. I understand.

A And then it may be people who are lesbian and gay and once they get ready to sit down and tell what actually happened to them, that may turn them off or whatever. They may not see it in such a way as their voice being heard. They may feel like what's the point, which is probably a protection, you know, learn to have over years because I know myself I have created a protection for myself from certain people. But I just felt like this was a good way to release so much pressure.

Q Well, I appreciate you. I really do; really, really do. Just a second ago you said that you wanted to participate because you wanted to be a voice, that you have, you know, several friends that were attending HBCUs across the nation and you wanted to

make sure that their issues were addressed. In our speaking to each other, do you feel that you have mentioned most of the issues that you or your friends that you are representing, the issues that they would be concerned about? You talked about safety. You talked a bit about a need to, you know, have a place where you can debrief, you know, maybe both; maybe individual counseling, maybe a group session; talked about phobia so that's something that could be addressed on the campus. Are there any other things that you can think of?

A None I can think of now.

Q Okay. I will take that. Okay, XXXXX, I appreciate your time and your interest. I know that was a lot that you shared with me. I really appreciate it and value it. I promise to protect it and keep the identity sacred just as I promised. I also want you to know if you are here at this university that the counseling center is available to you. Most of the counselors are accustomed to talking to gay and lesbian individuals so it's an option that you have available to you.

A Is it possible that I could speak directly to you?

Q It is possible that you could speak directly to me. Yeah, you could.

A Thank you. I honestly feel comfortable talking to you versus talking to anybody else.

Q Well, do you know where the counseling center is?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q And you've got my name and everything. My extension is XXXX here in my office. (Pause) Okay. Did you get it written down?

A Yes, ma'am.

Q All right. Great. So I'm available. You just have to let me know when, okay.

A Okay.

Q All right. I appreciate you very much.

A You're welcome.

Q Bye-bye.

A Bye-bye.

INTERVIEW #2 –PIP2

MS. TYRE: Hello. This is Yolanda Tyre. In the process of doing a second interview or Number 2 interview with XXXX?

A Hello.

Q Hey, may I speak to XXXX?

A This is me.

Q Hey, this is Yolanda Tyre.

A Hey, how are you doing?

Q Okay. How are you?

A I'm fine.

Q Are you ready or available to do the phone interview still?

A Yeah, I am. I'm in the mall. Does it need to be a quiet place?

Q Well, it sounds quiet on this end to me?

A Okay.

Q As long as you can speak for a few minutes.

A Okay. Let me click over and tell them I'm going to call them right back.

Q Okay.

A All right.

(Pause)

MS. TYRE: She hung up by mistake. Wow.

Q Hello.

A Yeah. I'm sorry. I disconnected.

Q That's okay. I got a quick disclosure I have to read and then we can begin.

A Okay.

Q Okay. I'm contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. I'm going to go over some general information about the study and then we can begin the interview.

A Okay.

Q I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on responses from the first phase of the study. You are asked to, once again, consider your experiences and provide some additional information or clarification or expansion on the issues identified in the first phase. Please realize that you can refuse to answer any individual question or provide perspective or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes and taped to ensure accuracy and data and collection analysis. Information obtained during the second phase of the study will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview is completed and all records and data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study after we complete the interview, please feel free to contact me at the email address that was on the flyer or my adviser that was on the flyer.

A Okay.

Q Do you have any questions or concerns?

A No, not really.

Q Okay. All right. When the data was collected, I can't tell which answers go with which person. So, unfortunately, I'm going to have to ask the original question again so I'll know where to go from there. The first question was really asking how do you view your perception of being on an HBCU campus and self-identifying as gay?

A Well, me personally, I feel as though there is a stigma about it. I think people are more afraid of it. Well, not afraid, but they don't view it as a good thing. I think that has to deal with mostly religious things. It boils down to like getting raised in the church, you know, that's a bad thing. You shouldn't be gay. I think that's what it boils down to. I think it's seen as being bad. It is not acceptable at all because we have no type of gay or lesbian or transgender activities or support groups or anything of that nature at XXX.

Q Okay.

A And me coming from a town that is mostly predominant white, I can say that I was more accepted there than I am here at XXXX. That's just me and my perspective of the things.

Q That's great. That's all that matters right now is your opinion. I really want to capture that. So can you or would you say that you had any -- I don't know -- negative experiences staying on the HBCU campus?

A Let me see. Yes and no. My freshman year I was more out, if you want to put it that way. And I had a group of friends who were my freshman roommates. We were all cool. When they found out that I was gay, that I was a lesbian, they freaked out. I don't talk to nobody except for one of them.

Q Okay.

A You know, now, I have my closer friends. I'm a junior this year. We've been friends for two years and they know and, you know, they're more open minded. We kind of have the same background. They are from a predominantly white town. You know, it's not as a big deal. It's like, okay, you're gay, whatever. You know, that's how I get it from them and also I'm -- I want to pledge this semester. It's one of my biggest fears that my sexuality is going to hinder me from pledging. I'm legacy. I might still get that stigma of freshman year, "I knew that you were gay. I heard you were talking to so and so." That's something that worries me.

Q Right.

A That me wanting to be a part of this organization, like I have wanted to be a part of this organization all my life and to know that me being who I am as a person is going to hinder me from being a part of that organization. It scares me.

Q I understand.

A I have a friend. She is an XXXX. She's gay. She goes to Auburn. It's not a big deal, but I asked one of my other friends who goes to XXXX. She's gay. She's an XXXX. Oh, it's a big deal. She can't tell noone, even her line sisters. She told them and they were like, "Oh, you can't tell nobody else." So, you know, it's negativity. And I'm not going to say it's all bad. It's not no people getting beat up, but you hear the talk around XXXX. "Oh, did you know she was gay." You know, you see it. You hear it.

Q Right. How has it been within your family? Have you experienced any positives or negatives in your family?

A When my mom found out, it was bad. I got put out of my house. I had to go stay with my grandfather. I stayed with him the whole senior year. Me and my mom were not talking from my sophomore year to my senior year. When I got ready to come to school, you know, me and her we got back close; like, things are a lot better now. My extended family like my aunts and stuff, they know but it's something that you don't speak about.

Q Okay.

A Because we're a Southern Baptist family. That's wrong. You know, you don't do that. And still to this day I can go home and my mom had some guy there -- well, not really my mom anymore but my grandma had some guy there. "Oh, this is so and so and he goes to so and so. Y'all should go somewhere." I have to explain, you know, I'm gay. It's not going to happen. So some of my cousins know and they are fine with it. They know and they still love me. Two of my aunts who I'm real close with, they know. This is on my mom's side, but on my dad's side everyone knows and it's fine. Then that goes back to saying about religion. My dad's side, they're religious but they're not as religious as my mom's side. They love me regardless. I'm still my granddad's daughter. I'm still my dad's daughter and it's okay.

