

**College Choice, Racial Identity, and Perceived Consequences for African  
Americans at Predominately White Institutions in the South**

by

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## Abstract

Using a sample of fourteen African American students at a single Predominately White Institution (PWI) in the south, this research tries to uncover how African Americans make the choice to attend a PWI over a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). The participants in this study indicated that there were varying reasons for African Americans to choose to attend a PWI over an HBCU. These responses can be segregated and compared based off of the students' racial identities. Students with self-identified weak racial identities were dissuaded, largely, because of their belief that HBCUs are not rigorous in their academics and a degree from an HBCU would not be as prestigious. The students with self-identified strong racial identities wanted a more diverse learning environment and did not view HBCUs negatively. Despite one's racial identity, my participants said that by choosing to attend a PWI over an HBCU caused tension in the Black community and resulted in the Black community questioning their 'Blackness,' or commitment to the Black community.

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## List of Abbreviations

PWI	Predominately White Institutions
HBCU	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
CRT	Critical Race Theory
AUM	Auburn University at Montgomery

## INTRODUCTION

Making the transition from high-school senior to college freshman can be quite an overwhelming experience for any newly admitted college student (Ballantine 2011). However, this feeling is not equal across races. African American students entering into college often deal with racism embedded at the institutional level, mostly at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). For example, standardized testing used to determine college acceptance has been criticized for having a racial bias such as testing the verbal skills most likely to be used in a White home (Santelices and Wilson 2010). Although standardized testing is only one component in the college acceptance process, scores are used to weed out low scoring students. This institutional racism transcends to affect the everyday experiences of African American college students (Ballantine 2011). Historically, the post-secondary institutions were established in predominantly White geographic areas, this positions African American post-secondary students in situations where they are disproportionately under-represented (Feagin, Vera, and Imani 1996). Other than professors and college administrators and/or employees not understanding their students, why is this important for PWIs?

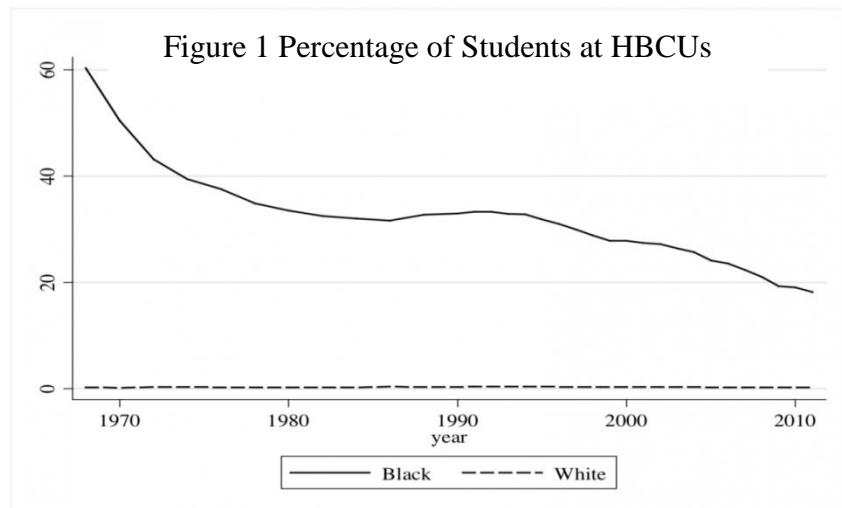
### The Problem

As the years progress, more and more African Americans are expected to enroll into PWIs as opposed to

Historically Black

Colleges and Universities (HBCU) (Woldoff, Wiggins, and Washington 2011). As illustrated in figure 1, Hinrichs (2014) discovered that this was occurring at an alarming rate dating back to the 1960s. Although he found that there has been a slight increase in White and other minority groups at HBCUs, African American student enrollment is down (Hinrichs 2014). This is coming at a time when more African Americans are attending college than in any other decade before (Center for Education Statistics 2014). So why are African Americans choosing PWIs over the traditional route of HBCUs?

Traditionally, there is a stereotype in America that doing well at a HBCU is not equivalent or equitable to doing well at a PWI (Ballantine, 2011; Harris 2011). A stereotype is defined as a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing (Ballantine 2011). There are three main stereotypes that plague HBCUs according to Janelle Harris (2011), writer for *Clutch Magazine*. Although *Clutch Magazine* is not a scholarly authority, it



Hinrichs, Peter. 2014. "Affirmative Action Bans and College Graduation Rates." *Economics of Education Review* 42(1): 43-52



informs what is going on in the community thus is a useful starting point for understanding the problem: declining African American enrollment rates at HBCUs. First, HBCUs are viewed as party schools. Second, HBCUs do not help assimilate Blacks into White culture. And third, HBCUs do not have adequate or equal resources (Harris 2011).

Anecdotal evidence is easily accessible across the internet; specifically, this data manifests in racially themed blogs. These blogs provide some reasoning as to why African Americans choose PWIs over HBCUs (Love 2011; Anonymous 2012; Martin 2009). For example, Vicki Love (2011), a blogger at [Blackgreeklife.blogspot.com](http://Blackgreeklife.blogspot.com), asserts that in order for her to compete in the field of opera singing, it was vital for her to attend a PWI. She explains that PWIs are a place where they will train her for the challenges of competing against White people. Another example of anecdotal evidence comes from an anonymous blogger who states that African Americans at PWIs must actively search for classes, events, or programs that promote positive outlooks on Black culture and identity. Furthermore, this blogger states that it is much easier to explore what it means to be African American at HBCUs (Anonymous 2012). If, in fact, African Americans are better off at HBCUs, why is enrollment declining for African Americans at HBCUs? It would seem as though African Americans must actively choose not to attend an HBCU. Finally, the last piece of anecdotal evidence on why African Americans choose PWIs over HBCUs comes from Roland Martin. Roland Martin (2009), former contributor at *CNN*, writes that he has experienced

a myriad of accusations from the Black community which claims that he does not know himself as a Black man since he attended a PWI. He argues that he already held a strong African American racial identity and that attending an HBCU would have been a waste of time. Martin (2009) implies that HBCUs are for African Americans who do not possess strong racial identities.

Although there are just as many blogs and news articles written by academics and activists who try to debunk these stereotypes, the stereotypes still exist and potentially inform the respondents for this research. Although a content analysis of blogs and newspaper articles would have been one option for conducting this research, in the current thesis, they simply serve as a way to formulate and format the interview questions with the respondents. Furthermore, I will use the blogs to discover if the listed stereotypes influence African Americans' decision to attend PWIs over HBCUs. Blogs and other social media could provide enough anecdotal evidence; however, the quality of the research would not be as high. Blogs and other social media posts could overstate or understate the degree to which the phenomenon is occurring. Interviewing several students will establish themes and direction.

Given the nature of the research, the literature review will examine various aspects of Blacks' experiences with higher education in America. First, I outline access to higher education for African Americans. Access to higher education for African Americans is different than their White counterparts (Ballantine 2011). Furthermore, White and Black experiences in higher education are completely

different in that Black students are the recipients of racism (Ballantine 2011). Second, one must understand African American/Black identity. Understanding Black racial identity, defined as a collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group, could be a leading factor in how an African American is dissuaded from attending an HBCU and persuaded to attend a PWI (Ballantine 2011). Once one understands the multi-faceted experiences and identities of African American college students, then one can ask the questions of how do African Americans at PWIs view HBCUs? Does racial connectedness influence African Americans to attend PWIs? And how does one's racial identity shape the subjective experience of African Americans at Predominately White Institutions?

### *Objectives*

The objectives for this study are threefold:

1. To identify the push and pull factors associated with attending a Predominately White Institution for African Americans.
2. To understand how the self-reported racial identity of African Americans influences their attitudes towards HBCUs.
3. To understand the perceived consequences for African Americans attending a Predominately White Institution over a Historically Black College or University.

### *Significance of the Study*

Research into college choice has been conducted since the 1980s. However, early research overlooks the significance of race in many of the

studies. Until Freeman (2005) argued race's impact on college choice, race as a factor on college choice was absent. However, her study included a population of all U.S. African Americans. Instead, her study should have used African Americans in the southeast where African Americans represented the largest minority. The southeast, having the most HBCUs in the country, increase access for African Americans to easily attend an HBCU whereas African Americans in other areas would not have as much access because of a lack of propinquity.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### *African-Americans' Experiences with Post-secondary Education*

Today's society boasts about being a post-racial America. However, America's education system is evidence of a racialized country. The educational experiences offered to many African American students in primary and secondary schools often do not prepare them as well for the demands of higher education as do the educational experiences of other students (Wallace and Bell 1999). Given the fact that the current study only looks at African American college students, the literature review will solely focus on African Americans as opposed to other racial and ethnic minorities.

Well before the start of their college classes, Black students are more likely to face multiple disadvantages to college enrollment and adjustment relative to other racial-ethnic groups (Wallace and Bell 1999; Scott 2014; Guiffrida 2006; Woldoff et al. 2011). In fact, this disadvantage starts before the students are born. Melhuish et al. (2008) report that the more parents read to

their child, the more literate the child will be. What happens when a parent is not as literate as their White counterpart? On average, households in low socioeconomic statuses tend to have lower literacy rates and tend not to value reading as highly as wealthier families (Van Vechten 2013). This predominately affects African American children since this group is disproportionately impoverished (Macartney, Bishaw, and Fontenot 2013). The result is that the child will not get read to as much. This early disadvantage could be outweighed by a successful school. However, the schooling systems, despite Brown vs. Board of Education, are largely segregated. Although it is illegal to segregate based on race, the schooling systems are segregated off of socio-economic statuses. The stratification affects Blacks more than it affects Whites because of the disproportionate impoverishment of African Americans (Kao and Thompson 2003; Ogbu 1994). The effects of stratification can include attending a poorer school which would not have the resources to ensure a successful high school to college transition, if one occurs at all. Educational inequality affects minorities more than Whites. In fact, African Americans and Hispanics, on average, enter high school with literacy skills three years behind White and Asian students; furthermore, students from low-income families enter high school with average literacy skills five years behind those of high-income students making the intersection of race and poverty especially troublesome (Reardon, Valentino, and Shores 2012). Twenty-five percent of African Americans are impoverished (Macartney et al. 2013). These are gaps that no amount of remedial instruction in

high school is likely to eliminate. And while the racial and ethnic disparities are smaller than they were fifty years ago, socioeconomic disparities in literacy skills are growing (Reardon et al. 2012). Another effect of stratification that affects African Americans more than Whites is the ability to pay for college. If a student cannot envision themselves going to college or affording college, the more likely they are going to view higher education as unattainable. This greatly reduces their motivation within secondary schooling (Cokley 2000). Furthermore, Wallace and Bell (1999) report that even low-income White students are tracked into higher performing, more successful school systems.

