

Developmental Networks, Black Feminist Thought, and Black Women Federal  
Senior Executives: A Case Study Approach

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## Abstract

Private and public sector organizations have become increasingly interested in promoting diversity. This interest has led to extensive growth in mentoring research and the design of a more expanded concept, developmental networks. Little empirical research informs our understanding of Black women in developmental networks and their political identities within those networks.

This qualitative study, within the framework of grounded theory method and of case study research, examines two research questions:

- (1) What do Black women federal senior executives value within their developmental networks?
- (2) How do Black women federal senior executives construct political identity within their developmental networks?

Applying the conceptual framework of Black feminist thought and developmental network support theories the study examined the developmental relationships of three Black women senior executives. This research highlights the development of a group of high achievers and the contributions of their self-identified support systems.

Data analysis from unstructured person-to-person interviews, a questionnaire, and researcher theoretical memos identified the themes support network, self-definition and self-determination, and ecology of life. The most visible codes were significant friendship, workplace behavior, social network composition, and Black woman

In conclusion, the women valued relationships that produced psychosocial outcomes such as friendship, trust, honesty, direct feedback, and reciprocity. They also valued relationships where they received workplace guidance and career exposure from mentor, friend, sponsor, and ally developers within or outside of the workplace. The women developed networks that provided closeness and consisted of developers from different social arenas. They defined their political identities, roles, coping strategies for life challenges and fostered relationships that recognized the importance of ethnic/racial respect, and understanding personal strength. In addition, the women preferred informal developmental relationships with Black and male developers of different ages.

Due to a small sample size, self-reported data and the application of grounded theory method, the findings of this study were interpreted with caution. Provided were recommendations for future research and practice.

## Dedication

It is through HIM that all things are possible. I dedicate this study to the memory of my mother and father, Elaine Frances Easley and William Banks Easley, for their unconditional love and commitment to academic excellence. To my adoring wife, Jacqueline Anne Easley, your support and constant unselfishness allowed me to complete this journey. To the most remarkable children on the planet, Monique Inez Easley and Isaiah William Easley, whose teachings, patience, and understanding I will always value.

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## Chapter I

**“The fact that the adult American Negro female emerges a formidable character is often met with amazement, distaste, and even belligerence. It is seldom accepted as an inevitable outcome of the struggle won by survivors, and deserves respect if not enthusiastic acceptance.”**

*Maya Angelou* (Gaines, 2003)

Prior to his departure on a journey in *The Odyssey*, King Odysseus asked his trusted and wise friend, Mentor, to protect, guide, and teach his son, Telemachus. This story represents the origin of the mentorship concept linked to workplace success around the globe. For the past three decades, researchers have conceptualized mentoring as the developmental assistance provided by a more senior individual within a protégé’s organization (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001; Kram, 1983, 1985; Levinson, D.J., Darrow, Klein, Levinson, M.H., & McKee, 1978; Noe, 1988a, 1988b; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The mentoring relationship was, and for some perceived exclusively, as a single dyadic relationship where the mentor serves as a teacher and adviser.

Recently, scholars have begun to revisit the seminal work of Kram (1985) to integrate components of social network theory, and to challenge the idea that protégés have not just one, but multiple individuals for developmental support in their careers known as “relationship constellations” or “developmental networks” (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; van Emmerik, 2004). An individual’s developmental network includes those people a protégé acknowledges as taking an active interest in and action to advance their career by providing developmental assistance (Higgins, 2000).

This chapter introduced the background and statement of the problem. It provided the research questions, purpose, limitations, significance, definition of terms and organization of the

study. The material covered in this Chapter offered a platform for understanding and defining the problem addressed by this case study.

### **Background of the Problem**

In the fall of 2001, I accepted a position with a federal organization as an organization development specialist. At that time, approximately 50% of the employees of the organization were Black. Compared with other federal organizations, this number represented an unusually high percentage of Blacks in an organization (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2003). Approximately 39% of the employees with the organization were Black women, along with approximately 11% Black men. At that time, Black men occupied four of the 19 Senior Executive Service slots. When I entered the organization, no Black woman had received a Senior Executive Service appointment. The organization did not place its first Black woman in a Senior Executive Service position until 2004. This reality served as the catalyst for my desire to understand the political identity and developmental network of Black women senior executives in the federal government. A reasonable place to begin was to identify some of the workplace obstacles faced by underrepresented populations and discuss the movement from mentoring to developmental networks.

**Barriers in the workplace.** The merits of working in a diverse workplace have been presented in public (Soni, 2000), academic (Dolan, 2004), and private (Ely & Thomas, 2001) sectors. However, certain groups in the workplace have faced many barriers while trying to ascend the corporate ladder.

For women, two prominent obstructive conditions are the “glass ceiling” (Mitra, 2003; Morrison, White, & van Velsor, 1987) and “Queen Bee Syndrome” (Kelly, 1993; Staines, Tavis, & Jayaratne, 1974). The glass-ceiling phenomenon occurs when women can see into the

realm of upper management, but are not able to reach it. The Queen Bee Syndrome presents itself when a woman believes she advanced in her profession exclusively because she was better than other women were. As she saw it, her rise within the ranks is something she attributes to her individual merit, and she therefore perceived this as the sole means for other women to experience similar success. Therefore, such women chose not to become part of a developmental network. This choice can make the quest difficult for women protégés who seek career guidance from those of the same-sex.

Women and members of minority groups are more likely to encounter barriers to information, have underdeveloped social networks, and experience employment discrimination and harassment in the workplace more than their male non-ethnic minority peers. As noted by Bierema (2005), all groups tend to have limited knowledge acquisition because the majority racial or ethnic group controls the communication channels. White men received management training, attended professional conferences and seminars, and are concentrated at higher career levels than others (Smithey & Lewis, 1998).

Gunn (2005) found that the availability of Black male mentors and role models in the work environment of Black women serve as predictors of the women's ability to formulate policy at the highest level within an organization. Research studies have demonstrated how support received in developmental relationships can help Black women in managerial positions overcome barriers to advancement (Combs, 2003; Thomas, 1990, 1993). Recognizing the power of such relationships, private and public sector organizations have created cultures that promote this practice with hopes of adding diversity within their managerial ranks. As a result, the number of Black women managers has increased, but not in significant numbers (Combs, 2003; Thomas, 1990, 1993).

Like many racial/ethnic minority groups, Black women experienced low representation in influential leadership roles within the corporate world. In 2000, out of 10,092 corporate officers, just 106 or 1.1% were Black women (Catalyst, 2004). Factors that contributed to this low representation were stereotypes; visibility; scrutiny; questioning of credibility and authority. Additional factors included: lack of fit in the workplace; double outsider status; lack of connection with influential others; and exclusion from informal networks.

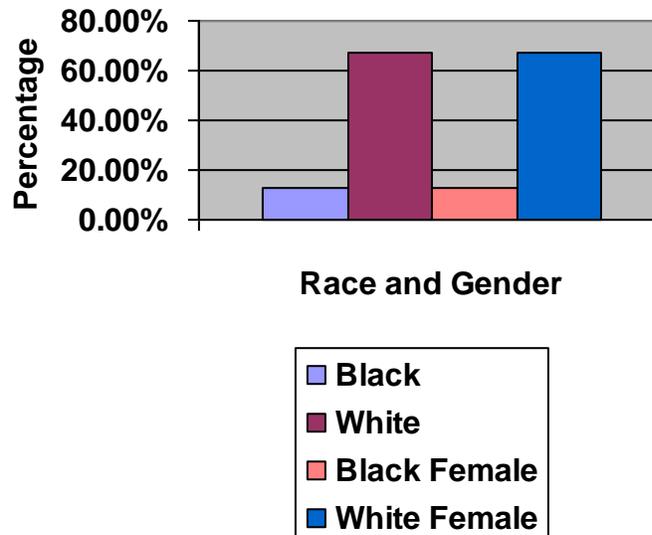
Black women face a daily struggle to establish themselves as competent professionals as they battle negative stereotypes (Blake-Beard, 1999). From my own observation, this persistent dilemma contributes to the creation of a psychologically challenging and often traumatic workplace for Black women.

Based on an extensive literature review conducted by Combs (2003), data from several studies revealed the dissimilarity of the status and advancement of Black women in comparison with White women. When examining the struggles of women managers, results show that Black women experience lower promotion rates than White women managers, occupational job segregation, pressures to modify gender and occupational roles, and negative career outcome experiences tied to racism and sexism.

After identifying workplace barriers confronting women and minorities, provided are United States population and federal employee race and gender figures.

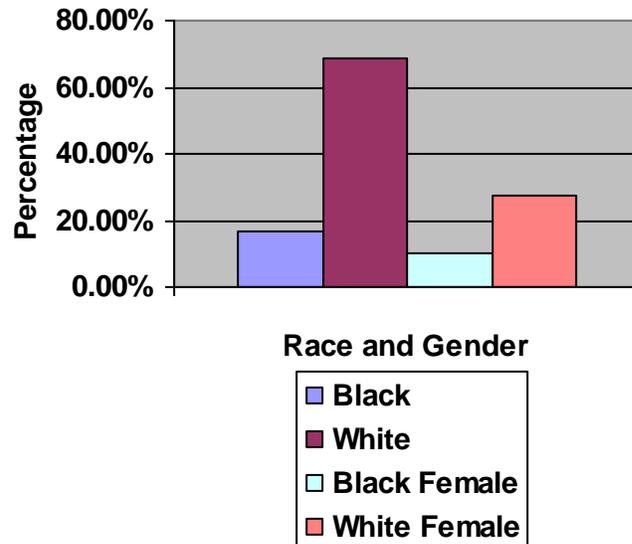
**Diversity in the federal workplace.** This section provided a representative picture of the national and federal workforce based on race and gender. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2004), Blacks (men and women) represented approximately 12.5% of the American population (see Figure 1.1), while White Americans (men and women) represented 67.6% of the

American population. White women represented 67.6% of the American women's population while Black women represented 13.1%.



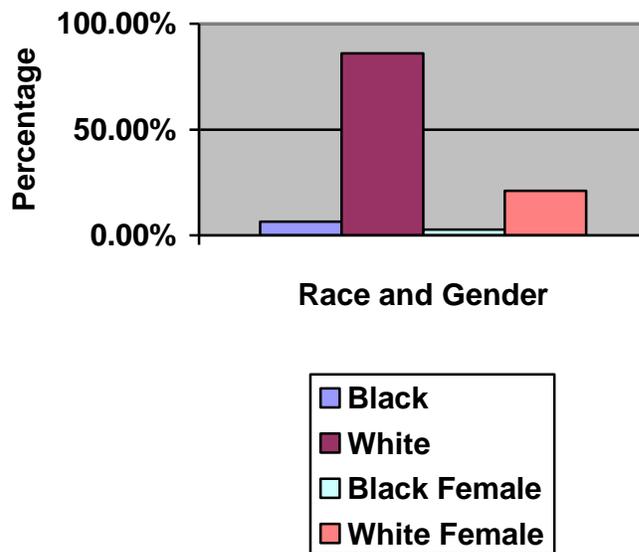
*Figure 1.1.* Percentage overall U.S population by race and gender.

According to the 2004 U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Central Personnel Data File (CPDF), Blacks (men and women) comprised 16.9% (see Figure 1.2) of all federal pay plans of the federal government workforce. Blacks in the federal government represented a higher percentage than that of Blacks in the country's overall population. According to the same source, Whites (men and women) comprised 68.6% of all federal pay plans, which was comparable to the national percentage of White Americans. Black women comprised 10.4% of all federal pay plans while White women comprised 27.5%.



*Figure 1.2.* Percentage federal workforce- all pay levels race and gender.

At the senior pay level within the federal government, Blacks (men and women) represented 6.5% (see Figure 1.3) of the senior executives while Whites (men and women) represented 86%. Black women represented 2.7% of senior executives while White women represented 21% of federal senior executives. Compared with the national and government-wide population figures, women are underrepresented at the senior executive level of the U.S. Federal Government.



*Figure 1.3.* Percentage federal workforce- senior pay level by race and gender.

According to a January 2003 Government Accountability Office Report, federal workforce projections indicated more than half of the 6,100 career members of the senior executive service will retire by 2007 (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 2003). The report also projected that during the four years from 2003 to 2007; only 26 additional Black women joined the Senior Executive Service (SES) workforce, representing 4.5% of the total. However, according to 2006 Demographic Profile of the Federal Workforce, Black women Senior Executives remained 2.7% of the total.

The Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) at the time stated that attempts to diversify the SES pool were a high priority for OPM. In 2003, the Director unveiled a new Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SCDP) designed to train qualified women, minorities, and people with disabilities to take on roles at the top levels of federal government. A mandatory requirement of the SCDP was that each candidate must acquire a SES mentor. A dearth of research existed that examined these special mentor/protégé

dyads from a protégé or mentor's perspective (Ritchie & Connolly, 1993; Smith, Howard, & Harrington, 2005). Even less research examined the developmental networks of Black women senior executives in the federal government.

Thorough examination of the above data indicated a continuous reduction in Black representation on the national, overall federal, and senior executive levels. There was a significant difference in the earnings of Black and White employees in this nation.

**Pay differentials.** Mitra (2003) found that Black women earned significantly less than Black men did. In addition, the supervisory positions held by Black women were far less meaningful than those held by Black men and White women. According to median weekly earning statistics collected by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (2005), Black women earned \$15 per week less than their White counterparts in the United States did. Confronted with such tremendous workplace obstacles, Black women could benefit from strong developmental relationships that could help them prepare for and transition into higher paying positions (Catalyst, 2004).

**From mentoring to developmental networks.** Since the seminal work of Kram (1985), much has been written about mentoring. For more than two decades, several publications have reviewed available mentoring research (Hughes, L, 1997; Megginson, 2000; Merriam, 1983; Molloy, 2005; Noe, 1988a&b; Hughes, D., 1997; Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett, 2003). Research about mentoring specific populations such as women (Ragins & Cotton, 1991) and minorities (Thomas, 1993) has been conducted. The research of Kram (1985 & 1983) and others (Chao, Walz, & Gardiner, 1992; Levesque, O'Neill, Nelson, & Dumas, 2005; Ragins, 1999; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000) identified and investigated career and psychosocial mentor functions. Research has examined different types of mentorships such as formal (Allen & O'Brien, 2006; Chao, Walz

& Gardiner, 1992; Douglas & McCauley, 1999), peer (Allen, Russell, & Maetzke 1997), e-mentoring (electronic) (Headlam-Wells, Gosland, & Craig, 2005), traditional (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001), and dialogic (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000). Mentoring research has explored the benefits (Burke, 1984; Fagenson, 1988; Noe, 1988a; and Scandura, 1992), barriers (Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1994), and challenges of such relationships. There is also research about the negative impact of mentoring (Eby & Allen, 2002). In addition, there is evidence that some mentoring relationships may demonstrate no measurable or visible growth (Daloz, 1988).

However, with few exceptions, much of the research has focused on all-White populations (Thomas, 1990). Blake-Beard (1999) suggested a need for future qualitative research to acquire greater comprehension of the Black women's subjective feelings regarding their careers, with emphasis on their ability to receive and benefit from mentoring. She noted that the research focused exclusively on Black women protégés has been minimal.

Within the past few years, the reconceptualization of mentoring has created an expanded functional scope to include more than a single or primary mentor (Higgins and Kram, 2001). Current developmental network literature refers the term *developer* as someone chosen by the protégé to promote instrumental or expressive activities (Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Kram & Higgins, 2008). The terms "instrumental and expressive" have a supplemental relationship with the terms "psychosocial and career", respectively. Found in earlier mentoring literature, instrumental relationships promote career advancement events such as sponsorship, protections, visibility, and access to extended power networks. Expressive relationships promote psychosocial activities and experience that renders encouragement, safety, advice, and work-life balance.

Developmental networks for minority professionals played an even more critical role in their ability to climb the corporate ladder (Thomas, 1990). Minority professionals often confronted racial and ethnic discriminatory behavior in the workplace. A successful developmental network with multiple instrumental and expressive relationships characterized by trust, honesty, a willingness to learn about self and others, and the ability to share power and privilege can nurture the autonomy and promote the strengths minority employees need to circumvent the harsh sting of discrimination in the workplace (Stanley, 2005). Black women are challenged to overcome the dual obstacles of racism and sexism (Hackett & Byers, 1996). Multiple relationships with several developers (formerly known as mentors) may help Black women to overcome such challenges.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Some believed that reliance on sources other than traditional mentors is likely to be more important to individual career development (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003). Other than mentors, there are other types of developmental relationships to help promote a protégés career and psychosocial growth. The concept of developmental networks suggested that mentoring could occur in alternative forms.

According to Black feminist thought literature, Black women share a historical reality and, thus, a common worldview (Few, 2007). The critical journey toward self-definition and self-determination offers a powerful challenge to the externally defined and controlling images of Black women (Collins, 2000a, 200b). When Black women define themselves and identify their own reality or their perceived life experience, they reject the assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to interpret their reality are entitled to do so.

The concepts of self-definition and self-determination have emerged as relevant to the notion of developmental relationships (Rock & Garavan, 2006). These concepts relate to the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. Ryan & Deci (2000) argue that situations that enhance self-determination are likely to increase an individual's level of interest to participate in developmental relationships. The ideology of Black feminist thought asserts self-determination and self-definition are essential characteristics that must be present to facilitate growth and development of Black women (Collins, 2000a, 200b; King, 1988). Collins asserts that rather than defining self in opposition to others, the connectedness among individuals, i.e., developmental relationships, provides Black women deeper, more meaningful self-definitions. It therefore should be an integral part of the conceptual framework for this study, as it will allow us to understand Black women's personal and professional growth experience. This understanding includes both psychosocial growth as an outcome of personal counseling and career growth as an outcome of performance coaching (Kram, 1985).

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following questions:

- (1) What do Black women federal senior executives value within their developmental networks?
- (2) How do Black women federal senior executives construct political identity within their developmental networks?

### **Purpose of the Study**

No research studies were found that explore the developmental networks of Black women, who have reached the Senior Executive Service. The study's objectives centered on learning more about the types of developmental networks identified by Black women senior

executives. More specifically, it allowed the examination of the journey of Black women senior executives in the federal government and identified critical elements of their self-selected significant relationships.

The study provided a qualitative inquiry, using grounded theory that identified preferred aspects of developmental relationships with Black women protégés within a developmental network. The study examined how these developmental networks contributed to the psychosocial, career, and political identity development of Black women members of the Senior Executive Service.

### **Limitations of the Research**

As with all grounded theory, the findings had limited application to the broader population. With only three co-researchers and one specific case, it is not possible to apply these findings to all Black women federal executives. The findings were limited because of the exclusive use of Black women.

The co-researchers within the study are senior executives, which excluded application of the findings to those Black women at lower federal pay-grade levels. As each co-researcher was an employee of the public sector, there was limited application of such findings to those employed in the private sector.

### **Significance of the Study**

Higgins & Thomas (2001) claimed that research has examined the effects of mentoring assistance from a series of dyadic relationships over the course of an individual's career; however, studies of developmental networks are rare. Williams, Brewley, Reed, White, and Davis-Haley (2005); claimed more research on mentoring relationships and Black women is required with Black feminist thought as the conceptual framework for these investigations.

Allen, Eby, O'Brien, and Lentz (2008) examined the state of mentoring research and found that mentoring research has flourished in the last 20 years. However, of the 207 studies reviewed in their study, only 10.1% of the research designs were qualitative or a combined qualitative and quantitative, indicating a lack of such studies about mentoring.

While research has demonstrated that Black women chief executive officers recognize the value and importance of developmental relationships in the workplace (Sherrod, 2001), few studies have attempted to link the functions of the developmental network phenomenon with Black women in the workplace.

The findings of this study offered insight into the value and type of relationships Black women have in their developmental networks. This research provided greater understanding and awareness of the developmental needs of Black women executives for those committed to creating and managing leadership programs. Those tasked to offer executive coaching services may also acquire professional insight because of this research. Those who are part of the developmental network of prospective Black women executives could gain greater knowledge regarding the needs of this unique population and therefore, be of greater service.

The results of this research may offer information and inspiration to prospective members of the Senior Executive Service and demonstrate that securing a position at that level is an attainable goal.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purpose of this research, related terms are defined as follows:

*Black*- a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "Black, African, or Negro," or provide written entries such as

Black, Afro American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian. For the purpose of this study, the terms *Black* and African American are used synonymously.

(U.S. Census Bureau (2000), Definition of subject characteristics. Retrieved February 12, 2011, from <http://www.census.gov/population/cen2000/phc-2-a-B.pdf>.)

*Developer*- people the protégés named who provided mentoring functions (career and psychosocial) in expressive and instrumental relationships. Developers may or may not be senior-level individuals working in the same organization as the protégé (Higgins & Thomas, 2001, p. 224).

*Developmental Network or Developmental Constellation*- a particular type of egocentric network comprised of the set of people or multiple developmental relationships the protégés names as taking an interest in and action to advance the protégé's career by providing developmental assistance. For the purpose of this study, the terms *developmental network* and *developmental constellation* are used synonymously (Chandler & Kram, 2005, p. 548; Higgins & Thomas, 2001, p. 224).

*Developmental Relationship*- a relationship in which an individual takes an active interest in and acts to advance another's career by providing developmental assistance (Higgins & Kram, 2001, p. 268).

*Expressive (or Psychosocial) Relationship*- a developmental relationship that provides psychosocial support functions such as encouragement in trying times, a safe outlet for discussion of career troubles, advice about coping with the unique stresses of the job, and considerations about work/life balance (Rock & Garavan, 2006, p. 340).

*Instrumental (or Career) Relationship* - a developmental relationship that provides career support functions such as sponsorship, protection, visibility, and access to extended powerful networks (Rock & Garavan, 2006, p. 340).

*Mentoring*- a dyadic relationship in which the mentor provides guidance and support to the protégé (Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy, 2001, p. 420).

*Mentors*- individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward support and mobility to their protégés' careers by providing two general types of behaviors or functions: career development functions and psychosocial functions (Ragins & Cotton, 1999, p. 2).

*Political Identity*- the Black feminist belief that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of their own identity as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression (Smith, 2000, p. 267).

*Protégés*- individuals who receive career support and mobility from mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999, p. 2).

*Self-determination*- the power to decide one's own destiny (Collins, 2000a, p. 300).

*Self-definition*- the power to name one's own reality (Collins, 2000a, p. 300).

*Standpoint*- refers to a particular position or angle of vision in which an individual experiences his or her life (Coker, 2003, p. 659).

## **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is composed of five chapters:

- Chapter I provides an introduction to the study including the background and statement of the problem, research questions, purpose of the study, limitations of the study, significance of the study, definition of terms, and organization of the study;
- Chapter II contains a concise review of mentoring literature including historical insights, the evolution of the concept, and areas related to mentoring in the workplace. The theoretical framework for the study consists of a review of related research of developmental networks, feminist theory, Black feminist thought, an integrative analysis of the theoretical framework, and a summary;
- Chapter III provides the selected research method including information about case studies, the research design, organizational context, organizational setting, co-researcher selection criteria, sampling, the pilot study, data collection procedures, and methods of analyses;
- Chapter IV provides the research findings including background of the co-researchers, findings that pertain to the two research questions, and a summary;
- Chapter V consists of a discussion of the findings, recommendations for future research, recommendations for practice, and conclusions;
- Supportive references, tables, figures, and appendices are provided.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

No one-research study identified examines how Black women addressed the barriers attributed to race, gender, and social class in their career to attain the position of Senior Executive. This literature review provided a multidisciplinary conceptual framework of key theories and research related to the research questions:

- (1) How do Black women federal senior executives describe relationships within their developmental networks?
- (2) How do Black women federal senior executives construct political identity within their developmental networks?

This chapter reviews literature that offers a historical and conceptual awareness of mentoring. It contains an examination of mentoring to include informal and formal applications, alternative forms, benefits, barriers, and mentoring for Black women. A broad understanding of mentoring is critical to the full comprehension of developmental networks.

After anchoring the literature review with an overview of mentoring, an immersion of the theoretical framework follows. That includes the examination of literature related to developmental networks and Black feminist theory. Integrating concepts of interpersonal networks and social networks with mentoring theory shapes the theoretical components of developmental networks. A review of such literature helps distinguish the dyadic dynamic of mentoring from the multi-interpersonal dynamics of developmental networks. The literature review defined developmental networks and identified the dimensions, typology, and support functions of developmental networks.

This literature review provided insight about the political identity of Black women through the lens of Black feminist thought. This section begins with an overview of feminist theory to offer a context and visualize the origin of Black feminist thought. The literature review connected issues of race, class, and gender with the critical variables of self-determination and self-definition as fundamental components of Black feminist thought. To embrace the uniqueness of Black feminist thought, the study defined and described the outsider-within phenomenon that has plagued Black women since their enslavement. Described are the five features that separate Black feminist thought theory from other feminist theories. To join developmental network theory and Black feminist thought theory, I completed this literature review with an integrative analysis.

### **Historical Foundation**

Literature from both scholars and practitioners refer to Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, as the first recorded usage of the term "mentor," in Western civilization. When the King of Ithaca, Odysseus, was away fighting in the Trojan War, he placed the care of his son, Telemachus in the hands of his trusted friend and advisor, Mentos (Mentor). An ironic twist in the poem is that Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom and War, frequently appeared to Telemachus disguised as Mentos. The proposal that Mentos was actually a "goddess" appearing in a variety of human and animal forms is quite interesting, and especially as one reviews the male dominated work of D.J. Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978), *The Seasons of a Man's Life*.