Q So this granddad that you stayed with, this is your dad's dad?

A Yeah, this is my dad's dad.

Q Okay. And just to repeat what I think I heard you say, you feel like your dad's side of the family are not as strictly religious as your mom's side of the family?

A Yes.

Q Okay.

A I mean, they're religious and they go to church and stuff like that but it's not to the extreme. My mom is not extreme about religion, but they are religious if you want to put it that way.

Q I understand. So how are you coping? What sorts of things are you doing to cope with, you know -- because where you go to school and your family are two major areas in anybody's life. What things do you feel like you do that would help you stay fortified in yourself or, you know, strong? How do you cope?

A Being true to myself. I cope through my friends. If something is going wrong or I get unhappy about my mom or she said something, I talk to my friends or art has always been an outlet for me. I paint. I draw. That's my outlet or sometimes I just have to sit down and just think things through or pray about it, you know, even though I am gay. A lot of people think that just because we're gay we aren't religious. I'm still religious.

Q Right.

A I'm a God-fearing woman. I mean, you just have to deal with it sometimes because it's not nothing that I chose because if it were up to me I would be straight. I wouldn't have no problems. I wouldn't have had to work two jobs my senior year because my mom didn't want to help me. I have to just know that this is helping me

because I haven't even got in the real world yet and I know it's going to be way much more bad things -- well, different people thinking different things about me just because of my sexuality. I just have to sit down with myself and tell myself it's going to be okay or talk with my friends or go draw until I feel better or just sit down and have a conversation with God and ask him, you know, bless these people with open minds and just give me patience to try to help people understand that I'm not only just gay. I'm Whitney. I am a artist. I am a student on the dean's list. I am a great friend. I am loyal, you know, just know me for more than who I am.

Q That's awesome, Whitney. Do you think there's any pros to being on HBCU campus? We talked a little about the cons, you know, religion.

A Yeah, because like I said I come from a predominantly white community and so I see more black gay people, black professional gay people because there is a lot of great gay people that, you know, who are kind of thuggish and ain't doing nothing. I see professional gay people doing stuff and striving to achieve and I meet people and get their perspective of how they see our community and discuss, like, our story and see how common they are. And that you were going through the same thing that I was going through. You know, it's hard to relate to somebody who is gay and they are white. They don't get that same -- people don't look at them the same, you know. Most white people

if they are gay, okay. You know, sometimes it is and sometimes it isn't. But it's just something about talking to somebody else that is black like you and they know the same struggles that you are going through --

Q Hey, let me ask you this. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

A Go ahead.

Q I was thinking back to you were saying like there are no gay support groups or anything like that at XXXX. But I'm inferring that you are saying that you have had the opportunity though, like maybe faculty or staff have allowed you time to sit with them, you know, just to --

A Not really faculty and staff but maybe mostly just students I have talked to.

Q Okay. Students, I understand, okay.

A Not really faculty because like -- but just students, like people that I have met walking around campus or sitting in the campus talking to.

Q Okay.

A Not really faculty.

Q Okay. Okay. Have you ever known of anyone trying to get some sort of support group or anything started at XXXX?

A I know last year they were thinking about starting one, but I haven't heard anything else about it and last time I heard was that they weren't going to be able to get the funds or the support from the school.

Q Okay. Okay. Well, I know you're in the mall. I have this one last question.

A Okay.

Q This is it. So tell me, Whitney, when you saw my signs posted up around your campus -- I hope they were posted anyway.

A They were.

Q What made you want to participate?

A I wanted my voice to be heard. I want to give my opinion about how I felt because nobody ever asked.

Q Oh. Well, you have an awesome voice. I appreciate you sharing it with me more than you know.

A You're welcome.

Q Okay. Okay. Well, I am not going to keep you. You do have my e-mail. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. I really appreciate your time.

A You're welcome.

Q Thank you.

A All right. Bye-bye.

Q Bye-bye.

INTERVIEW #3- PIP3

Q Okay. All right. I'm sitting in the car. I'm going to put you on speakerphone and then I'm going to just read my little phone script, ask you the two questions that were on the inside of the survey and then just kind of ask a couple of other questions about family and different things and that kind of impact and that's going to be it, okay. Okay. All right. Can you hear me?

A Yes.

Q Let me see if I can make it louder. No. Okay. I'm contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the

experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. Let me go over some general information about the study then we can begin the interview. I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on the responses from first phase of this study. You are asked, once again, to consider your experiences and provide some additional information, clarification or expansions on the issues in the first phase. Please realize that you can refuse to answer any individual questions or provide perspectives or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes -- it won't last that long -- and taped to ensure accuracy and data collection. Information obtained during this second session will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview is completed and all recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process, which is why I am taping it because it has to be transcribed. If you have any questions or concerns, you can e-mail me or my supervisor, XXXX who was listed on the flyer and on the survey. Do you have any questions?

A No.

Q Okay. All right. Because when I go and look into the data, it doesn't -- I can't tell who answered what because it's just all there because it was designed to be anonymous

so, therefore, I'm going to start with the two questions that were on the survey. What has your perception or experience been like attending an HBCU and being lesbian?

A -- it's okay. It wasn't bad. Just being a lesbian and not dressing like a female causes certain people to look at me different. It wasn't a bad experience, but could have been better.

Q Could have been better? Would you say that you had any negative experiences? You know, like some people talk about, you know, people saying mean things to them or throwing things at them or --

A I never had any type of negative experience from people in my peer group but in the older peer group, I had -- it seemed like they singled me out every time I went in the dorm room or any time I was going in the building, it felt like I was singled out.

Q Okay. Singled out for like being ID'd or --

A For being ID'd or just about everything because I don't look like a female and I don't dress like a female. So it's just like -- they are like all eyes on you.

Q I understand. Do you think that there were any benefits to being at a HBCU and being lesbian or gay?

A No.

Q No? Do you think it would have been different, easier, harder if you had been in a predominantly white school?

A I think it might have been a little bit easier. I don't know. Some people from my experiences growing up in an all Caucasian school, they never really judged me regardless of what I wore or how I dressed or how my hair was. I was never judged. Coming to an African-American school, it was like that's what the African-American culture looks at and judge people by what they look like. So it was like I think it might have been easier.

Q Okay.

A I think it would have been easier.

Q I understand. We talked a little bit about how your experience was inside the school setting. How has it been inside of your family setting?

A Inside my family. In the beginning it was hard because everybody was basically shocked and they didn't think nobody in their family would ever be gay. So in the beginning it was hard, but then they all loved me regardless.

Q And so now you feel like everybody is at a place of acceptance?

A Yes.

Q When you were going through that initial part of your family just kind of grasping the fact that, you know, somebody in their family was gay, can you describe how that was, those first couple of weeks or months or years of you being gay in your family?