High schools that are predominately Black tend to be poorer in terms of overall budget and economic makeup of the student population (Ballantine 2011). These schools do not have the adequate resources to make up for children's deficiencies in educational resources (educational technology, books, an environment with larger vocabulary words, etc.). Because of the schools' lack of resources, poorer, majority Black high schools have trouble hiring and securing the best, most-experienced faculty members (Wallace and Bell 1999; Ballantine 2011). Sub-par teachers and inadequate school and home resources results in a student who must overcome many obstacles even if he or she desires attending college (Ballantine 2011).

During the college application stage, many hopeful post-secondary students realize that their desires for further education are bound because of constricted financial means. A majority of students, especially African American

students, are not lucky enough to be a part of a wealthy-enough family where there is enough financial means available to afford college (Freeman 2005). A significant majority of African Americans face the dilemma of having to identify ways to pay for the astronomical costs of a post-secondary education. This dilemma often helps to underprepare African Americans for the college application process. In fact, African Americans delay applying for college when compared to their fellow White students. One aspect of delay is caused by navigating various sources of information about the college (Freeman 2005). These realities often prompt African American students to experience intimidation from the outset of the college application process, stimulating anxieties about their grade point average, ACT/SAT scores, and overall readiness to live up to the requirements of college (Feagin et al. 1996; Freeman 2005). A select number of these apprehensions are warranted in that a substantial achievement gap exists between White and Black students. On average, African Americans score two points lower than their fellow White students on ACT scores (Lorah 2013).

Undoubtedly, the friction between academic achievement and peer acceptance causes African American males to rebel against the “culture of education” (Ballantine 2011). However, this occurs less in post-secondary education because their social groups are altered into similar high(er) achieving students. However, the loosening of the friction with altered social groups does not indicate that African American students will desire assimilating into the

dominant White campus culture (Woldoff et al. 2011). Furthermore, regardless of social, economic, or academic background, African American students encounter problems unknown to White students and faculty in PWIs: having to redefine themselves as African American (Wallace and Bell 1999).

African American students are not as likely to enroll in their first choice of school when compared with other racial/ethnic minorities (Freeman 2005). In fact, Black students are likely to end up attending universities unknown to them. African Americans also struggle the most in finding means to afford the costs of college when compared to other minority groups (Feagin et al. 1996; Freeman 2005). For these reasons, research has uncovered racial and ethnic asymmetry in higher education access and choice among White and African American students. When college institutions are unsuccessful in recognizing the rough transition to college for Black students, it is the students themselves who must navigate, assimilate, and acculturate if they are to succeed in college. When African Americans fail to do this, these students drop-out altogether (Feagin et al. 1996).

Once African Americans register for post-secondary education, some quickly realize that they must learn to adjust. This adjustment is not only academic, where they realize how underprepared for college they are, but some African Americans must adjust socially to their new learning and social environment. Increasingly segregated elementary and secondary schools do not



expose most African Americans to White people, and African Americans find that they do not fit in at PWIs (Delgado and Stefancic 2012; Feagin et al. 1996).

The term adjustment refers to students' ability to adapt successfully to the expectations of college (Freeman 2005). According to Freeman (2005) adjustment embraces two spheres: social and academic. The academic adjustment of students relies upon a number of influences, which comprises academic preparedness. Academic preparedness explains, in part, the success rate for African Americans significantly lagging behind other racial and ethnic groups. For example, when contrasted to White students, African Americans are less likely to graduate within five years, have a higher attrition rate, and are less likely to continue on to graduate school (Woldoff et al. 2011). However, academic success is not the sole factor for attrition among minority students. In fact, Freeman (2005) indicates that social adjustment is just as significant as academic adjustment and poor social integration has negative effects on African American students at Predominately White Institutions. Precisely, aspects such as social support networks, experiences of isolation and alienation, faculty-student relations, and the college environment are all forecasters of African American students' success rates (Feagin et al. 1996; Wallace and Bell 1999).

Shook and Fazio (2008) argue that cross-racial collaboration at Predominately White Institutions engenders greater academic achievements for Black students, with Black freshman acquiring higher GPAs when roomed with a White student. Unfortunately for African Americans, natural interracial

friendships, as opposed to institution aided friendship, are challenging to develop (Woldoff et al. 2011). Countless Blacks see the atmosphere of PWIs as socially estranging and segregating and judge the school's racial environment as unaccommodating (Shook and Fazio 2008; Woldoff et al. 2011).

White students report internalized negative attitudes toward their fellow African Americans, which result in their apprehension in studying with and befriending Black students. White students believe that African Americans self-segregate, which makes the process of befriending Black students difficult (Woldoff et al. 2011). Because of the perceived racialized campus, some Blacks do not feel a sense of belonging at PWIs. As a consequence, the attrition rates for African American students are five to eight times higher than those for Whites (Wallace and Bell 1999). Black undergraduates at Predominately White Institutions often see the educational system as racist and discriminatory, and one that is largely run by Whites for Whites, which is believed to be a contributing factor of high attrition rates among African Americans (Wallace and Bell 1999).

Colleges and universities, per federal law, cannot discriminate based on a student's race. However, campuses usually harbor and create environments in which subtle forms of racism exist. These subtle acts of racism are called racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions take various forms and refer to hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color (Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso 2000). Often, African American students, as well as other minority students, assert that they feel invisible in the classroom by the

students and professors. Further, minority students express that their opinions of race and racism are of no concern to their fellow White students or their White professors. The perception of indifference prompts minority students to presume that both historical and contemporary instances of racism are irrelevant in the classroom. Racial microaggression can also include lower expectations academically, negative interactions with faculty, and formal and informal racial segregation (Solórzano et al. 2000).

### *Black College Students and the Performance of Race*

For some African American students, enrolling in a PWI requires confronting the over-arching White culture on a daily basis. Often, these students deal with this culture shock for the first time in their lives while attending PWIs. However, the shock from the new cultural experiences is not evenly distributed as some students experience different outcomes (Woldoff et al. 2011; Feagin et al. 1996). Considering how African Americans make adjustments at PWIs, Wallace and Bell (1999) identify two paths:

First, a student may choose to engage actively in the activities of mainstream culture-in this case, trying to do well in school. Or a student may become passive, doing just enough to get by or dropping out. Second, a student may be active or passive in resistance to the pressure to assimilate to mainstream culture. An active response is likely one of trying to change the system. A passive response is usually one of

seeming to go along with the system but may involve covert attempts to change it (pg. 316).

Research has competing conclusions about African Americans' assimilation and resistance to White culture. Wallace and Bell (1999) indicate that African Americans avoid events or environments in which they are expected to conform. For example, when African Americans are presented with a situation in which they know they will be one of a few minorities present, they try to find a way out from attending (Wallace and Bell 1999). This does not, however, transcend into the classroom where their academic success hinges on attendance. However, Woldoff et al. (2011) uncovered that some African Americans approach situations to nullify any negative stereotypes against Blacks.

There is a belief that Black students have similar backgrounds and that race trumps it all when dealing with access and success rates of African Americans in higher education. This is flawed logic. In fact, Hill-Collins (2000) asserts the idea of intersectionality or the influence of multiple identities, such as gender, race, class, and even geographic location as Woldoff et al. (2011) suggest. Each of these variables influences identity so that each experience and identity is based off of several factors. This means that there is no single shared identity for African Americans. Moreover, intersectionality illuminates paths between innumerable levels and classifications of repression and investigates

and examines the systems in which structure, social process, and social representation mold students' race, gender, and class (Hill-Collins 2000).

Originally, intersectionality described the oppression of Black women of color in society (Hill-Collins 2000). However, intersectionality can apply to college students as well. Specifically, intersectionality describes the differences in the Black experience at Predominately White Institutions. Likely, Black students with a history of living in predominantly White neighborhoods will adjust better at Predominately White Institutions than their peers who lived in near-segregated neighborhoods before college (Weldon 2005). Freeman (2005) posits that multiculturalism in one's neighborhood molds students to be more accepting, tolerant, and adaptive to other cultures.

Grantham and Ford (2003) argue that academically talented Black students must deal with being charged with the notion of 'acting White' by their same-race peers. Black students' scholastic endeavors are hindered by extraneous factors, such as poverty and access to good elementary and secondary schools. Education is looked upon by African Americans, especially by adolescents, as assimilating into White culture. So, achievement problems of Black elementary and secondary school students emerge from not only a limited opportunity due to structural constraints, but also coping with the burden of being accused of acting White. Furthermore, Grantham and Ford (2003) report that this hindrance manifests in largely African American and racially mixed schools. In response, academically talented Black students espouse racelessness, the

processes of disassociating oneself from a racial culture, which could be a reason that the African Americans who embrace the concept have an absence of same-race friendships.