Considered by many scholars to be the foundation of mentoring research, *The Seasons of a Man's Life* studied 40 White men ages 35-45 as it traced their development to adulthood. While Levinson's study suggested young men had successful mentors with whom they connected

in their early adult life, it did little to explain the developmental needs of women, men outside the age range in the study, or persons of different racial or ethnic identity. These limitations created a need to explore the concept further and diversify the meaning of mentoring to include members of other gender, age, and ethnic groups.

From *The Odyssey* to Levinson, et al. (1978), little changed with regard to the concept of mentoring. Viewed as a gender- and race-exclusive event targeting White men, post-Levinson era mentoring literature guided by the seminal work of Kathy Kram (1985), has become a more blended concept.

### **The Evolutionary Concept of Mentoring**

Strong empirical evidence consistently indicates the benefits of mentoring. However, just what mentoring means differs among both scholars and practitioners (Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Multiple operational definitions of mentoring are available. In early literature reviews (Merriam, 1983) and in more recent work (Wanberg et al., 2003), an evident and clear consistency is the lack of a universal definition of the term. The concepts of mentoring reflect several different descriptors such as age, workplace power and status, functions of the relationship and gender. Contemporary mentoring research has expanded the concept to include several different mentoring typologies (Allen, Russell, & Maetzke, 1997; Allen & O'Brien, 2006; Booth, 1996; Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001; Headlam-Wells, Gosland, & Craig, 2005; McGuire & Reger, 2003; Richie & Genoni, 2002), models (Carden, 1990; Gibb, 1994; Kram, 1983), and target groups (Blake-Beard, 2001; Burke, 2001; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Thomas, 1990, 1993). Below, several mentoring definitions depict the evolving characteristics of mentoring.

Levinson, et al. (1978), in one of the earliest formal interpretations of mentoring defined a mentor as a person several years older, of greater experience and seniority in the world the young *man* is entering and one who serves as a teacher, advisor, or sponsor. Levinson defined mentoring by its relationships and character and not by its functions. Though he admitted that his research had gender limitations, he stated there is evidence that women have even fewer mentoring opportunities, same-gender, or cross-gender, than men do. Along with the noted gender bias, the work promotes an age bias in that he believed a young man in early adulthood should have a mentor. Burke (1984) incorporated a concept inclusive of both genders as he states, "...a mentor is usually several years older, a person of greater experience and seniority in the world the young man or woman is entering" (p. 356).

Kram (1985) in her seminal work viewed a mentor as an experienced, high-ranking organization member who assists in the career development of the protégé by serving as a coach, sponsor, and advocate. Noe's research (1988a, 1988b) supports Kram's views. Ragins and Cotton (1991 & 1993) defined a mentor as "a high ranking, influential member of (an) organization who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to providing upward mobility and support to (someone's) career."

As Fagenson (1988) examined the protégé impact of mentoring, she applied the following definition: "a mentor (is)...someone in a position of power who looks out for you, or gives you advice, or brings your accomplishments to the attention of other people who have power in the company" (p. 186). Given this definition, more recent researchers such as Allen, Russell, and Maetzke (1997); Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy (2001); and Rymer (2002) have challenged the necessity of "power" as a mentor construct.

Whitley, Dougherty, & Dreher (1992) offered two conceptual views that use the relationship's duration as a critical variable. Classical mentoring occurs when the developmental relationship is of relatively long duration, is intense, mostly exclusive, and is one in which a protégé receives a range of career-oriented and psychosocial help from one senior manager. The second conceptual view contends that mentoring is of a shorter duration, less intense, with multiple and less exclusive relationships that are more specialized in the kind of progress-oriented functions provided to mentees. Mullen (1998) offered a more simplified definition as she described mentoring as a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced member (mentor) and a less experienced member (protégé) of an organization or profession.

Allen, Poteet, and Russell, (2000) described mentors as, “persons usually considered as more experienced, who support, train, ‘teach the ropes to’ or sponsor others as they pursue their career goals” (p. 275). This concept is more flexible in that it broadens the scope of mentoring with an indication that a mentor may or may not be more experienced than the protégé. For the purpose of their studies, Godshalk & Sosik (2000) defined mentoring as a “deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-on goal of having the skilled person grow and develop specific competencies” (p. 299-300). This concept suggested that growth and development should be the experience exclusively for the protégé. Day and Allen (2004) offered a general definition that described a mentor as an experienced employee who serves as a role model and provides support and direction to a protégé. A common theme of these definitions is that the mentor has more experience than the protégé.

## **Review of Mentoring Research in the Workplace**

The majority of the existing research on mentoring in the workplace was published after the early 1970s (Burke, 1984; Daloz, 1988; 1978; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Kram, 1983; Levinson, et al.; Noe, 1988a, 1988b; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Scandura, 1992; Thomas, 2001;). Wanberg et al (2003) identified five primary areas of empirical research on mentoring in the workplace: (a) outcomes of mentoring; (b) the role of diversity in mentoring; (c) the role of other individual characteristics in mentoring; (d) dynamics of mentoring relationships; and (e) formal mentoring programs. Most relevant to this study is the empirical research that addresses: (a) informal and formal mentoring; (b) alternative forms of mentoring; (c) benefits of mentoring; (d) barriers to mentoring; and (e) Black women and mentoring.

**Informal and formal mentoring.** The two most common forms of workplace mentoring examined in the research literature are informal and formal. The fundamental distinction between the two lies in the formation or origin of the relationship (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). An informal mentoring relationship is not created by the organization but occurs spontaneously due to similar interests or roles between two parties. Formal mentoring relationships are created and managed by the organization and generally represent an assigned dyad (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992).

**Informal mentoring.** Kathy Kram (1985) noted that informal relationships arise from a joint attraction between the mentor and the protégé. As the mentor approaches old age, they examine their legacy and wish to share their acquired knowledge and wisdom. The mentor seeks to acquire a sense of personal fulfillment that they have contributed to the professional life of the younger protégé.

Kram (1983) identified four phases of the mentoring cycle: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. The *initiation phase* represents the time that the relationship starts. Kram describes this period as one of “fantasy” during which the mentor is admired and respected for his or her competence or capacity to provide support and guidance. During this phase, the protégé begins to feel cared for, supported, and respected by the mentor. The mentor begins to perceive the protégé as someone who is “coachable.” The possibility of contributing to the protégé’s growth and success is impetus for setting the relationship in motion.

The *cultivation phase* is when the positive expectations that emerged during the *initiation phase* are tested against reality. As the relationship unfolds, each member of the dyad discovers the real value of relating to the other. During this phase, the range of action-oriented career/instrumental functions (i.e., performance coaching, exposure/visibility, protection, and/or sponsorship) and reflection-oriented psychosocial/expressive functions (i.e., counseling, friendship, role modeling, acceptance, and confirmation) characterize a mentoring relationship’s peak. The boundaries clarified during this phase may lead to richer intimacy and personal meaning or disappointment in discovering the relationship may not meet important developmental needs.

The *separation phase* demonstrates changes in the functions provided by the relationship and in the affective experiences of both the mentor and protégé. As the protégé experiences greater independence and autonomy, the “separation” occurs both structurally and psychologically. The protégé may experience feelings of loss, turmoil, and anxiety. When both the mentor and protégé realize the relationship is no longer in its previous form, they experience the end of this phase.

The relationship transforms primarily into a friendship during the *redefinition phase*. There is less evidence of psychosocial and career functions with the protégé entering the relationship on equal footing. Therefore, the mentor is removed from the "cognitive pedestal" of the protégé. The excitement of the first two phases is replaced with gratitude and realism.

Lois J. Zachary (2000) offered four terms that parallel those in Kram's research to describe the possible phases of successful mentoring: *preparing*, *negotiating*, *enabling*, and *closure*. Zachary saw learning as the fundamental process and primary purpose of informal mentoring. Based on the assumptions of Knowles' (1968, 1975, 1980, 1984, & 1995) Andragogical Model of Learning, the following concepts distinguishes the adult learner from the child learner:

1. The adult learner's concept is increasingly self-directed.
2. The adult learner's experience serves as a rich resource for learning by self and others.
3. The adult learners' readiness to learn develops from life tasks and problems.
4. The adult learners' orientation to learning is task or problem-centered.
5. The adult learners' motivation to learn is fueled by internal incentives and curiosity.

Generated discussions within an informal mentorship are more likely to move beyond career-related issues to more in-depth and personal issues (Chao et al., 1992; Noe, 1988a). Informal mentorships have a greater tendency than formal mentorships to experience interaction outside office confines (Friday, Friday, & Green, 2004). After discussing the different phases of informal mentoring and its relationship to adult learning theory, an examination of formal mentorship literature is below.

***Formal mentoring.*** A large amount of research has been conducted on informal mentoring applying a variety of methods to support or expand Kram's ( 1983&1985 ) two-function (behavior) model (Smith, Howard, & Harrington, 2005). The extent of this research has led to the meteoric trend of multiple organizations attempting to replicate the well-documented benefits of informal mentoring as an employee development tool. Over the past decade, several scholarly and popular press articles and books have offered best practices and steps to design formal mentoring programs (Allen, Lentz, & Eby, 2006; Murray, 1991). However, few of these recommendations have strong empirical evidence that validates their suggestions (Allen et al., 2006). Few studies according to Smith et al. (2005) have explored systematically and theoretically, the importance of formal mentor functions.

One of the critical assertions of this case study is a need to further explore and better understand the quality of informal mentoring relationships. Allen et al. (2006) have identified and examined critical gaps in the formal mentoring literature. One existing gap is that no available research has studied the relationship between perceived formal program characteristics and the quality of the mentoring relationship.

After a multiple regression analysis of survey data generated from a diverse sample group of 170 protégés and 107 mentors of formal mentoring programs, the results reveal specific program characteristics that are important correlates of mentoring behavior and mentorship quality (Allen, Lentz, & Eby, 2006). The results indicated that whether the protégé reports he or she is a voluntary participant makes little difference in the mentoring outcome. However, perceived input into the matching process appears to be critical for both the mentor and protégé enhancing the motivation of each to maximize the relationship. The results also indicate that

mentors who received high quality training were also more likely to report more psychosocial (i.e., counseling, friendship, role modeling, acceptance and confirmation) support.

A literature review of formal mentoring conducted by Smith et al. (2005) examined mentor functions across four industry contexts: *academic, military, business, and military academic*. Overall, this review supports the position that formal mentors are less likely to engage in psychosocial activities. In the *business context*, Zey (1995) found functions in an organization similar to Kram's career functions but used two new terms, *teaching* and *organizational* interventions. Teaching functions included teaching the job, drawing the organizational road map, and giving career guidance while organizational interventions involved protection, marketing, and access to resources. Zey's psychosocial functions were similar to those of Kram's, but indicated a greater emphasis on counseling behaviors in a formal mentoring relationship.

In reviewing the literature focused on a *military context*, Smith et al. (2005) identified a focus on mentor program regulations and found that leadership traits were substitutes for mentor traits. In *military- academic context* (military personnel stationed at academic institutions), there was no research.

In the early 1980s, organizations designed formal mentoring programs (Friday, Friday, & Green, 2004). Building on the work of Noe (1988a), Friday and Friday (2002) identified the following characteristics of formal mentoring programs:

- Program support from senior level managers;
- Design of a corporate mentoring strategy;
- A prudent mentor/protégé selection and matching process;
- Comprehensive mentor and protégé orientation;

- Clearly stated expectations and responsibility of mentor and protégé;
- Established duration and contact frequency between the mentor and protégé.

They also noted that the type of program offered by an organization should be varied and flexible allowing customization to meet the needs of a specific division or department. Friday and Friday (2002) state that, at a minimum, an effective formal mentoring program generates the following outcomes:

- Enhanced organizational skills and capabilities;
- Improved employee engagement, recruitment, and retention; and
- The cultivation of an inclusive, team-based corporate culture.

As formal mentoring relationships evolve from programmatic experience, many diverse and unique forms of mentorship are found in the literature. These experiences range from group to electronic types.

**Alternative forms of mentoring.** While empirical research pertaining to formal and informal relationships has dominated popular empirical mentoring research over the past decade, other studies related to nontraditional mentoring relationships have started to surface. Varied forms and types of mentoring rest on a continuum from those relationships that are highly satisfying to those that are dysfunctional and at times harmful (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller 2000). Below are descriptions of group, peer, online, dialogic, and other recent forms of mentoring found in the literature.

**Group mentoring.** Virtually all studies of mentoring have focused on the consequences of a one-to-one mentoring relationship (Dansky, 1996). Group mentoring, a relatively new concept, has yet to be clearly defined (Richie & Genoni, 2002). Dansky defined group mentoring as a function of professional associations in which the career development of

members is influenced by the group's exertion of social norms and roles. Group-level mentoring, asserted Dansky, emerged from the dynamics of the group as a whole, rather than a relationship with one specific person. Some of the dynamics included are social networks, polarization, communication flow, and conformity. Mentoring is not always a vertical experience, but may have a horizontal flow.

***Co-mentoring, peer or lateral Mentoring.*** Eby (1997) defined lateral mentoring as relationships among individuals who are at a comparable organizational level in terms of pay, status, and job responsibilities. Rymer's (2002) proposed model of co-mentoring consists of three components that distinguish it from traditional mentoring:

1. Co-mentorships are described as having close collegial friendship relationships that do not embrace the hierarchy of the senior mentoring a junior employee;
2. Communication between parties in a co-mentoring relationship is described as a dialogue between partners and not the transmission of a mentor's wisdom as found in a traditional mentoring relationship;
3. The concepts of mentoring expand into a network of co-mentorship and not the exclusive relationship of a single mentor for each protégé.

The common element between co-mentoring and traditional mentoring is mutual trust. Each person in a co-mentoring relationship has an opportunity to occupy the role of teacher and learner with the assumption that both parties have something to offer and gain in the relationship (McGuire & Reger, 2003). The focus of the relationship is on mutual empowerment and learning.

As with peer and other types of mentoring, communication between mentors and protégés may be transmitted via several different mediums. With so many relying upon the

Internet to emit and receive messages, it is no surprise to find mentoring relationships developing online.

***E-or online mentoring.*** Perhaps the most recent and global type of mentoring is online or e-mentoring. Headlam-Wells, Gosland, & Craig (2005) described this type of mentoring as mentoring aided by computer-mediated communication (CMC). It most commonly refers to mentoring via e-mail, but it can also include the use of Web-based media such as chat rooms and discussion areas. Ensher, Heun, & Blanchard (2003) identified the dearth of research in this area and noted that the effectiveness of such mentoring is under-researched. Ensher et al. identified five advantages of e-mentoring: 1) greater access; 2) reduced costs; 3) equalization of status; 4) decreased emphasis on status and 5) the provision of a record of interactions.

The progression moves from the online relationship to an examination of the communication dynamics of a mentorship. Based on tradition, the communication has the protégé as the sole or primary learning recipient while the mentor delivers and creates the learning experience. This creates a challenging question: Can double-loop learning occur in a mentoring relationship?

***Dialogic mentoring.*** Dialogic mentoring represents an integration of three distinct bodies of literature concerning organizational learning, mentoring, and dialogue (Bokeno & Gantt, 2000). While in traditional mentoring there exists monologic mentoring themes, in dialogic mentoring an open and freely negotiated interaction transpires. Double-loop, as defined by Argyris & Schon (1978), is the norm during dialogic mentoring in which communication is collaborative, mutually constructive, critically reflective, and participatory. Bokeno & Gantt (2000) observed that mentors and protégés enter the dialogue with a common operative

assumption. They assumed there is something they each do not know that generates a mutual desire to learn from each other.

While reviews of the most popular forms of mentoring literature are discussed, the literature is beginning to provide several new forms and styles of mentoring. The alternative forms of mentoring reflect relationships in the workplaces and expand existing alternative forms of mentoring, or both.

*Other alternative forms of mentoring.* Eby (1997) identified several mentoring relationships that reflect a variety of workplace situations that face today's organizations. Due to the recent and specific nature of these types of relationships, little related literature exists (Katz, 1982; Sundstrom, DeMease, & Futrell, 1990; Tombaugh & White, 1990). With participative work arrangements, corporate restructuring, and globalization of the workplace, Eby (1997) presents a varied typology of mentoring as follows:

*Intrateam Mentoring* – teams that influence their members in complex ways providing personal and social needs such as inclusion, affiliation, identity, and affirmation. Teams also may serve as repositories for technical knowledge, shape skill acquisition, and assist with career development much as a traditional mentor.

*Interteam Mentoring* – represents mentoring that may occur among members of different teams. Interteam members provide technical assistance, discuss job-related problems, obtain job-related feedback, and gather relevant market information.

*Survivor Mentoring* – a type of peer mentoring, this form of mentoring occurs typically among peers who have managed to survive staff cutbacks. It can help individual employees cope with organizational change.

*Manager – Subordinate Mentoring* – this type of mentoring occurs when managers act as role models for subordinates facilitating protégés (subordinates) learning of technical and interpersonal skills necessary for organizational advancement.

*External Mentoring*- this relationship is similar to an internal sponsor who possesses high rank, more experience, tenure and influence than the protégé. However, the sponsor in such relationships is employed in a different organization than the protégé.

**Benefits of mentoring.** Benefits of mentoring from the protégé’s perspective have been documented in the literature since Kram’s seminal research in 1985. Documented benefits from the perspective of the mentor are not as common highlights a trend that more organizations acknowledge the benefits (Catalyst, 2004; Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2006). The mentoring relationship is an important event for both mentors and protégés (Kram, 1985). For the protégé, the benefits are career satisfaction, career development, organizational learning (Ellinger, Watkins, & Bostrom, 1999; Fagenson, 1988; Joiner, Bartram, & Garreffa, 2004). The relationship serves as an important developmental role for the mentor’s career (Kram, 1985; Scandura, Tejada, Werther, & Lankau, 1996) and life stages (Erikson, 1963; Levinson et al., 1978). As organizations value diversity within their workforces, they recognize how mentoring can make it easier for members of under represented groups to shatter the “glass and concrete” ceilings (Catalyst, 2004).

**Protégé benefits.** The seminal work of Kathy Kram (1985) defined mentoring as a developmental relationship that enhances an individual’s growth and advancement. Analyzed interview data collected by Kram & Isabella (1985) and Kram (1985) revealed that mentors provide protégés with psychosocial and career functions. Psychosocial functions include role modeling, developing friendships, counseling, acceptance, and confirmation. Examples of career

functions are performance coaching, visibility, sponsorship, exposure, protection, and challenging assignments. Kram (1985) suggested that the greater the number of functions provided by the mentor, the more beneficial the relationship will be to the protégé.

Fagenson's (1988) pivotal research addressed the gaps she identified in her review of mentoring research. The early studies examining the power perceptions of protégés focused on a select group of mentored individuals-- for example, successful, high-level, upwardly mobile, mentored men. Noticeably absent from the literature were control groups consisting of non-mentored, low-level women, or minority ethnic control groups. In addition, most of those studies were anecdotal and descriptive in nature. Fagenson's pivotal research included a control group that consisted of equally tenured mentored and non-mentored men and women in high- and low-level jobs drawn from a single organization. The MANOVA performed on the power measures revealed a significant effect for the mentorship variable. Individuals who had mentors rated themselves as having significantly more organizational policy influence, resource power, and access to important people than individuals who did not have mentors.

Multiple studies thereafter have attempted to investigate the relationship of these functions to the career outcomes of protégés (Anderson, 2005; Fagenson, 1989; Noe, 1988a; Scandura, 1992). Many studies examined the link between mentoring and greater job satisfaction (Godshalk & Sosik, 2003; Scandura, 1992), higher salaries (Chao, 1997; Dreher & Ash, 1990), career mobility and managerial advancement (Catalyst, 2004).

The noted absence of minority ethnic groups and women co-researchers from the research add significance to this case study's unique focus on Black women.

***Mentor benefits.*** Several researchers addressed the lack of research examining the short- and long-term benefits of mentoring for mentors (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2006;

Scandura, Tejada, Werther, Lankau, 1996). In their study, Eby et al. (2006) found that immediate proximal benefits reported by mentors were positively associated with both their job satisfaction and their organizational commitment.

Motives for mentoring span a wide continuum and may change through time rather than establishing a single, fixed viewpoint. These motives may range from the selfish to the altruistic, the political to the organizational (Scandura, Tejada, Werther, & Lankau, 1996). “I help you, you help me” may serve as the primary incentive for a mentor who volunteers his or her time with a protégé (Scandura, et al., 1996). During this phenomenon, the protégé’s loyalty to the mentor becomes so great that the protégé begins to put the mentor’s career needs before his or her own. Jennings (1976) refers to this person as a “crucial subordinate.”

The mentor’s organizational value may be enhanced as she or he is seen as a “King-maker,” as the mentors earn the respect and admiration of their superiors and peers as a keen spotter of talent (Scandura et al., 1996). Scandura et al., (1996) indicate leaders can experience a sense of vitality and rejuvenation. By developing a relationship with a younger adult, the mentor has an opportunity to redirect his or her energies into more creative and productive action. Another possible motive for mentoring could be to have legendary or mythical status in an organization. The visceral feeling one can acquire just by helping or nurturing another may be a primary or sole motive for a mentor (Scandura et al., 1996). Research conducted by Scandura (1992) suggests that social support has a positive relationship to the salaries of managers and has important implications for managerial careers.

Now it is logical to examine what the literature says about the benefits received by an organization that practices and endorses mentoring.

***Benefits for the organization.*** A particularly salient issue for minorities and women within organizations is non-egalitarian treatment (Ragins & Scandura, 1994). Organizations are beginning to recognize the need to leverage diversity to produce better business results (Triple Creek Associates, Inc., 2005). Several empirical studies have generated data that support the value of mentoring in promoting diversity of people, ideas, and creativity in the workplace (Catalyst, 2004; Ragins, 1997; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Thomas, 2001; Triple Creek Associates, Inc., 2005).

Organizations have more satisfied, committed, and productive members when personal and professional needs are nurtured through developmental relationships (Scandura, Tejada, Werther, & Lankau, 1996). The organization becomes poised to move beyond mere reactive replacement initiatives and toward a more proactive succession planning because of mentoring leadership development initiatives. Scandura et al., (1996) continue to suggest that mentoring creates a three-way reciprocal context where the mentor gives, the protégé receives, and the organization benefits. Those that participate in dyadic mentoring are often more empowered (Fagenson, 1988) and promote organizational learning (Scandura et al., 1996) because they have greater opportunity to influence organizational policy than their non-mentored colleagues do. Mentored individuals perceive they have greater access to important people than non-mentored individuals do, which promotes effective top-down communication within an organization (Fagenson, 1988).

The literature clearly supported that organizations tend to receive measurable positive results when mentoring is an acceptable norm of the organizations culture. However, while protégés, mentors, and organizations can benefit, there may be visible or hidden obstacles that challenge a mentoring relationship.

**Barriers to mentoring.** Catalyst (2004) stated that while White women frequently refer to the “glass ceiling” as blocking their career upward mobility, women of color (Black, Asian, and Latina) often characterize the barriers they encounter as a “concrete ceiling.” Barriers identified by Black women were stereotypes, visibility, scrutiny, authority, credibility, fit, exclusion, and influence. Catalyst surveyed 963 Black women in Fortune 1000 companies and facilitated 23 focus groups comprised of entry- and mid-level Black women. The most common (43%) career barrier was not having an influential sponsor/mentor.

Essence magazine (Sherrod, 2001), a popular periodical that caters to Black women, interviewed four senior Black women executives to learn what it takes to deal with isolation when positioned at the top of an organization. All four executives encouraged having a mentor, advocate, or support network to offer guidance, assistance, and sponsorship.

While the benefits of mentoring are well documented, research has called into question the idea that mentoring relationships are exclusively positive (Eby, Butts, Lockwood, & Simon, 2004). Much of the literature (Blake-Beard, 2001; Ragins, 1996; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Thomas, 1990) related to barriers in mentoring focus on gender and minority mentorships. Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000), proposed that mentoring relationships exist on a continuum from highly satisfying to highly dysfunctional. Recent studies have explored *negative mentoring experiences* (Eby, & Allen, 2002; Eby et al., 2004).

Kanter’s (1977) seminal research on women in corporations discovered that women have less opportunity to advance and less access to power than men do. The term *token* used by Kanter described the relatively small number of women who do reach the upper echelons of their organizations given their high visibility and minority status.

In the Ragins (1996) survey, women reported significantly more barriers to gaining a mentor than the men, even when controlling for differences in age, rank, length of employment, and mentorship experience. The three factors that may block women from obtaining a mentor who is a man are: (1) sexual issues, (2) sex-role expectations and, (3) opportunities for meeting mentors. On an informal level, women often lack access to many of the settings traditionally frequented by men (e.g., men's clubs and sports activities). Women may also struggle to access formal mentorships (Ragins, 1996) with men since men may select protégés based on their involvement in key visible projects. When women occupy low-level staff positions, they may be less likely to be involved in projects that offer high-level visibility.

The *internal and external challenges* women may face as they negotiate the planned relationships created in formal mentoring programs (Blake-Beard, 2001) are depicted in the table below (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

*Challenges Women Encounter in Formal Mentoring Programs*

<b><i>INTERNAL CHALLENGES</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Unclear and/or unrealistic expectations</i></li> <li>• <i>Lack of attraction/reduced opportunities for identification</i></li> <li>• <i>Negotiating the developmental dilemma—balance of intimacy and distance</i></li> <li>• <i>Unbalanced focus on the benefits of the relationship for the protégé</i></li> <li>• <i>Moving the formal relationship through the separation phase</i></li> </ul>
<b><i>EXTERNAL CHALLENGES</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing the troublesome triangle of the direct supervisor, protégé, and mentor</li> <li>• Resentment and/or anxiety from non-participating peers</li> <li>• Damage from sexual innuendo and gossip</li> <li>• Belief that women participate in formal mentoring programs as a remedial solution for lack of necessary competencies and skills</li> </ul>

The study suggests that many types of obstructions may hinder, destroy, or challenge the development in mentoring relationships. These and other barriers may have a greater impact on special subpopulations.