A The first couple of months it was just like everybody was so in shock or so in awe and they were like, "Wow! Are you serious?" There was the questions -- really no one questioned. Over time it's irrelevant. It's me. They don't see it no more.

Q Did you have any problems or did you feel accepted by your grandparents?

A Grandparents still loved me the same. They never really questioned it. They were cool.

Q Cool. Did your grandparents seem to adjust better than your parents?

A Yes, grandparents always (inaudible). Grandparents always listened and (inaudible).

Q I understand. What do you do to cope? What kind of outlets do you allow yourself because you talked a little about, you know, during those initial stages it being

stressful at home. You know, and although I know you didn't say anybody did anything negative to you at school. I know that it was a little stressful, you know, knowing that sometimes you might be singled out because of the way you dressed. What sort of things did you do to try to deal with that?

A I didn't try to do nothing for real. I didn't really, really care. It was just like people are going to be people regardless and no matter, no matter who you take it to, they're going to do the same actions. It may not be the same actions from them but it's always going to be somebody else. So it's just like pointless. So I didn't really do anything to counter my anger or say anything about it. It was just whatever.

Q Okay. Okay. So it's just kind of your coping skill is the way you think of things. You think pretty positive about it that you are not going to be able to change other people so you should just kind of go on and be yourself and do your thing?

A Exactly.

Q Okay. Cool. When you agreed to participate and allow me to give you a call, what were you hoping to contribute or why were you interested, you know, in participating in the study?

A When I first -- it was something that I never really like -- plus I was like (inaudible). I was like well, we'll see. And I read it and it was like, oh, wow. I would be able to help people see what is going on in black schools and gay and lesbian community. But then I just wanted to be a part of something, something different.

Q Definitely. Well, those are the basic questions that I have. Are there anything that you think I possibly should be asking you or others that I'm not addressing?

A No, I think you are asking the right questions.

Q Okay. Okay. Well, that's going to be it. I just really kind of wanted to get your views and perceptions for how things work for you and just speak with you a minute about your family and what you did for coping and really to get your voice. I know it's really important.

A No problem.

Q Thank you, XXXX

A All right.

Q All right.

INTERVIEW #4 – PIP4

MS. TYRE: Hello. This is Yolanda Tyre getting ready to do interview with XXXX and it is October 5th today.

A Hello.

Q Hello, may I speak to XXXX?

A Hold on just a minute.

Q Okay.

A Okay. This is me.

Q Hey, XXXX, this is Yolanda Tyre.

A Hey.

Q Hey, it's Sunday. It's 2:00.

A Okay --

Q I'm sorry. Are you ready or do you want me to give you a call back at another time?

A Uh-uh. I mean, not if you just want to talk to me to ask me some questions.
That's cool.

Q Yeah. It shouldn't take longer than about 15 minutes or so to do it?

A Oh, that's cool. Okay.

Q Okay. All right. You know, I'm doing research so I have to read you a little phone script just talking about your confidentiality and what exactly am I going to be asking you and then I will -- we will start with the two questions that were on the survey because I don't know which ones were yours so that's why I ask again because it's anonymous and then I have four other questions that I will ask you. Of course, I want you to add in whatever you think I should know that I don't know, okay?

A Yeah.

Q Okay. Here I go. It says, Hello, caller. I am contacting concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay, African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. Let me first go over some general information about the study then we can begin the interview. I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on responses from the first phase of the study. You are asked to, once again, consider your

experiences and provide some additional information, clarification or expansion on the issues identified in the first phase. Please realize you can refuse to answer any questions or provide perspective or experiences that were not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes and taped to ensure accuracy and data collection and analysis. Information obtained during the second phase of the study will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview is completed and all recorded data will be destroyed after the completion of the transcription process. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, you are asked to please contact either me by e-mail or you can contact my faculty adviser XXXX who was listed on -- you know, within the interview survey that you completed. Do you have any questions about your willingness to participate or confidentiality?

A No.

Q Okay. All right. Great. So, again, starting with the first two questions that were on the survey, you know, what has been your experience as being gay or lesbian at an HBCU?

A I notice things a lot like the third person. I haven't had any direct contact with any particular (inaudible). I think that's just because I did not identify as a gay or lesbian. If

they don't know they won't ask you. It just goes on around you because they don't know if you are or not.

Q Okay.

A But I would say that those who are obvious enough to be labeled or classified, they say they stick together. It's kind of like a secret society. If you are in it, you're in it and everybody that's in it looks out for the next person. It's a cycle of brotherhood. Since I have been on campus the past three years, I have been wanting to get into the secret society just because I'm proud of my orientation. I feel that they are, too. We all should stick together. But it's like a little brotherhood and, you know, one person will never be without. Everybody is always together. We take up for each other even if we don't know. You know, even if we are not good friends with that person. It's like that's why we call it family. We really do. We're all sisters and brothers and we stick together even though we're all scattered out and about and not really in the same place at the same time. What we do is you get another family member. You feel that bond that connection between that person. That's a positive side of it that I have noticed.

Q Okay. So there is like an unofficial organization?

A Yeah.

Q No, official club meetings, no official group name?

A Right.

Q It is what it is?

A Right.

Q Okay. Okay. So that was a positive thing. Does your school have any -- does your school have any official groups for individuals that are gay or lesbian or bi or transgender?

A I think, all I know of is a meeting. They have group meeting on Tuesday and it's like a discussion session where you sit and you talk about, you know, your experiences or what happened to you or what you go through. It's like a little group meeting so that all of us can just come together to talk about what is happening once a week. So other than that, that's the only official thing that I really think that we have.

Q Okay. Okay. Do you think that's been a good impact on the university at all?

A I don't think -- it's not as big as it should be to impact the university. I really feel like -- I mean, because if you don't see the one flyer then you don't know. I really feel like it should be something that is a lot bigger. You know, a lot more accepted and

published and publicized -- and I feel like if it was larger then we could have more of an impact and maybe get other things going, you know, or get other people to come out and see. It can be like a big event where at our next meeting we will have a AIDS survivor or someone who is currently suffering AIDS. We could talk to the group where we could have a successful person that may have graduated from our school that's a gay or lesbian and make it more of like instead of tell us what went wrong with your week today. You know, having something -- okay. Well, we see the good side of it. We see that -- just like the next person, we don't have to feel like we can't get in there because of the way we are. I feel like it should be a lot bigger and a lot more people.

Q So you tell me a little bit about the positive about being at a HBCU, having the family and to a degree having a group but knowing that it could grow and develop. Are there any negatives that you see at being at a HBCU?

A There's always going to be one person in every bunch that will do their best to make someone feel uncomfortable. Like I said, it hasn't happened to me because they don't know but the person can be sitting right next to you and just dogging out the gays and lesbians. It's like do you know anyone that is gay or lesbian. You're like, No. Have you had any personal experiences that make you feel that way? So I'm like, No. And so why do you feel that urge to -MS. TYRE: Lost her.