Furthermore, Black students, whether college or K-12, are commonly pleased with their same-race peers when they are academically successful, but the acceptance of White culture judged by attitudes and manners in obtaining that success is deemed problematic (Ogbu and Simons 1998). Additionally, Ogbu (2004) emphasizes that the affliction of acting White contains allegations of being a sellout.

#### *African Americans and College Choice*

The racial influence on the choice to attend PWIs has not been explored. However, there has been some research conducted on the racial influences on African Americans to attend HBCUs and the racial influences of a student, not necessarily distinguishing between PWIs and HBCUs.

The decision of which university to enroll into is a critical choice to make, and most students are ignorant to the implications that results from which college they chose to attend. Bowers and Pugh (1973) identified various factors for college choice including economic, social factors, and academics; however, this study primarily sampled White students. When Braddock and Hua (2006) examined students of color's decisions to attend specific universities, they found that African American college students use more time in deciding which college is right for them and use diverse authorities of information than their fellow White

peers to make decisions on which university to attend. Furthermore, African American students who enroll into HBCUs indicate that race influences college choice. Specifically, these African American students may perceive Predominantly White Institutions as less accommodating or hostile to African American students (Barnett 2004).

HBCUs present college students with more access to Black academic mentors with which they can identify and allow for additional positive faculty-student connections than at PWIs. These two variables are important to African American higher education students' academic self-concepts (Berger and Milem 2000; Cokley 2000; Cokley 2001; Cokley 2002). The academic self is an outlook of the self that relates scholastic life with schooling ability. The following is considered a part of the academic self but is not an exhaustive list: grades, study habits, peer evaluation of scholastic ability, self-confidence, and satisfaction with school (Reynolds, Ramirez, Magrina, and Allen 1980).

Commonly, enrollment into a Historically Black College or University influences the academic self of African Americans positively (Berger and Milem 2000). Freeman (2005) and Willie (2003) suggest that the myriad aids of enrolling hint at the influence of a race-related reason for enrolling into a majority Black college. However, it was not until Van Camp et al. (2009) that this was truly tested using probably sampling techniques. According to Van Camp et al. (2009), HBCUs currently face the challenge of enrolling academically superior students and lose the majority of the most-talented African American students to

PWIs. They found that race-related motivations are significant elements for college choice for Black students electing to matriculate into HBCUs. Moreover, African American students' aspiration to surround themselves with their Black peers and the perceived ability for racial self-growth were motivations for Black students to choose an HBCU, like Berger and Millem (2000) and Cokley (2000, 2001, and 2002) suggest. Furthermore, they found that race-related motivations were dissimilar from motivations found in studies based on White college student samples. White college students were more likely to choose institutions based off geography, academics, financial support, etc. While there has been research concluding that culture and ethnicity influence college choice (Freeman 2005; Nora 2004; Tobolowsky, Outcalt, and McDonough 2005), Van Camp et al. (2009) focuses on the race-related reasons for African Americans' choice to attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In their study, they differentiated the actions linked with race-related decisions from the actions connected with social or academic motives. For example, a race-related motive could be the development of a stronger racial identity. Van Camp et al. (2009) suggest that the race-related decision for institution-type choice impacts the overall method of college choice. For instance, the on campus activities African American students engage in are central to their racial identity development. They explain that African American students who are content in their racial identity can still be attracted to enrolling into an HBCU. Furthermore, Van Camp, Barden, Sloan and



Clarke (2009) argue that the continual function for HBCUs is to offer a hospitable and understanding campus life for African American college students.

*African Americans, finances, and college choice*

According to St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005), Blacks' decisions on which college to attend were primarily influenced by finances. Tuition costs, student aid availability, and scholarship availability were direct factors determining which institution to attend for African Americans. Furthermore, they found that financial influences in college choice were similar to college decisions by potential college students from low socioeconomic status which is similar to what Paulsen and St. John (2002) found. However, the students in the St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005) study were from varying socio-economic statuses and with parents of high-achieving education backgrounds; nonetheless the pattern was still similar. Although there were other factors that influenced college choice for individual African American students, finances were found to be most significant. St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2005) found that, when compared to Whites, loans had a negative relationship and did not influence the decision to attend a college. The financial factors that influenced White students the most were grants and scholarships. This is not surprising given the average income and wealth differences of Blacks and Whites as reported earlier.

Researchers have observed that the way students view the financial aspects (i.e., college costs and student aid) and its further influence on college choice. One method students employ comprises of evaluating their capacity to

afford a college education. This is referred to as the role of finances (Cabrera, Nora, and Castañeda 1992, St. John et al. 2005). Research using this “role of finances” method revealed that perceived financial problems can sway how students experience post-secondary education. For example, the nexus approach (St. John, Paulsen, and Starkey 1996) studied how the fiscal motives for selecting a university pertain to the experience of college in addition to how these monetary expectations and prices influenced the student’s choice. This tactic claimed a “nexus” existed among the economic motives for selecting a university and how the students reacted to costs. These methods provide understandings of how students react to student financial aid. The nexus approach assimilates exploration of the impacts of college-funding-type opinions (i.e. attitudes towards loans) with the examination of the effects of expenses and financial assistance (Paulsen and St. John 1997).

Paulsen and St. John (2002) exposed the variances in which lower income students and higher-income students reacted to financial aid. Poorer students were inclined to choose an institution because of grants, and, when paralleled to higher-income college students, poorer and working-class students were affected by loan and work-study opportunities. Research dealing with African Americans and their response to financial assistance has revealed that Black college students are more inclined to choose a university or college based on the financial package they receive to attend. (Kaltenbaugh, St. John, and

Starkey 1999; St. John and Noell 1989). However, these studies did not deal with the racial differences in college choice.

Carter (1999) indicated that students' college choices are inhibited by their social conditions. For example, lower socio-economic status students are more likely to attend a university close to home given their financial situation. This option usually saves the student money (Carter 1999). In addition to Carter's (1999) research, Hanson (1994) and Hearn (1984) analyzed how race and social class affect student access to colleges and universities. They both concluded that class, more than race, affects student college-going opportunities (Hanson 1994; Hearn 1984). However, given the intersectional nature of class and race, specifically within the African American community, these two social aspects can and do work together to create inequality (St. John et al. 2005).

*African Americans, family, and college choice*

Freeman (1997) administered a study where she interviewed seventy African American high-school students to try to comprehend their decision-making procedure to go to college. Parental education and parental income, Freeman (1997) found, were major impacts in participants' college choice decisions. Additionally, Bateman (1993) found that the influence of parental social factors affected African American participants more than White participants.

Cyprian-Andrews (2004) analyzed the influences that affected African American students' decisions to enroll at a community college. She

accomplished this by interviewing twelve African American students enrolled in a community college in Louisiana. This researcher found multiple influences that persuaded the participants' judgement to seek a higher education. Cyprian-Andrews (2004) revealed that family, high school, and church influenced the participants' decisions to attend a community college. However, she made no mention as to whether this is applicable across races or is unique to the African Americans.

### *College Choice Models*

College choice, as defined by Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) is a "complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university or institution of advanced vocational training" (p. 234). Since the 1980s, several types of college choice models have been suggested in order to analyze this process (Cyprian-Andrews 2004).

Furthermore, these college choice models can be organized into three categories: sociological, economic, and a combined model based off personal choice (Hossler and Stage 1992). Moreover, these models have produced significant data within sociology regarding status attainment (Cyprian-Andrews 2004).

Some sociological influences were introduced out of the social theory of status-attainment. Although the use of status-attainment within sociology is dated and is used infrequently, it had its role in the formation of college choice models.

The status attainment model focused on the factors that influence higher education enrollment aspirations such as the student's family's socioeconomic background, academic ability, and parental educational expectations (Hossler and Stage 1992). Contrasting status attainment, economic models were founded on the idea that high school students use a cost-benefit analysis. The high school students would weigh the costs of their choice (e.g., attending college or going into the workforce) against the perceived benefits (Hossler et al. 1999). These models viewed college choice as an investment decision alone (McDonough 1997).

Both the sociological and economic perspective has strengths and weaknesses; however, the strongest models which employ a combined socio-economic perspective provide a comprehensive explanation of the college choice process (Bourdieu 1997; Coleman 1990; McDonough 1997). Combined models offer more opportunity for intervention by universities and were more useful to the college administrators and the public than the sociological and economic models alone (Hossler et al. 1989).

#### *Chapman's model*

Chapman's (1981) model comprises both micro and macro perspectives. The model also suggests that to comprehend students' college choice, colleges and universities have to take the students' backgrounds into account. These characteristics, as submitted by Chapman (1981), are characteristics of the students, their families, and the characteristics of the college. The student

characteristics included socioeconomic status, aptitude, educational aspirations, and high school performance. This model presents that student college choice is influenced by a set of student characteristics in combination with a series of external influences (Chapman 1981). As reported by Chapman (1981), students from families with low-to-middle socioeconomic backgrounds had imbalanced college enrollment rates and were also distributed disproportionately across different types of colleges and universities. These students often opted for lower priced colleges and universities. Often, this led institutions to have students of similar backgrounds and aptitudes (Chapman 1981). In addition, potential college students used their high school performance as judgment as to whether a particular university would be of interest to them (i.e., level of competition at the particular college or university, the aptitude of other students attending the college, their chances of being accepted to the college).

The external factors are grouped into three categories: First, the influences of significant persons (i.e. guidance counselors, teachers, or peers) helped to influence enrollment for students. Second, the characteristics of the university (i.e. location of the university, enrollment requirements, and the cost, availability of desired program) contributed to the student's external influences. Last, the particular institution's efforts to communicate information with prospective students were influencing external factors as well (Chapman 1981).