O'Neill & Blake-Beard (2002) explored gender barriers to the formation of cross-gender mentor-protégé relationships where the mentor is a woman and discovered similar barriers.

Identified were six physiological and social barriers:

- (1) ***Organizational Demographics***- offers one explanation for the relatively limited number of female mentor, male protégé dyads. Though progress has been made (Catalyst, 2004), the glass ceiling continues to prevent women from attaining leadership positions.
- (2) ***Relational Demography*** – men and women may be drawn to mentoring relationships with those most like themselves. Thomas (1990) reported that protégés involved in same-sex mentoring relationships reported more mutuality and trust than protégés in cross-sex relationships.
- (3) ***Sexual Liaisons***- both men and women may be unwilling to enter into a cross-sex mentoring relationship because of real or suspected sexual involvement.
- (4) ***Gender Stereotyping***- Masculine stereotypes (tough, aggressive, forceful, dominant, risk-takers, adventurous, and able to endure pressure) and feminine stereotypes (helpful, warm, gentle, kind, compassionate, and emotionally supportive) may decrease the likelihood of a man wanting a women mentor. He may assume she lacks the “masculine-oriented” skills sets to be a successful manager.

- (5) **Gender Behavior**- women or men may play into stereotypes, i.e., women asking for and receiving help. Conversely, women may worry about fitting gender stereotypes so they may not ask for help.
- (6) **Power Dynamics**- perceived as having more power at work, male mentors are also perceived as able to provide more effective mentoring.

Hale (2000) and Hay (1995) recognized that differences in learning styles between mentor and protégé may strengthen the relationship by enhancing the learning, but this relationship requires a certain tolerance and understanding from both parties. Both researchers described an *activist* protégé as being too impatient. A *reflector* protégé will want time to review his or her experiences, but may hold back from moving on or making decisions about action. A *theorist* protégé will want to learn new theories as well as teach the mentor but may be over analytical. A *pragmatist* generates practical ideas but may expect the mentor to provide the solutions.

O'Neil and Sankowsky (2001) indicated that a dyadic relationship might not be a healthy one when a protégé does not receive the proper type of mentoring for career advancement. The mentor actively blocking the protégé's career characterizes this dysfunctional relationship. O'Neil and Sankowsky (2001) applied the concept of "theoretical abuse" derived from the realm of psychotherapy. Theoretical abuse is when a mentor attempts to satisfy his or her own personal needs at the expense of the protégé by imposing his or her interpretations of events. For example, if the mentor tries to persuade the protégé to embrace a specific point of view, conflict about meaning may result. The mentor deliberately or unintentionally fails to elicit, elucidate, and explore the protégé's meaning-making, thereby applying the mentor's own framework to interpret and evaluate various life events.

Eby and Allen (2002) identified 15 negative experiences and their categorical affiliation through factor analysis. Listed in Table 2.2 are those relationship behaviors and characteristics that can create a negative mentoring experience.

Table 2.2

*Negative Mentoring Experiences*

<u><i>Distancing/Manipulative Behavior</i></u>	<u><i>Poor Dyadic Fit</i></u>
<i>Deceit</i>	Mismatched Values
<i>Sabotage</i>	Mismatched Personality
<i>Credit Taking</i>	Interpersonal Incompetence
<i>Intentional Exclusion</i>	Personal Problems
<i>General Abuse of Power</i>	Bad Attitude
<i>Inappropriate Delegation</i>	Mismatched Work Styles
<i>Self-Absorption</i>	Technical Incompetence
<i>Neglect</i>	

**Black women and mentoring.**

Research designed to describe feminine and masculine leadership (Parker, 2001), and career development (Combs & Sommer, 2003; Evans & Herr, 1991) often excluded the experiences of Black women. The paucity of mentoring research on Black women has been noted by Combs (2003) and Hackett and Byars (1996). Forces of racism and sexism (Evans & Herr, 1991; Mitra, 2003) have a negative effect on the career aspirations of Black women. Black women may alter, lower, or avoid career goals as well as develop coping systems to avoid prejudice, discrimination, and disappointments. Black men supervisors earn significantly higher

wages compared with Black women supervisors (Mitra, 2003). The same study found fewer Black women held meaningful supervisory positions than African men or White women.

David A. Thomas (2001) identified the following four critical areas of support received by minority executives in developmental relationships:

- (1) The relationships opened the door to challenging assignments that allowed the minority executives to gain professional competence
- (2) By putting the minority executives in high-trust positions, the mentors sent a message to the rest of the organization that these people were high performers thus helping them to gain confidence and establish their credibility
- (3) The mentors provided crucial career advice and counsel that prevented their protégés from getting sidetracked from the path leading to the executive level
- (4) The mentors often became powerful sponsors later in the minority executives' careers, recruiting them repeatedly to new positions and
- (5) The mentors often protected their protégés by confronting subordinates or peers who leveled unfair criticism at their protégés, especially if it had racial undertones.

The private sector is investing more than ever to recruit, retain, and promote women and minorities (Triple Creek Associates, Inc., 2006). In the research findings of Jones and Harter (2005), cross-race dyads consisting of a White supervisor and a non-White subordinate enhanced the subordinate's employment retention more than a same-race dyad. According to Ensher and Murphy (1997), those *mentored* by and matched with same-race mentors indicated having more satisfying relationships with greater career development support than those with different-race mentors. Perhaps racial composition can affect relationship functions and outcomes of the

different dyads (supervisor/subordinate vs. mentor/protégé) and, therefore, affect employee retention.

Research by Dreher and Cox (1996) examined the establishment of mentoring relationships based on race, gender, and opportunity. The findings concluded that career success for employees in organizations dominated by White men is influenced by the ability to establish mentoring relationships with White men. This conclusion does not negate the importance of developmental relationships with women or members of other racial groups, but can reflect a barrier toward acquiring such relationships.

Black women encounter multiple barriers (Gunn, 2005) that prevent and preclude them from reaching executive positions that involve formulating policy. Two predictors are: a) the availability of a Black male mentor, and b) the availability of a Black male role model. The research findings of both Dreher and Cox (1996) and Gunn (2005) indicated that the access to men mentors, Black or White, could have a significant impact on the career development of employees. This phenomenon may create major obstacles for Black women, as they are not members of the same racial or gender group as White men. They also are not members of the same gender group of Black men. This may challenge or hinder the upward mobility of Black women.

Combs (2003) defined *informal social systems* as relationships and contacts that facilitate access to career and social support for managerial Black women. With managerial Black women possessing a dual minority status (e.g. gender and race), these systems are central to their career advancement, success, earning power, and access to greater position levels.

Findings of the Higginbotham and Weber (1992) study strongly suggested that relationships with family, partners, children, friends, and the wider community play a large role

in the upward mobility of women. Black girls (Weiler, 1997) who were engaged in activities related to career goals received support and mentoring from their parents, extended family members, and community members. Hackett and Byars (1996) claimed there exists a strong link between the vicarious learning experiences and the career self-efficacy of Black women. Bandura (1986, 1997), defined vicarious learning as learning through observation while self-efficacy is a belief in ones capabilities to execute action required to produce given attainments. The assertion continues (Hackett & Byars, 1996) that significant vicarious learning occurs early in life coming from caregivers, family members, and the community. Due to this phenomenon, the Black mother may expose her daughter more frequently to nontraditional roles and behaviors than non-Black mothers. Therefore, Hackett and Byars determined that through this style of observational learning Black women develop strong beliefs in their abilities to accomplish tasks. Therefore, Black women may have a capacity to seek mentoring or other developmental relationships that promote vicarious learning.

Miller (1988) and Patterson (2004) examined the influence of network support variables (i.e., educational attainment of older family members and historical family structure) on the social and personality development of Black women. The results found that network structure support influences the way Black women feel about situations that reflect racial discrimination, self-esteem, and their ability to trust others.

The literature emphasizes the criticality of community support and developmental networks for Black women. As indicated, Black women may face many hurdles toward career success, including access to mentors. This phenomenon creates a confusing dilemma as little research exists about it and members of this special population have a difficult time securing a mentor.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Three theoretical frameworks influence this research: Developmental Networks, Standpoint Theory or Feminist Thought, and Black feminist thought. These three bodies of knowledge offer the interpretive vehicles for this case study and a better understanding of the Black woman's career journey. They will help to examine the relationships and political identity of this unique population.

**Developmental networks.** In the past three decades, scholars have described mentoring as a developmental relationship between a senior individual who is several years younger and a junior member of the organization (Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988a; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). A current trend in the literature challenges this traditional notion (Chandler & Kram, 2005; Dobrow & Higgins, 2005; Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Molloy, 2005; van Emmerik, 2004) and attempts to expand the mentoring concept by exploring how people have made significant contributions to the protégé's development. However, studies on concurrent multiple relationships, especially those who focus on Black women, are rare (Combs, 2003; Higgins & Thomas, 2001).

The concepts of network theory serve as the gateway to having an understanding of developmental networks.

**Network theory framework.** The foundation of developmental networks seminal research (Higgins & Kram, 2001) integrated the concepts of mentoring (Kram, 1985), interpersonal networks (Burke, Bristor, & Rothstein, 1995), and social network theory (Burt, 1992). The term *network* (Burt, 1992) refers to a set of objects (nodes) and a description (mapping) of the relationship between the objects. With regard to social networks, the objects are people or groups. Through social network theory and the basic understanding of mapping,

one can evaluate the *social capital* (Burt, 1997) of that group or individual. Social capital refers to the network position of the object and is the ability to draw on the resources of the network members. In essence, the more mappings an individual or group has, the more knowledge, influence, and power the original object will control.

Burke et al. (1995) conducted an exploratory study to examine the interpersonal networks of managerial men and women. The researchers examined the internal and external relationships of men and women managers. The findings indicate that all respondents had network members inside and outside the organization. Those who described their work environments as positive also reported greater organizational commitment, career satisfaction, and organizational integration.

Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) (Lent & Brown, 1996; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 1996a, 1996b) is grounded in Bandura's (1986, 1997) general social cognitive theory. These theories acknowledged mutual interacting influences between people, their behaviors, and their environment. Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting represent the three framework mechanisms of SCCT. These variables help people to guide their own career development. Albert and Luzzo (1999) asserted that mentoring relationships could facilitate both vicarious learning and verbal persuasion to help manage workplace barriers. The two primary aspects of SCCT (Lent & Brown, 1996) are the level of attainment individuals achieve at work and the degree to which they persist despite obstacles. The popular African saying, "it takes a village to raise a child", applies as the components of mentoring practice and research evolve from a dyad to a network.

***From dyads to developmental networks.*** In a literature review of developmental networks, Janice C. Molloy (2005) cited three dynamics that have facilitated the transition from

mentoring dyads to developmental networks: (1) changes in the employment contract; (2) technology; and (3) workforce demography. Pertaining to a change in the employment contract, Molloy suggested that the phenomena of job security and remaining with one employer for an extensive period are no longer reality. Both of these conditions promote the need for employees to develop multiple developmental relationships both inside and outside of their place of employment.

Molloy (2005) described how technology has greatly expanded our ability to communicate, making instant global access a reality. This condition allows protégés to have developmental access to multiple “cyber-space” and “virtual” mentoring relationships. Molloy stated that the increased diversity in the workplace presents unique challenges, especially for racial minorities. Protégés who have cross-race developmental relationships often seek and benefit from having simultaneous same-race relationships. The same-race developmental relationships (Thomas, 1993 & 1990) often facilitate positive psychosocial relationship functions and outcomes.

As the changes in the workplace and technology help us to understand the causes of the movement from traditional mentoring to developmental networks, it is now appropriate to define the concept.

***Concept and definition of developmental networks.*** Kram (1985) offered a simplistic concept of networks as concurrent relationships that are specifically developmental in nature. The seminal research demonstrated that protégés prefer more than a single dyadic relationship for development assistance in their careers. Individuals seek a set of developmental relationships from a variety of persons: peers, supervisors, subordinates, friends, family, and community members.

Chandler and Kram (2005) and Higgins and Thomas (2001) provided a more sophisticated definition: a particular type of egocentric network that is comprised of a set of people or multiple developmental relationships a protégé names as taking an interest in and action to advance the protégé's career by providing developmental assistance. Some recent researchers apply the term *constellations* (Higgins & Thomas, 2001; van Emmerik, 2004) to describe developmental networks.

Higgins and Thomas (2001) referred to those within an individual's developmental network as *developers*. Developers can be found across social systems and include anyone in the protégé's social network from which the protégé seeks career and psychosocial assistance. Developers (Higgins & Thomas, 2001) may or may not be "true" mentors and are not limited to those who are part of a formal relationship. Higgins and Thomas (2001) did not distinguish popular concepts such as coach, sponsor, mentor, or peer. The one term, developer, includes anyone the protégé identifies as providing *instrumental (career)* or *expressive (psychosocial)* (Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Malloy, 2005; Rock & Garavan, 2006) functional support. Higgins and Kram (2001) made it clear that a person's developmental network does not consist of *all* the interpersonal relationships and everyone in an individual's social network. Only those developers known and identified by the protégé are included. Those who provide career assistance without the protégé's awareness are not developers.

Upon defining *developmental networks*, a deeper investigation into its dynamics is most appropriate. A discussion of literature pertaining to the functions, characteristics, and types of mentoring is now most appropriate.

### **Dimensions, typology, and support functions of developmental networks.**

For the purpose of this study, the work of Higgins and Kram (2001) provided the conceptual framework for understanding the dimensions and typology of developmental networks. There are two key dimensions offered by Higgins and Kram (2001): (1) Developmental relationship *diversity* and (2) *Strength* of the individual relationships that comprise the network.

***Relationship diversity.*** In their research, Higgins and Kram (2001) did not define diversity in terms of race, gender, or disability. Their application of the term related to the nature of the relationship, not the attributes of the developers. Developmental diversity is the number of different social systems (e.g., school, place of employment, community, professional associations) or the *range* of social systems from which a relationship stems.

Increasing the range of a developmental network decreased the redundancies founded in the information. An individual who has different developers from several social systems has a *high-range* developmental network. In contrast, an individual who has all of his or her developers from the same social system has a *low-range* developmental network.

***Relationship strength.*** Developmental networks (Higgins & Kram, 2001) consist of strong, average, or weak ties. The ties of a developmental network represent how frequently the developer and protégé communicate, the level of reciprocity, and the level of emotional affect. Relationships characterized by mutuality and in which individuals are highly motivated to help each other and characterized by mutuality have strong ties. If a protégé does not offer much opportunity to learn or receive assistance from the developer, this characterizes a weak tie.

*Types of developmental networks.* Determined by the degree of diversity (range) and strength of the developmental relationship, Higgins and Kram (2001) identified four developmental network typologies: receptive, traditional, opportunistic, and entrepreneurial.

Table 2.3

*Developmental Network Typologies*

	<b><i>WEAK TIES (STRENGTH)</i></b>	<b><i>STRONG TIES (STRENGTH)</i></b>
<b>LOW RANGE (DIVERSITY)</b>	RECEPTIVE	TRADITIONAL
<b>HIGH RANGE (DIVERSITY)</b>	OPPORTUNISTIC	ENTREPRENEURIAL

*Receptive* networks (Higgins & Kram, 2001) are composed of a few weak tie relationships between the developers and protégé that arise from the same developmental system. The ties are connected to the same social system. The term “receptive” reflects the protégé’s openness to receiving assistance and yet does not suggest that the protégé is actively initiating or cultivating developmental relationships.

*Traditional* networks are comprised of a few developers who have strong ties with the developer. The term traditional is relevant since most of the time one protégé has a strong tie with one developer and represents a classic case of mentoring. Since the developers are affiliated with the same social system, there is a strong likelihood they will know each other.

*Opportunistic* networks have developmental relationships with many weak ties between protégé and multiple developers. These ties are often weak because the protégé does not

establish an emotional closeness or communicate frequently with the many developers to whom he or she has access. The protégé generally exercises a passive stance toward initiating and cultivating such relationships.

*Entrepreneurial* networks have strong ties and a high range of diversity. Unlike the protégé of an *opportunistic* relationship, an entrepreneurial protégé is motivated to act on behalf of him- or herself; as a result, these relationships exhibit the highest level of trust.

***Support functions of developmental networks.*** The support functions of developmental relationships mirror those identified by the seminal work of Kram (1985). For the purpose of this literature review, there will be a close examination and interpretation of Rock and Garavan's (2006) *instrumental* and *expressive* functions.

Relationships with developers in developmental networks (Molloy, 2005; Rock & Garavan, 2006) can be instrumental or expressive or some combination of the two. Instrumental support ties are designed to advance the protégé's career and professional interests. For example, instrumental support can often provide access to extended powerful networks, protection, visibility, and sponsorship. Expressive support provides the protégé with psychosocial benefits such as encouragement in trying times, a safe outlet for discussion of career troubles, advice about coping with the unique stresses of the job, and considerations about work/life balance.

Those in entrepreneurial networks are most likely to experience both instrumental and expressive support. These relationships are likely due to their strong ties, wide range of developers to offer greater opportunity to foster confidence, courage, and risk-taking (expressive support). These relationships also give the protégé above-adequate role modeling and ability to

maneuver throughout the organization (instrumental). There exists a dearth of literature about expressive and instrumental support of Black women executives.

With a clear representation of developmental theory provided, a strong comprehensive view of Black feminist thought is due. A description of Black feminist thought follows concluding with an integrative analysis of the theories that form the conceptual framework for this study.

### **Feminist Theory**

*“A standpoint refers to a particular position or angle of vision in which an individual experiences his or her life” (Coker, 2003, p. 659).*

The purpose of this section of the literature review is to offer a comprehensive understanding of standpoint theory. One should have a firm grasp of this theory’s tenets to have the proper foundation to understand Black feminist thought theory. There exists multiple related and yet distinct feminist standpoint theories. They are grounded in one original idea, which is that knowledge is socially located and arises in social positions that are structured by power relations (Hallstein, 1999).

Standpoint theorists (McClish & Bacon, 2002) asserted that there are two reasons an epistemology generated from an oppressed group, such as women, is more valid than the knowledge of those in dominant positions. The first reason insists that the oppressed must understand the ideology of those in power to survive, and the second reason asserts that those of subjugated groups offer fuller insight into the social order since they possess no desire to maintain the status quo.

In one of the central tenets associated with standpoint theory, Orbe (1998) asserted that research must begin from a person’s concrete lived experiences and emphasize the need to be aware of a specific societal position. Orbe also noted that research and knowledge production

about women must begin from women's lives and that their vision is not necessarily truthful. Therefore, no one standpoint can serve to represent the cognitive behavior, belief, or attitudes of all women due to the existence of multiple differences among women. With a true understanding of standpoint theory, one may now explore the specifics of Black feminist thought.

Theory grounds how researchers identify, name, interpret, and write about individual and collective experiences. It can be challenging to find and apply theoretical constructs that are appropriate for explaining and understanding the experiences of Black women. To try to interpret the experience in a fair and just manner, one must have the proper theoretical lens. Thus, it is important to identify a theory that reflects Black women's political and social positions and that of others with whom they interact in the world. Black feminists (McClish & Bacon, 2002) argue that Black women's perspectives are grounded in their unique experiences.

Feminist activists and historical scholars apply the "wave" model to describe the women's movement in the United States; however, this model obscures the historical role of race (Springer, 2002) as part of the movement. Black feminism evolved during the second wave of the American women's movement beginning in the late 1960s (Smith, 2000). While some traditional theories provide frameworks that are adaptable enough to conform to any group's development, Black feminist thought is more specific in its integration, validation, and centering of Black women's unique realities, perceptions, and experiences (Collins, 1986; Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnette, 2003).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the women's liberation and Black power movements (Cole & Stewart, 1996) aimed to redefine the roles and broaden the privileges of historically disadvantaged groups. These movements worked to accomplish these ends through the

redefinition of the constituent groups' identities and political consciousness. In 1973, the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) was formed (Smith, 2000). In 1974, a group of Black women known as The Combahee River Collective, gathered in Boston, Massachusetts (Smith, 2000). The name Combahee River came from a military action in South Carolina led by Harriet Tubman. During this heroic event, 750 slaves were freed in the only military campaign in American history planned and led by a woman. Members of these groups have been involved in defining and clarifying the political identity of Black women and were committed to struggling against racial, sexual, and class oppression. The focus on their own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics (Smith, 2000). Identity politics support the notion that the most profound and radical politics stem from one's own identity and not one that works toward ending someone else's oppression. Political identity (Cole & Stewart, 1996) describes a pattern of beliefs related to the social and structural relationships that connect the individual to social groups. It asserts that human existence is interconnected and that systemic obstacles rather than individual shortcomings limit disadvantaged groups. It proposes that the political realm is personally relevant and meaningful, and that collective actions are the best responses to social problems.

Black feminists distinguish their struggle from that of White feminists, as the struggle of Black feminists is both anti-racist and anti-sexist (Smith, 2000). White feminists do not claim as a facet of their struggle the element of race. Another distinction (Smith, 2000) is the feelings of solidarity that Black feminists have toward progressive Black men, which differ from the fractionalization that White women who are separatists have toward White men. To demonstrate solidarity with Black men, the vision of Black feminism embraces the unified struggle to diminish the forces of racism, class separation, and sexism.

**Black women's understanding of race, class, and gender.** Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2002) asserted that from the perspective of some of the most disenfranchised communities of women in the world, it is likely to envision a just and democratic society capable of treating all its citizens fairly. Conversely, she stated that if we begin our analysis from, and limit it to, the space of privileged communities, our vision of justice is more likely to be exclusionary because privilege nurtures blindness to those without the same privileges.

A Black feminist framework takes into account the intersectional dynamics of race, class, and gender (Coker, 2003). While this framework provides a platform to examine and better comprehend the commonalities that exist between Black women, it also recognizes differences among Black women. A review of the extensive work of Dr. Patricia Hill Collins (2005, 2000a, 2000b 1999, 1996-1997, 1990, & 1986) served as a primary source to offer a conceptual framework for comprehending Black feminist thought.

Working jointly and in systematic fashion, the discriminations of racism, sexism, and, in many cases, class inequality remain pervasive in the personal and professional lives of many Black women. Patricia Collins's (1986) conceptual framework of Black feminist thought and its themes rendered an insightful vantage point into the experiences of all Black women. Black feminist thought is grounded in the premise that Black women, as a group, share certain themes (Collins, 1986). The ideology of Black feminist thought declares that visibility of Black women asserts *self-determination and self-definition* as essential, challenges the interlocking nature of oppression, and presumes an image of Black women as powerful and independent subjects (Collins, 1986; King, 1988). A self-determined person is one who has the power to decide one's own destiny just as a self-realized person has the power to name one's own reality (Collins, 2000). The research indicates that to foster and facilitate a personal or professional relationship

with a Black woman, a balance of, respect for, or at minimum, a healthy recognition of these themes needs to exist.

**The social construction of black womanhood.** The “outsider-within” syndrome is a common and critical factor that unites the experience of U.S. Black women in the labor market. The outsider-within syndrome is a social condition where Black women appeared to belong to a group but were not accepted as an equal. Collins (2000a) outlined the origin of the syndrome.

Prior to World War II, the two categorical areas of employment for U.S. Black women were domestic and agricultural work. Development and transference of both skill sets are a direct result of Black women’s enslavement in this country. As domestic employees, Black women performed duties that allowed them to form nurturing ties with White children and often with the employers themselves. Hallstein (1999) also noted that women occupy a position inside and outside of the dominant culture. The outsider-within syndrome is also described as bifurcated in that a woman’s perception of her structural position allows her to see her own socially located knowledge and that of the dominant culture and its feminine conception.

Collins (2000) continues to describe the concept of “mammification” as a controlling image applied by those of the dominant group that depicts Black women as faithful obedient domestic servants. The dichotomy manifests itself when Black women are invited into places where the dominant group has assembled. However, they remain outsiders because they are invisible and their voices silenced when dialogue begins (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Dumas (1980) shares this concept in a contemporary manner as she described Black women executives who are often criticized if they do not appear warm and nurturing. I have often witnessed and heard Black professionals describe this reality as a personal workplace phenomenon. A Black woman can display a demeanor perceived as strong by those in her community, but other non-

Blacks label that same demeanor as a problem. It would probably be of tremendous benefit if those within the developmental networks of Black professional women understood the “outsider-within” and “mammification” concepts. This promotes and facilitates a stronger more meaningful dialogue and a richer degree of empathy within the dyads. If Black women are *self-defined* and *self-reliant*, these internal conditions will serve as attributes in their career development.

**The five distinguishing features of black feminist thought.** The effects of institutional racism are complicated by racial segregation and accompanying discriminatory practices designed to deny equitable treatment to Blacks. The general purpose of Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000) is to resist the practices and ideology generated by oppression. For Black women (Collins, 2000), the impact of institutional racism, sexism, and discrimination based on class remain observable and tangible. The common experiences generated by these existing conditions, stated Collins (2000), mean that Black women live in a different world than those who are not Black and women. These conditions amplify the need for a conceptual framework that distinguishes Black feminist thought from other feminist schools of thought.