A It's like they are the way they are.

Q Okay. So would you consider yourself out on your campus?

A Do I consider myself what?

Q Would you consider yourself out on your campus?

A Out? I feel like I am. I try to be as far as how I dress, who I'm around, what I do. I don't feel like it's recognized. I don't feel like anybody else knows other than me.

Q Okay. What do you think it is about you that makes you different then because, of course, like I do, you can -- well, we can be in a space --

MS. TYRE: Shoot. Call dropped.

Q XXXX? Hello.

A Hello.

Q Hey. XXXX?

A Yes.

Q Okay. Sorry. The call was lost. I don't know what happened?

A Oh, okay.

Q I was asking so what do you think is different about you. Although you are saying that you are trying to be out but some people seem to be recognized very easily.

A Yes.

Q Do you think it's just your style? What do you think is different about you?

A That makes me stand out?

Q No, that makes you not stand out because you're saying that, you know, you don't feel like a lot of people realize that you're out.

A Right. I'm quiet. Like in class I'm in class. There's no playing around. There's no talking about hanging out at the club, you know.

Q Okay.

A Not talking about relationships. I'm just in there. I do my work and they recognize me as the person who has the answers to all the questions. They don't say, okay, she told me about this instead. I haven't had those type that I was. So they just automatically assume that I'm not.

Q Okay. I see. Okay. Do you think there's any benefit, any other benefits to being gay and on an HBCU campus?

A The benefit to it? It's good to be different. Because I mean, there, of course, is an assumption on the college campus and you don't want to be part of that stereotype. You don't want to be like everyone else -- everybody else. I feel like if you are not afraid to be who you are in one of the harshest environments that you will ever be in then that's (inaudible). If you are not afraid to be yourself and show your true colors at a HBCU then you will make it in the rest of the world, no problem.

Q Okay.

A It takes a strong person. If you can do that, you can do anything.

Q Okay. Do you think it will be any different if you were at a non-HBCU?

A Yeah, I think it would be more accepted.

Q You do?

A I think there would actually be a great, a larger population of gays and lesbians if it was a mixed campus. It would be a bigger population. It would be a lot more accepted.

Q Okay.

Q XXXX? XXXX?

MS. TYRE: Okay. Call was lost again.

A Hey.

Q Hey. Where are you? In Wal-Mart?

A I am in Piggly Wiggly in Birmingham.

Q Okay. So we had a drop again. I figured you must be in a big building because you know how sometimes the transmission doesn't go as well in a big place?

A You there?

Q I'm still here.

A I think if the student population were more diverse it wouldn't be a big issue. It would be more highly accepted.

Q That make as lot of sense. I understand you thoughts. So are you out in your family?

A Yeah, yeah.

Q Okay. How is that or how was the coming out process in your family?

A It was only hard for like the first day or two. Right after that well, my mom -- the initially. Well, my sister only one really already knew. She was like was friends with anybody that I was friends with. The only hard part was getting across to my mom. Once that came out, then she was -- after the first day of the initial shock -- ever since. Right now it's like not even a question or issue or nothing.

Q Okay. What do you think made it easy for your mom? You know, I'm just specifying your mom just because a lot of people, you know, when they talk about having difficulties, it's usually with their parents accepting it. But your parents did well. Are there any other gay individuals in your family? You know, were there any points of reference for her?

A Was it anybody else that she dealt with before or what?

Q Well, I'm really putting words in your mouth and I'm asking you a question. Why do you think your mom was able to deal with it so well? You think she's just a cool person?

A Because by the time she found out it was about six -- about five years down the line. So when she found out, it kind of just pieced everything together for her.

Q I understand so she kind of maybe had a inkling of it anyway?

A Right. She already saw all the things that was happening, but she didn't put it together as, okay, that's what this is.

Q I see.

A When she found out everything just became clear, like, oh, okay, well, that's why you did this, this and this. She just put everything together instead of, Oh, I never had any idea.

Q Okay. I've had a couple of interviewees talk about their grandparents. Do you have living grandparents? Was that an issue for your grandparents at all?

A Both sides of my grandparents are deceased.

Q Okay. All right. Okay. And any problems with -- I'm using the word "problems" but it can be positive as well like with your extended family like with mom's sisters or brothers or dad's sisters or brothers.

A With my aunt, she's cool. She is almost one of the religious types that you won't even tell. My dad told her (inaudible). Once she found out she wasn't like we're going to change you (inaudible). She was like okay. Cool. She was like I always thought Brenda was different.

Q That's funny.

A She was cool. She doesn't -- I mean, she's not accepting as far as morals and ethics and all that good stuff. But she doesn't make me feel bad about it at all.

Q She's still your aunt.

A Yes.

Q That's all right. That's great. Now, how would you overall describe your family in regard to religion? Would you say one, minimum with religious or to ten, like very hyper-religious.

A There are only two religious people -- well, three -- in my entire family: My mom, my sister and my aunt. So I think because of that we're like (inaudible). Everybody else has -- they have it in their mind, but as far as acting on it and living by it and showing it, they don't do. So I would say those three.

Q Okay. My third question: Although your experience seems to be -- because you are observing it a lot. I know that sometimes observing negativity can have a negative impact on you as well. How do you cope? What things do you do to cope with --

A (inaudible).

Q Uh-huh.

A I try to give -- I try to show. It's always a particular person. I always try to show that person, whoever he or she is, the positive side of it. And I would develop a friendship with them, you know, just being classmates and roommates (inaudible) I would have (inaudible) and then the end of the semester when it's like, okay, we're about to get out of school but let's keep in touch. We're best friends. Then they find out. Then I tell them. It's like they can't judge me then because by then we're the best of friends. And they never would have thought and then I tell them, okay, I'm proving a point. Anybody can be just as cool as I am. I'm almost your best friend. So your whole idea has changed because you have become friends with me and never knew about my orientation.

Q Right.

A So that's -- I befriend them basically, and then in the end it's like, okay. Well, you like me. You know, I was in it. Then they feel kind of dumb and they are trying to change their views then.

Q So how do you feel about them then because it seems that you would be on a quest to prove to them that, you know, gay people aren't as bad as they might think they

are? Are you really liking these people or really feeling like you want to be their best friend because you have known all along?

A Yes. Some of them, yes. Now, I won't be like -- I won't be like I was just telling you to prove a point, you know. If I actually developed a friendship then, yes, but just if it's a person that I just can't see myself getting along with then, being truthful then I'll tell them, you know, I hear what you say about this person or about that person or how he dresses and still make my point. They never said any of those things about me and then I will just cut off that there once I tell them: Okay, well, I'm the person that you're always talking about. But we have been cool up until this point. But since my point is proven, I have no other reason to associate with them.

Q Okay.

A I cut it off.

Q Okay. When you saw the flyer posted up at your school, what made you decide, Hey, I think I'm going to take the time to participate in this study.