Chapman (1981) contended that a student's socio-economic background and internal characteristics influenced college choice the most. Second, he

suggested were the external influences such as the fixed characteristics of the college (geography, tuition, and degrees offered) and input from significant persons (family members, peers, and teachers).

Although Chapman's (1981) model includes student characteristics such as socioeconomic status, aptitude, and college characteristics, he fails to include race as a possible influence. Another limit to this model is that it only described the pattern of influences that affected traditional aged (18-21) prospective students. There are more non-traditional aged students returning to college. Non-traditional students (age 25+) now make up sixty-three percent of all college students in America (Bell 2012). Although the uptick in nontraditional students is caused by the economic downturn in 2008, this just shows how restrictive Chapman's model truly is. Therefore, it is important that college choice models recognize the necessity to also develop a college choice model that can examine a myriad of factors for different types of student. This reveals yet another gap in the college choice research.

#### *Jackson's model*

Jackson's (1982) model is separated into three phases: preference, exclusion, and evaluation. The preference phase highlights the sociological facets that impact a student's college choice. In the preference phase, according to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), the student cultivates opinions about attending college in general. In this phase, a student determines if he/she are interested in attending college. Students' academic performances, in addition, impact their

intent to attend college. Academic performance is a major component of the Jackson's (1982) preference phase. Furthermore, Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) found that the students who perform well academically throughout high school are more likely to develop a preference to enroll into post-secondary education.

Furthermore, Jackson's (1982) model argues that such factors like a family's socio-economic background, parents' education, and peer influences are also included in the preference stage. However, it is during this stage that Jackson ignored factors including race, ethnicity, or gender as possible influences on college choice process of students.

In Jackson's (1982) exclusion phase, students make a choice to attend college, like in the preference phase, but are considering their options. These college options are determined by examining their current resources, such as financially achievable choices. The main facets of this phase include university location, academic information, and college cost. University location includes determining which geographic area a student prefers such as a rural campus or an urban campus. After this preference is realized, the student excludes those that do not fit this ideal college environment. Concerning academic information, students look at admissions requirements, such as SAT/ACT score, GPA requirements, etc., and determine if they have the qualifications for enrollment at specific universities. Finally, students research the total cost of attending a specific university and deduce whether they can afford enrollment. During these



stages, students began to reduce their list of colleges by considering these components (Jackson 1982). Jackson (1982) argues that college location and availability of accurate information are the strongest influences on college choice in the exclusion phase of the model. Furthermore, aspiring college students often exclude universities from their master list of college choices. Most often, this is done with a narrow understanding or a lack of information about these colleges (Jackson 1982).

Evaluation is the final phase in the Jackson (1982) model where students begin to evaluate their list of college choices and judge the final list based upon factors such as college characteristics and college cost. This phase is where students craft their final college choice list. Jackson (1982) notes that not only are students planning their college choices, the students also consider non college options as well such as entering the workforce. Of all the factors included in this model, race was excluded leaving a significant void.

#### *Hanson and Litten's model*

Hanson and Litten (1989) claimed that the college choice process is ongoing and includes five major steps: college aspirations; searching; collecting information; applying; and enrolling. Hanson and Litten's (1989) model recognized various factors that affect the process of college- choice which includes students' background and attributes, environment, public policy, college characteristics and actions, and high school attributes. They contend that the high school a student attended, as well as current public policies, have the

biggest sway during the search process. Students' background and attributes influence the decision to attend college and help to develop the student's college aspirations the most. And the college's actions such as recruitment and admissions policies affect students the most during the information gathering phase. Whether colleges choose to admit or deny the student and how much aid was granted helped determine if the student enrolled at that college according to Hansen and Litten (1989).

Out of all the college choice models, Hanson and Litten's (1989) model is the only model that includes race, family background, and parent's education as possible influences of college choice decisions. This model is very complex in that it seems to try to cover every possible variable that could influence college choice. This model is the only framework model that includes both race and family as possible student background characteristics to consider when examining college choice. In addition, Litten (1982) argued the importance of examining college- choice by different groups (i.e. race, class, gender) in order to suggest where different recruiting strategies might be appropriate.

*Hossler and Gallagher's model*

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) is the most cited theoretical model of college choice and is a simplified three-stage college choice model based on previous college choice research, models, and theories. This model contains a structure of three steps: predisposition, search, and choice. This model places most of the emphasis on the aspiring college student rather than the educational

institution. The predisposition step refers to post high school arrangements students choose: education or work. During this step, peers, high school experiences and performances, and family background are influencing factors in the development of these plans. In the search stage, students probe and appraise possible colleges to attend. During this step, students determine if certain colleges have the particular characteristics they are seeking. What size classes are typically offered; what fees are associated with attending this university; are the professors focused more on teaching or research? Hossler and Gallagher (1987) identify the search stage as the most important step because of the heightened interaction between students and the institution. In the choice stage, students generally create a list of top-choice-schools either tangible or psychologically and will make their college selections from their list. However, it is important to note that some students only have one school in mind. Moreover, as academic performance and socioeconomic status increase, the list of colleges considered increases (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987).

#### *The Model of Predetermination*

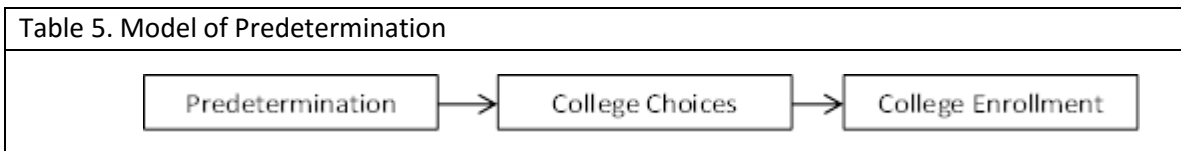
More recently, Freeman (2005) contributed an analysis of college choice with greater breadth. She recognizes the significance for the expansion of a college choice model to address traits that may be explicit to some cultural groups. The Model of Predetermination, developed by Freeman (2005), uses a framework that includes race, cultural characteristics, school characteristics and family as factors when considering college choice influences. She points out that

models without this perspective do not allow for the exploration of how varied cultural characteristics, such as race and racial identity, influence college choice. In contrast with prior models that focus on structural and general factors that influence college choice, Freeman (2005) focuses on the predictors that matter for an individual student's college selection.

In this model, Freeman (2005) refers to the first phase of the college choice process as predetermination because of environmental and situational conditions regularly having significant impacts on whether or not a student chooses to go to college. These environmental circumstances usually affect the student's decision-making process. For example, parents who are college-educated are more likely to initiate the idea of going to college than are those who did not go to college. Furthermore, college-educated parents are more likely to start a college-education savings account for their children (Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper 1999). First generation students, in contrast, report receiving less financial support from their family for college tuition and are more ignorant about college in general (Freeman 1997). Freeman asserts that although parental finances do not impact predisposition, parents' education levels do impact one's predisposition.

The Model of Predetermination modifies the Hossler and Gallagher Model to account for more culturally diverse perspectives not captured in the latter model. Freeman (2012) augmented the Hossler and Gallagher Model to maintain, what she thinks, is the fluidity in the college choice process. Each of

the student’s cultural and socio-economic characteristics intersects to produce a unique “model” for that individual. For example, a high school student determines she want to go to college. In the predetermination phase, her parents, peers, and teachers influences, financial influences, propinquity etc. all intersect to form what her ideal college looks like. From here, the student looks for all the institutions which match her predetermined list of desirable characteristics. She narrows down which colleges fit and do not fit into her created list. She applied to some or all the institutions that match her predetermined list of desirable characteristics. From here, she enrolls into which ever college accepts her or offers her the most benefits such as a scholarship. This global model can be viewed in table 5.



For the current research, I plan to utilize the Model of Predetermination as a framework for my research design and methodology. The model operates under the microsociological paradigm as it is able to account for individual characteristics and situations when analyzing college choice. Freeman (2005) argues that race is a predetermination factor which influences college choice, thus this model should be applicable when looking at the race of the institution. I will use interviews to uncover individual motivations for an African American choosing a PWI over an HBCU.

## *Conclusion*

The research questions stem from the anecdotal evidence provided earlier and from the current literature on race, racial identity, and college choice for African Americans. However, how do my research questions sit within the realm of previous research on race, higher education, and college choice? As mentioned earlier, enrollment rates for HBCUs are declining amongst African Americans. Given the financial, racial, structural, social barriers to get to PWIs presents an interesting phenomena. Rather than attending universities with historically proven academic results, and universities which increase college access to minorities, specifically African Americans, African Americans are shying away from attending HBCUs. More and more African Americans are choosing to attend PWIs over HBCUs despite the research on racism at PWIs. Are PWIs that enticing, or is there something that HBCUs do not or cannot provide? Furthermore, as seen from the anecdotal evidence, there seems to be some backlash to African Americans choosing to attend a PWI. Is this phenomenon happening to more than just the individual cited? My study seeks to answer these questions. To restate, the objectives of this study are threefold: To identify the push and pull factors associated with attending a Predominately White Institution for African Americans; to understand how the self-reported racial identity of African Americans influences attitudes towards HBCUs; and to understand the perceived consequences for African Americans attending a Predominately White Institution over a Historically Black College or University.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Sample*

The methodological design for this study is a qualitative analysis. I conducted in-depth interviews with 14 African American college students at a single Predominately White Institution. Each subject was over the age of 19 at the time of the interview in accordance with the State of Alabama's definition of an adult. There was no set quota for any of the following variables: sex, college major, year in school, age, or income. This was a non-random, convenience sample. Furthermore, this study was approved by the Auburn University at Montgomery Institutional Review Board for Human Subject Research.