Collins (2000) stated that while Black feminist thought may offer common ground among Black women; these distinguishing features are not necessarily unique and may share much with other bodies of knowledge. Collins (1990) also pointed out how the existence of these distinguishing features does not mean that Black women respond in an identical manner. She acknowledges that the diversity among Black women produces different experiences and, therefore, a variety of reactions to these core themes. Numerous factors (Collins, 1990) such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, social class, urbanization, and geographical location represent

the complicated diversity of Black women. Described below are five features that distinguish the epistemology of Black feminist thought.

***Experience and consciousness.*** The first feature recognizes interdependence between experience (Collins, 2000) and consciousness. The link between what one does and what one thinks characterizes the Black women's experience as a group. Collins (2000) asserted that a lack of political activism (action, deeds, what one does) on the part of an oppressed group stems from the group's flawed consciousness (thoughts, ideas, cognition) of their own subordination. There are two possible interpretations (Collins, 2000) of the oppressed group's consciousness if Black women's collective wisdom is not present. The first interpretation is that subordinate groups have a stronger identification with the power group and, therefore, lack a valid independent interpretation of their own oppression. The second interpretation is that the oppressed group is *less* human than the powerful group. Both interpretations, according to Collins (2000), sees the lack of activism by Black women or any oppressed group as a sign of the group's inferiority or a flawed consciousness of subordination.

***The legacy of struggle.*** The second feature is the recognized link between Black women's oppression and the legacy of struggle. The legacy of struggle, according to Collins (2000), referred to Black women's struggle to exist in conflicting worlds: (1) that of the White, privileged, and oppressive; and (2) that of the Black, exploited and simultaneously oppressed. Acknowledging that this dilemma exists, (Collins, 2000) does not confirm that every Black woman recognizes or embraces its existence.

***Dialogic relationship.*** The third feature of Black feminist thought is that there exists a *dialogic* (Collins, 2000) relationship that characterizes Black women's experiences and group knowledge. This feature suggests that alterations of thought may accompany changes in action

and produce altered experiences that promote changed individual or group consciousness.

Within the context of this feature, Collins introduced the notion of *rearticulation*, which occurs when Black women receive a different view of themselves and the world. This rearticulated consciousness strives to empower Black women and promote resistance (Collins, 2000).

Williams, Brewley, Reed, White, and Davis-Haley (2005) identified the “use of dialogue” as a Black feminist thought theme. This too suggests that oppressed groups use dialogues to establish empowered bonds and relationships.

***Black women intellectuals.*** The fourth distinguishing feature claims Black women intellectuals (Collins, 2000) as the coalition building group of Black feminist thought. Collins continues to emphasize that a Black woman intellectual can reside within and outside of the academic arena. The experience of the Black woman affords her the right and ability to provide a vision of Black womanhood that is unavailable to members of other groups. Collins asserted the primary responsibility for defining one’s own reality lies with the people who experience that reality. The intellectual must promote and push the themes of *self-determination*, *self-definition*, and *group autonomy*. The concepts of self-determination and self-definition will serve as variables of interest and exploration for the developmental networks of Black women.

The features “Black women intellectuals”, experience, and consciousness parallel the “lived experience as a criterion of meaning” Black feminist thought theme of Williams et al. (2005). All three themes or features (Collins, 2000; Williams et al., 2005) emphasize the prized value of women knowing what they know through the circumstances they have encountered in life.

***Significance of change.*** The significance of change represents the fifth distinguishing feature of Black feminist thought. Collins (2000) asserted the changing social conditions

experienced by Black women generate a need for constant Black feminist analyses of shared differences that characterize Black womanhood. Collins used the aforementioned concept of “mammification” as an example. She acknowledged that in today’s world of work, far fewer Black women are domestic employees, but Collins submits this image has experienced a modern transformation. Black women still hold the lion’s share of contemporary emotional nurturing, lower tier administrative, and “cleaning up after people” positions.

These five features combine to create an emphasis on Black women’s empowerment, and to advance the theme of oneness of all of human life (Collins, 2000). Black feminist thought requires searching for social justice for everyone, not just for Black women. Black feminist thought theory provides that type of framework, which promotes a deeper comprehension of professional Black women and their experience in developmental networks. Below is an integrative analysis of Black feminist thought and developmental networks.

### **Integrative Analysis of Theoretical Frameworks**

The review of the two theoretical frameworks offers the reader an overview of developmental networks and Black feminist thought. Integrating the concepts of Black feminist thought with developmental networks provides a sociopolitical lens to understand the developmental experience of professional Black women. In applying these frameworks to mentoring research, a voice to Black women is given as they describe their developmental relationships. To comprehend the concept of developmental networks, thorough examinations of mentoring research and network theory are required. To have a firm and thorough grasp of the self-defined ideologies of Black feminist thought and its themes, one must unearth the significant social injustices of Black women. Applying the concepts of Black feminist thought as part of the framework for this study helps to understand the political identity of Black women.

I believe that developers in “healthy” developmental relationships with Black women must comprehend and respect the concepts of Black feminist thought. It appears critical that “she,” the Black woman, is able to understand herself, and the harsh realities afforded her by this nation’s historical and current conditions. They should be aware of how to recognize and navigate the political and social minefields that exist in their world as a developer and must know how to teach, guide, and help them to negotiate these realities. To offer credible developmental support to Black women, an understanding of their political and social identities is necessary for members of their developmental networks.

The collaborative interaction of the tenets of mentoring (Kram, 1985), developmental network theory (Higgins & Kram, 2001), and Black feminist thought (Collins, 2002a) should facilitate a harmonious mentorship. A mentor who is unaware of or does not comprehend the belief system of his or her protégé could experience difficulty trying to establish a strong bond. The protégé may have difficulty trusting and trying to determine if the mentor values her individuality. This condition may jeopardize the protégé’s ability to receive the counsel and advice of the mentor without suspicion. For the mentor to comprehend the Black women protégé’s legacy of struggle and the interpretive respect on her reality are essential components of a healthy relationship.

This blended learning approach should manifest itself if true growth, for both parties, is to occur. Members of the Black women’s developmental network must understand her racial, gender, and class challenges in order to help navigate her rise to success. It is my assumption that without a proper comprehension of these realities faced by Black women, neither she nor the mentor will be able to render significant interpretations of her experience.

**Summary**

There is qualitative research that examined the benefits, barriers, types, and impact of developmental networks on special populations in the private sector. However, little research examined developmental networks in the federal sector. This literature review identified no studies that attempt to blend both the concepts of developmental networks and the construction of Black women's political identity. The number of Black women members in the Senior Executive Service is low and, therefore, deserves a greater level of understanding.

## **Chapter III**

### **Method**

This chapter presents the qualitative methods used to explore how Black women federal senior executives describe their developmental networks and political identity. The chapter will provide an overview of case study research, share the research questions, discuss the research design, describe the organizational context and setting, identify the co-researchers, discuss the sampling technique, selection criteria, a description of a pilot study, and data collection techniques. Topics also addressed are confidentiality, acquiring permission, and access to human subjects. The research questions that guide this study are:

- (1) What do Black women federal senior executives value within their developmental networks?
- (2) How do Black women federal executives construct political identity within developmental networks?

### **Case Studies**

Qualitative case studies are quite common and often used in education research (Merriam, 1998). Merriam defined a case study as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. A case study is a suitable design if one is interested in describing the population of the study or for what it can reveal about a phenomenon, knowledge of which we would otherwise not have access to (Merriam, 1998).

A case study can help us to understand processes of programs, events, and projects to identify characteristics that will allow us to have a clearer understanding and view of certain issues (Merriam, 1998). Merriam and Stake (2000) emphasized that a case must be a “bounded system” with certain features within and outside of the case.

George and Bennett (2005) emphasized that case studies must be “focused” and “structured.” The study must be conducted with a specific research objective in mind and with a theoretical focus appropriate for that objective. The researcher must also write general questions (structure) that reflect the research objective and ask these questions of each case to guide and standardize the data collection. Doing so makes it possible to compare the findings systematically.

Stake (2000) identified six major conceptual responsibilities of case study research:

1. *Bounding the case, conceptualizing the object of study;*
2. *Selecting phenomena, themes, or issues-- that is, the research questions-- to emphasize;*
3. *Seeking patterns of data to develop the issues;*
4. *Triangulating key observations and bases for interpretation;*
5. *Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue;*
6. *Developing assertions or generalizations about the case.*

All except the first responsibility are similar to the responsibilities of other types of qualitative research. The image of a heart encased within a closed circle was applied by Merriam to visualize this concept. The heart represents the focus of the study and the circular border defines the edge of the case.

Another emerging difference relates to the fourth responsibility, as Janesick (2000) replaced the concept of *triangulation* with *crystallization*. Crystallization is the idea that observing or investigating various facets of an object of study can often best characterize the phenomenon under study. The combination of facets and ways of observing yields a multiple-shaded picture. Stake (2000) shared the case study concept of *discovery learning* by which the researcher provides the material to the reader to learn what the researcher already knows or does not know.

Case study research is appropriate if the researcher is interested in process and the “how” or “why” a specific phenomenon occurs. The objective of this case study is to give meaning to the events in the multiple developmental relationships (networks) of Black women federal senior executives. The intent is not to seek truth, but to acquire insight and a deeper understanding of the developmental relationships. The first step in the process will include describing the method of inquiry, context, population, organizational setting, and the developmental networks of the subjects. The second step will be to confirm the relationships, events, patterns, challenges, barriers, and learning experiences (i.e., expressional, instrumental, self-determination, and self-definition) of the co-researchers as conveyed in their own words.

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design offers flexible guidelines (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) that bridge theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and methods for collecting empirical data. Grounded theory blended with constructivist inquiry, Black feminist thought, and developmental network theory serve as the framework for the study.

Allen, Eby, O’Brien, and Lentz (2008) examined the state of mentoring research and found that mentoring research has flourished in the last 20 years. However, of the 207 studies reviewed in their study, only 10.1% of the research designs were qualitative or a combined qualitative/quantitative indicating a lack of qualitative studies about mentoring.

There are different methods to do qualitative research; however, Grounded Theory Method (LaRossa, 2005) offers a valuable set of procedures for thinking theoretically about textual materials such as interview transcripts, observational field notes, and historical documents.

The method of inquiry for this case study will be *constructivist inquiry* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) as the blueprint for the investigation of human subjects. Before 1989

constructivist inquiry was known as *naturalistic inquiry* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This method of inquiry denotes that co-researchers serve as the primary source as they relate events from their own perspective. The three basic assumptions of naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1979) are as follows:

- 1) *The Assumption of Multiple Reality*- inquiry does not converge onto one single reality, but diverges onto many realities;
- 2) *The Assumption of Subject-Object Interrelatedness*- the belief that inquirers and the objects or entities they investigate are interrelated;
- 3) *The Assumption of Contextuality*- represents the belief that all phenomena are contextually determined.

Constructivist inquiry (Manning, 1997) follows the aforementioned assumptions: it uses inductive analysis, rejects a prior theory as a source of deductive analysis, and observes designated procedures including co-constructed interpretation and human-as-instrument approaches. Constructivist inquiry adds the following two assumptions referred to as *axioms*:

- 4) *The relationship of Known and Knower*- asserts that knower and known are collaborative co-creators of experience; and
- 5) *Values*- assert the belief that inquiry is values-based.

### **Organizational Context and Setting**

This study occurred in a diverse federal organization, which was complex and had just over 2,000 employees. It is important to note that I was an eight-year employee of this organization and had guided the professional development of several members of the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program. Through my work in the areas of

organizational development, career development, and training, I had developed a trusted rapport with these employees. This included the co-researchers of this study as I had provided executive coaching, consultation, and organizational development services for each. It is important to note that while I have provided support to the program and its members, I have never managed the program and the co-researchers of this study have never been under my authority or supervision.

The primary occupational specialties within the organization were accounting, financial management, information technology, budget management, and program management. Seven separate functional areas comprised the organization. Multiple offices, divisions, branches, and teams existed within the organization.

In 2004, 48.7% of the organization's overall workforce was Black with 36.6% of the population Black women. It was unique for a federal organization of this size to have such a high representation of Blacks in its workforce.

The Senior Executive Service established by Title IV of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 became effective in 1979 (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2007). Senior executive positions are higher than the highest General Schedule (GS) level, which is GS-15. The Government's senior executives are responsible for individual and organizational performance. Since the implementation of the service, management practiced by federal executives has gradually shifted from the traditional regulatory and procedure approach to one that focuses on leadership.

There were 19 senior executive service (SES) occupied positions within the organization. At the time of the study, fourteen of the senior executives were men and five were women. Of the 19 senior executives, one (5%) was a Black man and two (11%) were Black women. In 2005, the first Black woman was appointed to senior executive status within the organization. In

2001, there were five Black men senior executives. The researcher found it quite interesting that an organization established in 1940, with over one third of its workforce comprised of Black women, saw 60 years elapse before the appointment of a Black woman senior executive. It was this historical fact, along with the researcher's interest in workplace mentoring that facilitated the design of this study.

In 2003, the Office of Personnel Management implemented the Senior Executive Candidate Development Program (SESCDP). The program's intent is to create a high quality and diverse (e.g. Women, minorities, and persons with disabilities) Senior Executive Leadership corps. This competitive program is open to individuals at the grade 14 or 15 pay level. Components of the 18- to 24- month program include the design of an individual development plan, four weeks of rotational assignments, mentoring, completion of more than 80 hours of formal training, and the completion and interpretation of an assessment tool such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Individual learning objectives for the program driven by the core competencies of the Senior Executive Service (SES) are the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's) (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2007):

***Leading Change***- involves the ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization to meet organizational goals. The "leading change" competencies are creativity/innovation; external awareness; flexibility; resilience; strategic thinking; and vision.

***Leading People***- involves the ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals. The mutual competencies found under this core qualification are conflict management; leveraging diversity; developing others; and team building.

**Results Driven**- involves the ability to meet organizational goals and other customer expectations. The “results driven” competencies are accountability; customer service; decisiveness; entrepreneurship; problem solving; and technical credibility.

**Business Acumen** – involves the ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically. Competencies that fall under this ECQ are financial management; human capital management; and technology management.

**Building Coalitions** – involves the ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, state and local governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or internal organizations to achieve common goals. The competencies for “building coalitions” are partnering; political savvy; and influencing/negotiating.

In 2006, The Office of Personnel Management added six “fundamental competencies” to become the foundation of the ECQs. Those competencies are interpersonal skills; oral communication; continual learning; written communication; integrity/honesty; and public service motivation. As program candidates design their individual development plans, they identify and participate in learning activities that will enhance growth in all the developmental areas listed above.

### **Selection Criteria, Sampling, and Co-researchers**

As previously mentioned, a case is a single unit or a bounded system. When we get curious about a particular organization, the case is “given” (Merriam, 1998). The following represent the five selection criteria for co-researchers of this study:

- Women;
- Black;
- Currently or previously employed with the organization of interest;

- Entered the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) while employed with the organization of interest;
- Received senior executive status during the program or after completion of the SESCO.

Since the implementation of the SESCO, the organization of interest has admitted seven Black women into the program. Each entered the SESCO at the GS-15 pay level. Of the seven, four have successfully completed the program, one did not complete the program, and at the time of this study, two are in the final stage of the program.

Three have received appointment to the Senior Executive Service, two of the three completed the SESCO, and one received her appointment before completing the SESCO requirements. Two received their senior executive appointments within the organization of interest for this study, while one left the organization to secure a senior executive position. Two of the five women completed the program but have yet to receive an SES position. The three women are the only Black women to enter this organization's SESCO and receive senior executive status. The three Black women who entered or completed the program and received senior executive status during or after the program will serve as the *unique sample* for this study. A unique sample (Merriam, 1998) is one based on atypical or rare attributes or occurrences of the phenomenon of interest.

Table 3.1

*Status of Seven SESCO DP Black Women*

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Entered SESCO DP</b>	<b>Completed SESCO DP</b>	<b>Received SES within Organization</b>	<b>Received SES outside of Organization</b>	<b>Currently Employee of Organization</b>
<b>1*</b>	X	X		X	
<b>2*</b>	X		X		X
<b>3*</b>	X	X	X		X
<b>4</b>	X	X			X
<b>5</b>	X	X			X
<b>6</b>	X				X
<b>7</b>	X				X

\*Co-researcher in the study

**Pilot Study**

To prepare for data collection, I conducted a pilot case study. The purpose of the case study was to help refine the data collection techniques with respect to both the content and the procedures. This project helped to evaluate the application of the Developmental Network Questionnaire (Higgins & Galvin, 2004) (see Appendix A), the effectiveness of the interview guide, usage of the audio recording equipment, and familiarization with the coding process to include the HyperRESEARCH coding software. For the purpose of the pilot study and the primary study, the term *co-researcher* represents the co-researcher(s) of the study. The co-researcher for the pilot study was a Black woman with more than 20 years of management

experience in the federal government. She was a grade GS-14 and worked in the organizational setting described above.

I designed an interview guide to track and monitor the process. Approximately three weeks before the interview, the co-researcher received an interview packet containing the Informed Consent form (see Appendix B), a copy of the Institutional Review Board's approval form (see Appendix G), and the Developmental Network Questionnaire (DNQ). Approximately two weeks later, I met with the co-researcher to review the purpose of the study, explain the process, review the DNQ instructions, secure a signed copy of the Informed Consent form, and answer questions. The confidential nature of the study was discussed,

On June 27, 2008, I conducted the audio-recorded interview. During the 75-minute interview, I interpreted the DNQ, transcribed theoretical memo notes, and asked the background, developmental network, and political identity interview questions. The audio-recorded interview was forwarded to a transcriber. Upon arrival of the transcript, I shared a hard copy with the co-researcher for review and feedback. I listened to the audio and read the transcription several times, adding to my theoretical memo notes.

I completed the HyperRESEARCH coding software tutorial, uploaded the transcription and started the coding process. A peer review process was administered using two doctoral candidate colleagues. Both peer reviewers are Black women who were asked to review the transcript carefully and share interpreted thoughts, themes, concepts, and ideas. Each peer reviewer provided a list of concepts related to selected sections of the transcript. I captured valuable lessons learned during this entire process and debriefed with my committee co-chairs. . The pilot study aided the researcher in revising the interview guide, acquiring a confident

interview style, securing greater comfort with the DNQ interpretation process, and developing stronger familiarization with the coding software.

### **Data Collection**

**Developmental network questionnaire.** The Developmental Network Questionnaire (DNQ) is a practitioner's instrument developed by Monica Higgins and John Galvin (2004) (Appendix C) as a classroom exercise used to solicit information about current developmental relationships and the network they compose. I purchased permission from the copyright holder, Harvard Business School, to reprint both the electronic and print versions of this questionnaire. For the purpose of this study, the print version was administered. Per e-mail correspondence received from the primary author of the questionnaire, (M.C. Higgins, personal communication, September 12, 2007; Appendix C) the collection of such data are linked to the social network theory research of Granovetter (1973), the mentor functions (i.e., psychosocial and career) research of Kram (1985), and the developmental network research of Higgins and Kram (2001).

The purpose of the instrument is to provide background information about the co-researcher's developmental relationships. The instrument was used to elicit information about the co-researchers current (i.e., over the past year) developmental relationships and the network they comprise.

In September of 2008, each co-researcher received a packet that contained the DNQ along with copies of the Informed Consent. They were requested to complete the instrument before the first interview session. Two interviews per co-researcher for a total of six interviews were conducted between October and December of 2008. During each session, I explained the purpose of the instrument, emphasized the confidential nature of the exercise as per the Informed Consent, and reviewed the instrument's instructions with each co-researcher. I explained to the

co-researchers that this exercise was not a test, but a self-validating instrument designed to offer a better understanding of their individual developmental support networks.

The instrument is self-scoring and allowed the co-researchers to self-identify members of their developmental network. Members of one's developmental network are described as those who currently (i.e., over the past year) took an active interest in and made a concerted effort to advance their careers. The co-researchers responded to DNQ items that offered a clearer understanding and provided visual mapping of their developmental network. Co-researchers provided mentor demographics and responded to items that capture relationship diversity (i.e., number, density, and range of social systems) and relationship type (i.e., type and level of support functions- psychosocial/expressive and career/instrumental) data. As part of the exercise, co-researchers designed relationship maps to illustrate their current (within one year), past (five years ago), and future (five years from today). This mapping exercise offered a visual depiction of their social systems and the degree of closeness with developers. The information collected will support or challenge the interview data, as it will reflect the selected topics applied during the co-researcher interviews.

The intent was to interpret the DNQ results during the initial interview session and then ask the interview questions during the second interview. Two of the three co-researchers experienced this process while the third co-researcher, because she did not complete the instrument before the initial interview, was first administered the interview questions then the DNQ. During the sessions, I explained the related terms, concepts, reviewed the results, answered questions relevant to the results, and identified possible steps to strengthen their developmental networks. The instrument results will remain locked in a secure place in my residence and not be shared with anyone.

**Interview inquiry.** Bell-Scott (1994) emphasized how important it is to apply nontraditional information sources, such as personal journals to comprehend the human experience in Black feminist qualitative research. Three Black family studies scholars— Few, Stephens and Rouse-Arnett (2003)— collectively analyzed their experiences interviewing Black women on sensitive topics and offer five practical suggestions that will be applied during the data collection process of this research study. The application tenets facilitated and enabled *authenticity* for the duration of the study.

1. **Contextualizing Research** – a researcher must educate him- or herself about the history and culture of their subjects or informants to secure insider status. When applying Black feminist thought to design interview protocols and code data, an awareness of the diversity, cross-sectional, and multiple consciousness of Black women’s experience must be active and present.
2. **Contextualizing Self in the Process** - researchers must monitor their subjectivity in the research process and properly manage their relationship with the informant(s). This behavior is found in a “self-reflexive” researcher as they design a forum that will allow informants to express, be accountable to, defend, and validate knowledge that contributes to the collective experience of Black women.
3. **Monitoring Symbolic Power** – language is symbolic power that defines and validates experience. A qualitative researcher must be attentive to the use of language during the entire interview process as interpretations may create a false reality for the informants. This referent can create costly barriers and wedges between the researcher and the informant(s). Taking the interview data back to the informant to review is helpful to address this referent.

4. **Triangulating Multiple Sources** – the researcher must apply multiple strategies to collect the data to allow the informant different opportunities to uncover subjugated knowledge and allow her to feel empowered. Asking the same question in multiple ways and using multiple nontraditional data sources are two recommended techniques that will achieve this referent.
5. **Caring in the Research Process** – the most skilled and talented researcher is unable to determine exactly what will be uncovered during the inquiry process. If a painful experience should arise providing a list of self-help resources (e.g., books and tapes), counseling hotlines, or a list of therapists may be given to the informant.

The two sets of criteria (Manning, 1997) that address the quality and rigor of constructivist inquiry are trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness (Manning, 1997) is parallel to the empiricist concepts of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. In essence, trustworthiness ensures that one has carried out the research process correctly. Authenticity (Manning, 1997) involves a set of criteria that commits the constructivist researcher to a set of actions. If the researcher fails to meet these commitments, the quality of the research is questionable.

To promote these criteria I applied the following actions:

1. **Member Checks** - this activity afforded the assurance that I “got it right” and have accurately represented the lives of the co-researchers. Co-researchers reviewed the interview transcripts to determine the accuracy of the data.
2. **Peer Reviews** - I shared parts of the transcripts and findings with colleagues who are knowledgeable about the applied research method.

3. **Informed Consent** - consent forms were reviewed with the co-researchers to convey the purpose of the research, procedures, risks, possible benefits, confidentiality, freedom to withdraw, and require signatures of permission.
4. **Caring and Trusting Researcher** - I invested the necessary time and effort building a relationship with the co-researchers based on trust and empathy. Through executive coaching, career counseling, and management consultation experiences with each co-researcher, I believe this dynamic was established.

A review of contemporary mentoring research examined data collection methods (Allen, Eby, O'Brien, and Lentz, 2008). Of the 178 methods applied in 207 studies, only 14 used interviewing as a data collection method. Perhaps this indicates a need for more studies that use this technique.

The use of qualitative research methods, such as interviews, is instrumental in the exploration of various dynamics such as race, gender, and sexuality interactions (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003). Interviewing is necessary (Merriam, 1998) when behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them cannot be observed or when interested in past events that cannot be replicated. The main objective of the interview is to obtain meaningful information using open-ended questions. The interviews for this study captured a broad perspective of developmental networks and political identity constructs.

**Interview protocol.** The researcher has secured oral permission from the pilot study co-researcher and the three primary co-researchers of the case study. All co-researchers signed an "Informed Consent" form that reflects the research risks, benefits, and the co-researchers' voluntary status. Each interview began with a short explanation of the research project with the co-researcher encouraged to ask clarifying questions. The researcher submitted required

documentation to the Institutional Review Board Office of Research Compliance. Each co-researcher received a copy of the approved research application.

Reassurance was given that the co-researchers' anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained and protected at all times. Identifying information—names of the interviewees, locations of work or organizations, and events--were excised from the received transcripts. The co-researchers assumed pseudonyms in all theoretical memos and transcripts, and the co-researchers' places of employment were not disclosed. A professional transcriptionist transcribed the interview audiotapes. The transcriber signed a contract of confidentiality prior to receiving the transcribed data. Once transcribed, the original tapes were locked in a drawer in my residence and I was the only person with access to the audiotapes. After completing the analysis, the researcher erased the tapes but will retain a copy of the original transcription for seven years.

The six interviews took place in the offices of the co-researchers. Profiles were designed to capture the age, race, sex, relationship closeness, social arenas, type of career and psychosocial help received, and relationship type of each co-researcher.