A Because it was like it had my name on it.

Q Oh.

A Anytime I see the word, it's like, okay, I need to go over and talk to them because it's like -- just like saying black females between the ages of 20 and 23. You understand what I'm saying?

Q I understand.

A You fit the specifics to the details. I would respond to it because it's asking for information. It was kind of like anything that has anything to do with it, the lifestyle or orientation, I'm all for it because anybody want to know, I'll tell them. It's not hidden. It doesn't take time at all to be proud of who you are. My name was on the paper. It said gays and you.

Q Okay. That's cute. Thank you for sharing that with me. That was really cool. Well, are there any questions because I am a researcher. You know, I'm not personally gay although I have lots of gay friends. I love working with students just period, working with that group. Now, are there any things that you think that I have missed that you just want to say, Hey, Yolanda, you didn't ask me this?

A No. I have been to a couple of your discussions in my freshman year when you came over to the building and had group discussions and whatnot. I made comments or answered questions that you may have asked that everybody was kind of like she's

speaking up for the gay people, maybe. I have been to a couple of the groups and you're like the only person I have seen who would actually have that kind of direct contact with the student body and actually listen and discuss and talk about things. Not any questions but about what we saw when I saw the flyer other than asking me to do a survey for my people. It was like okay. I remember her from last year or the year before and she's cool. She always wants to know what we're doing, what we're going through, you know, how she can do something that might help us. If it had been anybody else like a scientific person who didn't really care about the next person. I'd be like, well, just another survey.

Q Yeah. Well, I really appreciate you saying that and completing the survey for me because, of course, it is hard sometimes to get people to complete things like that if they don't know you. And it is a personal topic, too. It's not like everybody feels obligated to be going around and telling their personal business.

A I don't think it's a -- but maybe like four degrees less than an obligation because if that's who you are then I think you should feel obligated.

Q Okay.

A I mean, you don't see a Hispanic saying, I don't have to go to this place and that place because I'm Hispanic.

Q Right.

A I do it because I feel sorry for people, no. If you're proud of who you are no matter what.

Q Yeah.

A So if you hide it, then okay, you're not proud. I saw it as an obligation because there's only so many of us on campus anyway.

Q Right.

A And the few of us that there are, Well, I don't have time to go to this. You're on the computer all day anyway. If you are going to claim that that's who you are then this is asking to complete the survey, not just anybody. A straight person can't complete the survey. We have to do what it is asking, a specific question.

Q Right.

A It wasn't just a general survey for any and everybody to complete. So if it is asking for gays and lesbians, then the gays and lesbians should feel obligated to complete it because it is for us. It's for the betterment of us and to help us instead of the next person. I saw it asking for me because that's who I am. That's what I'm proud of and

that's not something that I'm ashamed of because I don't have time for or I don't feel like doing. That's just me.

Q Okay.

A I went through like making -- seeing my mom crying and hearing people talk about me long enough to not be proud.

Q Right.

A I have been through enough to say, okay, well, I'm proud of what I am. If I can do this and make her cry and I have never seen her cry, then yes. They must be worth it and so I'm going to make it worth it. I'm going to be proud of it.

Q Right.

A It's a decision I made. It's not one of those decisions that you make (inaudible).

Q Yeah. Well, XXXX, I really appreciate you.

A No problem.

Q Okay. Well, this is going to conclude our interview. You have my e-mail address in case you need to contact me if you have any other thoughts. Again, thank you very much for your time.

A No problem.

Q Okay. Have a good Sunday.

A All right. Appreciate it.

Q All right. Bye-bye.

Interview #5: PIP 5

Q Hello may I speak with XXXX?

A Speaking

Q Hi, this is Yulanda I am contacting you regarding your agreement to complete a phone interview regarding, lesbian and gay African Americans in an HBCU setting.

A oh ok I remember

Q Are you ready to get started?

A Yes I am

Q First I am going to read you an informational script then we will move into the questioning, ok

A Alright, I am ready

Q I'm contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. Let me go over some general information about the study then we can begin the interview. I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on the responses from first phase of this study. You are asked, once again, to consider your experiences and provide some additional information, clarification or expansions on the issues in the first phase. Please realize that you can refuse to answer any individual questions or provide perspectives or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes and taped to ensure accuracy in data collection. Information obtained during this second session will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview is completed and all recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process, which is why I am taping it because it has to be transcribed. If you have any questions or

concerns, you can e-mail me or my supervisor, XXXX who was listed on the flyer and on the survey. Do you have any questions?

A No.

Q Thank you for speaking with me today

A No problem

Q Well first off I would like to gain an understanding of what has your perception or experience been like attending an HBCU as a gay male?

A I am approaching the end of my sophomore year here. I have not experienced any physical attacks; however I always hear critical things. I think that it is harder here for males than females. Well for the fem females anyway. I am not an all out fem gay male, so I think that has helped a bit. But being in theater draws attention to you. Here at the HBCU I do feel excepted for my talents. I am very active in the Art/theater department. I am very skilled and I feel that I am appreciated for it although they suspect that I am gay. Outside of the theater department I have often felt that no one wanted me around. I really did not feel accepted.

Q You stated that you always here critical thinks?

A Yes, when I enter the dorm, or hang out in the lunch room. Sometimes I feel that my teachers hate me. There have been many times when I have heard someone say faggot, or sissy in passing. They don't even know me....

Q Are there any other experiences?

A mean words are basically it...it is a bit harder to make friends. I really like theater, I have several friends there.

Q Are there any things which you find to be a benefit to being at an HBCU and gay?

A Don't get me wrong, I appreciate being at a HBCU. They allow me to show case talents that I don't feel others might appreciate. I do appreciate the culture. On the down side they can be mean and slow to accept some things. I think a lot of them hide behind religion. Its wrong. People that are not gay do all sorts of things and they are not held to the same standard. Homophobia is a tragic fear.

Q Do you think that your college experience might be different if you attended a predominantly white college?

A I think that things might be worse if I attended a predominately white school.

Q Explain?

A I feel that they would just not accept me and that I have more of a chance of acceptance at a traditional HBCU.

Q Do you feel that you have been accepted in you family as being gay?

A I have not been able to tell my family. They are very religious and I know that they would not go for that. I fear that I would be kicked out of the family. I am sure that none of them would understand. I have several brothers. I just don't see them taking it well at all.

Q Explain, why you feel that way?

A I can't really put my finger on it. It's hard to explain. There have been so many times growing up that my family has downgraded being gay. They hate gay people. They don't understand the need for gay rights. Or how someone could have feelings for someone of the same sex. I don't even think about telling them. It would not go over well.

Q You mentioned earlier that you really appreciated the theater department and that you had several friends there; however that you have had a hard time with friends outside of the department...