Due to budget and time constraints, this study took place at a single university. This sole university of study is Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM), located in Montgomery, Alabama. This university is ideal for many reasons. First and most obvious, AUM is a Predominately White University with a total White student population of about fifty-one percent of enrolled undergraduate and graduate students. In order to be classified as a PWI, a school must have a fifty-percent or above White student population (Auburn University at Montgomery Office of Institutional Effectiveness 2014). While AUM's population of White students is slightly above the fifty percent requirement, the fact that it is perceived as a majority White school is a stronger, supplemental factor when choosing the university to conduct this research. For my study, the undergraduate student population was solely used due to two

reasons. First, there is an unusually high number of 'unspecified race' in graduate students' statistics. 'Unspecified race' accounts for thirty percent of AUM's graduate students' race data as opposed to two percent of the undergraduates' race data. AUM's undergraduate White student population is about fifty-four percent (Auburn University at Montgomery Office of Institutional Effectiveness 2014). Second, I only interviewed undergraduate students because I was only interested in why undergraduate African American students made the decision to attend a PWI and not the choices of graduate students because most literature on college choice focuses on college choice for undergraduate students.

Second, the location of the university has a built-in control for multiple influences. Of the 100 HBCUs in the country, the south has the most with about 72% (National Center for Education Statistics 2013). The definition of "the south" is subjective so clarification is necessary. For the given percentage, I used the following states as "the south" given similar cultural characteristics: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and the Florida pan-handle. Given the proximity of HBCUs to students, the analysis will only concern students in the south as HBCUs are just as accessible as PWIs. Furthermore, of the seventy-two HBCUs in the south, Alabama has the largest HBCU count at twelve, six public HBCUs and six private HBCUs (National Center for Education Statistics 2013). At the heart of Alabama sits Montgomery, a city which has four HBCUs within a



sixty mile radius (US Department of Education N.d.). Researching the students at AUM allows for the lessening effects of the convenience selection in college choice.

Finally, AUM, unlike its parent school Auburn University, does not have a notable name recognition. Reducing the name recognition of the university in my study will allow me to dismiss attendance to the university because of a famed program, including both athletics and academics.

In the course of the research, I interviewed fourteen Black college students at AUM. Of this fourteen, fifty-seven percent were female and about forty-three percent were male. The respondents' ages ranged from nineteen to forty-two years. The average age of the respondents was about twenty-four; however, when you take out the forty-two year old, the average age was twenty-two. The median age was also twenty-two. All of this information is located in Table two. To obtain the fourteen participants, I used a snowball sample. My snowball sample started with African American students who are involved in clubs and organizations on campus. From there, I was able to connect with other African American student leaders on campus and students not involved on campus.

My research methods have the limitations associated with a small, convenience snowball sample including a nonrandom sample. Due to the selected methodology, there could be bias. My participants could be unrepresentative of the population—African Americans who chose PWIs over

HBCUs. Furthermore, the snowball sample could have provided similar respondents who would give similar answers given that they were connected to each other somehow. These students could be more similar than they are different which could be the reason for similar responses and attitudes. Finally, during the initial selection process, there could have been subconscious bias in selecting individual who looked safe and approachable.

Table 2. Age, Sex, and Racial Identity of Participants

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Self-reported Racial Identity</b>
Candy	26	Female	Weak
Carol	42	Female	Weak
Jake	21	Male	Strong
Jaqueline	26	Female	Strong
Leslie	22	Female	Strong
James	23	Male	Strong
Ashley	20	Female	Strong
Michelle	22	Female	Weak
Lena	23	Female	Weak
Khal	22	Male	Weak
Joe	28	Male	Weak
Quan	19	Male	Strong
Jon	19	Male	Weak
Jess	25	Female	Strong

### *Data Collection*

For this research, I conducted in-depth interviews with African American students at Auburn University at Montgomery. These interviews were recorded using a camera as to accurately capture both the verbal responses as well as the behavior during the interview. The interviews took place one at a time and were conducted in mutually agreed upon locations. Each interview lasted approximately thirty-five to forty-five minutes. The participants were not compensated. The interview schedule is located in the appendix.

### *Race-of-interviewer effect*

Being a White researcher studying Black participants represents issues that must be addressed. This is known as a race-of-interviewer effect. The race-of-interviewer effect influences participants of color to respond to questions about race in words that the interviewer, not being of color, wants to hear. In this case, I am White and my subjects are Black. In general, the existing research would suggest that interviewers may prime respondents to answer questions differently than they would answer were it an interviewer-of-color. Lawrence (2010) argues that the interviewer's presence is otherwise influencing the respondent in formulating his or her response: rather than respondents concealing their opinions from dissimilar interviewers, they are forming different opinions as a result of being exposed to the dissimilar interviewer. He uses Zaller and Feldman's (1992) Model of Opinionation to make this claim. The Model of Opinionation states that "at any given time, different considerations are on

[participants'] minds, and these salient considerations determine what [participants] tell surveyors about...policy preferences" (Lawrence 2010). However, the race-of-interviewer effect is not restricted to African Americans; these effects have also been found among Hispanics and non-Hispanics (Reese et al.1986; Hurtado 1994), and among Native Americans and Chinese-Americans (Weeks and Moore 1981).

Davis (1997) suggests that Black interviewees are giving their genuine opinions to Black interviewers, but it is certainly conceivable that Black respondents might be socially pressured to express opinions that conform to norms of racial solidarity and group consciousness to Black interviewers. Lawrence's (2010) findings suggest that race-of-interviewer effects continue to persist in responses to racially-themed questions.

Considering race-of-interviewer effects in my study, several steps were taken to minimize the effect. First, prior to the sit down interview, I sent the questions to the respondents to gauge their willingness to participate in the study. I asked each of the fourteen respondents if they were hesitant in divulging their responses to me: a White male. None of the participants were hesitant about answering my questions about race, racial identity, college choice, or the Black community's challenging their Blackness. Even though my respondents indicated no hesitations regarding the questions I provided, I offered an alternative. I asked the respondents if they would be more comfortable answering these questions with a Black interviewer and/or if they would prefer to have a

member of the Black community present during the interview. None of the respondents requested a representative or a change in interviewer.

Although no participant requested any accommodations in the interview, I think that providing the questions and an option to have a member of the Black community present or conduct the interview helped the respondents feel comfortable with the types of questions being asked. During the interview, their behavior seemed calm and comfortable. Furthermore, one respondent indicated not feeling comfortable answering one question in my study but was willing to answer the others. I believe I created a comfortable and welcoming environment for the participants to respond without feeling pressured to answer in a socially desirable manner.

#### *Analysis of Interview Results*

After the in-depth interviews were completed, I transcribed all of the interviews into Microsoft Word documents, which were then stored on my personal computer. I looked for specific themes using heuristic coding and organized the information into charts that documented the frequencies of themes, by gender differences, and, most importantly, by racial identity intensity (strong or weak). I used the qualitative analysis program known as NVivo to help uncover underlying and missed themes from the interviews.

Quotations are included in the results section to better illustrate the complexities of the phenomena. I utilized Gorden's (1992) interviewing coding method. The first step in analyzing the data, as according to Gorden (1992),

entailed underlining the relevant words and phrases. Then, I assigned each word or phrase a unique identification number, called an “address.” This identification number indicates the precise location in the transcript. This number is simply the line number in the transcript plus a letter (a, b, c, or d). The letter was only needed if there is more than one relevant word or phrase per line (Gorden 1992).

To complete the analysis process, I used a special coding sheet in which the column and row headings signified the groupings of germane data that I defined. Next, I put the identification number of each category of related information into the appropriate cells. This coding method allowed me to equate the data from one interview with another. It also allowed me to summarize the results of a number of interviews on the same topic by showing the frequency with which each type of information is given (Gorden 1992).

The participants were allowed to select their own aliases. However, if they declined a preferred alias, one was assigned to them. During the interview, participants were made aware of their alias as to pinpoint their contributions to the research.

## RESULTS

Two themes emerged from the interviews. The first theme that emerged from the sample was the influence of one’s racial identity, or how one’s identity is shaped by their race. Specifically, how does racial identity influence an African-American’s decision to attend a PWI. Weak and strong racial identities and their motives will be compared. The second theme that emerged was the

consequences associated with attending a PWI over an HBCU. These consequences are both positive and negative. These two macro themes will be addressed fully in the succeeding sections.

### *Racial Identity and College Choice*

When probed, the sample produced differing results based on their reported racial identity. The sample size of fourteen included seven participants who indicated they have a weak racial identity. Furthermore, seven other participants indicated they have a strong racial identity. The participants were asked, "How is being Black related to your sense of identity," and their response either explicitly or implicitly self-categorized a strong or weak racial identity. The specifics of their responses are included in Table 3 and Table 4.



Table 3. Participants with Weak Racial Identities

James	“My identity is based on my personality traits: likes, dislikes, pet-peeves, and opinions, all of which have nothing to do with my skin color.”
Michelle	“I feel like I am not identified by my [race].”
Lena	“I do not relate being Black to my identity.”
Khal	“...I rarely refer to myself as Black.”
Joe	“I have developed my own identity and self”
Carol	“...Be true to yourself; do not let your color define who you are.”
Candy	“Being Black is just the color of my skin ...”

Table 4. Participants with Strong Racial Identities

Ashley	“Being Black is related to my sense of identity...”
John	“[Being Black is] a piece of who I am.”
Jake	(After probing) “...I would say [I have a] strong [racial identity].”
Jaqueline	“Black people are the strongest people I have ever known and that makes me honored to be one.”
Leslie	“It became my identity when I reached an age of understanding the difference between how I looked verses how society wanted me to look.”
Quan	“[Being Black is] a part of me.”
Jess	(After probing) “I have a strong racial identity.”