I interviewed each of the three co-researchers twice with time periods that ranged from a little less than an hour to close to two hours. Upon preliminary analysis of the initial data, additional interviews were determined unnecessary. Background information, social history, developmental network, and political identity represented the general interview topics used for guidance during the interview sessions. Interview conversations were audio taped and a professional transcriptionist transcribed the notes. After receipt of the transcripts, the researcher presented each co-researcher with a copy of her transcript for review. I received no recommended changes from the co-researchers.

After each interview, the researcher designed theoretical memos to record thoughts, interpretations, questions, and directions for further data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To identify them, the theoretical memos were dated and received the pseudonym of the co-researcher. These theoretical memo notes served as a data source that gave more in-depth richness to the findings of the study and strengthened the trustworthiness and rigor of the data.

### **Data Analysis**

After the collection of the data, organization, coding, and interpretation of the data commenced. The study employed a triangulation approach. In a statistical sense, generalization is not a goal of qualitative research. Coding was the analytic process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) through which data were fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory. The interview transcriptions and theoretical memos provided the data for coding. Strauss and Corbin (1988) defined a coding process as a sequence of action/interaction pertaining to a phenomenon as it evolves over time. The analysis required multiple levels of coding.

To analyze the collected data the researcher applied the following four processes of coding analysis:

- 1) **Open Coding** -was applied to identify concepts (the building blocks of theory), their properties (characteristics of a category), and dimensions (range along which general properties of a category vary). Repeatedly, the transcribed interview data was examined separately, at different levels, line-by-line for meaning;
- 2) **Axial coding** - focused on the specific properties of a category, the conditions that caused the category to occur, and the consequences that surround it. Axial coding relates the categories to their subcategories (concepts that pertain to the

category offering further clarification and specification), linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions to the concepts of developmental networks and political identity;

- 3) **Selective Coding** - included the integration of open and axial code words and refinement of the theory.
- 4) **Emergent Themes** - represented category codes that were repeated when all the codes became saturated, signifying the end of coding and recoding process.

I, as the researcher, used the HyperRESEARCH software program to review the data for labels, concepts, categories, subcategories, and themes. The first step was a thorough word-for-word analysis to name the phenomena and group similar events, happenings, and objects under a common label or classification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Applying comparative analysis, the data was further broken down into discrete events, ideas, incidents, and acts. After accumulating the concepts, I then began to group the processes (categorizing) under terms that were more abstract. I then related the categories to subcategories which answer questions about the phenomenon such as when, where, how, why, who, and with what consequences. I identified emergent themes and integrated them to form a central category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and then refined the theory.

Following the coding process, theoretical memos contained headings indicating the concepts or categories to which they pertain. These theoretical memos eventually contributed to the emerging themes and central theory. Two peer reviewers evaluated parts of the transcripts and findings to validate the data. I shared copies of the master code list with the peer reviewers for reference. The peer reviewers are both Black women acquainted with qualitative research procedures. Their gender and racial identities were a reason for selection, as their personal

experience with establishing their own political identities and creating developmental networks enhanced their ability to serve as peer reviewers.

The emergence of these truths and theoretical insight discovered specific relationships and provided the researcher an interpretive framework. I, as the researcher, analyzed the data much like an interpreter searching for meaning. This analysis following the coding process of Straus and Corbin (1998) included categorizing and integrating open and axial coding until the theoretical truths were revealed in the data. Table 3.2 represents a checklist applied and followed during the data collection and analysis process to promote procedural consistency.

Table 3.2

*Case Study Research Protocol*

<b>Research Checklist</b>	<b><i>Pilot Co-researcher</i></b>	<b><i>Co-researcher #1</i></b>	<b><i>Co-researcher #2</i></b>	<b><i>Co-researcher #3</i></b>
<b><i>Pre-Pilot Study</i></b>				
Contact transcriber	x	x	x	x
Forward Informed Consent/IRB Info. to co-researchers	X	x	x	x
<b><i>Pre-Interview Session w/ co-researcher</i></b>				
Schedule initial meeting	x	x	x	x
Review Informed Consent and forwarded materials	x	x	x	x
Explain purpose of the study	x	x	x	x
Review role of co-researcher	x	x	x	x
Discuss time commitment	x	x	x	x
Explain confidentiality	x	x	x	x
Review DNQ purpose and instructions	x	x	x	x
Identify DNQ time period for completion	x	x	x	x
<b><i>Interview</i></b>				
Record the session	x	x	x	x
Interpret DNQ and provide Interpretive Guide	x	x	x	x
Create theoretical memo notes	x	x	x	x
Forward interview to transcriptionist	x	x	x	x
Receive transcription	x	x	x	x
<b><i>Data Analysis</i></b>				
Listen/review transcript	x	x	x	x
Review theoretical memo notes	x	x	x	x
Enter interview transcription into data analysis software	x	x	x	x
Coding- categories, labels, themes	x	x	x	x
Perform member check	x	x	x	x

**Analysis concerns.** I had an existing professional relationship with each of the co-researchers prior to the implementation of the study. While this may have promoted trust, it may have also challenged my ability to remain unbiased and objective. Items discussed in the study apply only to the specific circumstances of this case.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the relevant aspects of a qualitative research method to describe the strategies of inquiry and the means of data analysis. Offered is a thorough description of the components of the research design. Presented are the research questions, a thorough depiction of the organizational context, and an overview of the selection criteria and sampling process. Presented are the process and protocol for conducting the semi-structured interviews. Described are applicable techniques for acquiring trustworthiness and authenticity during the study. Provided is a thorough description of the intended coding technique including justification for the selected coding software program. It is with the execution of said data collection and analysis that I conducted a quality case study that informed existing related literature about this topic.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Research Findings**

The Developmental Network Questionnaire (DNQ) identified members and characteristics of the support network. Analysis of the co-researcher DNQ, interview data and demographics reflect noteworthy findings. The co-researchers are all in their early to mid-fifties, married, have three or fewer children, over 28 years of federal work experience, with comparable management experience (see Table 4.1). Examination of their developer demographics revealed a slight preference for men and a clear preference for Black developers. The chosen developers represent a diverse age group with no preference noted. The co-researchers preferred a high degree of closeness among their developers and identified few social arenas, with work as the most common (see Table 4.1 and 4.2).

Chapter IV includes an introduction, method overview, background of the co-researchers, an analysis of the findings, and a chapter summary. The research questions guided the analysis.

- (1) What do Black women federal senior executives value within their developmental networks?
- (2) How do Black women federal senior executives construct political identity within their developmental networks?

#### **Method Overview**

As described in Chapter III, a qualitative case study approach (George & Bennett, 2005; Merriam, 1998) was applied throughout the collection of the data- i.e., thoughts, concepts, incidents, ideas, and events. Methods of data collection included the administration of the DNQ (Higgins & Galvin, 2004) and a series of audio-recorded open-ended interviews. The interview questions are in Appendix B. Interpretation of the DNQ occurred during the interviews.

Transcripts were provided to each co-researcher for meaning verification and recommended changes. The co-researchers requested no changes.

After open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the labeled and analyzed transcripts identifying incidents, events, actions, and ideas represented the phenomena described by the co-researchers. The extensive list was condensed and integrated to establish a more manageable list. For example, the concept “communication” represents various modes and forms of message transmission and reception displayed by the co-researcher within a developmental relationship. Through the process, concepts and categories evolved that represented the same phenomenon with a further breakdown into subcategories.

Axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) is the process of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions. Further collapsing and integrating the categories generated a more robust categorization of the data. To arrive at this point multiple reviews of the data produced different scenarios. It was through many interpretive events, sharing with my two peer researchers and numerous brainstorming sessions with my qualitative research advisor, Dr. April Few-Demo, that data validation occurred. Through further analysis, themes emerged to establish a theoretical framework grounded in the data.

It was through the pre-interview phase, the interview sessions, and the intense coding process that differences in behavior became evident. Co-researcher demographics had many similarities such as age, sex, marital status, and years of experience.

### **The Co-researchers**

**Demographic comparison.** The three co-researchers for this study are members of the Federal Senior Executive Service (SES). They worked at some time concurrently with the same organization and participated in the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program.

The co-researchers selected pseudonyms to protect their individual identities as well as those of their respective developers. Their self-selected names for the purpose of the study are Ms. Jones, Ms. Fields, and Ms. Smith.

In Table 4.1, the personal demographics indicate that each co-researcher is a woman, Black, with a mean age of 53.0 years, married, and with a 2.0 mean number of children. The early childhood demographics indicate that each co-researcher grew up in a low- to middle-income socioeconomic family environment while living in a Mid-Atlantic or Southern region of the United States.

The mean number of federal service years of the co-researchers is 31.7 years with 18.7 years of management experience and 3.3 years of SES experience. Ms. Jones reached the senior executive level after 24 years of federal service, while Ms. Fields took 26 years and Ms. Smith reached this level after 35 years of federal service.

Table 4.1

*Co-researcher Demographics*

<i>Demographics</i>	<i>Ms. Jones</i>	<i>Ms. Fields</i>	<i>Ms. Smith</i>	<i>Mean</i>
<i>Age</i>	51 years	50 years	58 years	53 years
<i>Race</i>	Black	Black	Black	
<i>Sex</i>	Female	Female	Female	
<i>Marital Status</i>	Married	Married	Married	
<i>Parental Status</i>	3 children	2 children	1 child	2 children
<i>Childhood Socioeconomic Status</i>	Low-income	Middle-income	Low-income	
<i>Childhood Geographic Location</i>	New Jersey	Washington, D.C./Maryland	North Carolina	
<i>Years of Federal Service</i>	28 years	30 years	37 years	31.7 years
<i>Years of Federal Management Experience</i>	17 years	25 years	14 years	18.7 years
<i>Years of Federal Senior Executive Service</i>	4 years	4 years	2 years	3.3 years

***Ms. Fields.*** Ms. Fields has a quiet presence. She is soft-spoken, yet does not hesitate to speak with directness and confidence. Though she self-disclosed introversion as her Myers-Briggs behavior-style preference (Kroeger & Thuesen, 1988), Ms. Fields was the most vocal of

the three co-researchers during the interview process. To emphasize her thoughts, she provided numerous examples. She expressed interest about her developmental network and noted several surprises. For one, she was surprised that the majority of developers she listed were Black men, as she has always thought of herself as one who values ethnic and gender diversity.

Ms. Fields possesses a bachelor's degree and resides in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. She is active with her church where she holds several leadership positions.

*Ms. Smith.* Ms. Smith was the oldest, with the most years of federal service; however, she had less management experience. During the initial interview, Ms. Smith had multiple interruptions. After the interruptions, she would take a few seconds to get back on track with the interview. At times, she paused before responding to the interview questions. Ms. Smith has a master's degree and resides in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. She is an active volunteer with her church and other social service organizations.

*Ms. Jones.* Ms. Jones demonstrated much interest in the DNQ. She asked many questions during the DNQ interpretation as she was genuinely interested and wanted to understand the meaning of the results. She continuously challenged herself to discover new meanings of self. Ms. Jones challenged her traditional way of thinking as we interpreted the results. She vividly recalled several childhood encounters with racial bigotry. Ms. Jones has a master's degree and resides in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Ms. Jones is active in community service demonstrated by her involvement in civic, church and sorority events.

### **Research Question 1: What Do Black Women Federal Senior Executives Value Within Their Developmental Networks?**

To identify the integral dynamics of the co-researchers' developmental networks, each completed the Developmental Network Questionnaire (DNQ) and responded to 17 interview

questions (see Appendix B). The interviews examined relationship dynamics such as diversity, quality of the support received, and challenges faced. Discussed below are the results of these two exploratory events.

**Developmental network questionnaire results.** To offer a composite view of their self-identified support networks, the co-researchers completed the DNQ (see Appendix E). Each co-researcher identified up to six developers who were people over the past year who have taken an active interest in and made a concerted effort to help the co-researcher to advance in her career by providing varied amounts of professional or personal guidance.

Two co-researchers identified six developers while the third co-researcher identified five developers. None of the co-researchers expressed difficulty identifying their developers. The research of Higgins and Kram (2001) and Higgins and Thomas (2001) concluded successful persons in the workforce have more than one developmental relationship during their career.

The results of this instrument indicated the diversity, density, range, type of help, type of relationship, and visual mapping (i.e., past, current, and future) of the co-researchers' support network. Raw subtotals, percentages and mean scores from the DNQ pertain to each area of diversity. Table 4.2, *DNQ- Developer Gender, Race, Age, and Density Results*, demonstrates the diversity of gender, race, and age between the developers. Table 4.3, *DNQ- Closeness, Range, Function and Relationship Type*, summarizes the closeness, range, type of help (i.e., career or psychosocial) and the relationship type. Key terms used in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 are defined below.

- ***Ally*** – a developer who has offered low amounts of career help and low amounts of psychosocial help
- ***Career Help*** – benefits to the co-researcher such as increased career opportunities, greater recognition, visibility, opening doors, sponsorship, providing connections to challenging assignments and protection; also referred to as *instrumental* help (Higgins & Kram, 2000)

- ***Closeness*** – represents the emotional closeness or intensity of the relationship that may range from “very close,” “close,” “less than close” to “distant”
- ***Density*** – represents whether the developers know one another and is calculated by dividing the number of actual relationships that exist by the possible number of relationships that could exist
- ***Friend*** – a developer who has offered low amounts of career help and high amounts of psychosocial help
- ***Mentor*** – a developer who has offered high amounts of career help and high amounts of psychosocial help
- ***Psychosocial Help*** – benefits to the co-researcher such as friendship, counseling, role modeling, acceptance and confirmation; also referred to as *expressive* help (Higgins & Kram, 2000)
- ***Range*** – represents the number of social arenas the relationship emerges from such as work, family, church, community or college
- ***Sponsor*** – a developer who has offered low amounts of psychosocial assistance and high amounts of career assistance

***Relationship diversity.*** In Table 4.2, of the 17 total developers, 10 (59%) were men and 7 (41%) were women. This disparity represents a slight gender preference by the co-researchers. Ms. Smith and Ms. Jones identified 3 (50%) male and 3 (50%) female developers. Five (80%) of the developers identified by Ms. Fields were men which may demonstrate a gender preference. Fifty-nine percent of the overall developers were of a different sex than the co-researchers. This represents a slight but not a strong preference for a developer of the opposite gender.

Table 4.2

*DNQ- Developer Gender, Race, Age, and Density Results*

CO-RESEARCHER	DEVELOPERS	GENDER	RACE	AGE	DENSITY
<i>Ms. Jones</i>	DL	Male (M)	White (W)	47	JT/KP
	HCO	Female(F)	Black (B)	54	JT
	JT	Female	White	56	DL/KP/HCO
	KP	Male	White	56	JT/DL/
	LCA	Female	Black	48	LMC
	LMC	Male	Black	67	LCA
Sub-total	6 Developers	3(F) 3(M)	3(B) 3(W)		
Mean/Percentage		50%(F) 50%(M)	50%(B) 50%(W)	55 years	33.3% Density
<i>Ms. Fields</i>	ANDERSON	Male	Black	74	Olive/Herbert
	AVERY	Male	Black	56	Herbert
	HERBERT	Male	Black	50	Anderson/TH/Avery/Olive
	OLIVE	Female	Black	57	Herbert/Anderson
	TH	Male	Asian (A)	36	Herbert
Sub-total	5 Developers	4(M) 1(F)	4(B) 1(A)		
Mean/Percentage		80%(M) 20% (F)	80% (B) 20%(A)	55 years	50% Density
<i>Ms. Smith</i>	CM	Female	Black	52	none
	CP	Male	Black	63	KK
	JS	Male	Black	48	NF/KK
	KK	Female	Black	45	JS/NF/CP
	MP	Male	Black	62	none
	NF	Female	White	50	KK/JS
Sub-totals	6 Developers	3(F) 3(M)	5(B) 1(W)		
Means/Percentage		50% (F) 50%(M)	83%(B) 17%(W)	53 years	27% Density
GRAND TOTAL	17 Developers	10 (Male) 7 (Female)	12(B) 4(W) 1(A)		
Grand Means/Percentage		59% (M) 41%(F)	71% (B) 24% (W) 5% (A)  29% of a different race	54 years	36.8% Density

**Race.** The racial diversity of the developers consisted of three groups: Black, White, and Asian. Twelve (71%) were Black, 4 (24%) were White and 1 (5%) was Asian. Missing were representatives of other minority groups. When combining gender with race, 7 (41%) of the developers were Black men, 5 (29%) Black women, 2 (12%) White men, 2 (12%) White women

and 1 (6%) Asian man. These differences could represent a slight preference for developers of the opposite gender but of the same race. Ms. Fields stated her surprise that she listed only one non-Black developer and noted that this lack of racial diversity within her support network was an opportunity for change. She plans to increase her interactions with other professionals of different races/ethnicities and will attempt to diversify the racial profile of her future career network.

**Age.** The overall mean age of the developers (54 years) is very close to the mean age of the co-researchers (53 years). The ages for the 17 developers ranged between 36 to 74 years. Slightly less than half, 8 (47%) of the developers were the same age as or younger than the co-researcher. This result challenges the common belief that a developer should be, or is preferred to be, older in age than the protégé. The co-researchers appear to have no obvious age preference and are more concerned about other developer characteristics, such as trust, as they establish developmental relationships.

**Density.** The relationship's *density* determines if the developers within the co-researcher's network know one another or not. According to the theoretical framework of the DNQ (Higgins & Galvin, 2004), a network in which most developers know most other developers is said to be "dense" while a network of which few or no developers know one another is said to be "sparse." Within a dense network, there exists an increased probability of having access to the same types of information and providing similar perspectives while a sparse network may offer varied advice and feedback.

The "Density" column of Table 4.2 shows which and how many developers (if any) each developer knows. For example, Ms. Jones' developer, "DL", knows two of the five other developers, "JT and KP." Another developer "HCO" knows only one other developer, "JT."

The DNQ density scores for each co-researcher were 50% or lower which highlights the sparsity of the networks. The network of Ms. Jones received a density score of 33.3% while the network of Ms. Smith had the lowest score of 27%. Ms. Fields' density score was a high of 50%. If the co-researchers preferred a network where the information, advice and guidance they received was different, then they were probably satisfied with their density scores. However, Ms. Fields stated that her network could improve by creating one that offered greater sparsity. She seeks and values broad interpretations of her reality and has less need for the consistency offered by a dense network.

*Closeness.* Related to density is the concept of relationship closeness as displayed in Table 4.3. The co-researchers ranked the emotional closeness of their developer relationships as very close, close, less than close or distant. It should be noted that a very close relationship is not always preferred or better than a distant relationship as other variables—i.e., density, function type, and relationship type—contribute to the individually perceived quality of the relationship. There may be instances where there is little and infrequent personal sharing (distant), but when it does occur, it offers very important developmental assistance. Upon examination, 16 of the 17 relationships were described as either “very close” or “close.” One relationship was “less than close” and none ranked as “distant.” This indicates that high and strong emotional closeness within a developmental relationship is a strong preference of the three co-researchers. It is interesting to note that all of the eight relationships labeled “very close” are with Black developers. None of the relationships with non-Black developers ranked as “very close.”

Table 4.3

*DNQ- Developer Closeness, Range, Function, and Relationship Type*

CO-RESEARCHER	DEVELOPERS	CLOSENESS	RANGE	CAREER HELP SCORES	PSYCHOSOCIAL HELP SCORES	RELATIONSHIP TYPE
<i>Ms. Jones</i>	DL	Close ( C )	Work (W)	29	28	Mentor (M)
	HCO	Very Close (V)	Work	5	35	Friend (F)
	JT	Close	Work	35	30	Mentor
	KP	Close	Work	32	21	Sponsor (S)
	LCA	Very Close	Family (F)	5	35	Friend
	LMC	Very Close	College Friend (CF)	14	35	Friend
Sub-totals	6 Developers	3( C ) 3(V)	4(W) 1(F) 1(CF)	120 ( 210 max.)	184 (210 max.)	3(F) 2(M) 1(S)
Mean Raw Scores, Totals or Percentage Representation		50%(C) 50%(V)	3 of 6 max.	20	31	50(F) 33(M) 17(S) %
<i>Ms. Fields</i>	ANDERSON	Very Close	Church ( C )	23	33	Mentor
	AVERY	Close	Work	13	23	Friend
	HERBERT	Very Close	Family	21	35	Mentor
	OLIVE	Very Close	Church	7	35	Friend
	TH	Close	Work	33	25	Mentor
Sub-totals	5 Developers	3(C) 2(V)	2( C ) 2(W) 1(F)	97 (175 max.)	151 (175 max.)	3(M) 2(F)
Mean Raw Scores, Totals or Percentage Representation		60%( C ) 40%( V)	3 of 6 max.	19	30	60(M) 40(F) %
<i>Ms. Smith</i>	CM	Close	Church	5	20	Ally (A)
	CP	Very Close	Family	5	27	Friend
	JS	Very Close	Work	5	29	Friend
	KK	Close	Work	5	29	Friend
	MP	Very Close	College Friend	5	29	Friend
	NF	Less than close (L)	Work	5	18	Ally
Sub-totals	6 Developers	3(V) 2( C ) 1(L)	3(W) 1(C) 1(F) 1(CF)	30 (210 max.)	152 (210 max.)	4(F) 2(A)
Mean Raw Scores, Totals or Percentage Representation		50%(V) 33%(C ) 17%(L)	4(6 max. social arenas)	5	25	67(F) 33(A) %
GRAND TOTALS	17 Developers	8 (V) 8(C ) 1(L)	9(W) 3(C) 3(F) 2(CF)	247 of 595	487 of 595	9(F) 5(M) 2(A) 1(S)
GRAND MEANS and PERCENTAGES		47% Very Close (VC) 47% Close (C) 6% Less than close % (L)	53% Work(W) 18% Church (C) 18% Family(F) 11% College Friend (CF)	15 of 35	29 of 35	53% Friends (F) 29% Mentors(M) 12% Allies (A) 6% Sponsors (S)

**Range.** The range is the number of social arenas of the co-researcher and developer represented in the network. The greater the range of a network, the more social arenas it taps and the more diverse its assistance is likely to be. Table 4.3 indicates there were four social arenas identified within the context of the 17 developmental relationships. The four social arenas selected are *work*, *church*, *family*, and *college friend*. The workplace social arena is represented in 9 (53%) of the relationships and is the dominant social arena. With only four social arenas identified within the 17 developmental relationships, the assistance received is not as diverse as it could be. When one compares the *closeness* with the *range*, one notes that all of the “church,” “family” and “college friend” social arenas developmental relationships are described as “very close” by the co-researchers while only two of the nine “work” social arenas were described as having a “very close” relationship.

**Relationship functions.** The term *career* and the term *psychosocial* represented benefits or functions of developmental relationships. The career developmental functions encompass such benefits as advocacy, coaching, exposure, visibility, protection, and challenging assignments. The psychosocial developmental functions included such benefits as role modeling, counseling, friendship, acceptance, confirmation, caring and sharing beyond the boundaries of the work relationship.

The co-researchers assessed the amount of career and psychosocial help their developmental network provide. Each co-researcher has individually rated the psychosocial and career help received based on a Likert Scale where “1” is “never/not at all” to “7” is “to the maximum extent possible.” They then total their scores for each function, which ranged from a low of five to a high of 35. Each function, career and psychosocial, had five items to evaluate.

An example “career” item is “Open doors for you professionally.” An example of a psychosocial item is “Counsels you on non-work related issues.”

Upon review of the psychosocial and career raw scores, it is noted that the psychosocial grand total of 487 (66%) almost doubled the career grand total score of 247 (34%). This rating indicates the psychosocial benefit of the developmental relationship was more important to the co-researchers than the career function. Higgins (2000) found the career function to be of greater value in the workplace as relationship outcomes such as exposure, visibility, providing challenging assignments, and offering new career opportunities have a strong connection with job satisfaction.

***Relationship type.*** The final area of the DNQ includes examining the type of relationships the co-researchers have with their developers. The four relationship types include mentor (high career score and high psychosocial score), sponsor (high career score and low psychosocial score), friend (low career score and high psychosocial score) and, ally (low career score and low psychosocial score). The data represented in Table 4.3 depict how close the co-researchers believe they are to their developers and the social arena of their relationships. Also reflected are the perceived relationship benefits; those benefits determine whether the developer is considered a mentor, friend, ally, or sponsor.

The career and psychosocial help scores determine this relationship. The results indicate that of the 17 developer relationships, 9 (53%) were identified as friends, 5 (29%) as mentors, 2 (12%) as allies and, 1 (6%) as a sponsor. The high psychosocial scores of friends and mentors reiterate that the three co-researchers value this type of help. There is clear preference among the co-researchers to establish developmental relationships that emphasize and prioritize psychosocial characteristics as the foundation, more than career assistance.

Upon the interpretation of the DNQ, Ms. Smith identified sponsorship as an area for improvement and a current void as she desires to incorporate more career type assistance in her future developmental relationships. She is most interested in securing sponsors that will help open career doors for her and create opportunities for advancement. As a person in the IT career field, which has been traditionally a male-dominated career field with few minorities and women, she described her career journey as one with few sponsors. Having achieved high-level success despite not having the advantage of a sponsor is atypical (Catalyst, 2004) and a reflection of Ms. Smith's ability to persevere against tremendous odds.

**Interview results.** Each co-researcher participated in two interviews to strengthen the understanding of her developmental network. The co-researchers responded to open-ended interview questions about their background, support network, and political identity. Three general thematic areas—*support network*, *self-definition and self-determination* and *ecology of life*—emerged from the data analysis.