A yes

Q You also stated that you have not felt accepted by the environment, with teachers or with your family. I can imagine that this can be stressful at times. You sound like you really love your family and that being accepted would be important to you.

A Ug. Ya. I would like to tell my one brother. We are really close...I just don't know.

Q It sounds like dealing with all of that can be a bit stressful at times.

A I suppose so at times.

Q How do you deal with that stress?

A I hang around friends that accept me. I attend a church which accepts me. I try to participate in as many activities as I can which displays my talent. I always feel good after going to this church. It is so different than the one back home. Dancing and performing in theater is a great thing. I love theater.

Q So displaying your talent and hanging in accepting places works for you.

A Yes

Q Displaying my talent. Dancing, developing plays etc. really makes me feel good. And it provides an opportunity for others to see other parts of me outside of being gay. I really enjoy.

A Thank you for sharing that.

Q XXXX why did you want to participate in the study? What drew you to the posted sign?

A I want to participate in the study to let others know that they are not alone in their journey. Its hard out here. But it can be done. I am determined.

Q so you wanted to provide a voice, promote understanding?

A Yes that is it; I just want to let everyone one know. I am a human being and that gay people are more than what they think they are.

Q Thank you XXXX this concludes the questions that I have for you, is there any information that you would like to add?

A pause. I can't think of anything. I am glad that you are completing this study. I am glad that someone cares about us.

Q Well think you again. I appreciate you sharing your story and your experiences.

Well if there is nothing more. This concludes the interview. Good-bye.

A goodbye-

Interview #6: PIP6

A Hello.

Q Hey, may I speak to XXXX?

A This is me.

Q Hi, this is Yolanda Tyre.

A How are you doing?

Q Okay. How are you?

A I'm fine.

Q I am calling you regarding your agreement to participate in the phone survey regarding African American lesbian and gay identity development within an HBCU setting. Are you available?

A Yeah, I am. Let me turn down the TV.

Q Okay.

A Okay. I am ready now.

Q Thank you for your time today.

A You are welcome.

Q All right. I am going to read an informational script, make sure that you don't have any questions and then get into the interview, alright?

A ok, alright.

Q I'm contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. Let me go over some general information about the study then we can begin the interview. I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on the responses from first phase of this study. You are asked, once again, to consider your experiences and provide some additional information, clarification or expansions on the issues in the first phase. Please realize that you can refuse to answer any individual questions or provide perspectives or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes and taped to ensure accuracy and data collection. Information obtained during this second session will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview

is completed and all recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process, which is why I am taping it because it has to be transcribed. If you have any questions or concerns, you can e-mail me or my supervisor, XXXX who was listed on the flyer and on the survey. Do you have any questions?

A No. That was pretty clear.

Q Well first off I would like to gain an understanding of what has your perception or experience been like attending an HBCU as a lesbian?

A Life is difficult. People judge me before they get to know me. People joke on me. Make up rumors although many of them really don't know anything about me. College in many ways is just like high school. I hate it.

Q I understand that things have been hard in college. Can you give me a little more information on how your day to day interactions have been on campus?

A Well like I said, I hear my roommate say things about me on the phone to her friends. "The freak is in" or once I heard her say the "dike is in a good mood today, so you can come over". One time she told one of her friends that I tried to come on to her, which was a big lie. It started a big mess in our room. Her mother called me going off, it was crazy. We are trying to get new room assignments now. I cannot wait. Things are not

so bad with teachers; it is just the crazy students. They always say things under their breath. No one has said anything directly to me, they generally don't own up to if I turn around and look at them. I don't trust anyone in this dorm. They are always so childish. Once someone stuck a note on my door that said "a dike girl lives here". No one seem to care that my feelings where hurt or my rights were violated.

Q Have you ever been physically attacked or feared that you might be physically attacked.

A No not really, but me and my roommate have really had some heated words which I felt might turn into a fight. That is why we are separating. I can't see myself sharing this small space with her crazy XXX. People on this campus are just verbal, they don't do much, which I guess is a good thing. I don't know what I would do if I had to worry about that crap.

Q Ok so let me make sure that I understand, right now the worse thing about the campus and being gay is dealing with verbal hostility.

A Yeah, I guess you can say that is it. It is crazy though.

Q Are there any things which you find to be a benefit to being at an HBCU and gay?

A I like that they provide me with the same opportunities as any other individual. Gay or straight we are all getting the same education. I don't see any benefits beyond that. I don't see any special cons either.

Q Do you think that your college experience might be different if you attended a predominantly white college?

A Yes, I think that it would be better.

Q Why?

A I think that whites are more opened minded. I would not have to be so undercover.

Q Ok so you view whites as more open-minded and understanding of lesbians and gays?

A yes

Q Any particular reason why?

A My friends back home who where white, just did not seem to care as much. I feel that they are more willing to look at the real you.

Q Do you feel that you have been accepted in your family as being gay?

A Family. I am not out to my family. I don't want to put the extra pressure on my grandmother. She is old and really all that I have in my life. I just don't think that she would understand. She is better off not knowing. My family life is already a mess; I just would be making life hard for myself.

Q So you are not out in your family. You have not been able to tell anyone?

A I think that one or two people may have an idea, however we have not talked about it. I think that my mother and grandmother may have an idea but I am not 100% sure.

Q Why do you feel that way?

A Sometimes she will tell me she loves me with this deep look in her eye like she is trying to tell me something.

Q What about with your mom?

A My mom has long been out of my life. She is on drugs and she is just all downhill. I have lived with my grandmother for a long time. When I do see my mother which is like once a year or less, she'll ask me what's wrong? You better be ok. It s just her tone and the way she looks at me. It is just a sick feeling I have.

Q It sounds like you have a lot going on in your life; school, roommate and family.

A yeah-

Q How do you deal with that stress?

A I focus on my school

Q You focus on school work?

A yeah well when I start to get stressed, I just focus more on what I need to do to graduate. Getting my mind off of it helps a lot. I can't do anything about my mom, or my roommate. All I can do is just keep being myself. I have to keep going and just let everything else take a back seat to where I am going.

Q I understand. XXXX why did you want to participate in the study? What drew you to the posted sign?

A I wanted to let the community know that all gay people are not the same. We are more than what statics make us out to be. We are smart, love others, and are God fearing, hard workers.

Q Great, so you wanted to give a different view of things.

A Yes I think it is important. People act like we don't have feelings or that we don't hear what they say about us. Or see how they sneak and try to hurt us. I think it is wrong and that something should be done. This is my way of getting my opinion out.

Q XXXX thank you for sharing your opinion. Are there any other thoughts or experiences that you would like to share with me before we conclude?

A No I think that is it.

Q Well thanks again.

A Your welcome, pause

Q Alright good bye.

Call ended-

Interview #7: PIP7

A Hello.

Q Hey, may I speak to XXXX?

A Hi this is XXXX.