Some students with weak racial identities indicated that they chose to attend a Predominately White Institution primarily because of the stereotypes associated with the HBCUs. Noted earlier, one of the stereotypes which plagues HBCUs is not being academically rigorous enough. Khal stated,

I feel that HBCUs do not accurately or efficiently educate African Americans. There are people I know who have transferred from an HBCU because they felt they weren't receiving a quality education. Also, there are times in the future when a person who graduates from an HBCU is sneered at because of the image HBCUs have of being easy or catering towards Blacks.

Lena's comments agree with Khal's. When she was going through the application stage, she was set on attending an HBCU. She told me that she recalls actively being dissuaded by friends. Her friends cited some of the on-campus events and the bad reputation that were associated with HBCUs. She enrolled in an HBCU despite her friends trying to influence her decision. After her first year at an HBCU, she transferred to a PWI. On her reason for transferring, she stated,

While at [an HBCU], I did not feel challenged. When I applied to the university, I had the impression that the university was prestigious and rigorous. However, I quickly found out that was not the case there. If I wasn't being challenged then people might not look at my degree the

same as a White university. I should have listened to my friends. But now I actively try to persuade students not to attend most HBCUs.

Joe heard horror stories like what happened to Lena and was dissuaded to attend an HBCU. Joe has the impression that the academics are subpar due to the classroom setting and environment. Joe believes that “the students at HBCUs...dominate their instructor. Or [that] instructors don’t care whether the students learn the material and will either pass or fail them with minimal effort.” He goes on to state, “I’m sure many African American students have the same premonitions that I do in regards to attending a PWI over an HBCU. I would be both selfish and a narcissist to think that I am the only individual to feel this way.”

Participants with strong racial identities were not dissuaded to attend HBCUs because of societal stereotypes. In fact, they generally hold positive views of HBCUs. Jaqueline states that attending a PWI or an HBCU is a personal choice and that she chose her school based on the connections she could obtain from attending the university. Furthermore, she states that students who attend HBCUs are not going to a subpar school. These students are attending a school so they can feel more connected to their culture and history. Leslie responded to the question much like the others who have strong racial identity. She stated,

Well I have to say it depends on the student's family and how they are viewed by their peers. I chose [a PWI] because they offered my major unlike some of the HBCUs.

I probed for additional information regarding her comments by asking, “If an HBCU offered your major would you’ve attended?” She replied by stating,

Probably not. HBCUs aren’t bad schools; some are very prestigious. They were just not for me at that time. I already had a strong sense of who I am as a Black female and didn’t feel the need for an Afrocentric curriculum. But I was pressured by some of my teachers to attend an HBCU; even my mother attended Tuskegee Institute.

Ashley’s response generally agreed with what the other respondents had to say about why she chose a PWI over an HBCU. She added that she “wanted to have opportunities to network with people outside of my race and ethnicity” and expressed concern with finding a job by limiting herself to a small proportion of the population.

In fact, those with strong racial identities were influenced to attend PWIs over HBCUs by what they consider to be a more diverse environment at PWIs.

Ashley suggests,

My high school was a little diverse but mostly White. I did not even apply to an HBCU because I wanted to stick with the diversity of people. I mean after all the world is a diverse place and I need to know how to engage and interact with people who are not like me. ...[M]any...PWIs have this aspect. Most PWIs have this aspect mainly because there are more PWI than HBCUs and many people are looking for diverse schools that are stable with many career options. I do not think that this outlook applies to

all African Americans because if it did, then there would not be anyone attending HBCUs. In contrast if I was the only one with this outlook, then PWIs would be considered [Only White Institutions].

Carol's response agrees with Ashley's comments. Carol states,

I know and am very much aware that the world is not one color. So attending an HBCU, in my opinion, and not a school that is diverse is hampering your horizons and opportunities for growth.

Jaqueline's response is similar to the others in that one of the deciding factors in choosing to attend a PWI over an HBCU was diversity. "I enjoy learning new cultures...I cannot limit myself just to embrace one set of cultures..." Finally, Jess responded with the following:

I chose not to attend an HBCU because I did not feel as though it was important for me to attend college only with other students who shared my cultural background and skin color. I did not grow up in a homogeneous environment, so I did not want to begin this as an adult and college student...I also believe that my outlook may apply to most African Americans...

There was one respondent who indicated that their decision to attend a PWI was not a deliberate choice. Meaning there was no decision making process to eliminate an HBCU or PWI. These students just ended up at a PWI haphazardly or by default. Carol specifically states,

It never crossed my mind to attend an HBCU. I researched top schools for education in the state of Alabama and [my school] came up; so after doing some research, I applied. I did not apply to any other school, nor did I do any additional research because I liked everything that [my school] has to offer me.

In summation, a majority of my sample of African American students provided varying reasons for choosing to attend a PWI over an HBCU based on their racial identity.

Those with weaker racial identities indicated that they chose a PWI because of a negative stereotype associated with attending an HBCU. However, those with strong racial identities do not buy into the stereotypes that plague HBCUs. Instead, these students indicated positive feeling towards HBCUs. Their reasoning for attending a PWI over an HBCU was the diversity. The African Americans with strong racial identities believe that PWIs offer a more diverse educational environment and curriculum that will help them in their careers.

#### *Perceived Consequences for Choosing*

No matter their individual racial identity, African Americans in this study indicated that African Americans face criticisms for attending a PWI over an HBCU. Khal believes "...that an African American who chooses a PWI over an HBCU will sometimes be looked down upon or called a traitor." Carol also agrees that African Americans face criticism for attending a PWI. She states,

In my opinion, I believe some African Americans will view or look down on others who attend a PWI over an HBCU. Just as I think White people look down on the students who attend an HBCU. I think we should embrace whatever choice an individual makes and not be judgmental.

Jon suggests the same things about criticisms for attending a PWI. He states that an African American may face bigotry or prejudice from ill-informed or closed-minded members of the Black community. Jake said it was a little uncomfortable telling his friends and family members he chose to attend a PWI over what he describes as the “conventional choice” of attending an HBCU. Jaqueline states, “You are...ridiculed by your peers on why you would not want to attend an HBCU if you are of African American descent.”

One of the biggest criticisms from others, the respondents said in the interviews, was members of the African American community questioning their Blackness, or their commitment to or status in the Black community. Carol states that when she wears her alma mater shirt is when the criticism begins. She states, “There have been little snide remarks or jokes; but hey it’s okay because I did what was best for me regardless of what others thought. You have to be strong and not give in to other people’s ignorance.” Michelle told me a story of when she was telling her friends where she was going to college. She states,

I attended an all-Black high school; therefore, because of my openness to other races and ethnicities, my “Blackness” has always been questioned, especially when I told people where I wanted to go to college. Most people

were supportive but there were some Black people who joked I was going to end up like Michael Jackson—White.

Leslie states,

I have been questioned by at least one or two individuals. For instance, one of them claimed I was going 'playing in the snow' when I told them where I was going to college. At first, I was upset with them for saying that, but I realized how sad it must be for them not being able to open up to other people despite their skin color...I chose [a PWI] because of the [potential] criticism I would receive at an HBCU for not being Black enough and to stand out from my peers academically.

Ashley has been battling people accusing her of not being “Black” enough and that her decision to attend a PWI only exasperated the criticisms. She states,

People would say that I am trying to be White or that I am a White girl trapped in a Black girl's body. I asked them why I have to be compared to someone White. Why can't I be an intelligent Black girl who knows how to carry myself appropriately? Another thing that got to me was the whole 'you are too pretty for a Black girl' or 'your hair is too good for you to be Black.' Why can't I be a pretty girl in general? Why can't I just have good hair? Ultimately, these questions frustrated me because I felt like I wasn't or the college I chose wasn't good enough just because of the color of my skin, and I was categorized because of it.



Khal recalls the moment that he told his Black friends that he was going to attend a PWI. He states,

There were people in my classes who questioned my 'Blackness' because I don't know a certain rapper or hip-hop artist, or simply because I don't have that aura of Blackness about me, or because I chose a White university. There are times when I speak...people...question whether I am Black or not. Also, the way I look. Some people have gone so far as to call me "Sand Negro" because I look as if I am from Middle Eastern origin... Honestly, I don't care if people perceive me to be 'Black enough' or not. I know what I am and I know that I'll have to face the same prejudices in the job market like my predecessors. To me, that's being Black enough.

Finally, Jon has experienced the same accusatory language from the Black community about attending a PWI over an HBCU. He states,

I was frequently referred to as an Oreo after I told people of my decision [to attend a PWI]. My reaction was to just smile and politely reject the notion. This is an inaccurate assessment. I hate to be referred to as an Oreo. I understand that people don't mean for it to be offensive, but in my eyes the person is saying that because I speak correct English, have a diverse social circle, make good grades, etc. [and] that I can't be fully Black because those aren't the things that Black people do. Being called an Oreo is belittling, insulting, and quite racist and was surprised by the members of my community when they said it because it means that they

buy into the notion that Black people are inferior and White people are superior.

Jess reported that questioning can come from both the African American community and the White community. She states,

From an African American's viewpoint, this person could be accused of thinking they're better than the rest of us: Blacks; or thinking they're White. From a Caucasian's viewpoint, the African American might be asked why they would not want to attend an institution with people who look like them and who they can identify with.

While a lot of the consequences from attending a PWI were negative, there were some positive consequences that the participants stated. Carol states,

I think it is easier to get a job coming from a PWI. There isn't as much baggage associate with those types of universities...HBCUs have negative stereotypes for not being as good or for being party schools so some African Americans might not want to hinder their future success.

Lena reports that by attending a PWI she has access to better networks for jobs. She goes on to state, "White people still control a lot in the hiring process so it may be easier to get a job [through a PWI] than through an HBCU." Quan also feels as though attending a PWI will give you better access to jobs outside of a sub-group of people. He states,

I think that by attending a White school over an HBCU you're more likely going to get a better job. White schools hold a higher standing in society so it is better to associate yourself with that. Also, I think that you're taken more serious when you graduate from a PWI as opposed to an HBCU for that very same reason.

When I probed Quan for more information by asking him why he thinks that, he told me, "Probably because [PWIs] are associated with White culture." When I asked him to explain more on the following statement, he replied with, "From what I have experienced and seen, anytime race is involved, White always beats Black, and I think that applies with PWIs and HBCUs."

In summation, there are both positive and negative actual and perceived consequences for African Americans to choose a Predominately White Institution over a Historically Black College or University. Some negative consequences included questioning one's loyalty to the Black community and members of the Black community questioning the respondents' "Blackness." Some of the derogatory comments would be calling a student an Oreo (Black on the outside, White on the inside) or a "Sand Negro." Other comments include telling the potential PWI students that they were "going to play in the snow." Some positive consequences for attending a PWI over an HBCU include better access to what my respondents' indicated were better jobs that White people had control over.

## CONCLUSIONS

### *Discussion*

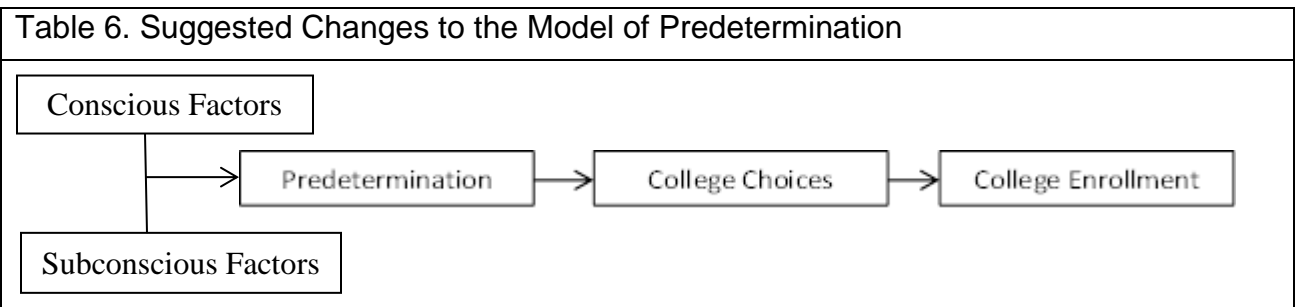
The results from this research have significant place within the college choice literature especially in examining the impact of race. From my limited sample, results suggest that one's racial identity provides differing motivations for choosing to attend a PWI over an HBCU in the south. Let me be clear: racial identity alone does not play a factor in choosing which university-type an African American attends as indicated in the fifty-fifty response rate. However, my participants indicated race based reasons for choosing PWIs and the racial make-up and history of the institution impacted the college choice process.

In the introduction, I cite and reference three individuals who describe actively choosing to attend a Predominately White Institution. Their anecdotes described how their perceptions of the institution as well as their racial identity strength actively influenced their decision to attend a PWI over an HBCU. However, my results do not indicate students actively choosing to attend a PWI over an HBCU. In my results, no participant indicated that race or racial identity influenced their decision to attend a PWI prior to m bringing up race. However, it is important to note that race did influence their decision to attend a PWI either subconsciously or indirectly. It was more of a contributing factor more than a deal breaker. Moreover, when asked why they chose their PWI, my participants listed several different characteristics including geography, curriculum, and financial costs. When asked about the racial make-up of the institution, many respondents

listed their reasons for attending a PWI over and HBCU. Their responses suggested that, while not a conscious factor, racial make-up of the institution had an influence on their predetermination, or list of desired characteristics in a university. Regardless of whether a student had a self-reported strong racial identity or weak racial identity, the outcome was still the same. Many respondents overlooked or discounted attending HBCUs. It seems that my respondents have internalized the cultural stereotypes about HBCUs and Black culture and subconsciously act in ways to counteract this on an individual level. In some ways, these students are subconsciously acting in ways to disassociate themselves from these negative stereotypes.

Furthermore, although there were many reasons African Americans use to make their college choice, my research specifically looks at the act of choosing between a PWI or an HBCU. Prior college choice research does not make this distinction. College choice research and most college choice models assume race is insignificant in the decision making process. Although most of the college models use statistics, theoretically my research has a place within these models. Given my results, the Model of Predetermination works best to explain the behavior. However, the model needs to be theoretically augmented. I suggest there are conscious and subconscious factors that influence a college student's predetermination. These conscious and subconscious push and pull factors work in tandem to create desirable characteristics in colleges and universities. Conscious factors include finances, geography, types of majors offered, etc.

Furthermore, conscious factors are actively on the minds of students when selecting desirable institutions to attend. Subconscious factors are subtle and provide undertones in the college choice process. Subconscious factors could include racial makeup of the institution, racism, racial identity, or even the gendered make-up of the institution. Subconscious factors work to dissuade students from considering applying to the university. The students internalize negative stereotypes associated with the university or type-of university and do not think about applying to them. However, I suggest that subconscious factors, while effecting HBCUs in the research, can work against any type of institution: private university vs. public university; HBCU vs. PWI, large campus vs. small campus, and online universities vs. in-person universities.



The participants who indicated a weak racial identity may subscribe to the Critical Race Theory concept of White-over-color thesis. The White-over-color thesis argues that in American society and culture, items associated with White culture are superior to those associated with Black culture (Delgado and Stefancic 2012). In this instance, these students may believe that Predominately White Institutions are superior to Historically Black Colleges and Universities

because of a PWIs association and connection to White culture. Some participants included this in their responses. Juxtaposed, the same reason why they reject HBCUs is because of their connection with and association with Black culture.

Regardless of how strong or weak the participants' racial identity is, most suggested or implied that attending a PWI was a way to embrace multiculturalism. Multiculturalism in Critical Race Theory (CRT) suggests that institutions should represent various types of cultures (Delgado and Stefancic 2012). One of the main issues the participants in the study had qualms with is the lack of multiculturalism at HBCUs. These students wanted to learn more about the various cultures within and between the US and other countries. These students recognize that the US is not culturally homogenous and want an education that reflects that.

Finally, concerning the negative consequences, the African American participants in my study indicated negative consequences when they chose to attend a Predominately White Institution. The negative consequences can best be equated to the African American community viewing my participants as race traitors, a CRT concept. Normally, race traitor research focuses on White supremacists criticizing White people for supporting multiculturalism because it goes against the White race's interests in being culturally dominant (Delgado and Stefancic 2012). While not as extreme as White supremacists, in this instance,

the Black community viewed the participants as traitors; they questioned their loyalty; and they questioned their 'Blackness.'

Van Camp, Barden, Sloan and Clarke (2009) found that racial identity was a factor in how African Americans chose to attend HBCUs. They found that race-related reasons are important factors for college choice, at least for Black students choosing to attend an HBCU in the south. Specifically, the students' desire to be around other Black students and to have opportunities for racial self-development were identified as reasons students choose to attend an HBCU. My findings hint at the other end of the spectrum. Some African Americans choose PWIs over HBCUs to escape the negative stereotypes associated with HBCUs and Black culture.

Like Van Camp et al. (2009), my research contradicts Freeman's (2005) research. Freeman (2005) concluded that race is insignificant when students choose their university. However, Freeman's (2005) research used a nationwide sample, whereas my study and Van Camp et al. (2009) focused on students in the south where HBCUs are most prevalent. Not all African Americans have access to HBCUs due to geography. However, since the majority of African Americans live in the south, and the majority of HBCUs are in the south, access to HBCUs for African Americans serves a majority of African Americans.

### *Limitations of the Study*

Although several important and interesting themes emerged from the data, there are some key limitations for this study. One of the most obvious flaws is the



number of universities in this study. There was only one university sampled. Despite some of the built in controls indicated in the methodology, there is still a possibility that the results are unreliable or invalid due to such a limited amount of universities in the study. Second, the sample size and selection of fourteen African Americans is a limitation. The participants were not chosen randomly and could have skewed the results. However, there is saturation of themes and ideas in the responses they gave. Third, the interviews for this thesis were conducted prior to several high profile police shootings involving race, institutional racism, and police officers. This outside factor could have changed the students' perceptions of White culture and could have resulted in the changing of attitudes towards Black culture especially for the participants who indicated a weak racial identity. A final limitation for this study is the race of the researcher. I am a White researcher studying Black participants. My participants could have felt apprehensions divulging topics and attitudes based on my race. However, specific steps were taken to minimize this effect as specified in the methods section.

### *Policy Implications*

Although this research has limitations, there are still some policy implications for both Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions.

In order to combat the decreasing enrollment numbers of Black students, HBCUs should embark on a marketing campaign to promote history, relevance,

and rigor of the university. This marketing campaign should directly or indirectly address the stereotypes that plague the university. Furthermore, this campaign should remind the community of the HBCUs' relevance in higher education and its historical roots. HBCUs should also commit to being more diverse. The students in this study thought their campus and curriculum was too Afro-centric. HBCUs should not abandon their Afro-centric curriculum. The universities should offer more diverse options for those students who are not necessarily interested in such a curriculum. I believe when HBCUs address the stereotypes and refute them by showcasing the rigor and history of the college-type, HBCUs will cease experiencing a decline in African American students.

Juxtaposed to HBCUs, if PWIs want to increase their enrollment of African American students, they should focus more on diversity. The students in this study indicated that they were interested in the diverse options at PWIs and not necessarily interested in one culture, but various cultures. However, PWIs should not over state their diversity in marketing campaigns. Past research finds that students-of-color often feel misled when they arrive on campus when the university over emphasizes the diversity on campus.

### *Future Research*

Given the multiple limitations in this study, there should be future studies that expand upon the findings and research questions. Another researcher should use another measure for defining the strength of racial identity. One

option would be the Black Racial Identity Attitude Scale developed by Helms and Parham (1981).

If another researcher would want to build upon this study, he/she should create a random study where more participants and more Predominately White Institutions are studied. Like I stated earlier, this study only had fourteen participants at one university. A future researcher would also want to expand to other universities in the south with a larger sample of African American student.

Another research option to conduct following this study would be a large-scale survey. Given the population size of students attending south-eastern universities near Historical Black Colleges and Universities, a large scale population study would be possible with the study population being Predominately White Institutions near Historically Black Institutions. The researcher could take a random sample of the students at each of the population of universities. This would produce the most reliable and valid results if one were to continue to study this phenomenon.

Moreover, another study would want to uncover whether there is a backlash for African Americans who choose to attend PWIs, like my participants suggested.

Finally, an interesting topic for future research would be non-Black students at HBCUs or how White students use race to choose their university. As a White college student who has lived in the heart of the Black belt, I imagine racism plays a role in this choice.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Auburn University at Montgomery

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography

#### INFORMED CONSENT

Concerning Participation in a Research Study *College Choice, Racial Identity, and Consequences for African Americans at Predominately White Institutions in the South.*

You are invited to participate in a study to uncover the differential experiences of African Americans at Predominately White Institutions in terms of racial identity and college choice.

#### **Research Purpose and Procedures:**

We hope to learn about the different experiences African Americans have at Predominately White Institutions concerning racial identity. You were selected as a possible participant in this study on the basis that you are an African American attending Auburn University at Montgomery. If you decide to participate, I, B. Cooper Garrett, a graduate student in Sociology at Auburn University, will interview you about your experiences with being African American at a Predominately White Institution, including college choice, perceptions of Black culture, and attitudes towards HBCUs. This interview should last around 30-45 minutes.

#### **Risks or Discomforts/Potential Benefits:**

By participating in this study, there might be psychological harm in the form of discomfort during and/or after the interview.

- Each interview will last about 30 to 45 minutes
- Each respondent will be linked with a pseudonym. The corresponding codes will be inaccessible to all except the researcher.
- The only cost of this study to the respondent is time.
- You will be audio recorded to ensure accurate representation of thoughts and responses.

**Alternative Procedures:**

An alternative procedure maybe conducted via Skype to convenience the respondent.

**Provisions for Confidentiality:**

Your name will be removed from all data collected. All identifying information presented in the thesis prior to the publication or presentation will be removed.

**Management of Research-related Injury:**

If at any time during or after the interview you need counseling, please contact the AUM Counseling center at 334-244-3114 or at [counselingcenter@aum.edu](mailto:counselingcenter@aum.edu)

**Contacts for Additional Information:**

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, B. Cooper Garrett at 334-730-3153 or at [bgarret4@aum.edu](mailto:bgarret4@aum.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Debra Tomblin, Research Compliance Manager, AUM, 334-244-3250, [dtomblin@aum.edu](mailto:dtomblin@aum.edu).

**Voluntary Participation and the Right to Discontinue Participation without Penalty:**

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you decide later to withdraw from the study, you may also withdraw any information that has been collected about you. Your decision whether to participate will not prejudice your future relations with Auburn University at Montgomery or Auburn University. The researcher may discontinue the study at any point. The researcher may terminate your participation from the project at any point. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE, HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED ABOVE.

Participant's signature and Date

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Investigator's signature

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## Appendix B

### **Interview Schedule for Respondents**

#### I. Opening

A. Establish Rapport: [shake hands] My name is Cooper Garrett, and I am a graduate student in Sociology conducting research for my thesis. I thought you would be an excellent candidate for my thesis. Are you still interesting in participating in this interview? (Yes: continue with the script; No: end the interview)

B. Purpose: I would like to ask you some questions about your background, your experience as an African American at a predominately White university, and your attitudes towards universities that have a majority Black student population.

C. Motivation: I hope this information can lead to a better understanding of how African American students choose which institution to attend.

D. Time Line: The interview should take about 30-45 minutes. Are you available to respond to some questions at this time? (Yes: continue with the script; No: end the interview)

Transition: Let me begin by asking you some questions about where you; I would like you to be as specific as possible. Are you able to do this? (Respondent says yes) You are free to terminate this interview at any point without repercussions. (Respondent says no). Okay, thank you for your time and have a great day.

#### II. Body

##### A. General Questions

1. Are you okay with me recording this interview? (If yes, proceed. If no, end the interview.)
  2. Do you have a pseudonym you want me to use?
  3. What is your age?
  4. What is your sex?
  5. What is your race?
  6. Do you know the difference between a Historically Black College or University, also called an HBCU, and a Predominately White Institution, also called a PWI? (If no, I will inform them of the differences)
  7. So what made you come to AUM? (Additional probing if necessary)
  8. What does it mean to be Black? (Additional probing if necessary)
  9. How is being Black related to your sense of identity? (Additional probing if necessary)
- B. The Process of Choosing a PWI
10. Why would an African American choose a Predominately White Institution over a Historically Black College University?
- C. Navigating Blackness
11. Explain the consequences for African Americans choosing a PWI over an HBCU?  
Have you experienced any of these while attend AUM?
  12. Before applying to this university, were you worried about racist acts on campus?  
If yes, what factors made you overlook the racism? (Additional probing if necessary)  
If no, why weren't you worried about racism? (Additional probing if necessary)
  13. Has anyone ever questioned your "Blackness", or said you weren't Black enough, or an equivalent, when you announce your decision to attend a PWI?

#### D. Attitudes towards HBCUs

14. What role do HBCUs play in educating African Americans? (Additional probing if necessary)

15. Explain your decision not to attend an HBCU?

16. How are HBCUs an extension of Black culture?

Transition: Well, it has been a pleasure learning about your experiences with higher education and race. Let me briefly summarize the information that I have recorded during our interview.

#### III Closing

A. Summarize provided responses to the respondents.

B Maintain Rapport: I appreciate the time you took for this interview. Is there anything else you think would be helpful for me to know so that I can successfully write about your experiences?

C. Action to be taken: I should have all the information I need. Would it be alright to contact you if I have any more questions? And, if you would like to receive a copy of the final report, with all of my findings, just email me at bgarret4@aum.edu, and I would be happy to send you a copy. Thanks again.

D. Debrief (located in appendix B)

#### **Script for recruiting respondents**

A. Walk up to respondents

“Hello! My name is Cooper Garrett, and I am a graduate student conducting research for my thesis on racial identity and the experiences and attitudes of African American

students at majority White universities. I was wondering if you would be interested in participating by being interviewed by me?

(If yes) Great! Are you 19 years old or older?

If yes: May I have your contact information so we can get an interview set up?

If yes: (exchange contact information)

If no: Okay, thank you for your time. Have a great day.

If no: Okay, thank you for your time. Have a great day

(If no) Okay, thank you for your time. Have a great day.”

### **B. Email to instructors gaining consent to ask students to participate**

“Hello,

My name is Cooper Garrett, and I am a graduate student conducting research for my thesis on racial identity and the experiences and attitudes of African American students at majority White universities. I was wondering if I could stop by your class on mutually agreeable time and date and ask your students if they would be interested in participating in my study? The department head has already provided his consent.

Thanks for your time,

Cooper Garrett

### **C. In-Class recruitment**

“Hello! My name is Cooper Garrett, and I am a graduate student conducting research for my thesis on racial identity and the experiences and attitudes of African American students at majority White universities. I was wondering if any of you would be interested in participating by being interviewed by me? If you’re interested please email me at

bgarret4@aum.edu.”

#### **D. Potential Classes to Recruit Participants**

##### *Spring 2015*

3148 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology David Feltmate

3149 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology Annice Yarber-Allen

3150 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology Zongli Tang

3151 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology David Feltmate

3152 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology Zongli Tang

3275 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology David Feltmate

##### *Summer 2015*

3476 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology Zongli Tang

##### *Fall 2015*

1919 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology Kimberly P. Brackett

1937 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology Zongli Tang

1938 SOCI 2000 Introduction to Sociology Zongli Tang



## Appendix C

### Debriefing Form

Thank you for your participation in my study! Your participation is greatly appreciated.

**Purpose of the Study:** We previously informed you that the purpose of the study was to examine how racial identity influences the experiences and attitudes of African Americans at Predominately White Institutions. I realize that some of the questions asked may have provoked strong emotional reactions. As a researcher, I do not provide mental health services, and I will not be following up with you after the study. However, I want to provide every participant in this study with a list of clinical resources that are available, should you decide you need assistance at any time. Please see information pertaining to local resources at the end of this form.

**Confidentiality:**

You may decide that you do not want your data used in this research. If you would like your data removed from the study and permanently deleted please email Cooper Garrett at bgarret4@aum.edu to inform him of your decision to no longer participate in the study. Please do not disclose research procedures and/or hypotheses to anyone who might participate in this study in the future as this could affect the results of the study. Please remember that your confidentiality will be protected in this study. Your name or other identifying information will not be used in any publication

**Final Report:**

If you would like to receive a copy of the final report of this study (or a summary of the findings) when it is completed, please feel free to contact the researcher at [bgarret4@aum.edu](mailto:bgarret4@aum.edu).

**Useful Contact Information:**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, its purpose or procedures, or if you have a research-related problem, please feel free to contact the researcher, Cooper Garrett at [bgarret4@aum.edu](mailto:bgarret4@aum.edu) if you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact Debra Tomblin, Research Compliance Manager, AUM, 334-244-3250, [dtomblin@aum.edu](mailto:dtomblin@aum.edu) If you feel upset after having completed the study or find that some questions or aspects of the study triggered distress, talking with a qualified clinician may help. If you feel you would like assistance please contact the AUM Counseling center at 334-244-3114 or at [counselingcenter@aum.edu](mailto:counselingcenter@aum.edu) In the case of an emergency please call 911.