The *support network* was the clearest theme representing 54% of the coded data, followed by the *self-determination* and *self-definition* theme representing 40%, and *ecology of life* representing 6% of the distribution. Figure 4.1 is a graph of the three themes, the 15 codes, and their percentage representation. (see Appendix D for definition of themes, categories, and codes.)

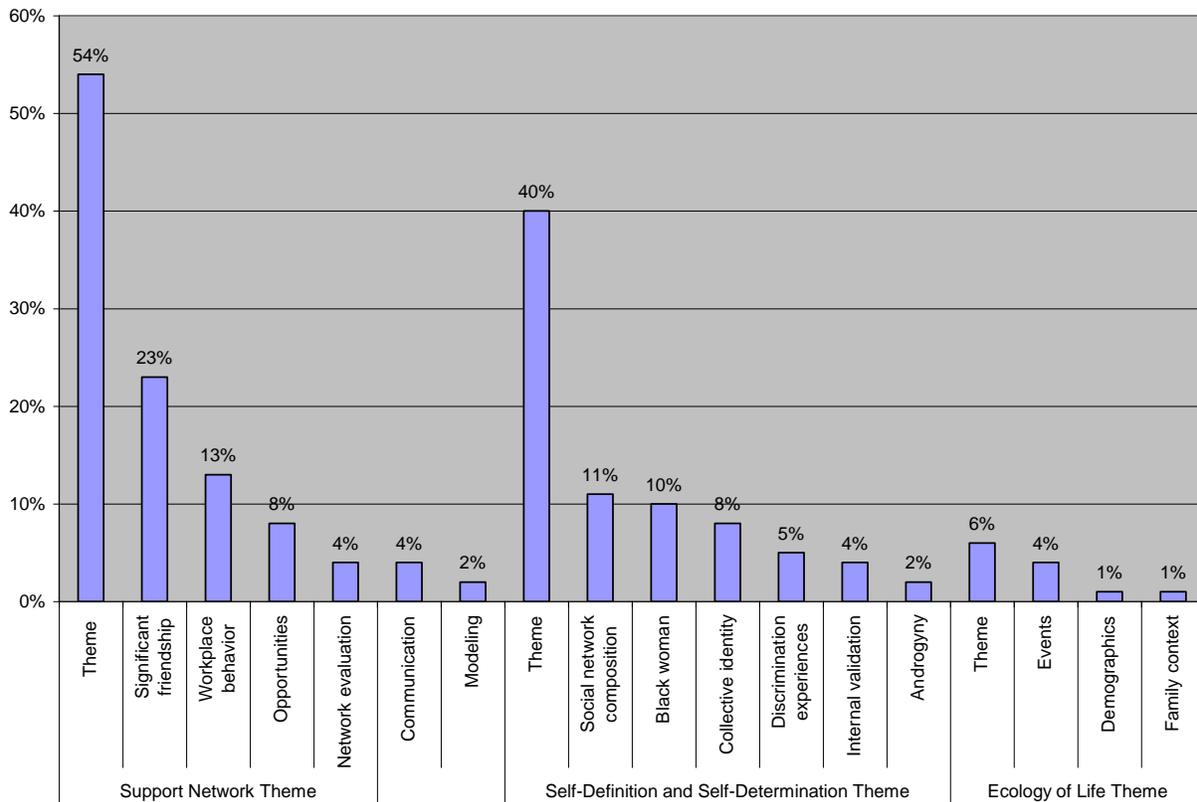


Figure 4.1. Percentage representation of codes within themes

The codes appear descending order to represent the most to the least represented codes. The code percentages range from a high of 23% (*significant friendship/ support network*) to a low of 1% (*demographics and family context/ecology of life*). It is important to note the combined dominance of the *support network* and *self-Definition/self-determination* themes. These codes indicate the strongest categories that describe their developmental network and political identity. Each category, subcategory, and code is contained in the relevant thematic section.

For each theme, there are individual code maps (see Appendix E) that represent a visual depiction of the subcategories that evolved during analysis. The code maps demonstrate the hierarchical relationships and paths between the codes, subcategories and categories.

Interpretive meanings, along with examples, promote comprehension of the co-researchers' experiences. In the following sections are explanations of the *support network*, *self-definition* and *self-determination and ecology of life* themes, categories, subcategories, and codes per order of dominance in the data analysis process.

**Support network theme.** The *support network* is a set of developmental relationships identified by the co-researcher taking an interest in and action to advance the co-researcher's career. This theme offers an understanding of what the co-researchers identified as most important about their developmental networks. Analysis of the transcript data served to substantiate the DNQ results discussed previously. Multiple dynamics of the co-researcher/developer relationship such as density, depth, distance, and diversity are better understood. Several messages that arose during the DNQ interpretation sessions are clarified in the text of the interviews. Of interest, significant friendship is the most prominent code. Under the Support Network thematic umbrella are two subcategories, *developer attributes* and *lessons learned*.

**Developer attributes.** The *developer attributes* are developer characteristics that provide either psychosocial or career functions that represent the next levels of coding. Under *psychosocial function* lies the most dominant of the coding concepts, *significant friendship*. The general category *lessons learned* captures the valued knowledge gained by the co-researcher from her developers. Relevant developmental events surfaced during the interviews creating the three codes *workplace behavior*, *communication*, and *network evaluation*.

**Significant friendship.** Significant friendship represented almost one quarter (23%) of the coding data. This category represents multiple thoughts that reflect the co-researcher's relationship with the developer such as feeling protected, serving as a social acquaintance,

sharing of thoughts and beliefs, important persons, things, and ideas valued by the co-researcher. For example, Ms. Jones demonstrated a distinction between mentorship/sponsorship relationships and friendships.

There are things that I may share with a mentor or a sponsor that will give them a glimpse into my personal life, but will not include any personal challenges or problems. However, with my friends, that group would be more aware of my personal problems and challenges. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Within a friendship, Ms. Jones needs to experience a higher level of sharing. She conveys that there must be this unique quality within her relationship with a developer before she is comfortable sharing very personal information about herself. This stipulation may also reflect the need to have a certain level of trust prior to establishing a close bond with her developer.

Ms. Smith emphasizes the value of a trusting rapport and having a developer who offers feedback that both complements and criticizes the protégé.

Yes someone that I could go to who will listen, not be judgmental, to share positive and negative experiences, and get feedback that I trust will be honest and not just because of a friendship – will tell me what I don't want to hear. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

Ms. Smith continued to describe the type of connection she desires in a developmental relationship.

I have heard before that you can have mentoring relationships where you do not have a personal relationship, just someone who is there, who gives you advice, and I have seen that work. I do like having a connection. We do not have to be best buds or tell each other our personal lives, but I would like to connect. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

Ms. Jones stated that she has erected a “shield” that is applied when establishing relationships with developers of a different ethnic group.

...this is in personal relationships with people that are different from me. In every situation, it has always blown up into something that I never perceived it to be. Therefore, it has led me to confirm that the racial majority population is not aware of minority populations. They (racial majority) make many assumptions. That is what I

saw as a child in the early 60s and 70s and even when it was up north. Therefore, I have a shield. I only let them get so close. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

The *shield* is noted when we examine Ms. Jones' relationship types, along with the racial background of her developers. We discover that all of her "friend" relationships, which represent a high level of psychosocial function and a low level of career function, are with Black developers. Ms. Jones attributed much of these choices to be a result of her experiences during an era of racial tension.

Ms. Fields desired to have a relationship where she not only received help, guidance, and assistance but also gave the same to her mentor. This is reflected in the quote below.

I think that my personal philosophy is relative to developmental network/mentors. I look at those relationships, and if they are not reciprocal, they probably are not good relationships. It is probably not a good fit. (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

*Career function.* The career function category demonstrated characteristics that provide sponsorship, protection, visibility, and access to professional networks. Within the category, two subcategories *opportunities* and *modeling* surfaced as important relationship outcomes for the co-researchers. The subcategory *opportunities*, referred to those developer attributes that promoted the co-researchers' ability to move up the career ladder, to advance, to network and to take part in activities that pushed the co-researcher to greater heights. Ms. Fields described this phenomenon.

However, he was very concerned with my own personal development here at work, and offered many opportunities. One of the biggest things that he did for me is encourage me to get out of my comfort zone, do more traveling to learn firsthand and see the mission of the (organization), which would help prepare me for the next Presidential transition. (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

Her developer encouraged Ms. Fields to explore her organization outside of the headquarters, which led her to challenge her norms by visiting the different field sites of the organization throughout the nation.

Ms. Jones presented how a developer, JT, created opportunities for her.

JT has provided opportunities for me to move ahead by recommending me for positions or promotions. He talked with me or advised me on a personal level giving me feedback on behavior, work or networking. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

JT offered valued sponsorship by exposing Ms. Jones to influential persons within the chain of command who could open doors of opportunity for her. Her developer also shared strategies and coached Ms. Jones about ways to expand her professional network.

Ms. Smith described the benefit of a deceased developer whom she did not list, but shared the enormous effect she had on her career. She repeatedly used the term “push” to emphasize her need for encouragement from her developers.

...and she really supported me to get my master's degree. She helped me identify assignments to push me along. The last assignment that I did while working with her was to work at the White House for about a year. ...she pushed me to my potential. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

*Modeling.* The concept of *modeling* reflects the developer’s ability to teach, guide, and advise the co-researcher by offering exemplary behavior. Kouzes and Posner (1990) identified *modeling* as one of five primary leadership behaviors. This framework emphasizes that words and plans are not enough, as leaders need to demonstrate that they practice what they preach.

Ms. Fields shared an example of how one of her developers, TH, demonstrated through his behavior the importance of building global relationships.

After he was here and spent all of our travel money in the first couple of months, I am thinking, what the heck? Is he just here as a consultant, or is he just going to go out and tour (the organization), and we do all the work? What is his contribution? \_But he was going out there to build those relationships, to get to know the folks of the Department, to

be able to speak about it, to be able to support it in the budget process. I would be gone from Sunday to Friday next week. Or when the chief operating officer from the (organization) calls, I can say, “oh, hi, Marsha. I have seen you over there in your office. I have been to the Dam. What is your issue? That is why that position is so important for you to fill. Okay. Let me make sure we consider that.” (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

It is from the behavior of TH that Ms. Fields began to understand the value of face-to-face collaboration and relationship building with colleagues outside of her immediate vicinity. What she originally saw as a waste she now recognizes as an essential to connect with her business associates so that she may truly comprehend their needs and, therefore, offer better service.

***Lessons learned.*** The category *lessons learned* captures the valued knowledge gained by the co-researchers. Relevant developmental events surfaced during the interviews creating the three codes *workplace behavior*, *communication*, and *network evaluation*.

***Workplace behavior.*** Included in the *workplace behavior* code are learned attitudes, behaviors, knowledge, and skills or abilities acquired for application in the world of work. While not always physically being in the same workplace as the co-researchers, the developers shared advice, suggestions, and recommendations for how the co-researchers could enhance their work lives. Much of this advice promoted a nontraditional approach to work for the co-researchers. This code was the second most prominent phenomenon of the study, representing 13% of the total distribution.

Ms. Jones shared a learning experience with her developer, DG, which illustrates this code.

I was concerned about DG, as he was of a different racial background and would not be sensitive to the needs of minorities. He shared a book with me that talked about racial injustice back in the early 1900s and focused on the housing industry in Chicago. But the book was so full of so much information that it gave me a new appreciation for DG and DG made comments during planning sessions that made me more respectful of the person

because they recognized the shortcomings as far as what we were doing as a management team toward minorities here in the workplace, specifically African- American. I learned that you cannot take people at face value just because you may perceive them as acting or reacting a certain way. So we did not have a very close personal relationship. I am quite sure it would have grown as time went on. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Mrs. Smith shared a lesson from one of her developers a White woman senior executive who told Ms. Smith of her perceived difficulties when working with same-gender senior executives. Ms. Smith became aware to question her trust of same-gender colleagues. She shared that as a senior executive she very often had differing opinions and that it was sometimes extremely difficult working with the women peers.

She found herself in a position where she could not necessarily trust her female peers. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

*Communication.* The code *communication* gives insight about the transmission of thoughts and messages that transpired within the relationships. It also depicts how the co-researcher and her developers resolved problems, conflicts within the relationship, and learned from each other. The examples cited below demonstrate the communication lessons learned by the co-researchers during the developmental experiences. Ms. Jones shared a story regarding an exchange she had with one of her developers.

The reason I was given this feedback is that I made a negative comment about someone that JT felt very strongly about and I did it in an open forum. I came back to my desk and I fired off an email to JT after I thought about it a little while and told her I wanted to meet with her, because I felt as if her comments at this time were just inappropriate. I went back and I said that after burying my mother, this was not a good time to bring up something like this. I had no aspirations for a promotion; I was fine where I was. I had just been in my job a year. Therefore, her bringing up something like that to me then was not a good thing.

... Well she did not say she was hurt, she apologized. She was so sorry. She did not mean to upset me. Anyway, she said she would not do that anymore. The point was not to stop the feedback; it's that emotional intelligence thing. You have to know what to say, how to say it and when to say it. JT did not know that. She just felt as if I have this relationship, so therefore I can say this and it will be all right. That was extremely negative. (Ms. Jones, October 17, 2008)

The timing of the delivery of JT's criticism of Ms. Jones was clearly not good, as Ms. Jones was coping with the loss of her mother. Ms. Jones, acknowledging JT's comment as valid, was not prepared to receive the suggestion and interpreted the experience as an attack.

Below Ms. Smith shared some behaviors that she valued when engaged in communication with her developer. Active listening appears important along with the developer being able to share both positive and negative thoughts. Honesty and a straightforward approach help Ms. Smith to receive and respect the advice she receives from a developer.

Someone that I would run to, that I could go to who will listen, not be judgmental, to share positive and negative experiences, and get feedback that I trust to be honest and not just because of a friendship – will tell me what I don't want to hear. ...so I value the advice that I get. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

*Network evaluation.* The code network evaluation, represented the co-researchers' impressions of their networks. While it represented just 4% of the code percentage, network evaluation captures the co-researchers' assessment of their developmental network. These reactions about their past, current, and future networks surfaced during the DNQ interpretation.

Ms. Fields was surprised that all but one of her developers was Black. This awareness led to an acknowledgement that she needed to diversify her future network and between our first and second interview she designed some action steps to make that happen.

It was also very interesting to me as I looked at this (developmental network), with the exception of one person, that they were all Black. That two of them are from work—the scope of folks that had that kind of influence on me seemed narrower than I would have expected. (Ms. Fields, October 22, 2008)

Ms. Smith recognized that those in her network were not in a position to help her to advance. Upon reflection, she could not recall having a developer who served this purpose. She often was just in the right place at the right time and things happened without developer

sponsorship. Regarding her network vision, Ms. Smith, planned to identify sponsors who can help facilitate future career transition(s).

The folks that I have identified in my network are not ones who are at this point in a position to open doors for me. They may have at different points but not right at this moment. (Ms. Smith, October 23, 2008)

It is of no surprise that these Black women expressed basic human needs to feel comfortable, safe, valued, and respected (Blake-Beard, 1999) within the confines of their developmental relationships. What may differ is how they define and recognize those qualities. For example while some may expect to receive advice, guidance and support, it appears critical for these women to be engaged in relationships that allow them to reciprocate the advice, guidance, and support that they receive. They also appear to value honest feedback.

In summary, the findings indicated a larger number of men developers, a lack of racial diversity, and a diverse age range. When combining race with gender, Black men were the dominant group. The density of their networks was sparse with a high degree of closeness. They found these relationships at their churches, within their families, at work, and with college friends. The codes with the highest percentage were significant friendship and workplace behavior.

### **Research Question 2: How Do Black Women Federal Senior Executives Construct Political Identity Within Developmental Networks?**

Analysis of the interview data provided an understanding of how the developmental relationships influenced the co-researchers political identity. Eight interview questions explored and identified concepts related to the second research question. These questions extracted information that offered greater understanding of the co-researchers' self-perception based on

race and gender. The results in the following section apply to the theme *self-definition* and *self-determination*.

**Self-Definition and self-determination theme.** The concepts *self-definition* and *self-determination* represent the key components of Black feminist thought (Collins, 1990) and, for the purpose of this study, political identity and social identity. Under the umbrella of Black feminist thought, self-definition refers to Black women having the power to name their own reality while self-determination refers to Black women having the power to decide their own destiny. For the interpretive purpose of the data collected for this study, these themes represent the internal and external factors or events that occurred during the co-researchers' developmental relationships and appear to have contributed to their self-definition or self-determination.

**Social identity.** The term, social identity, represents the co-researchers' perception of self as part of different social groups and events that have challenged their ability to define themselves or name their reality. Internal conceptualization represents how the co-researcher's social identity or group membership is formed or influenced *within* her. External conceptualization represents how the co-researcher's social identity or group membership is formed or influenced *outside* of her.

**Discrimination experiences.** The code *discrimination experiences* surfaced to represent the trauma, pain, ill feelings, isolation, invisibility, or burden due to the co-researcher's perceived different standard of judgment based on race, sex, or gender. This code only represented a small part (5%) of the total code distribution. Given the social "double-edged sword" of sexism and racism faced by many Black women (Blake-Beard, 1999; Catalyst, 2004; Combs, 2003), it was surprising to have such a small percentage representation of this phenomenon. Below is part of a statement rendered by Ms. Jones.

...of those who are maybe ethnically or racially different from me. Those that are different from me perceived those things that were perceived one way by me. In every situation, it has always blown up into something that I never perceived it to be. It has led me to confirm that the majority population is not aware of minority populations. They make many assumptions. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Ms. Jones shared her acquired logic and reasoning for developing a protective “shield” to insulate herself from those of a different race or ethnicity who tend to misinterpret her reality. She spoke of an ignorance that exists within the majority (White) population and within her experience; this ignorance is consistently blended with operative assumptions. It is for this reason she intentionally limited her closeness with members of the “majority” population.

*Social network composition.* Social network composition, a code of External Conceptualization, represented components of the co-researchers’ developmental support network that are visible and known to the world. Components such as depth, density, distance, frequency, diversity, and homogeneity of the network are captured within this category. This code represented 11% of the code frequency distribution. Ms. Smith shared experiences of “being the only one.”

I’ve gone on trips, to federal reserve banks, been in strategic planning meetings, and then realizing that I was only Black women, the only Black period. I have found myself early on in my career, and then in the last couple of years, having been in that position. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

Ms. Jones related her preference to secure a network of developers who are different from her. Her stated reasons agree with the fundamental framework of the DNQ that asserts a more diverse network offers different messages and learning opportunities. A less diverse developmental network tends to offer repeated and similar messages.

...if you surround yourself with too many people like you, you will get the same messages over and over again, which may not help you move ahead and sometimes you have to branch out and get a better understanding of what other people think – what people of other backgrounds and other ethnicities think can make you a more rounded

person. I learned that. No one told me that. I figured it out. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

***Gender politics.*** The subcategory, *gender politics*, captured descriptors that reflect how the co-researchers see themselves as women. As noted earlier, this is a primary component of *political identity* and *Black feminist thought* as both frameworks insist the Black woman determines her own destiny and defines herself. The codes *Black woman* and *androgyny* surfaced during the analysis of this phenomena.

***Black woman.*** The code *Black woman* represented how the co-researchers defined their roles as Black women, reflecting their coping strategies for life challenges. Ten percent of the identified codes represented these phenomena. The co-researchers developed ways to protect and motivate themselves. As an example, Ms. Fields articulated her acquired work ethic, driven by a need to prove herself and be better than others. Many in the Black community have received similar teachings (Hackett & Byars, 1996). One such lesson is that in order to prosper in society you had to be “twice as good.”

I say perfect, but I know that no one’s perfect...My role as a black woman, I had to prove myself. ... I had to work harder, that probably had something to do with me trying to make sure I was doing’ everything just right... I have been made to believe that everything that I do could have some impact on someone coming behind me, and I wanted to make sure that I am doing a good job. (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

Below Ms. Jones discussed the impact of turning a certain age and wearing a certain ethnic hairstyle. These two events appeared relevant as she acquired a sense of personal freedom. She no longer had to create an image approved by others. She could now transmit another message to the world and not feel guilty about it.

...I turned 50. It just put things in perspective for me and that is when I decided to go back to a natural hairstyle, because I felt as if it was okay to portray my Blackness. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Ms. Smith echoed a similar belief that materialized through her educational values and academic performance. She described how a developer pushed her to excel and to do better. Subscribing to mediocrity was not an option for her as she was encouraged to fulfill her true potential.

She emphasized the fact that like it or not, we had to be better. ... We meaning Blacks and Black women... That we had to be good was not good enough. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

*Androgyny.* Capturing a small (2%) portion of the codes, *androgyny* represented the self-perceived dual gender role of the co-researchers when at times, especially at home, they assumed traditional men and women behavioral norms. One may assert this is symptomatic of a historical absence of Black men in the lives of Black women. The Black women assumed what many would consider traditional roles of men such as primary household supporter, decision-maker and financial earner. Ms. Jones is referred to as the Alpha female within her male peer group of senior executives, which represents her perceived tendency to assume a dominant position within the group.

\_ I see myself as independent, strong willed, - I've been called by my peers, alpha-female, that I am a very decisive woman. - they might say a bit controlling... Because I like to get things done and when we get together as a peer group, sometimes they go off everywhere and I try to stick to the task. I see myself as - I'm assertive, but it's tempered with maturity. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Familial duties often remain the primary, and in some households the exclusive, responsibility of the women. Despite her rise to become a senior executive, Ms. Fields still assumed the “superwoman” role (Collins, 200a) within her family. She did not blame her husband for this reality, as he is one of her selected developers, but accepted this role.

It is trying to balance everything. ...this level of career achievement with the level of church responsibility, taking care of family, including my elderly father. (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

The codes *collective identity* and *internal validation* evolved from the *political identity* category and the *race politics* subcategory.

***Race Politics.*** The subcategory, *race politics*, reflects a phenomenon that offers insight into how the co-researcher sees herself as a Black. Under this umbrella term are the codes *collective identity* and *internal validation*.

*Collective identity.* *Collective identity* represents how the co-researcher sees herself as a member of the Black community as related to her ethnicity. This code represented 8% of the frequency distribution.

Below Ms. Fields reacted to the DNQ data and to the fact that all but one of her five developers is Black. While she stated that this was not a purposeful outcome, it indicates she tends to trust those who are of Black ethnicity. She also believed that she would receive greater support from those who share her ethnic identity. Receiving this data helped Ms. Fields realize that her network would improve if it were more diverse.

It was not intentional to select those of the same race, but I think that I tend to have more trust if it is someone who is like me. I have the expectation that we would be supportive of each other. (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

Ms. Jones described the “burden” that Black people experience as they feel societal pressure to fight for and represent the race individually. She described the pressures of trying to help non-Blacks comprehend Black culture and help them see the character of Black people and not just their skin color. Choosing the term “burden” reflects that this is not a comfortable task.

The burden is I’m the black person that sits on the executive council... justifying behaviors, being defensive, supporting, doing whatever I can to help my peers understand the Black culture, people, different perspectives, and that does not necessarily mean that they are not smart, loyal or doing their jobs. My goal is to get my peers past the visual, the color, and to the person. I find that a burden for me. To have someone leading the country that looks like me takes some of that weight off my shoulders. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

*Internal validation.* The code *internal validation* represented the co-researcher's capacity to feel good about herself. *Internal validation* captures the experience or interpretation of the world that helps the co-researchers to feel that they are "okay." This code represented 4% of the frequency distribution. Ms. Jones articulated that she has now arrived at a place where she is comfortable with her ethnic identity. However, it appears that this was not immediate and, therefore, takes a significant amount of time to develop.

I was at a point in my career, where people would take me for who I was or not. I felt comfortable with showing my ethnicity other than my color. People can see me - if they get used to you, they see you for who you are and I think I've reached that stage with my peers and with my superiors that they know who I am irrespective of my hairstyle or my attire. Now that doesn't work when I leave this place and go to meet others. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

As Ms. Smith described herself as an example, she also demonstrated a confidence to share with other (Black) colleagues in the workplace. She discussed her responsibility to offer unique assistance and support that may be difficult for non-Black colleagues to render due to their cultural ignorance. Ms. Smith is aware of the cultural and ethnic sensitivity she brings to the workplace, which may affect distribution of power and influential decision-making.

As a Black woman, I do realize that I am an example and I realize that I do consider the other people in the organization because of the role that I'm in. I don't know if a White counterpart would give second thoughts to some of the things that I might consider. I am sensitive to the fact that there are other Blacks in the organization, and I don't necessarily make job selections because of race but I am sensitive because I've been this route where there weren't any other role models and that other Black women may experience the same thing. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

In summary, the *self-definition* and *self-determination* themes emphasize how important it is for the co-researchers and perhaps the majority of Black women to determine their own destiny and define who they are (Collins, 2000a). As developers work with Black women, this awareness could help the developer to identify effective ways to display and interpret behavior while in a developmental relationship. This framework can provide the non-Black developer

insight of how to conceptualize the reality within and outside the Black woman. A developer may now have cause to stop and attempt to hear the unique voice of Black women and not assume that the developer's reality is similar to hers. Developers may now challenge their individual truth and discover new truths about Black women.

**Ecology of life theme.** Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Systems Theory examines adult (or child) development within the context of layered environments each having an effect on an adult's development. Ecology of Life, a term created for the purpose of this study, encompasses significant events that occurred in the co-researchers lives that surfaced in a meaningful way during the interview.

The subcategories captured are *transition* and *social address*. Under the *transitions* umbrella is the code *events*. Bronfenbrenner (1986), defines *social address* as developmental outcomes for adults (and children) living in contrasting environments as defined by geography or social background, i.e. socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or religion. The codes that represent *social address* phenomena are *demographics* and *family context*. Although it represents only 6% of the code distribution, *ecology of life*, illuminates the critical role of the co-researchers family and events.

**Events.** The code, *events*, represented important past occurrences or incidents of the co-researchers. Ms. Jones described a traumatic experience that occurred at a retail store during her childhood. An experience such as this may have had an impact on her inability to trust people who are White. Not only did Ms. Jones suffer trauma, but so did her mother.

My mother went to the drugstore to pick up some medication for an aunt that was living with us and on Medicaid. My mother got to the store right before it shut. I must have been in middle school; the pharmacist was very nasty to her and made racial innuendos to about her being poor and on welfare. My mother was so hurt she just cried. That incident, I remember as an adult. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Ms. Fields recounted being a victim of discrimination as an adolescent. She and members of her family were denied access to public establishments. These events may influence one's orientation to life and the world.

In my lifetime – seeing' as I am 50 now it is a lot different. But when I could say this when I was 20, or 30, and talk about the places I could not go in Maryland as a kid and as ... a teenager. I could not go to the local pool. I could not go to certain stores or – when I was very little, if my mother ventured into Garfinkel's Department Store, she could not try on anything. (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

The following section highlights how those persons closest to the co-researchers may have influenced their political identity.

**Demographics.** The code *demographics* refer to items related to the co-researchers such as age, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, childhood geography, and length of career experience. This data was collected at the beginning of each interview. This code represented only 1% of the overall code distribution. Ms. Fields identified a learning moment where she sees the need to diversify the age ranges of those within her network.

...I'm thinking about it in terms of just my new role leading diversity for the Department, and having diverse perspectives. ...especially as you look into the future, there is a broader range of age, because if some of those folks are still here, they are going to be 80. (Ms. Fields, personal communication, October 22, 2008)

**Family context.** The code *family context* relates to text that reflects the impact of the co-researchers' immediate or extended familial experience. This code also represented 1% of the code distribution. Ms. Jones shared insight about the impact of her parents' death. The physical absence of her parents appears to have offered additional comfort within her own skin and with her own identity.

Both parents are deceased. There is no one there judging me... I made a decision that it was okay for me to be the way I felt like I wanted to be. (Ms. Jones, personal communication, October 17, 2008)

Ms. Smith described the special bond between her and her brother who was a selected developer for the DNQ. She continued to emphasize the important value and personal contributions of her familial and spiritual network. It is easy to see how this history had an impact on her political and social identity.

...he is family, is always there, retired from the Marine Corps, and started another career after he retired. We talk weekly about workplace issues, or comparing experiences. Family and friends certainly are very important to me. I am centered spiritually. I enjoy the person that I am. I love working and having purpose in my life. I set high expectations for myself but also know that there is life outside of work and so I do enjoy my life when I am not here (work). I am not defined by this job. (Ms. Smith, personal communication, October 23, 2008)

In summary, the findings indicate that the political identities of these women were influenced by interactions within different social groups, the impact of certain discriminatory events, and the components of their networks. The findings also indicate the importance of defining their gender and racial roles as well as life events, individual demographics, and family dynamics.

**Summary.** Data pertaining to the functions of the developmental relationships were consistent. It is clear that the co-researchers placed a high value on the psychosocial benefits of their relationships. The majority of their relationship types were labeled friends and mentors with a high level of psychosocial outcomes. The most important code generated was *significant friendship* representing a preference to have developers who provide counseling opportunities, trust, comfort, protection and a shared value system. The co-researchers embraced an opportunity to expand their knowledge, become aware of on-the-job politics, and discussions that promote a global view.

The co-researchers noted the importance of developmental relationships that respected their culture, ethnicity, history and identity. The co-researchers were not seeking or expecting

the developers to validate their ethnicity, but comprehend their plight as women of color.

Having a developer acknowledge their gender role was not as important as respect.

## Chapter V

### Discussions, Recommendations and Conclusions

Using a grounded theory approach, this study examined how developmental support networks contributed to the psychosocial, career, and political identity development of three Black women of the federal Senior Executive Service. A developmental network is a particular type of egocentric network that is comprised of multiple relationships to advance the protégé's career (Chandler & Kram, 2005; Higgins & Thomas, 2001). The research questions that guided the study were:

- (1) What do Black women federal senior executives value within their developmental networks?
- (2) How do Black women federal senior executives construct political identity within their developmental networks?

#### Discussion of the Findings

##### **Research question 1: What do Black women federal senior executives value within their developmental networks?**

The Black women federal senior executives valued developmental relationships that offered friendship, workplace behavioral guidance, and those that may develop in different environments including outside of the workplace. The women also valued those relationships that offered high levels of psychosocial support and that the age of their developers is not important. Regarding sex and race, the women valued developmental relationships as those with men (59%) and Black developers (71%). To summarize, the developmental networks of these women emphasized the psychosocial function to include friendships, different locations of the developers, and the

importance of workplace guidance. They also wanted developers of diverse age groups, male and same race developers.

Research Question 1 guided the examination of the women's developmental networks to identify what important constructs, descriptors, or issues would surface that described their relationships. From the data generated from the Developmental Network Questionnaire (DNQ) and the interviews, the four most important characteristics were value of friendship, importance of the workplace, relationship types, and developer's sex and race.

***Value of friendship.*** The women valued relationships that offered a high level of psychosocial support. They wanted to establish a friendship with their developers where trust plays a major role. These Black women also valued informal relationships in contrast to having a paired developer. Each of the 17 developmental relationships mentioned in this study were informal. This supports the research of Kram (1985) that informal relationships develop by mutual identification and not by a pairing process.

The women valued psychosocial relationships where they received encouragement, felt safe, learned coping strategies, and acquired guidance about how to balance work and family life. These results were similar to the informal mentoring research (Chao, Walz, & Gardiner, 1992; Noe, 1988a) and that these types of psychosocial relationships tend to move beyond career related issues. Therefore, protégés participating in such relationships trust a developer's ability to address issues, such as friendship, more than career issues.

The Smith, Howard, and Harrington (2005) study found that formal mentors are less likely to engage in psychosocial activities. Formal mentoring relationships are created and managed by an organization and represent an assigned dyad (Chao, Walz, & Gardiner, 1992). None of the relationships identified for this study were formal. This is interesting because the

women of this study had formal mentoring relationships as part of the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program. The women's preference for psychosocial support may explain their identification of only informal relationships.

Developmental relationships consist of different levels of career and psychosocial support with a high level of psychosocial support discovered within the relationships of these women. According to the DNQ results, mentors and friends were developers who provided a high level of psychosocial support. The difference is that mentors also provided high levels of career support while friends provided a low level of career support. Combined, mentors and friends represented 14 (82%) of the relationships identified. With 35 representing the highest possible raw score, the grand mean DNQ score for psychosocial help (29) was almost double the score of career help (15). These results inferred that establishing a friendship with a developer was important for these women. The women discussed experiences that perhaps challenged their abilities to trust. For example, not being allowed to try on clothes in a department store because of skin color or watching a drug store employee humiliate ones mother. These types of experiences may have inhibited their ability to trust others, especially those who are different.

Forces of racism and sexism have a negative effect on the career aspirations of Black women (Evans & Herr, 1991; Mitra, 2003). The challenges described in the code *discriminatory experiences* perhaps contributed to a higher need to establish trusting friendships outside of the workplace. The Black women told of their discriminatory experiences in the form of workplace alienation, hostility, or isolation. This experience may be a contributing factor that led to their selection of a majority of same-race developers. The results of Miller's (1988) and Patterson's (2004) research found that network support influences the way Black women feel about situations that reflect discrimination and their ability to trust others. To be comfortable sharing

confidential information these women wanted trusting relationships. Establishing a trusting bond with their developers is important because it gave the women confidence that discrimination would not occur within their relationships.

*Importance of the workplace.* The code, workplace behavior, was the second highest code (13%) identified by the Black women. This high percentage indicated the importance of the workplace and of receiving guidance in or about their workplace. Many researchers conclude that critical areas of support in developmental relationships open doors and create opportunities in the workplace (Catalyst, 2004; Combs, 2003; Ellinger, Watkins & Bostrom, 1999; Fagenson, 1988; Joiner, Bartram, & Garreffa, 2004; Kram, 1983; Thomas, 1993; Thomas, 2001). While the women of this study did not rely upon developers to provide an opportunity, they valued the exposure and guidance they received from their interactions with the developers.

These women solicited advice from their developers about how to behave in the workplace. An interesting finding is that slightly more than half, (53%), of the 17 developmental relationships were cultivated in the workplace. This means that eight (47%) of the Black women's relationships developed outside of the workplace with family members, college friends, or church members. They understood that it was not necessary for the developers of their network to share the same workplace as them. Informal mentoring research notes that developmental relationships and networks can form in places other than work and yet provide guidance related to the workplace (Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Galvin, 2004). Another explanation for the women forming relationships outside of work is that with diverse social arenas their information received within the network is less redundant.

***Relationship types.*** A conclusion of this study is that the Black women found value having different types of relationships within their developmental networks. While most of their relationships were friends (53%), they also had mentors (29%), allies (12%), and a sponsor (6%). This was a learning experience for these Black women, because a mentoring experience was the only type of developmental relationship with which they were familiar. Prior to this intervention, these Black women would have labeled each of their developers as mentors. While they were familiar with the popular definitions of ally, friend, and sponsor, they had not applied such labels to their developers.

Several studies (Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Galvin, 2004; Thomas, 2001) indicated that most high achievers received different levels of psychosocial and career support, in multiple dyadic-networked relationships, and benefited from intra- and extra-organizational relationships. The level of support does not define the quality or effectiveness of a developmental relationship. Low levels of such support may be as beneficial as relationships with high levels of support. This explains why these women had different types of relationships such as mentors, friends, sponsors, and allies.

These Black women valued cross-generational relationships as illustrated by the age span (36-74 years) in their networks. The younger developers came from a variety of social arenas—five were from work, two were family, and one was from their church. The women were most concerned with the quality and type of support they needed, not the age of their developer. The findings contradict studies that assert a mentor should be older than the protégé in order for the protégé to receive maximum benefit from the relationship (Burke, 1984; Fagenson, 1988; Fagenson, 1989; Levinson, 1978; Merriam, 1983).

These findings support the recent research (Allen, Russell, & Maetzke, 1997; Ebbby, 1997; Rymer, 2002; Taylor, 2008) that challenges the notion that a developer should be older or more senior than their protégé. These researchers have discussed concepts such as peer mentoring, which is a mentoring experience between mentors and protégés of or close to the same age or job type. Cross-age mentoring occurs when mentors and protégés are both younger and older than each other are. The developmental relationships of these Black women supports such research that age differences between the developer and protégé do not influence the quality of the developmental relationship.

*Developers' sex and race.* According to Ensher and Murphy (1997), those mentored by and matched with same-race mentors indicated having more satisfying relationships with greater career development support than those with different-race mentors. Seventy-one percent of the developers identified by the women of this study were Black. This may indicate that the women experienced more satisfaction in same-sex relationships and therefore chose a high percentage of such developers.

Of importance is the finding that the Black women's developmental networks included seven Black male developers with each woman having at least one Black male developer. Only two of the 17 developers were White men. In retrospect, these findings confirm Gunn's (2005) research that these role models were accurate predictors for Black women to reach executive positions. This study with Gunn (2005) challenges the research by Dreher and Cox (1996) that concluded career success for employees in organizations dominated by White men is influenced by the employee's ability to establish mentoring relationships with White men. Of interest, these Black women had more Black male than White male developmental relationships.

One wonders what role the Queen Bee Syndrome (Kelly, 1993; Staines, Tavis, & Jayaratne, 1974) may have in the identification of same sex developers. The Queen Bee Syndrome argues that some women who have risen to the managerial level in male-dominated organizations are motivated to maintain the organizational culture that allowed them career success. Such women, therefore, do not act as a developer for women colleagues.

The women of the study were aware that at times it was a challenge to trust women colleagues within their professional arenas. These women described these challenges as shared by other women or their own experiences. More important, these women wanted psychosocial and career reciprocity in developmental relationships. As a result, they had reciprocal relationships with male and female developers who provided needed guidance.

The results of the DNQ reflect that a minority, 41% of the developers were of the same sex. The Black women inferred that at times it was a challenge to trust other women within their professional arenas. Perhaps the women identified as hard to trust, by the women of this study, possess the Queen Bee Syndrome.

In summary, the women of this study valued developmental relationships that provided psychosocial support, address workplace issues, and had friend and mentor developers. These relationships also offer reciprocity and consist of majority male and Black developers.

**Research question 2: How do Black women federal senior executives construct political identity within their developmental networks?** A political identity is the Black feminist thought belief that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of the Black women's own identity as opposed to working to end someone else's oppression (Smith, 2000). The Black women executives of this study constructed political identities within their developmental networks that defined their own reality, established equitable relationships,

and identified developers that comprehended their struggles, and were not intimidated by their self-identity. The findings of this research describe how the women of this study see themselves as being racial/ethnic women in this specific context.

Black feminist thought distinguishes itself from feminist ideology by five features, *experience and consciousness, legacy of struggle, dialogic relationship, Black women intellectuals, and significance of change* (Collins, 2000). The findings of this study parallel each of these features. In other words, these Black women defined their own reality within their developmental networks.

The Black women maintained an active role in each of their relationships with no indication of power struggles. They and their developers were equal partners in their relationships (i.e. *experience and consciousness*). They were able to exist and succeed in conflicting worlds of White privilege and oppression. Black reality and exploitation are a struggle for Black women (i.e. *legacy of struggle*). The Black women of the study wanted their developers to challenge their reality. They also accepted a different perception of self as they became aware of the demographics of their developmental support network, (i.e. *dialogic relationship*). It was evident that the Black women wanted to be in relationships where they defined their own reality (i.e. *Black women intellectuals*). They described the gender behavior and role of the Black women as androgynous and one that they wanted developers to understand (i.e. *significance of change*). To summarize the women of this study constructed their political identity within their developmental networks based on racial identity, gender identity, and self-definition.

***Racial identity.*** The Black women of this study wanted the developers to respect their ethnic uniqueness and to possess insight about the Black experience (Collins, 1986; King, 1988;

Miller, 1988; Patterson, 2004). They wanted unconditional acceptance of their reality without attempts to redefine, alter, or misinterpret their racial identity. The women of this study expected their developers to encourage and support them in expressing their Black identity. They did not require their developers to be experts on topics such as racism, discrimination, and oppression, but to have an awareness of such realities. Prior Black feminist thought research declares that Black women should be visible to those with whom they interact (Collins, 1986, 2000a).

***Gender identity.*** A conclusion of this study is that the Black women wanted developers not to question their role as Black women. The women thought it was important for the developers to understand the burdens they carry as Black women. At times, Black women displayed gender behavior that go against the norm or challenge a stereotype. They felt it important that their developers understood and valued their androgynous role. The Black women wanted their developers to respect, understand, and value, not ridicule or feel intimidated by their reality. It is through this understanding that the Black women protégés of this study achieved equity in their developmental relationships.

Several studies identified the concept of *mammification*, where some members of the dominant group depict Black women as faithful and obedient (Collins, 2000; Duma, 1980; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). The Black women felt that when members of the dominant group experienced the Black women's counter behavior, it created a challenge for those persons. When developers subscribe to the mammification concept, it creates significant problems for the relationship. For example, these Black women would not feel like the developers understood their condition. This would challenge the woman's ability to trust or develop a significant friendship with her developer. The concept of mammification may also explain why developers

view Black women as disloyal or unfaithful when her behavior challenges the developer's stereotype of them.

***Self-Definition.*** The findings support the research of Hackett and Byars, (1996) and Collins, (1999, 2000) that indicates the importance of Black women having primary responsibility for defining their own reality. Their expectation was that the developers would value their uniqueness.

The need for Black women to be self-reliant and self-defined may also evolve from the “outsider-within syndrome” (Collins, 2000; Dumas, 1980; Hallstein, 1999; Howard-Hamilton, 2003). This condition evolved from the Black women's historical position as a domestic slave or worker where at times they were like a member of the family. Black women nurtured the children of slave owners, and took care of these employers when they were sick. They fed and clothed them, and addressed other personal needs. As the Black women's status evolved beyond that of slaves and domestics, this syndrome may explain why those who oppressed Black women found their political identities hard to accept.

The women referred to discriminatory experiences in the workplace as events that contributed to their self-definition. For example, the male colleagues often referred to one of the Black women as an Alpha female. This reference challenged the woman's definition of self. This woman rejected their perceived reality and chose to define herself as assertive, mature, task-oriented, strong-willed, and decisive. The mammification concept may explain why her male colleagues attached the label Alpha female, as her behavior challenged their stereotype of Black women.

In summary, the women of this study construct their political identities within developmental networks that promote racial identity, gender equity, and respect for their reality.

The concepts of mammification (Collins, 2000; Dumas, 1980; Hallstein, 1999; Howard-Hamilton, 2003) and the outsider-within syndrome (Collins, 2000; Dumas, 1980; Hallstein, 1999; Howard-Hamilton, 2003) contributed possible explanations of the women's racial and gender identities.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

A central tenet of standpoint theory (Orbe, 1998) is that research must begin from concrete lived experiences. With the limited number of research studies (Blake-Beard, 1999; Catalyst, 2004; Combs, 2003) about the condition of Black women in the workplace, there exists a need for more exploratory efforts to help us understand this unique group and the stories they have to share. Longitudinal or comparative studies using a larger sample group of Black women from different organizations (private and public) could offer a greater awareness of their developmental networks. This approach would offer a stronger generalization of the findings.

It would also be of interest to determine if the political identity of Black women executives in the private employment sector differs or is similar to that of Black women executives in the federal employment sector. Black women executives in different industrial environments may define themselves and determine their reality differently. Perhaps certain variables within those different environments effect the political identify of the Black women executives.

Many research studies discussed the benefits of multiple developmental relationships (Higgins, 2000; Higgins, 2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Kram, 1985). The research suggested we might have different types of relationships such as mentors, sponsors, allies and friends. This research challenges the traditional concept of a person seeking, securing and establishing a relationship with just one developer. Additional research to examine and compare other types of

relationships could provide a clearer understanding of the specific dynamics of each relationship type. How are these relationships different or similar? Do relationship type preferences differ based on the sex or race of the developer or protégé? Is the impact or outcome of the experience different? The findings of my research indicate that the three women valued their developers respecting their political, racial, and gender identities. The findings also suggest that the women seek Black men or women as *friend* type developers as all nine of the developers identified as *friends* for this study were Black. Additional research would help to determine if these preferences are applicable to the general population of Black women executives or not.

O'Neill and Blake-Beard (2002) and Thomas (1990) examined the developmental relationships of minorities and found that same-sex developmental relationships have more mutuality and trust. The different findings between their studies and this study highlight a need for more research about Black women, minorities, and their developmental networks.

A study that compared the developmental needs of Black and White women senior executives would be of interest as well as Black men with Black women executives. Do members of these groups value the same functional outcomes (e.g., career or psychosocial)? How do their respective racial, gender, and political identities affect their developmental relationships?

It would be of interest to examine the developmental networks of younger and older Black women managers in the federal government and determine if there are noticeable generational differences. To compare and contrast the desired developer attributes of these women would be an interesting study. Another population to study would be Black women managers in the federal government who are not in the senior executive service, such as branch managers and division directors.

This group of Black women clearly valued the psychosocial functions of their developmental relationships. It would be of interest to examine the preferred developmental functions of women of other ethnic groups, ages, industry affiliations, marital status, and parental status

It may be of interest to explore differences in developmental networks based on socioeconomic background and status. Other research may want to compare how long it takes different populations based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, education, and marital status to reach the senior executive level in the federal government.

Many of the developers identified by these three Black women are Black (71%). Thomas (2001, 1993) suggested a need for more research to determine the extent race plays in selecting a developer. There is certainly much more to be discovered and far more to be understood about this population.

In this study, all of the eight relationships labeled “very close” are with Black developers. Additional research should examine the degree of closeness in developmental relationships to determine if this is a challenge for Black women protégés when matched with non-Black developers. How different groups define closeness would also be of interest as well as the similarities or differences which emerge.

All of the Black women in this study were at some time participants of the Senior Executive Candidate Development Program (SESCDP). Two other Black women from the same organization have completed this program, but have not secured a senior executive position. Future research may examine factors that influence the selection of Black women into the senior executive service, in particular those who complete the SESCO. Why do some achieve this goal and others do not?

In my 20 years of experience in the field of career development, some women expressed concerns about their working with other women. Some appear to connect this phenomenon with the Queen Bee Syndrome (Kelly, 1993; Staines, Tavris, & Jayaratne, 1974). Additional research would determine if this syndrome contributes to some Black women preferring male mentors and role models (Gunn, 2005).

### **Recommendations for Practice**

This section offers recommendations based on the study's findings that may influence executive coaching, training, and leadership development of Black women executives. These recommendations may be helpful for human resource development professionals responsible for mentoring programs, diversity training, managers, and developers of Black women. Also, those concerned with the retention of minorities and women may find this study of value.

Mentoring is mandatory in the federal government's Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP). The results of this study indicate that when pairing and matching Black women candidates within the SESCO, race and gender preferences may be factors to consider. When identifying possible mentors for Black women candidates, Black men and women mentors should be available for selection consideration.

Executive coaches who work with Black women may find the results of this research helpful. Since trust was such a clear and valued quality of the relationships, those who coach Black women may want to be sure to protect confidentiality. This is a quality of any coaching relationship, but perhaps is more important when working with this population. The developer may want to follow through on his or her word, and do nothing to compromise the integrity of the relationship.

Noting that it appears important to these Black women to have a *close* relationship, a developer may attempt to determine what “close” means to the women. With the psychosocial function being a critical dynamic in the relationship, the developer may attempt to better comprehend this possible preference. A developer may want to make trust a high priority throughout the relationship. The developer must understand how Black women assess and evaluate trustworthiness. According to the women of this study, they preferred developers who made them feel safe, protected, and valued. Within the context of each unique relationship, it may be helpful if the developer and protégé engage in dialogue so they are able to recognize any potential warning signs to avoid trauma.

The data suggest the importance of respect for ethnic diversity by the developer working with Black women. While a non-Black developer is unable to experience the day-to-day ethnic challenges of Black women protégés, the developer should have some insight about the Black experience. Working knowledge of the history of Black women and a genuine human interest could enhance the quality of the relationship. An example of such interest may be the non-Black developer attending a Black History month event, perhaps with the protégé.

The developer should also not attempt to define the Black women protégé’s identity or to determine her destiny (Collins, 200a). The Black women define these phenomena. The findings of this study recommend the developer listen and learn, but not criticize the racial identity of his or her Black protégé.

Since the concept of developmental networks is still relatively new, this study may introduce the concept to practitioners and challenge the traditional concept of mentoring. Such awareness may encourage those who manage mentoring based programs to establish group, peer,

or cross-age mentoring relationships to broaden the developmental experience of the participating protégés.

As senior executives in the federal government, the Black women in this study may use their professional influence to introduce the DNQ instrument and its concepts into their respective work environments. This may create opportunities and invitations for practitioners to visit federal work sites to conduct related training and knowledge sharing. They may also choose to share their experience with the instrument during subordinate coaching sessions or in discussion with colleagues. This may help inform others about the developmental network phenomena and encourage self-assessment.

For those who conduct diversity training or team-building interventions, these findings may offer insight. The voices and stories of the Black women in this study may provide a deeper understanding of what Black women confront in the world of work. Other Black women who become acquainted with the study may discover their value and seek to validate their own political identities. They may find comfort just knowing that others share similar experiences and that they are not alone. The results of this study may assist group members to understand the dynamics of Black women. An understanding of concepts such as trust, friendship, and racial identity may enhance team interaction.

Questions should arise when one encounters a member of this group and, therefore, attempt to understand their behaviors and decision-making styles. For example, is her choice not to go out for drinks with colleagues after work because she does not like the group or does her choice reflect a need to build trust before attending a social event? It would be helpful if developers listened and challenged themselves to understand the discriminatory experiences

shared by Black women protégés and not expect that they “just get over it.” Though they may desire closeness, it may take some time for it to develop.

When training mentors, the instructor should discuss research that has identified preferred relationship qualities and conditions of Black women. It may be helpful if mentors have techniques and strategies that demonstrate how to define and recognize trust. Instructors of such training should design exercises and learning activities, such as role-playing, to help mentors practice and develop such communication skills.

### **Conclusions**

This study offers several insights to understanding the developmental networks and political identities of these three Black women executives. The themes that surfaced, Support Network, Self-Definition and Self-Determination, and Ecology of Life provided insight into their professional world. The most valued codes were significant friendship, workplace behavior, social network composition, and Black woman.

The significant friendship code represented the value the Black women placed on psychosocial outcomes. These outcomes included trust, honesty, direct feedback, and reciprocity within their relationships. Workplace behavior included receiving guidance related to the workplace from developers within or outside of the workplace. This code included providing career exposure. The social network composition theme represented components of the Black women's developmental support network that are visible and known to the world. The women acquired awareness of the social locations, diversity of information shared, closeness, and frequency of contact within their networks. The Black woman theme represented how the co-researchers defined their roles as Black women, reflecting their coping strategies for life challenges. The Black women of the study developed ways to protect and motivate themselves.

In addition, the women valued informal developmental relationships with Black and male developers of diverse ages. The women had friend, mentor, ally, and sponsor types of relationships.

While research that examines developmental support networks from the perspective of Black women is scarce (; Blake-Beard, 1999; Blake-Beard, 2001; Combs, 2003; Combs & Sommer, 2003; Evans & Herr, 1991), it is my hope that this study will encourage others to continue the scholarship. This research offers insight into the developmental relationships of Black women whom most would identify as high achievers. The quest to be self-defined and feel validated from within is a fundamental facet of the Black women's plight (Cole & Stewart, 1996; Collins, 2000a; Few, Stephens & Rouse-Arnette, 2003; McClish & Bacon, 2002; Smith, 2000). It is only through the sharing of their stories that there will be a greater understanding of their developmental needs.

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*Appendix A***Developmental Network Questionnaire**

Higgins, M. & Galvin, J. (Rev. December 20, 2004). Developmental Network Questionnaire (Product# 9-404-105). Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing. Copyright 2004, President and Fellows of Harvard College

404-105

Developmental Network Questionnaire

**Instructions**

Think back over the past year. During that time, who are the people who have taken an active interest in and concerted action to help you to advance in your career by providing professional and/or personal guidance? These are the people who constitute your current developmental network.

These people may span a number of different dimensions, so please think broadly. For example, they may be people with whom you work or have worked, old or new friends, people you know in your community, or family members. The interest and action these people take to help your career may be targeted to (1) professional development (directly applying to your job or career, such as input on your current job or job performance, or information or advice about potential career moves), and/or (2) personal development (applying to such areas as clarifying your personal aspirations or helping negotiate work-life balance issues).

Please enter the initials (or some other brief identifier you will remember) of at least two and up to six of these people in the blanks at the beginning of the next page. On subsequent pages, you will be asked a series of questions about each of the people you have named.

Please write these initials or names in the six shaded blanks at the beginning of the next page.



In the table below, first copy the initials of the people you named both down the column at the left and across the row at the top.

Next, think about the group of people you have named and the relationships between them. Do they know one another? For each unshaded box, place a large X in the box if the people whose names are in the corresponding column and row know each other.


Count the number of Xes in the entire grid above,  
and write that number here.

Consult the table below. In column A, find the number of relationships (two through six)  
that you have listed. Write the corresponding number from column B here.

A	B
2	1
3	3
4	6
5	10
6	15

This fraction is your developmental network's density

In the boxes below, group the names you have listed into boxes based on the *primary* way you know them—the social arena that best captures your relationship with this person. That is, if more than one of the people you have listed come from the same social arena, write their initials or names together in the same box below.

Examples of social arenas: family members, childhood friends, college friends, graduate school friends, graduate school professors, previous job or organization, current job or organization, community activity such as volunteering, religious organization.

If someone is a member of more than one social arena, please pick the *best* group in which to include them. For example, if you are married to someone you met in college, the primary social arena this person belongs to is "family" and not "college friends."

Social arena: _____ Members:	Social arena: _____ Members:	Social arena: _____ Members:
Social arena: _____ Members:	Social arena: _____ Members:	Social arena: _____ Members:

How many boxes are filled in?  
Write this number here.




This is your developmental network's range.



For these career and psychosocial totals, a value of 21 or greater is considered "high," and 20 or lower is considered "low." Write the names or initials in the colored boxes, and circle the relationship type named in the cell that corresponds to each relationship's totals. For example, if relationship 1 has "career help total" of 25 and "psychosocial help total" of 15, it would be categorized as "career high" and "psychosocial low," and "Sponsor" would be circled in relationship 1's table.

	Career High	Career Low
Psychosocial High	<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Friend</i>
Psychosocial Low	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Ally</i>

	Career High	Career Low
Psychosocial High	<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Friend</i>
Psychosocial Low	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Ally</i>

	Career High	Career Low
Psychosocial High	<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Friend</i>
Psychosocial Low	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Ally</i>

	Career High	Career Low
Psychosocial High	<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Friend</i>
Psychosocial Low	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Ally</i>

	Career High	Career Low
Psychosocial High	<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Friend</i>
Psychosocial Low	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Ally</i>

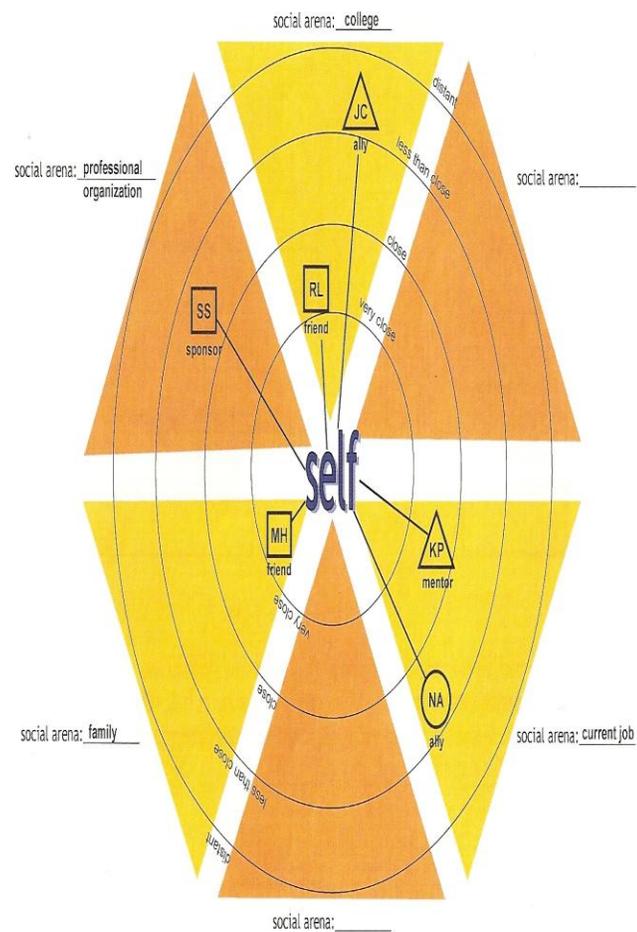
	Career High	Career Low
Psychosocial High	<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Friend</i>
Psychosocial Low	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Ally</i>

On the blank template on the next page, draw a map of your developmental network. An example of a relationship map is shown below.

Refer back to page 5 to fill in the social arenas you listed in the blanks surrounding the chart. Write the names or initials of your developers around the "self" symbol below in the appropriate social arena. Use your answers to the emotional closeness item on page 3 to determine how near to the "self" to place each relationship. Next, draw a triangle around initials of people who are your superiors, a square around peers' initials, and a circle around subordinates' initials. Under each symbol, write the kind of relationship you have with that person (mentor, sponsor, friend, or ally).

Finally, draw a line connecting the "self" to each of the developers.

Sample relationship map:



*Appendix B*

**Informed Consent for Co-researchers in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Institutional Review Board**

**Title of Research:** Developmental Networks, Black Feminist Thought, and Black Women Federal Senior Executives: A Case Study Approach

**Investigator(s):** Brian G. Easley, Doctoral Candidate

### **I. Purpose of this Research/Project**

The purpose of this research is to examine the developmental networks of Black women federal executives applying the concepts of developmental networks and Black feminist thought. It is intended that this qualitative study will provide greater understanding of how Black women executives self-identify members of a developmental network and how those relationships contribute to their individual career development process. This research is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D. in Human Development at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

### **II. Procedures**

Participation in this study is voluntary on the part of each co-researcher. Each co-researcher will provide oral permission to participate and sign an informed consent. A minimum of one interview conversation will be recorded using an audiotape recorder, transcribed by a professional transcriber, and analyzed by the researcher. Upon preliminary analysis of the transcriptions, additional interviews “may” be requested. Transcriptions will be sent to each subject to be read and reviewed for accuracy and protection of confidentiality and anonymity.

### **III. Risks**

This study presents "minimal risk" to the co-researchers. It is possible that mild emotional distress may occur during the interview process as co-researchers recall unpleasent experiences. Due the nature of this study and its focus on developmental networks, which are typically positive experiences, emotional distress is highly unlikely. The researcher will protect the co-researchers from any risk by assuring confidentiality and comply with the mandates established by the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB). Each co-researcher will receive a copy of the approved research application.

### **IV. Benefits**

While there exists no promise or guarantee of experienced benefits, the co-researchers may experience an enhanced sense of personal/professional value because of their participation in the research project. The co-researchers may acquire added knowledge of self. Societal benefits may include contributing knowledge to an area where there exists little research. Those who are



## Appendix C

## Institutional Review Board Approval



Office of Research Compliance  
 Institutional Review Board  
 2000 Kraft Drive, Suite 2000 (0497)  
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
 540/231-4991 Fax 540/231-0959  
 e-mail moored@vt.edu  
 www.irb.vt.edu

DATE: December 2, 2008

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Clare Klunk  
 Brian Easley

Approval date: 1/2/2009  
 Continuing Review Due Date: 12/18/2009  
 Expiration Date: 1/1/2010

FROM: David M. Moore 

SUBJECT: **IRB Expedited Continuation 1: "Developmental Networks, Black Feminist Thought, and African American Women Federal Executives: A Case Study Approach"**, IRB # 07-649

This memo is regarding the above referenced protocol which was previously granted expedited approval by the IRB. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. Pursuant to your request, as Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval for extension of the study for a period of 12 months, effective as of January 2, 2009.

Approval of your research by the IRB provides the appropriate review as required by federal and state laws regarding human subject research. As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.
3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.
4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

cc: File  
 Department Reviewer: Angela J. Huebner

*Invent the Future*

*Appendix D***DNQ Author's Note****Verizon Webmail**

**From:** "Monica Higgins" <higginmo@gse.harvard.edu>  
**To:** bigenyc@comcast.net  
**Date:** 09/12/2007 08:37:59 CDT  
**Subject:** Re: **Doctoral Candidates Request**

Hi Brian,

Thanks for your email. The DNQ is an instrument that is used for practitioners. The scale is based upon measures that are used/published elsewhere, however. So, yes, it is a published instrument. However, after you generate the data (amount/kind/content of help provided), how you use it, of course, should be linked to prior social networking and mentoring research. (e.g., collecting density information in the DNQ is the trad'l way of collecting such info, a la people like Granovetter; collecting info re. psychosocial assistance with the scale items is fine and is based upon prior research a la Kram, but then, how you manipulate the data should be consistent prior research, such as the papers I have written). So, what I'd recommend is that you look at my studies (e.g., JOB, 2001) rather than the DNQ. Then, if you want the instrument I used for such research, I can snail mail it to you. Make sense?

Monica

On Thu, 13 Sep 2007 01:15:35 +0000

[bigenyc@comcast.net](mailto:bigenyc@comcast.net) wrote:

Hello Dr. Higgins,

I am a doctoral candidate in Virginia Tech's Human Development program (concentration in Adult Learning and Human Resource Development) and I want to use the Developmental Network Questionnaire to gather data for my study. My research is focused on examining the developmental networks of Black women senior executives in the federal government using dev. network theory and Black feminist thought as my conceptual frameworks.

I have purchased the hard copy and multi-media (CD) versions of DNQ along with the permission to make copies of the instrument from Harvard Business School Publishing. I am however having a difficult time trying to secure information (Teaching Notes?) that will indicate the internal consistency, reliability, validity, etc. of the instrument. I've contacted HBSP but with no success. I am willing to pay for the document. I am designing my proposal to share with my committee this fall so time is of the essence.

Thank you Dr Higgins for any assistance you can render!

Sincerely,

Brian Easley

*Appendix E*

**Selected Interview Topics**

Developmental Networks, Black Feminist Thought, and Black Women Federal Senior Executives: A Case Study Approach

**Background Information/Social History**

- What is your age?
- What is your race?
- What is your marital status?
- Do you have children?
- What was your family socioeconomic status as a child?
- Where did you live as a child?
- How long have you served in the federal government?
- How many years have you been a manager?
- How many years have you been a senior executive in the federal government?
- What else do you want to share about your personal background?

**DEVELOPMENTAL NETWORK**

- Who do you see as the most important individuals in your professional support network?
- Can you tell me your reason for considering these persons as most important?
- What are the race and sex of each member of your support network?
- What was the reason for selecting someone of a different sex? (Support Functions/Political Identity)
- What was the reason for selecting someone of a different race? (Support Functions/Political Identity)
- What was the reason for selecting someone of the same sex? (Support Functions/Political Identity)
- What was the reason for selecting someone of the same race? (Support Functions/Political Identity)
- How did you meet members of your support network? (Relationship Diversity)
- Are any of the members of your support network acquainted with each other? (Relationship Diversity)
- Describe the support you received from each member of your support network. (Support Functions)
- What type of support did you most value? (Support Functions)
- How often did you meet with each member of your support network? (Relationship Strength)
- How do you handle conflict within a mentoring relationship?
- How do you handle challenges in a mentoring relationship?

**POLITICAL IDENTITY**

- How do you see yourself as a person?
- How do you see yourself as a woman?
- How do you see yourself as a Black woman?
- Do you discuss race in your mentoring relationships?
- Do you discuss gender in your mentoring relationships?
- How do these relationships contribute to seeing yourself as a professional?
- How do these relationships contribute to seeing yourself as a woman?
- Any different from how you would see yourself as a Black woman?

## Appendix F

## HyperRESEARCH Theme Maps

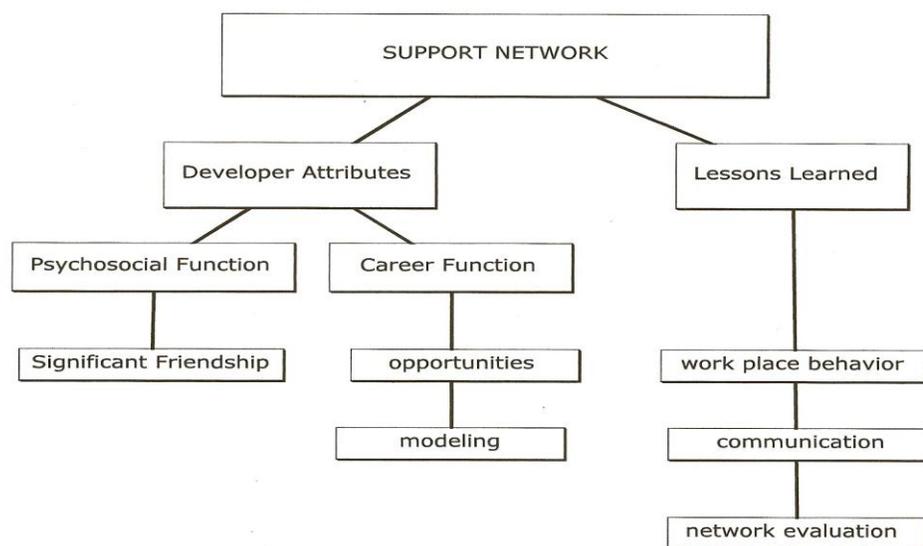
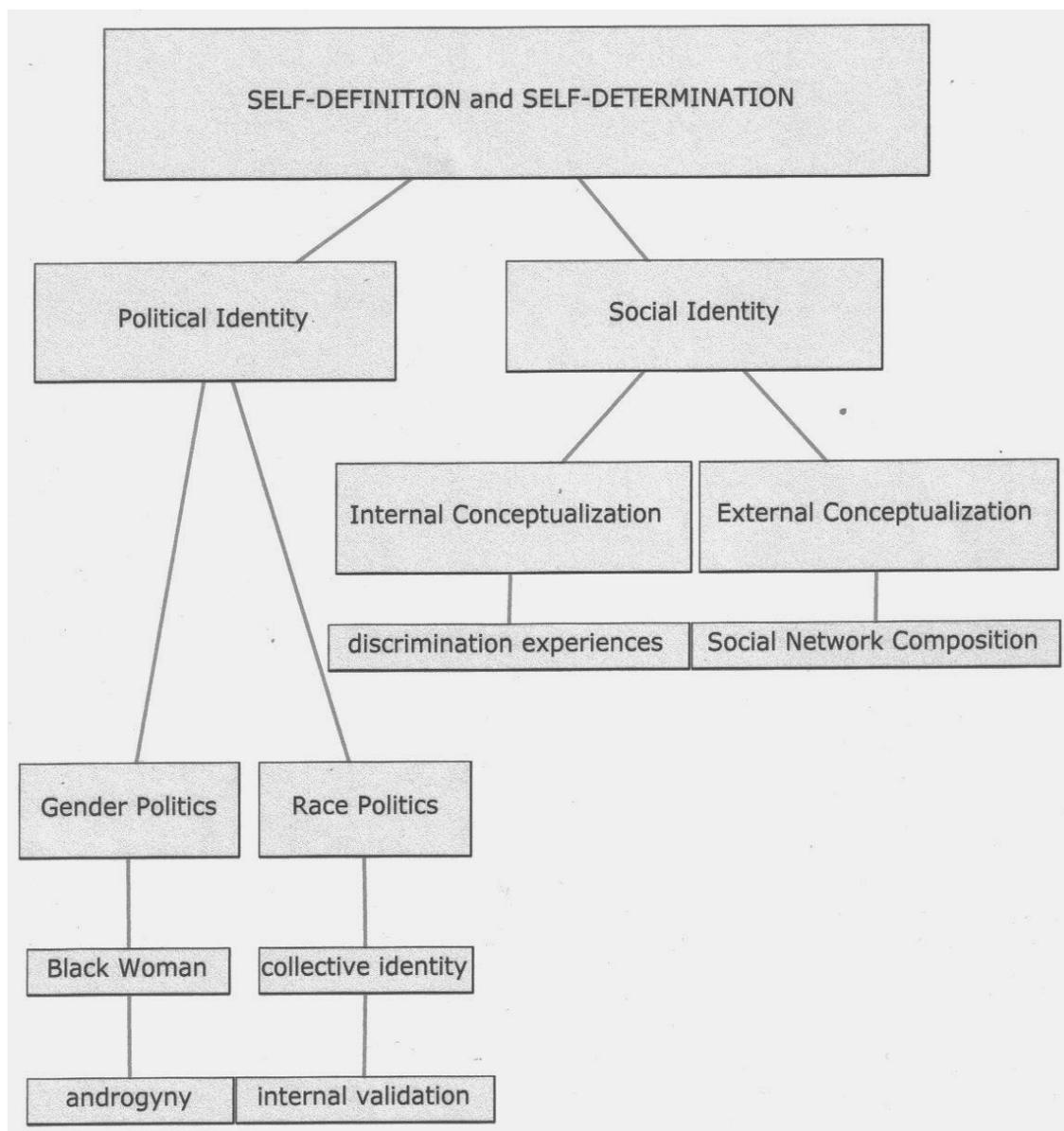
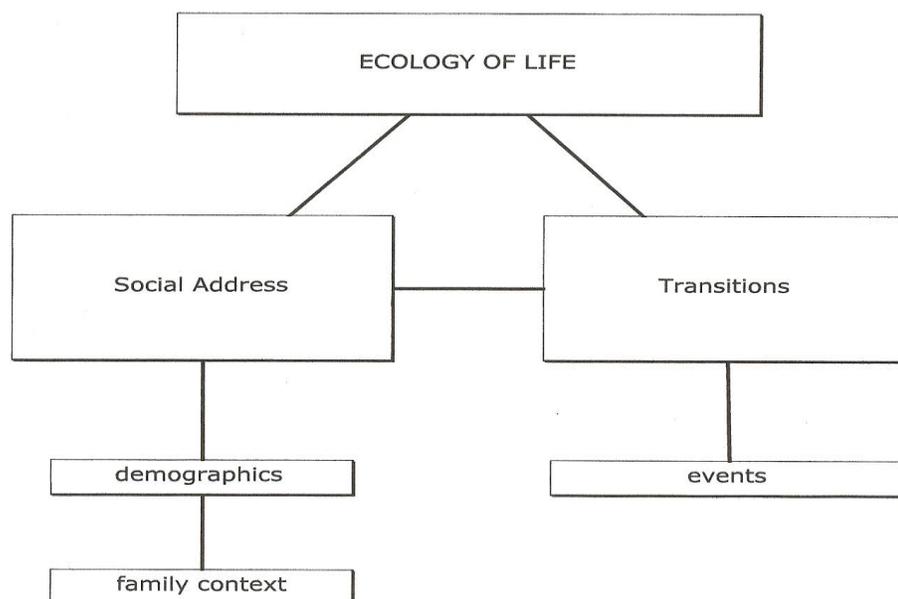


Figure F1. Support Network Themes



*Figure F2* Self-Definition and Self-Determination Theme



*Figure F3* Ecology of Life Theme

*Appendix G*

**Final Code List and Definitions**

<b>androgyny</b>	seen by the Black women as behavior atypical of women; male behavior; gender behavior that goes against the norm, expectation or stereotype
<b>Black Woman</b>	seeing herself as a black woman or how others see her shield and self-protection; wants to feel protected; has an inner need to protect herself; men/women or sexual issue; sexual roles; gender roles as per a societal stereotype; traditional style, behavior or thought; deep belief; i.e., religion; community service; non-paid work; treat others with respect; put others before self; stay grounded, humble and remember where Black women "came from"; do it all, balancing, pleasing the world sometimes before self;
<b>Career Function</b>	characteristics of the developer that provide sponsorship, protection, visibility and access to extended powerful networks
<b>collective identity</b>	Black or different ethnic/racial group or related to racism; the personal impact of the 2008 Presidential election; spokesperson for her race; how Black women sees themselves as Black
<b>communication</b>	oral communication; nonverbal; feedback; input or observations about Black women shared by the developer; act before thinking times when Black women or developer did not agree how Black women managed a situation; problem solving
<b>demographics</b>	Black womens age, race/ethnicity, marital status, parental status, family socioeconomic status, childhood geography, length of federal service, length of time as a manager, length of time as a senior executive
<b>Developer Attributes</b>	desirable developer characteristics that provide psychosocial or career support
<b>discrimination experiences</b>	different standard of judgment based on race, sex/gender or other difference; burden; extra weight; being the only one or feeling isolated; Black women perceive that others ignore or do not see her; ill feelings or not good; painful event or experience; a trait, behavior, attitude not desired or valued

<b>ECOLOGY OF LIFE</b>	represents significant events and environmental changes during the co-researcher's life
<b>events</b>	a condition or event that had to occur before; prerequisite; a monumental milestone; short period of time, i.e., relationship length; long period of time; how a Black woman was raised as a child
<b>External Conceptualization</b>	how the Black woman's social identity or group membership is formed or influenced outside of herself
<b>family context</b>	pertaining to the Black woman's immediate or extended related members
<b>Gender Politics</b>	how the Black woman sees herself as a woman
<b>Internal Conceptualization</b>	how the Black woman's social identity or group membership are formed or influenced within herself
<b>internal validation</b>	likes her blackness; feeling good about self; Black woman believes and feels that she is in a better place than someone else
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	what did the Black woman learn from her developmental support network?
<b>modeling</b>	an exemplary situation or person; following exemplary behavior
<b>network evaluation</b>	effect or outcome of completing the instrument developmental network in five years; network vision; bring to completion; where she wants to be
<b>opportunities</b>	move up career ladder; developer creates possible career opportunities and advancement; developer pushed Black woman and helped to move when hesitant or in an immobile place; location; developer is encouraging; comes to the aid of ; informal interaction with others; meeting; networking; recommendation/referral; marketing; social; Black woman's network beyond 1+ years ago; past network
<b>Political Identity</b>	how the co-researcher sees herself as a human, woman or black person
<b>Psychosocial Function</b>	characteristics of the developer that provide encouragement in trying times, a safe outlet for discussion of career issues, advice about coping with stress or work life balance

<b>Race Politics</b>	how the Black woman sees herself as Black
<b>SELF-DEFINITION and SELF-DETERMINATION</b>	internal and external factors or events that enable the co-researcher to decide her own destiny or name her own reality
<b>Significant Friendship</b>	always there; strong, firm, durable; feeling comfortable within the relationship; became part of; no surprise the way it should be; close or very close relationship; developer helps Black women to consider or think about options; advisor; thinking; a can't lose situation; make less complicated; help to address, identify and/or define thoughts or feelings; protect and shield; colleague or someone Black women worked with; social acquaintance; friend; what one relationship may or may not give the other(s) will give; both developer and Black women receive; Black women and developer(s) share similar beliefs, thoughts, principles, etc.; discrete and select sharing thoughts, feelings very close and not shared with many; assume something to be the truth; does not matter; not a factor or of significance; always, no matter what; having meaning and focus in life; important persons, things and ideas
<b>Social Address</b>	represents the social background of Black women including familial experience, socioeconomic status, geography, and ethnicity.
<b>Social Identity</b>	how the Black woman sees herself from her perceived membership of different social groups; issues or events that challenge the Black woman's ability to define herself or name her own reality
<b>social network composition</b>	represents the depth, density, distance, frequency, diversity and homogeneity of the Black woman's relationships; how narrow or extensive is her network; if developers know each other; not close relationship; relationship with someone of a different sex and race; how often developer and Black women connected or met; same sex or same race (homogeneity); like others, the same; unaware; did not know; ignorance; did not expect person(s) to be part of network; Black woman or developer did not know energetic feeling
<b>SUPPORT NETWORK</b>	a set of people or multiple developmental relationships identified by the Black woman taking an interest in and action to advance the Black woman's career
<b>Transitions</b>	represents critical moments and periods in the Black woman's life

**workplace behavior**

attitudes or behaviors in a work environment; professional life-long learning; independent learning without developer; transferable skills; strengthen weaknesses; self-development; reinforce; a view; how seen; applying to a world-view; nontraditional, unique or on the edge thoughts or behaviors; application of knowledge, skills or abilities; shares and applies practical knowledge; smart or bright