Q Hi my name is Yulanda Tyre and I am calling you regarding your agreement to participate in the phone survey regarding African American lesbian and gay identity development in a HBCU setting. Are you available?

A yes

Q How are you doing?

A Good. How are you?

Q I'm fine. I am grateful to be talking to you. Thank you for your time today.

A That's cool.

Q Great. Ok. I am going to read an informational script and then get into the interview, alright?

A ok, alright.

Q I'm contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. Let me go over some general information about the study then we can begin the interview. I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on the responses from first phase of this study. You are asked, once again, to consider your experiences and provide some additional information, clarification or expansions on the issues in the first phase. Please realize that you can refuse to answer any individual questions or provide perspectives or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes and taped to ensure accuracy and data collection. Information obtained during this second session will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview is completed and all recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process, which is why I am taping it because it has to be transcribed. If you have any questions or concerns, you can e-mail me or my supervisor, XXXX who was listed on the flyer and on the survey. Do you have any questions?

A No.

Q Ok. First I would like to gain an understanding of what your perception or experience has been like attending an HBCU as a lesbian?

A My feelings toward being at an HBCU are mixed. I have made several friends, many know that I am gay. However I must say that I don't go around advertising. I don't think that everyone needs to know or would understand. I hear the things that straight people say about gay people when they are not around. There is always something being said. They pretend to not mind, but behind your back they are raking you over the coals. I have been lucky I am a fem girl so not many assume that I am gay. I have a few close gay guy friends, I know that some of the straight people think that I am like them. Hey my business is just my business. Things have been ok for me here.

Q Ok so things at an HBCU have been good for you, you really have not experienced any problems?

A Well I would not say that. I feel that what happens to gays on campus impacts me whether everybody knows that I am or not. It does not make me feel good to know that people are talking about me without knowing who I am. Or to see people talking about other gay people without knowing who they are. Judging and criticizing although they do all kind of crazy stuff all the time. It is crazy here at times. But what can you do about it?

The staff are as bad as students sometimes, who do you tell. We all just have to stick together.

Q Right. So I understand that there is a lot of judging and criticizing. You don't feel that being gay is accepted on the campus.

A No. There are a few people who try to get to know you and look beyond, you know, differences. But all in all it's not accepted.

Q Have you ever been physically attacked or feared that you might be physically attacked.

A No. they just do crazy things like point you out or start rumors, not much beyond that. I have not had that problem; I don't think that any of my friends have either.

Q Do you feel that there are any benefits/draw backs to being at an HBCU and being out?

A I am not sure if attending here offers any benefits. I am almost a senior and I am not sure that I feel comfortable, yet. I think that I just know how to play the game and work the system a little better than I did as a freshman.

Q Do you think that your college experience might be different if you attended a predominantly white college?

A If I were at a white school I think that it might be about the same for me. I am good at adapting to situations. My appearance does not give me away so I may be able to hang.

Q Do you think that whites would be more open or closed to lesbian and gay lifestyles?

A I think that some whites hate gays just as much as blacks. They just may not express it as loudly, however they have other means of showing prejudice.

Q Do you feel that you have been accepted in your family as being gay?

A My sister knows that I am gay. I think that my mother has an idea. We just tolerate each other at this point because I am here in college. I don't have any reason to tell her now. Maybe when I get older and settle down. I told my grandmother a few years back. She understood. We were very close. She passed away during my first year here. She is all that matters to me. I lived with her as a child. Me and my sister, she took us in when my mother ran off with some man. I am fine with myself at this point. I don't need her acceptance. My grandmother was my real mother.

Q Ok so you are not out to your biological mother, but you were able to tell your grandmother who raised you and your sister. You and your sister are close and she knows. Do you feel that she accepts you?

A Yes, she does. We are always there for each other.

Q Do you experience stress related to being gay?

A I don't think so. Although it does make me mad and angry that people judge me when they find out I am gay. Things are stressful in school. I have lots of work and I work part time off campus.

Q How do you deal with the stress in your life? I imagine that being out in an HBCU environment might be a bit stressful at times, would you agree.

A I agree at times. I like to listen to music, I journal and hang with friends who care for me the way that I am.

Q I understand friends, journaling and music provide you with an outlet.

A yes

Q Why did you want to participate in the study? What drew you to the posted sign?

A I wanted to participate in the study because I thought it was cool that someone wanted to know. At most HBCUs it is not discussed. But seeing it posted on campus gave me a sense of pride. I just felt drawn to do it.

Q Are there any other thoughts or experiences that you would like to share with me before we conclude?

A No I don't think so.

Q Well thank you for your time.

A Your welcome.

Call ended

Interview #8: PIP 8

Q Hello may I speak with XXXX?

A Speaking

Q Hi, this is Yulanda I am contacting you regarding your agreement to complete a phone interview regarding, lesbian and gay African Americans in an HBCU setting.

A oh

Q Are you available

A If you give me a moment I can be ready

Q oh ok, would you like for me to call you back in a moment?

A No would you just hold on for a moment please, I had a friend over.

Q Ok

PAUSE

A Ok I am ready now

Q Thank you for sharing your time with me. The information that you provide is very important and I am very grateful that you are willing to share it with me.

A Oh you are welcome, no problem.

Q Great well lets get started. First I am going to read you an informational script, make sure that you don't have any questions, and then we will move into the questioning, ok

A Alright, I am ready

Q I'm contacting you concerning your interest to participate in the phone interview phase of my study examining the experiences and perceptions of lesbian and gay African-American college students attending an HBCU institution. Let me go over some general information about the study then we can begin the interview. Um, I will be asking you some open-ended questions based on the responses from first phase of this study. You are asked, once again, to consider your experiences and provide some additional information, clarification or expansions on the issues in the first phase. Please realize that you can refuse to answer any individual questions or provide perspectives or experiences that are not addressed specifically by the questions. The interview will be limited to 60 minutes and taped to ensure accuracy in data collection. Information

obtained during this second session will remain anonymous. Your name will not be linked to a specific interview or response. All your contact information will be destroyed after this interview is completed and all recorded data will be destroyed at the completion of the transcription process, which is why I am taping it because it has to be transcribed. If you have any questions or concerns, you can e-mail me or my supervisor, XXXX who was listed on the flyer and on the survey. Do you have any questions?

A No.

Q Well first off I would like to gain an understanding of what has your perception or experience been like attending an HBCU as a lesbian?

A For me being on this campus has been great. I have been out since high school so I really just don't care about what these folks have to say. I hear things at times, but when necessary I confront them about there bad attitudes. Most time people don't even know anyone gay. They just say things because they want to have someone to pick on. Well it's not going to be me.

Q ok so your biggest issue with being out on campus is people saying negative things.

A Although I really don't care, I guess if I have to say there is an aggravation that would be it.

Q Well you stated that you confront people, so do they at times make you upset?

A Well I guess so, it is so stupid, the things they say and the way they look at you.

Q Have you gotten into any fights?

A Only verbal with girls in the dorm. Let me tell you during my first year here I had this roommate who was a trip. However we worked it out and we are sort of friends now. It was a trip. Her mom and my mom where going at it over the phone. But it's all good now.

Q Ok so you have had a few people that you "were" not able to like due to judgment of you being lesbian, but now things are better?

A Yes, for the most part, however of course there are always going to be people just randomly tripping.

Q Are there any things which you find to be a benefit or a drawback to being at an HBCU and gay?

A I like being at an HBCU there is no other place I would like to be. Even though there are some crazy people there are a lot of nice and caring people who make the stay worthwhile.

Q Do you think that your college experience might be different if you attended a predominantly white college?

A Well I am from Birmingham and they seem to not care if I was gay or not. I am a pretty verbal and out there girl. I try to wear something gay everyday to show my pride.

Q Explain what you mean.

A I think whites just don't care. They have other things to worry about other than who I like to have sex with.

Q So you think that things would be better?

A I guess so; I just don't think that at a predominantly white school that people would care as much.

Q Do you feel that you have been accepted in you family as being gay?

A I am out in my family. They all know. I am lucky. My mom talks to all of my friends and gives me advice about relationships when I ask her. At first she was very

upset. Her cried and did not speak to me too much. However after a while she came around and we now have a great relationship. Even her new husband is fine with it. We all get along great.

Q So at first it was stressful, and it got better. What do you think caused your mom to come around?

A Well we always had a good relationship. I think that she already had an idea. I just never liked boys the way my sister did.

Q How did you feel during the transition time?

A Transition time?

Q The time when things were tense; when she was not talking to you, do you remember how you felt?

A It was crazy. It was odd not having my mom there to talk to me. It was hard seeing her upset. But what could I do. I knew that I just did not like boys. It was hard.

Q At that time did you think that you might loose the relationship with your mother?

A It crossed my mind, but my sister encouraged me to just hang in. She helped a lot. She talked to my mother too.

Q Earlier you talked about people on campus saying mean things and judging you. You also stated that at times you felt you needed to confront people.

A right...

Q That compounded with school sounds like it can be stressful at times. Right?

A It can be, but I try to not let it get me down.

Q How do you deal with that stress?

A Stressed. When I get stressed I hang with friends, go out or go shopping.

Q Ok so hanging out with friends helps and getting away from the situation.

A yup. I have a group of friends that I always feel good when I am with them.

Q XXXX why did you want to participate in the study? What drew you to the posted sign?

A I wanted to let the word know that gay people are cool and we have a very serious voice. Get to know one before you judge one.

Q Wow that sounds like you. I appreciate you sharing that. Are there any other statements that you would like to add to the interview?

A No; PAUSE

A I am glad that you are doing it.

Q Well of course, your issues are important to me.

A Not many people feel that way.

Q I am sorry about that. PAUSE. Can you think of anything more?

A No

Q Ok that is going to conclude the interview. I appreciate your input. Thank you.

A You're welcomed.

CALL ENDED

APPENDIX K

Auburn University Institutional Review Board Approval



Office of Human Subjects Research
307 Sanford Hall
Auburn University, AL 36849

Telephone: 334-844-5966
Fax: 334-844-4391
hsubjec@auburn.edu

July 31, 2008

MEMORANDUM TO: Yulanda Tyre
Counselor Education Counseling Psychology

PROTOCOL TITLE: "Understanding African American Lesbian and Gay development within a
Historically Black College Environment"

IRB AUTHORIZATION NO: 08-161 EP 0807

APPROVAL DATE: July 26, 2008
EXPIRATION DATE: July 25, 2009

The above referenced protocol was approved by IRB Expedited procedure under 45 CFR 46.110 (Category #7):

"Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

You should report to the IRB any proposed changes in the protocol or procedures and any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others. Please reference the above authorization number in any future correspondence regarding this project.

If you will be unable to file a Final Report on your project before July 25, 2009, you must submit a request for an extension of approval to the IRB no later than July 11, 2009. If your IRB authorization expires and/or you have not received written notice that a request for an extension has been approved prior to July 25, 2009, you must suspend the project immediately and contact the Office of Human Subjects Research for assistance.

A Final Report will be required to close your IRB project file. You are reminded that you must use the stamped, IRB-approved informed consent when you consent your participants. Please remember that signed consent forms must be retained at least three years after completion of your study.

If you have any questions concerning this Board action, please contact the Office of Human Subjects Research at 844-5966.

Sincerely,

Kathy Jo Ellison, RN, DSN, CIP
Chair of the Institutional Review Board
for the Use of Human Subjects in Research

cc: Dr. Debra Cobia
Dr. Jamie Carney

APPENDIX L

Alabama State University Institutional Review Board Approval

Ms Tyree,

The IRB file number for your project is 2008052701. The overall registration number with the Office for Human Research Protections of the U.S. Dept. Of Health and Human Services for ASU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) is IORG0005513. ASU's IRB number is IRB00006630 and the assurance number for human subjects' research is FWA00013366.

Thelma C. Ivery, Ph.D.

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

PH 110A/Campus Box 146

Alabama State University

Montgomery, Alabama

Office Phone: 334 229 4316

FAX 334 229 4916

APPENDIX M

Alabama A & M Institutional Review Board Approval

Tyre IRB 1

ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY
Office of Institutional Research, Planning and Sponsored Programs
PO Box 411
4900 Meridian Street, NW
Normal, AL 35762

IRB# AAMU-113

Application for Approval of a Research Project Involving Human Subjects

I, Yulanda Tyre, the Principal Investigator, submit to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) this form along with one copy of a research proposal entitled: Understanding African American Lesbian and Gay within a Historically Black College Environment; as well as one copy of a one page abstract in lay terminology and the informed consent document.

I understand the need to protect the rights of human subjects in biomedical and behavioral research and assure that I will:

- 1. obtain informed consent of subjects who are to participate in this research project.
2. report to the Institutional Review Board any unanticipated effects harmful to subjects which become apparent during the research.
3. cooperate with the continuing review of this research project by submitting annual reports and a final report.
4. obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering the project or implementing changes in the approval consent form.
5. maintain all documentation such as consent forms, progress reports, data as required by the institution and Federal Regulations.

Signature: Yulanda Tyre Date: June 16, 2008
Title: Doctoral Candidate, Auburn University Department: Counselor Leadership
Phone#: (Office) 334-229-4482 (Home) 334-277-3651 E-Mail: tyre@alasu.edu; tyreyul@auburn.edu

By my signature above, I declare the above named research involving human subjects to be: (Check one)

- 1. Exempt according to category number listed in Appendix 1 **
X 2. Expeditable according to category number listed in Appendix 2 **
3. Other and must be reviewed by the IRB.

*Short Title:

** 45 CFR 46, Subpart A: Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects