"BEYOND COLOR, BEYOND NAME"

AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCUs)

AND PREDOMINATELY WHITE UNIVERSITIES (PWIs)

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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Abstract

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This qualitative study uses a sample of sixteen African American high school juniors, the school principal, and a school counselor from a predominantly African American high school in North Carolina to explore African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges (HBCUs) and predominantly white institutions (PWIs). This case study applies one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions to illustrate that participants perceive historically black colleges and universities (HBCU) as institutions that provide support, entertainment, and Black history and predominately white institutions (PWI) as uncomfortable, inaccessible, and academically demanding institutions that emphasize sports. The results of the study reveal that ideologies of Blackness and Whiteness, influences from the family, and media are the contributing factors in African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother who has provided me with the love, support, and care needed to complete this chapter in my life. And to my brother, never let anything hold you back. And to my nephew, Taylan Louis Patterson, I hope that I can be a role model for you, like so many great people have been for me. I dedicate my love, my appreciation, and my heart to you all…forever.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

Racial history in the United States has led to varying opinions about education and educational institutions among majority and African American populations. Less than 50 years ago the choice of an institution of higher education in the United States was very limited for African Americans. Indeed, laws were in place segregating most public facilities, and forbidding Blacks to attend most predominately white institutions (PWIs). The historical ramifications of segregation have led some people to argue that predominately white institutions are significantly more credible institutions. Some people believe that these institutions better prepare individuals for life in our predominately white society, while historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) provide limited services and inequitable post-collegiate preparation. HBCU defenders state that these institutions' missions are to provide a top-notch education that allows students to exceed societal expectations. Varying opinions of these collegiate institutions historically and presently have led me to question what youth think about higher educational institutions.

Today, African Americans have the choice to attend either HBCUs or PWIs but where do they get information about these institutions? Research on perceptions and/or decision-making is well-known (McClelland, 1996; Adeyemi-Bello, 1998; Hellman & Kaufman, 2002; Rebhan, 2004; Nicholls, 1978); however those studies largely focus on human development and psychology. Research on historically black colleges and predominately white institutions has been well documented (Fleming, 1984; Allen, 1992; Freeman, 1997; McDonough, 1997; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Wright, 2005), but many

of these studies concentrate on institutional differences (i.e. academic and financial resources), demographics, and historical precedents. In addition, several investigations have been conducted on college choice (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Pitre, 2007; Canale, Dunlap, Britt, & Donahue, 1996; Freeman, 2005; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987); yet, most of these investigations are concerned with decision-making, academic preparation, financial implications, and/or the significance of college rankings on high school youth. Few studies, however, discuss the factors that contribute to the perceptions of higher educational institutions among African American youth. In hopes of providing more knowledge on this topic, this case study explores African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs.

Historical Overview

Prior to the American Civil War, education for Blacks was dependent upon the decency of their masters and sometimes the church. Individuals who believed it was important to provide all people the chance to be educated provided the means to do so. But sadly the opportunity to acquire more than the basic tenets of reading and writing was hard to come by because it was forbidden by law. The first free school for Blacks was opened in 1797 in New York City. However, it did not receive public funding until 1824 (Shuck, 1972). Nonetheless, by 1835, nearly every state in the South had passed laws forbidding the education of slaves. Some suggest these laws reflected the conflict between Blacks' desire for education and Whites' fear that an educated Black population would no longer remain slaves (Christy & Williamson, 1992).

Public policy and particular provisions prohibited the education of African Americans, and further prohibited a structured higher education system for Black students.

Recognizing the need for institutions that would educate African Americans, the American

Missionary Association (AMA) began to develop school systems (Browning & Williams,

1978). The Institute for Colored Youth, founded in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, became the first

higher education institution for Blacks in 1837. It was followed by two other Black

institutions, Lincoln University (1854) and Wilberforce (1856) (U.S. Department of

Education, 1991). These institutions were called "universities" or institutions from their

establishment, although their mission originally centered on providing elementary and

secondary schooling for students with no education.

The years following the Civil War brought about the enacment of the 13th amendment

and The Reconstruction period, which provided a change in education. In 1862, Senator

Justin Morrill began a movement to improve public higher education throughout the United

States (usinfo.state.gov). The First Morrill Act made it possible for the states which were still

part of the Union to establish colleges for their citizens. These states were to use the lands

provided to them to establish colleges in engineering, agriculture, and military science

(Nevins, 1962). However, in many instances Blacks were still denied admission into these

colleges, regardless of their location.

In 1865, Congress established the Freedman's Bureau, designed to oversee education

for newly freed African Americans. With the aid of the Freedman's Bureau, schools for

newly freed slaves spread throughout the South. However, the government still lacked

cooperation and support from the southern states (Harderoad, 1987). The United States

Congress in 1890 set out to rectify this situation by the passage of the Second Morrill Act.

This act expanded the 1862 system of land-grant universities to include African American

colleges. Most of the Black normal schools were added to the system and were later known

as the "1890 institutions" (Christy & Williamson, 1992). Each southern state that did not have a Black college was now legally obligated to create one. However, because the Morrill Act of 1890 only required southern states to establish colleges for Blacks, few historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) can be found in areas outside the southern United States.

Following the Civil War, education was considered to be a priority for African Americans' survival. The U.S. Supreme Court's 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision established a "separate but equal" policy. In addition, this case encouraged African American colleges to focus on training teachers to become instructors in segregated schools. The separation set forth by this decision combined with acts of violence, voter suppression, and denial of economic opportunities and resources became known as "Jim Crow." The southern compliance to the "Jim Crow" era remained until the early 1950's. (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

In 1954, the court, led by Chief Justice Earl Warren, in the case of Brown v. Board of Education, rejected the "separate but equal" doctrine and held that it was in violation of the 14th amendment of the United States Constitution. The decision concluded that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal (Friedman, 2004). Unfortunately, the Brown decision did not terminate school segregation immediately. In fact in 1955 the Supreme Court issued an additional ruling, referred to as "Brown II," which assigned the lower federal courts responsibility for enforcing the Brown v. Board of Education ruling with, "all deliberate speed" (McGee & McAfee, 1977). Despite both rulings, most public schools remained segregated. The lack of adequate funding, research equipment and resources left

many public schools with large Black populations, including HBCUs, at a disadvantage when compared to predominately white schools (Mance, 2002).

A decade after the Brown decision, Congress passed Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which provided equal opportunities in federal financial programs and/or activities. The title protected individuals in these programs from discrimination. Passage of the law also established the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) (Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 1998). Throughout the 1970's the OCR investigated and worked towards enforcing desegregation, while calling for the enhancement of HBCUs. These improvements included equipment, quality of faculty, financial support, and expansion of the non-minority student population (Mance, 2002). Despite several challenges, with the help of federal and state governments, HBCUs aimed towards continual improvements and progression while maintaining their historical missions.

Until the mid-twentieth century, more than 90 percent of the African American students enrolled in higher education in the United States were educated at an HBCU. However, since the early 1960's, partially due to desegregation laws, the percentage of Black students at HBCUs has declined. For example, in 2006 only 17 percent of Black students were enrolled in the 103 historically black colleges and universities in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Yet, approximately 30 percent of all bachelor degrees awarded annually to African Americans are given by HBCUs (NCES, 2006). In fact, research suggests that predominately white institutions enroll more Black students than historically black colleges and universities, but that HBCUs confer a greater percentage of degrees awarded to African American students than do PWIs (Nettles & Perna, 1997).

Scope of the Problem

A review of literature shows that in the last 40 years the factors that influence the processes associated with student's college decisions have significantly increased (Hossler, Braxton & Coopersmith, 1989; Perna, 2000). The literature also shows that some of the decision making processes and perceptions of African American students have been attributed to the expectations of youths' personal and cultural identities, the importance of role models and schools, and the individual's connection to religion and spirituality (McKinnon, 2003; West, 1993; Howard, 2003; Taylor, Thornton, & Chatters, 1987; Freeman, 1997; Perry, 1993).

Scholars have conducted a vast scope of research regarding the factors that may or may not influence the selection of collegiate institutions (Loewith, 1998; Seiver, 1992). Some studies focus on the most influential individuals in a student's life when selecting his or her college (Loewith, 1998; Seiver, 1992). Additional research has discovered that various factors influence the selection of collegiate institutions. These factors have been grouped into four categories: academic issues, social issues, personal issues, and financial issues (Allen, 1987; Canale et.al., 1996; Clark & Crawford, 1992; Freeman, 1999).

Other investigations have suggested that African American students' perceptions are related to students' aspirations, motivation, ambition, achievement, and media's portrayal of African Americans, (Inoue, 1999; Kerchoff & Campbell, 1977; McClelland, 1961; Stewart, 2001; Pitre, 2007; Giroux, 1991). In addition, there is increasing research (Plomin & Asbury, 2005) that suggests and demonstrates evidence of the importance of cultural influences on African American youths (Plomin & Asbury, 2005). However, cultural differences do not appear to be the only factor impacting the academic orientations of Black

youth. Circumstances, relationships and social structures also appear to be significant in how African American students understand education and educational institutions (McKinnon, 2003).

For example, Outcalt and Skewes-Cox (2002) examined academic perceptions, racial attitudes, and college satisfaction. The study investigated differences in perception between African American students attending public HBCUs and PWIs. The final sample consisted of 1,500 students. The report revealed several significant findings concerning perceptions about HBCUs and PWIs: (a) African American students at HBCUs reported significantly higher grade point averages than their PWI peers; (b) 62% of students from PWIs and 44% of students from HBCUs had negative views of African American campus unity; (c) more students at HBCUs reported feeling their campus activities represented their interests; (d) significantly more students from HBCUs than PWIs reported positive relationships with faculty; and, (e) HBCU students were more likely to aspire to attend graduate school than students from PWIs. One may conclude that perceptions carried by African American students are a direct result of personal experience and attitudes that surround African American youth.

Aside from HBCUs' contributions to educational opportunities for Black students, people continue to question their educational value and quality (Browning & Williams, 1998; Kim & Conrad, 2006). In the case of *U.S. v. Fordice, 1992,* the United States Supreme Court questioned the educational validity of historically black colleges and universities. Policymakers and others, in states such as Mississippi, have questioned the legitimacy of HBCUs and have pleaded for the uniting of HBCUs and PWIs, some at the expense of closing HBCUs. Furthermore, some African American students and parents express concerns

about the educational value of attending HBCUs as opposed to PWIs, while living in a predominately white society (Kim & Conrad, 2006).

Although affirmative action has been credited for increases in African American enrollment in higher education, Blacks are not represented in the higher education system in the same proportion as they are in the United States population. The disproportionately low number of African Americans in higher educational institutions has been a concern for some time (Clark & Crawford, 1992). According to the *Minorities in Higher Education Twenty-first Annual Status Report (2003-2004)* from 1991 to 2001, college enrollment of minorities rose by nearly 1.5 million students (52 percent) to more than 4.3 million. Even with this progress, African Americans were not enrolled at the same rate as their White peers. Forty percent of African Americans attended college, compared with 45 percent of Whites. Although the number of minority students pursuing higher education degrees has risen over the years, this report shows that much work lies ahead to narrow the large gap that still remains.

Colleges and universities, specifically HBCUs and PWIs, are seeking ways to recruit, retain, and graduate minority students. These institutions are attempting to create programs, initiatives, and financial opportunities to increase the number of minority students who earn post-secondary degrees (Kunjufu, 1997; Brown, Donahoo & Bertrand, 2001). Higher education institutions may be unaware of what youth think about their institutions, long before students make college choices. Although there have been many studies examining the factors associated with the college selection process (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Perna, 2000; Freeman, 1999), there is little research that specifically focuses on the factors that contribute to African American perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs.

Purpose of the Study

What is evident throughout the literature concerning African American students is they may be products of one or a combination of factors that can be attributed to: (a) personal educational aspirations; (b) family/peer/community/school influences; and (c) society and popular culture. Surprisingly, little research has been conducted on African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs.

According to Hearn, Griswold, Marine, and McFarland (1995), understanding the influences and decision-making process that African Americans use in determining their ideas about institutional types is, "momentous and merits serious attention." In the few studies that have been specific to African American students, the actual voices of African American students have not been heard (Freeman, 1999). This study aims to remedy that gap in research.

The purpose of this case study is to explore the perceptions of African American youth concerning historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. Specifically, the study examines the factors that may be attributed to the participants' perceptions. In addition, the role of culture is explored in order to reveal its influence, or lack thereof, in Black youth perceptions of both HBCUs and PWIs. This study utilizes a sample of 16 (6 males, 10 females) African American high schools students. The sample population is drawn from a demographic area served by both types of collegiate institutions questioned in this study. Furthermore, this case study answers the following research questions:

1. What factors (i.e. family, community, media) contribute to African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)?

2. What factors (i.e. family, community, media) contribute to African American youth perceptions of predominately white institutions (PWIs)?

3. How does school culture influence African American youth perceptions of both HBCUs and PWI?

Significance of Study

While working for my master's degree at a predominately white institution (PWI), I was informed by a professor that my application to the program was originally denied. The professor stated that some of the admission committee members felt my undergraduate program at a historically black college/university (HBCU) did not prepare me to be successful at their large, predominately white institution. Upon hearing this information, I was curious as to how they made such a determination. My undergraduate grade point average exceeded the institution's graduate entrance requirement. I had several outstanding recommendations, and my program had excellent teacher certification passage rates, job placement, and graduation rates. My professor's comments later led me to reflect on my collegiate events.

I had very different experiences at each institution, but was surprised to discover that many of the initial opinions, thoughts, and understandings I had about these schools were inaccurate. Moreover, I learned that many of the perceptions my family, school, friends, and community provided me were narrow and most of the media's representation of these institutions was misleading. Now, I want to explore how today's Black youth perceive these collegiate institutions. In addition, I want to learn more about the factors that contribute to

their perceptions, and discover if they may affect their collegiate decisions, as they did for me.

Although researchers know a great deal about the experiences of African American students within different higher education institution types, less is known about the influences on students' understandings of institutional types. According to Hearn, Griswold, Marine, and McFarland (1995), understanding the influences and decision-making process that African Americans use in determining their ideas about institutional types is, "momentous and merits serious attention." In the few studies that have been specific to African American students, the actual voices of African American students have not been heard (Freeman, 1999).

The results of this study could be of importance to practitioners, researchers, and theorists in K-12 and higher education. Practitioners may be able to call on these results when working with students on collegiate planning and decision making. After reading this study, teachers could gain insight into the concerns of youth with regards to higher education. Providing perceptions of students in similar circumstances may assist all individuals, with future higher education plans, to make better informed decisions. In addition, college personnel may be able to use the results of this study to address the concerns of African American students when attempting to recruit and retain students.

Furthermore, the study may persuade other researchers to study the knowledge youth acquire and retain. Results may further be useful to African American high school students, high school teachers, administrators and counselors, as well as the parents of college bound African American youth. Collegiate offices of admission may also find the results of this study useful.

Outline of the Study

Using a case study design and constant comparative analysis as a methodological guide, this study applies qualitative methods to illustrate African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. Specifically, qualitative methods have been employed to derive themes that capture the 'thick and rich' lived experiences of the research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Qualitative researchers argue "that all meaning is situated in a particular perspective or context, and since different people and groups often have different perspectives and contexts, and there are many different meanings in the world, none of which is necessarily more valid or true than the other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 111). The qualitative approach used in this investigation is based on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data such as observations, interviews, and focus groups. The interview structure provides the participants a voice through which to tell their stories. The questions reveal information concerning Black and White identity, family, school, popular culture, and other factors that influence the participants' perceptions.

The present study is arranged in five chapters. Chapter one discusses the historical overview, the scope of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of study, and a brief description of the methodology. Chapter two provides an in-depth examination of related literature with regards to African Americans, historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. Chapter two presents literature discussing the significance of schools, family/community, and media in African American youth lives. Chapter three provides a detailed outline of the methodology, including data collection and analysis. Chapter four provides a contextual analysis of the city, school district and school. Chapter

four also presents the results and findings of this study. Chapter five concludes this study

with a discussion of implications for future practice, theory, and/or research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the issues of African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately white institutions (PWIs). This presentation is organized into five sections; (1) Understanding Culture, provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks used throughout the study; (2) School Culture, Expectations, Curriculum and the African American Student analyzes the roles of culture, expectation, and curriculum, and presents a number of studies which have linked these with African American high school students. It argues that research has ignored many factors that may influence student outcomes such as educational resources and peer groups; (3) Family/Community cultures and African American youth looks at family and community cultural influences on African American youth. This section is organized into four subsections– (a) the role that of Black families, (b) self identities connection to African American students, (c) the role of religion in Black culture and, (d) community influences on African American youth perceptions; (4) Popular Culture and the African American student, discusses popular culture's impact on youth. The final section summarizes the arguments based on the literature.

Understanding Culture

Culture is the relationships and associations of meaning that people utilize in a particular social setting. Mary Henry (1993) defines "culture as a historically developed system of symbols, both verbal and non-verbal, which contains a group's pattern of meanings about the world, others, and themselves" (p. 299). In other words, culture is the way

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individuals communicate and develop knowledge about life. Both Brofenbrenner (1977) and later Ogbu (1985) emphasized that culture is the ecology of interrelated systems. Changes in one part of the cultural system are likely to affect all other parts.

Culture is also made up of a variety of human responses expressed in symbolic form. Educational institutions are symbols. Symbols contain meaning. The meanings within symbols are varied. For example, cognitive elements of culture are ideas about the world used to determine personal behavior and the behaviors of others. Evaluative components of culture are areas where individuals place a value on things (i.e., moral codes, ethics) (Henry, 1993). Throughout the study participants' perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs may reveal that both cognitive and evaluative components of culture greatly influence their understanding and priorities in regards to education. Because culture is about behaviors, human thought, and relationships it is the framework necessary to study the factors that contribute to African American youth perceptions. It is my belief that the factors attributed to African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs will center around three primary cultural influences: school, family/community, and popular culture, and these cultural influences will guide this study.

SCHOOL CULTURE, EXPECTATIONS, CURRICULUM AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT

This segment of the literature review is a discussion of the roles of culture, expectation, curriculum and African American youth. Three general questions are used to guide this analysis. First, 'Why is school culture important?' Next, 'How do scholastic resources affect school culture?' Finally 'What roles do peers have in African American student's perceptions?'

Culture, Schools, and African American Youth

The importance of school culture in youth perceptions

School culture is a set of beliefs, relationships, standards, and opinions shared by those who make up a school (Henry, 1993). Much of the literature on school culture is driven by Brofenbrenner's (1977) ecological approach, specifically his emphasis on macrosystems and microsystems. The microsystem is the small, immediate environment a child lives in. The microsystem includes relationships/organizations such as schools. The macrosystem is the most distant set of people, places, things, or ideas and includes things such as the government, economy, cultural values and customs. Bernstein (1993) asserts that schools are the primary means of ideological dominance that socializes students into the dominant society. In summary, school culture is composed of academics, public settings, and learning. The roles of teacher and student, and public and private perceptions anchor school culture.

Cusick (1973) viewed schools as a "factory-like transmitter of society's culture, a maintenance subsystem of the larger society (p. 219)." Cusick (1973) definition suggests youth perceptions, understandings, and knowledge are overwhelmingly produced in schools. For example, if a school views large institutions of higher education as premier learning environments, as society often suggests, the students within can be taught to believe the same.

Schools emphasize what they can tell us about the wider culture in which they are located. Every school is not unique but neither is it the case that schools are all the same; rather schools are seen to filter the broad manuscript of the wider culture (McLaren, 1989, p.52).

Youth culture includes environments. Researchers specializing in school culture note that not all schools send the same messages to students because schools are not only reflections of society but varying communities and cultural patterns (Eisenhart, 2001; Derring, 1989; Deal, 1990).

The Impact of educational resources on African American students

Within the traditional views of society, education has been considered the 'equalizer' (Fordham, 1996). However, inequities are evident throughout our daily lives. These inequities include scholastic differences which may contribute to African American youth's perceptions. Scholastic differences surround schools including instructional practices, school resources, and funding. Distribution of educational resources results in variations within learning environments and impacts the attainment of life opportunities for African American youth. Much of current policy in education seeks to assure equality in education; educational standards differ by state, district, and school nationwide leaving many, especially those in urban and poor communities, at a disadvantage (Augenblick, Myers, & Anderson, 1997). Data show that the most poorly funded schools tend to be located in predominantly African American communities (Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Fordham, 1996; Jencks & Phillips, 1998)

Dramatically different learning opportunities, especially disparities in access to well-qualified teachers, high quality curriculum, and well-maintained instructional facilities, have been shown to strongly correlate with differences in student achievement and place many African American students significantly behind their White counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Poor scholastic experiences and the lack of resources contribute to perceptions of college. "Without concrete experience related to college and limited access to knowledge surrounding college, African American students may draw their own conclusions based on

faulty assumptions" (Pitre, 2006, p. 569). For example, if African American youth are only provided with a limited amount of knowledge concerning education and educational institutions, their perceptions will also be narrowed. Within the paradigm of school culture, students' perceptions are attributed to direct influences and experiences, such as school.

According to Saddler (2005), even if Black students attend schools with Whites they receive an education that is different and inferior, including curriculum, instructional practice, negative expectations, and lack of collegiate preparation. Socioeconomic differences among communities also equate to disparities in school resources. The *Education Trust Report, Funding Gaps 2006* (www.2.edtrust.org), indicates that schools with the greatest need are those serving African American youth and students of color; yet they are given the least. According to the report all three primary sources of education funding, the federal and state governments, as well as school districts, contribute to the funding inequities. Local governments provide nearly half the funding. The reliance on local funding in America's school districts means affluent districts can spend more money on their children's education.

> School expenditure levels correlate positively with student socioeconomic status and negatively with education need when school size and grade level are controlled statistically…Teachers with higher salaries are concentrated in high income and low minority schools. Furthermore, pupil-teacher ratios are higher in schools with larger minority and low-income student populations…Educational units with higher proportions of low-income and minority students are allocated fewer fiscal and educational resources than are more affluent educational units, despite the probability

that these students have substantially greater need for both (MacPhail, Wilcox, &

King, 1986, p. 425).

In most areas education costs are supported by a system of general taxes, primarily local

property taxes. Because these funds are used locally, districts with higher property values

have larger resources to fund their schools (Darling-Hammond, 2000). For instance, the 100

wealthiest districts in Texas taxed their local property at an average of $0.57 per $100 in

2003. At that rate they were able to spend over $9,000 per student. However, the 100 poorest

school districts taxed themselves at a rate over $0.90 cents per $100, and could only spend

$5,000 per student (Jones, 2004, p. 478). These unequal resources include technology,

instructional materials, facilities, and most important adequate teaching and administrative

staffs.

Curriculum and instructional relationships with Black youth

Adelman (1999) found that curriculum had the strongest relationship to aspirations of

college attendance, when compared to other measures. However, the high school curriculum

has been an obstacle that includes poor instructional techniques that defeat African American

students' perceptions and decision-making about attending colleges and universities (Pitre,

2007). Some students may believe that the lack of success in the classroom will inevitably

equate to failure in higher education. But often collegiate perceptions, decision making and

aspirations are based on more than the classrooms that surround Black youth such as familial

influences and media.

In a study conducted by Rumberger (1995), results showed that the quality of

instruction given to African Americans was on average much lower than that of White

students, creating a gap in educational achievement by the end of the first grade. Despite all

proposals, such as vouchers and national mandates, most experts agree that the majority of poor African American and minority students will not receive an education comparable to what is available in America's best suburban schools, private or public, until the problem of inequitable school funding is resolved. Unfortunately, this disparity in school funding leads many to believe that the money put forth by the community/governments is a reflection of how much that community/governments care for its youth, instead of a circumstance of what people choose to give to educational institutions. These aforementioned circumstances further emphasize that U.S. society is based on property rights rather than human rights (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

In *Savage Inequalities*, Kozol (1991) discusses stories of high school students' knowledge of inequities within their schools and society. One 16-year old African American male noted this about his school:

> You can understand things better when you go among the wealthy. You look around, you stare at their school, although it's impolite, and you take a deep breath at the sight of all those beautiful surroundings. Then you come back home and see that these are the things you do not have. You think of the difference (p.104).

Clearly, the quality of public education an individual receives in America is largely dependent on where he or she lives, and results in many children, especially African American youth, receiving an inferior education. According to Bordieu's (1997) cultural reproduction theory, schools are not considered neutral institutions, but provide the preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of the dominant class as most valuable, and African Americans unfortunately are not likely to be found within that valued group.

Disparities in resources are a function of how public education in the United States is managed (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Howard, 2001). In one study, Freeman (1997) asked African American high school students to describe perceived barriers limiting the desire, ambition, or pursuit of higher education. Among the barriers uncovered was an intimidation factor related to their college preparation. Black students did not display self-assurance in the academic preparation they received in high school. This perceived lack of preparation left students with uncertainty regarding college (Freeman, 2005). This lack of confidence in their academic state results not only in weak aspirations but some African American youth perceive college negatively, or opt out of attending college (Pitre, 2007). According to Saddler (2005), African American youth are not only being 'mis-educated' but 'de-educated'. Furthermore, cultural theorists believe that African American youth are being systematically excluded from the educational system (Saddler, 2005; Freeman, 1997, Howard, 2001; Bordieu, 1997). In addition, one may conclude that if scholastic inequities are influenced by socioeconomic differences, educational resources, and instructional practices, those factors may also be linked to Black youths perception of education.

The relative influence of peers on African American youth perceptions

There is a general agreement among educational authorities (i.e., principals, academic scholars, teachers) that individuals are 'associated' by the individuals that they interact with. The literature regarding peer influence on African American youth suggests that peers are the most influential factor in students' collegiate decisions. The findings also indicate that adolescence is the period in which children become aware of expectations and their environment (Imhelder & Piaget, 1958; Lerner & Galambos, 1998; Steinberg & Morris,

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2000). As children and youth move beyond their families into the worlds of peers and communities, their life choices and identities may differ as a function of their perceptions.

Research has shown that within secondary schools, peer groups have a great influence over youth towards achievement, aspirations, or lack thereof (Phelan, Davidson, & Ya, 1999).Children's friends and acquaintances, many of whom reside in the same neighborhoods, can contribute to the choices students make within and outside of education and can easily undermine parents' efforts to help their children navigate the turbulent years of adolescence (Rankin & Quane, 2002). Peer groups play a powerful role in perceptions because the desire to be accepted by one's peers often becomes of paramount concern for youth (Noguera, 2003).

High-achieving African American youths socialize and affiliate with those who have similar perceptions, expectations, and aspirations - but that can sometimes come at a cost. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) examined the role of 'racelessness' as a factor in the academic achievement of African American students in a Washington D.C. high school and found that high-achieving students were more willing to identify with the beliefs and values of the dominant culture than less successful students. Indeed, Ford (1995) uncovered a persistent rate at which many gifted African American students intentionally fail because peers suggest academic competence equates the abandonment of their culture.

The pathway to college begins early and is often influenced by a variety of factors (Steinberg & Morris, 2000). For some African American students, perceptions are consistently being negotiated with their own personal and cultural identities. Welch and Hodges (1997) define academic identity as a "dimension of a larger, global self-concept and is central to academic perception, performance, achievement and motivation" (p.37). They

further note for African American youths that academic perceptions are tied to personal commitments to a standard of excellence, and a willingness to persist in the challenge, struggle, excitement and disappointment intrinsic in the learning process. At other times, personal aspirations, peer influence, socioeconomic status, or attitudes are determinants. However, these determinants do not account for some of the learning environments, curriculum deficiencies, lowered expectations and overall societal inequities that many students of color must confront (Teranishi, Allen, & Solorzano, 2004).

Peer relations are influential. Additionally, when Black youth work towards independence peer relations can become especially important and contribute significantly to negative or positive educational perceptions. "Not all members of a minority group believe the same thing or behave the same way. Some individuals will always believe or behave differently from the dominant pattern in their group" (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 168). But African Americans' perceptions can be explained by one simple but devastating reality: racism exists in our society, and peer influence, the educational system, neighborhoods, role models, and the experiences that lie within it are not excluded.

FAMILY/COMMUNITY CULTURES AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT

This section of the literature review discusses the role of family and community in African American student understandings and cultural realities. Three questions are used to guide this analysis. First, what role does family play in Black youth's education? Next, how does self-identity and spirituality affect cultural realities? And finally, how does community influence education?

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Black families and Scholastic implications

The Importance of family in shaping culture

Although schools continue to have influential effects on youth, family plays a major role in influencing academic identity and academic perceptions. The family context is especially important given that the home is the major ecological setting for children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Luster & McAdoo, 1994). There is general consensus in educational literature about the impact of family on youth (Billingsley, 1992; Howard, 2003). Kao and Tienda (1998) reported that African American students whose parents provided support and had regular conversations with their children were more likely to have positive thoughts about higher education and their futures.

Research has demonstrated that family is crucial to the patterning of students' achievement (Mehan, 1992; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). A particularly important aspect of family is that they are often associated by socioeconomic status, as well as home life (two-parent versus single-parent). Actually, the relationship between family structure and achievement has been shown to have profound consequences on academic perceptions. In a study on families, Roscigno (1999) notes;

> Family background is consequential, in part, because of its influence
>
> on educational access across and within schools. That is, family
>
> socioeconomic status and structure have implications for the type and
>
> quality of school a student attends, for the academic track a given
>
> student ends up on, and for the amount of attention and level of
>
> expectation a teacher places on a student (p.158-159).

For example, numerous studies of families with diverse demographic characteristics have

linked parents' involvement in their children's education to a variety of positive academic outcomes for children and adolescents (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein, 1987; Kao & Tienda, 1998). Studies have also shown that the family produces the climate that supports the development of cognitive abilities, as well as the development of personal characteristics that may interpret cultural realities (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998). Family issues are often a circumstance of larger societal issues which affect the circumstances that African American students must deal with, and membership/loyalty to their racial and ethnic communities can take precedence in many situations involving competition with the dominant ideology, including perceptions of success.

According to Hillard (2000) African American youth believe their presence in the world is of some importance. Research has also found that parental involvement with a child's education is associated with a greater likelihood of aspiring to attend college and college enrollment (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Perna, 2000). Additional findings also show that parental involvement is associated with higher math and reading achievement (Lee, 1993; Willis, 1996); lower rates of behavioral problems, and lower likelihood of high school dropouts and truancy (Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1995).

Research on the family life of poor African-American children, however, is minuscule. Most of these studies have examined differences between African-American and European-American families rather than variation within African-American families. Even fewer studies of African-American families have looked beyond family and sociological demographics to examine how other family processes contribute to the successful development of poor African-American children and adolescents (Ford, 1996; Huston, McLoyd, & Coll, 1994). Yet, a few notable accounts of poor African-American families

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demonstrate that processes within these families differ substantially, and that these differences are related to their children's school achievement (Clark, 1983; Perna, 2000; Cabrera, & LaNasa, 2000). In addition to family processes within the home, interactions between African-American families and their communities also deserve more attention.

However, research has been mixed on the importance of family structure and its effect on academic achievement. Some studies have found that children from single-parent homes are less likely to graduate from high school and have worse academic, economic, and social outcomes (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Salem, Zimmerman, & Notaro, 1998; Zimilies & Lee, 1991). Such studies imply that living with both biological parents has the most positive impact on adolescent outcomes (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). A longitudinal study of Black urban youth supports the importance of family structure, particularly emphasizing a father's presence in middle childhood and early adolescence (Brooks-Gunn, Guo, & Furstenberg, 1993). However, another study suggests that the negative association between female-headed families and academic achievement among African Americans may be associated with the fact that the students are typically surrounded by other schoolmates in a similar situation, leading to a concentration effect (Bankston & Caldas, 1998).

Self-identity and Spirituality among African American youth

Coupling Personal identity with Black youth perceptions

Black adolescents become increasingly aware of their identities, behaviors, and attitudes along racial, gender and academic lines throughout high school (Howard, 2003). The belief in self can be exhibited in many ways but none more than the student's desire, commitment, or choice to succeed in school (Stipek, 2002). Indeed, self identity and the way

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youths identify themselves could possibly have important implications on their decision about whether or not they should attend college.   For example, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) have found that Black students, particularly adolescents, "face the burden of acting White, if they are academically successful" (p. 177). In other words, an African American student who is intelligent/gifted is not viewed by peers, community, etc. as really 'Black'. Furthermore, Fordham (1996), in a later study, noted that African American students who are successful are forced to adopt a 'raceless' persona, distancing themselves from Black cultural attributes. This biased assumption judges intelligence and academic achievement unfairly and leads some Black youth to choose between scholastic success or cultural acceptance.

For some African American students academic ideologies and perceptions are consistently being negotiated with their own personal and cultural identities. Welch and Hodges (1997) define academic identity as a "dimension of a larger, global self-concept and is central to academic perception, performance, achievement and motivation" (p. 37). They further note that for African American youth, academic identity is tied to the personal commitment to a standard of excellence, and the willingness to persist in the challenge, struggle, excitement and disappointment intrinsic in the learning process. This subtle embedding process is possibly facilitated by reinforcement and learning which may be the basis for the development of Black youths' self identity. "The self-concept of adolescents is conceived to be a multi-dimensional construct that becomes increasingly differentiated as individuals' progress from childhood to adulthood" (Hay & Ashman, 2003, p. 79). Individuals with low self-concepts have been shown to have less positive characteristics in the domains of cooperation, expectations, and aspirations (Hay, Ashman, &

VanKraapenoord, 1998). Successful Black youths' self-concepts may be linked to their resiliency.

According to Wang and Gordon (1994), resilience is defined as an individual's ability to overcome challenges and challenging events. In their research, resilient youth tend to maintain healthy expectations of themselves and others. They tend to set goals and have a clear sense of purpose about their future and strive to control their own fates. They also are likely to have good feelings about themselves and their achievements. Indeed, resilient children are said to be those who beat the odds or bounce back under adverse circumstances and the findings suggest that this resiliency is a major component in the success of some African American youth (Floyd, 1997). Within the context of cultural-ecological theory, resiliency is a component that most likely is developed in a child's microsystem (i.e. family, school). A resilient child uses the cultural systems for the sake of their own positive development. The environment and/or circumstances that arise in African American youth can significantly impact their understanding, optimism, or ideas about education. Therefore, it is important to understand how Black children learn to think about themselves, as this may contribute to their perceptions and achievements.

The function of religion in African American youth culture

Researchers have conducted many studies that demonstrate a strong connection between religion and individuals of African origin (Brome et.al, 2000; Mattis 2000; Constantine et.al, 2000; Chatters, Taylor & Lincoln, 1999). At the center of this religious connection is the "Black church." Although Brofenbrenner's model places religion in the macrosystem, African American studies suggest otherwise. In a study of religion's impact on youth, Moore (1991) concluded that among African American populations, religious practice

permeates every aspect of life. For example, Taylor, Thorton, and Chatters (1987) suggest

that many African American populations express their spirituality through high levels of

religious participation, rooted in the Black church. The Black church is vital to the religious

and spiritual ties of the African American community because it is the oldest and most

influential institution founded, maintained, and controlled by Black people (Sanders, 2002).

> Destruction of the Black community in the post-slavery period might have been even
>
> more far reaching had it not been for the role of the Black church. The church almost
>
> single-handedly provided the structure of attitudes, values, and behaviors so crucial
>
> for adequate performance. Indeed the Black church was virtually a substantial society
>
> (Haynes & Comer, 1990, p. 115).

The aforementioned quote suggests that the 'Black church' has served as a symbolic

center of African American life. According to Brofenbrenner, religion is found to be active in

the macrosystem, but CE would suggest that the church is a significant cultural entity and

may be more connected to youths' microsystem. For example, religious organizations have

served a range of functions from individual and collective help to social movements. Indeed,

Murphy (1994) notes that the "Black church is a shared institution among Protestant

Christian denominations that have been developed and administered by African Americans"

(p. 145). Not surprisingly, in one national survey, nearly nine in ten African Americans held

a positive view of the role of religion, the Black church, and its contributions to African

American life (Taylor, Thornton, & Chatters, 1987). A youth and religion project at The

University of Illinois (2002) found among urban youth, religion matters most for promoting

positive outcomes for young people. The project also found that for African Americans who

are underprivileged, religious involvement allows youth to take advantage of opportunities and skirt dangers.

The spiritual expression of the Black church provides a sense of support, fellowship and belonging (Pargament et al., 1983) which allow individuals to search deep within themselves for resources of self-affirmation and compassion (Murphy, 1994). Religion tends to function as a tool for moral development, and a source for navigation during periods of crisis. In addition, spirituality has been found to be more salient among African American populations than any other around the globe (Hodge & Williams, 2002). Studies have shown that for youths in general and young African Americans in particular, religion and spirituality discourage negative and destructive behaviors. The sense of control that comes from religious affinity is based on: (a) the belief that all things work together for the good of those who believe in God; (b) and the belief that God will help the religious to cope with the stress of difficult situations, emotions, as well as resolve conflicts in order to enhance the well-being of all (Smith, 2003). In a study of African American youths' ability to cope as well as their psychological well-being, Spencer (1995) concluded that the employment of religion, spirituality and cultural pride as a form of coping is important to the development of a healthy sense of self and in relation to others.

Religiosity and spirituality are defining features of African American life. In their investigation, Jagers and Smith found that (1996) African American college students reported higher levels of spirituality than European American students, and were likely to sustain their hopes through a strong connection to religion and spirituality. Religiosity among African American youth is theoretically and existentially concerned with the questions of oppression (Cone, 1997), and with the quest for liberation, love, hope, and justice (Mattis & Jagers,

2001). The link between religion and spiritual expression is a means of connecting historical and cultural contexts. Billingsley (1999) notes that religion and spirituality are an intrinsic part of the lived experiences of African American youth that allows them to face and surpass the realities of life. Given this assertion, it would be reasonable to infer that religiosity may play a role in shaping African American student's perception of the world, including systems of higher education.

Community Influences and African American culture

School's impact on African American youth perceptions

Ogbu (1985) proposes his cultural ecological (CE) theory which considers the broad societal and school factors as well as the dynamics within the minority communities. At its most basic, Ogbu's CE theory posits:

> … that there are two sets of factors influencing the minority student:
>
> how society at large and the school treat minorities (system) and how
>
> minority groups respond to those treatments and to schooling
>
> (community forces). The theory further posits that differences in
>
> school performance between immigrant & non-immigrant minorities
>
> are partly due to differences in their community forces (Ogbu &
>
> Simons 1998, p. 156).

For example, the relationships that develop in schools is critical to their development. Because of the amount of time students spend in school, relationships formed there, whether negative or positive, affect African American youth. The educational setting often provides

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the opportunity to form those aforementioned relationships with others outside their microsystem, and are interrelated with both school and community forces.

Regardless of class status, transitions for African American populations involve new behavior demands, communication, and ways of thinking. Primary differences become evident because two different populations have their own distinct ways of being, but environment and circumstances force them into each other's context (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Unfortunately, the mixture of environments, resources, and experiences is not always an equal learning opportunity. For example, the CE theory recognizes the practices of teaching in relation to African American school performance and the influence ecological systems have on youth.

Neighborhood's impact on African American perceptions

There is a definite link between residence in impoverished neighborhoods and the social mobility prospects of adolescents. According to Jarrett (1997) while many children who grow up in impoverished neighborhoods will remain poor into adulthood, there are also many individuals who become socially mobile and successful. Moreover, the effects of neighborhoods are likely to be greater as children enter adolescence. While parents seem to mediate the effects of neighborhoods on younger children, neighborhood effects on adolescents are more likely to be mediated by peer associations (Rankin & Quane, 2000). Researchers have proposed two theoretical explanations for such circumstances. According to neighborhood resource models, individuals are products of their environments. For example, poor neighborhoods will be limited in child services, such as parks, schools, and libraries. These services have been known to be beneficial for people who utilize these sources (Chase-Lansdale & Brooks, 1995). Thus, the theory argues that poor African

American neighborhoods tend to have poor resources. The real issue is that the system gives those who begin with certain advantages ---economic status, values, speech patterns, mannerisms, and behaviors--- a better chance to retain those advantages throughout life, and ensures that African American youth, minorities, and economically disadvantaged students will remain at the bottom rung of societies ladder (McLaren, 1989).

Ogbu suggests that the instability and unpredictability found in many African American communities affects the productivity of youth (Ogbu, 1985). An important study on the social ecology of neighborhoods states,

> The urban poor are doubly disadvantaged- by the individual experience of poverty and by the concentrated poverty of the neighborhoods in which they reside. Trapped in economically devastated neighborhoods where few employed adults or stable families remain, children and families often lack contact with persons with the knowledge, experience, and most important, the valuable social connections to aid them in their efforts to improve their life circumstances (Rankin & Quane, 2000, p. 141).

One may conclude that the community is part of African American youth's culture. Unfortunately, many African American youth find themselves in communities where they are not surrounded by environments and individuals, such as role models, that may contribute to educational and social achievement.

The interrelated affects of role models

Reference group members define role models as individuals with which to compare themselves (Turner, 1955). Research suggests that role models contribute to youths' societal norms (Fordham, 1996; Chavous, et al., 2003). These norms include personal motivation,

scholastic perceptions, and the presence, or lack thereof, of positive role models. One

explanation for the influence of role models comes from collective socialization theory which

holds that specific behaviors that adults enact in their neighborhoods can promote positive

youth development.

Frequent exposures to unconventional adults who engage in violent or illegal

behaviors become a reoccurrence in the lives of youth (Wilson, 1987). Taylor (1989) asserts

that role models provide 'consistent relationships.' These relationships are fostered by

supportive adults who help Black youth mediate their experiences and thus learn how to

understand and control the world around them. In other words, some research suggests that

the best role models are those a child identifies as mentors. Research also suggests that

HBCUs are perceived as institutions that provide positive role models that may not be found

in African American neighborhoods (Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Anderson and Cavallaro (2002) discuss role models' impacts on inspiring dreams.

They write:

> As children shape their behavior and values they look to role models for guidance.
>
> They may identify the role models they wish to emulate based on the possession of
>
> certain skills or attributes. While the child may not want to be exactly like the person,
>
> he or she may see the possibilities in that person (p. 161).

Unfortunately, for many urban African American students, poor role models have resulted in

low expectations for their futures. Loehr (1988) and Hawley (1989) suggest that the lack of

minority role models in the field of education, such as African American teachers, results in

an environment best suited for the success of White students. Further, researchers note that

immediate role models whose successes are seen worthy of emulation inspire youthful

dreams (Anderson & Cavallaro, 2002; Hawley, 1989).

Perceptions are the framework for African American youth experiences

Perception consists of one's interpretation of the world, which is based on one's

experiences and defines one's reality (Crane, 2005).   If individuals presume that there is no

reality beyond their lived experiences then perception is very selective. So, the way the world

is perceived and interpreted is therefore very limited. This selectivity no doubt plays a role in

how African American youth interpret the world. Attainment is clouded by human

perceptions of reality. In other words, individuals with positive perceptions expect a high rate

of success and attribute the success to ability. And in cases that a student is unsuccessful it

would be attributed to low effort or bad luck.

 Important to the facet of perceptions is the process by which one selects which

information to give attention to, also known as scripts (Becker, 1983). Scripts refer to the

stereotypical sequences of events and information that are activated by what we observe. One

may suggest that students' scripts emerge from experiences, knowledge, needs, values, and

beliefs. They also serve as the means, by which individuals decide if new information

reinforces, adds to, changes, or is irrelevant to their perceptions (Mills, 1997). "The interplay

of meanings that one attaches to race, the stereotypes one holds of other people, and the need

to guard one's own position all powerfully determine one's perceptions" (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2001, p.80). The way African American students themselves are perceived and

understood by others has much to do with stereotypes.

Several studies have documented some glaring misconceptions. For example, Outcalt

and Skewes-Cox (2002) examined academic perceptions, racial attitudes, and college

satisfaction. The study investigated differences in perception between 1,500 African American students attending public HBCUs and PWIs. The report revealed several significant findings concerning perceptions about HBCUs and PWIs: (a) African American students at HBCUs reported significantly higher grade point averages than their PWI peers, (b) 62% of students from PWIs and 44% of students from HBCUs had negative views of African American campus unity, (c) more students at HBCUs reported feeling their campus activities represented their interests, (d) significantly more students from HBCUs than PWIs reported positive relationships with faculty and (e) HBCU students were more likely to aspire to attend graduate school than students from PWIs. Perceptions carried by African American students' are a direct result of personal experience and attitudes that surround African American youth. While these important studies provide insight into perceptions of African American students attending both types of institutions, there is little research on the perceptions of youth concerning HBCUs and PWIs prior to attending college.

POPULAR CULTURE AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT

This section of the literature review discusses popular culture's role in African American realities. Specifically, this section analyzes the contributions of media, images, television, and movies to African American culture.

The Media Matters in African American youth perceptions

Popular culture and youth

The importance of popular culture should not be trivialized. The study of popular culture is important as a means for understanding the underlying values and beliefs that guide culture. In addition to having a structure, popular culture comes in numerous forms: print

media, film, television, music, fashion, computer media, sport, and games. Each of these cultural forms is dense, vast, and highly complex; each can be a separate window on the culture or combined with other forms to develop a more complex picture of the popular culture (Carlsson, 2002; Dolby, 2003).

One of the more frequently discussed statistics about youth and media is that by the time American youth finish high school they have spent more time in front of televisions than in the classroom (Dolby, 2003). If the time youth devote to other media such as computers, video games, radios, movies, and magazines are added, it would seem safe to assume that youth spend more time consuming mass media than anything in their lives. Dyson (2003) concluded that among a sample of over 2,000 students from 3rd through 12th grades, more than 97% of the homes had at least three televisions. The study also concluded that African American youth average almost 10 hours of media exposure daily. In addition, most of the media consumption among all ethnic groups was without the presence of an adult. Media are full of images and stereotypes. Bell hooks (1992) argues that the institutionalized representations of race via mass media support and maintain the oppression, exploitation and overall domination of all black people.

In addition, images impact an individual's perceptions through the process of selective interpretation. The media, whose role is to bring information to the masses, have a strong impact on the construction of a social reality, "that is by framing images of reality…in a predictable and patterned way" (McCombs, p.246). Popular media, especially news, movies, and television programming, can show skewed versions of reality. False perceptions can produce inaccurate understandings of schooling and post-secondary education. From news coverage to entertainment, images shape, reflect, reinforce and define the world in

which we live. Indeed, evidence suggests African American youth consume popular culture at a far greater rate than their white counterparts (McChesney, 2000; Kenway & Bullen, 2001). Cornel West (1993) comments that the two biggest influences that affect individual perceptions of African American communities and African American students are too much poverty and little self love with popular media contributing to both.

According to McCombs (2004) the media set the public agenda. Perhaps this agenda setting function of the media is best described by Cohen (1963) who notes that the press may not be successful in telling people what to think about but they are successful in telling their audience what to know about and have feelings about. Ideally, a media system within a democratic society should provide its audience with broader images, include accurate representations, diverse understandings and perceptions of African Americans. It has been said that reality itself is manipulated by those who create media.

Cultivation theory suggests that exposure to television content creates a worldview, or a consistent picture of social behavior, norms, and structure, based on the stable view of society that television content provides (Gerbner et al., 1994; Signorielli, 2001). This model suggests that restricted images lead young viewers to develop stereotypes and prejudices. The world of television becomes the social reality of the viewer. Given this model, viewers who do not see images of a group may believe that the invisible groups are powerless and unimportant.

Television, Movies, and Black youth

The limited inclusion of visible racial/ethnic groups in television programming and advertising conveys relative lack of power and importance of these groups in the larger society. Though the numbers are limited, the portrayals of visible racial/ethnic groups are

relevant to television's capacity to create, maintain, or modify stereotypes and prejudice (Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Schroeder, 2002). The portrayals vary along two dimensions: scope of action (starring, supporting, background roles) and valence of the role (positive, negative, neutral). There are also demographic variations based on age, gender, family group membership, occupation, and other physical or psychological characteristics associated with the roles (Fujioka, 1999; Claussen, 2004). Depending on the role dimension studied, there is disagreement about the degree to which current portrayals are positive or realistic (Hall, 1997; Givens & Monahan, 2005; Kearn-Foxworth, 1994). The variations in role portrayals are clear. Visible racial/ethnic groups are more likely to be presented as criminals or as crime victims and in limited occupational roles (Entman, 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000; Greenberg & Collette, 1997).

For example, African American characters are subtly stereotyped through segregation on racially homogeneous situation comedies (the "ghetto gulch" phenomenon), on specific networks (Universal Pictures Network [UPN] and Warner Brothers [WB]) and most recently, on specific nights (e.g., Monday UPN). Furthermore, these Black comedy shows have been found overwhelmingly to be based on stereotypes of Blacks, such as "fun-loving," "poor," and "clownish" (Gentz & Kramer, 2006). For instance, several programs on minor networks have opted for traditional formulas of Black entertainment, whereby Blacks confirm stereotypes of the group. Characters on these shows often speak using Black English as well as in-group colloquialisms and slang rather than 'standard' English. In addition, African American youth are more likely than European American youth to be associated with a sports-related, musical (rap or hip-hop), or party theme rather than with a learning or creative one (Holtzman, 2000). Claussen (2004) notes that Blacks continually struggle for both a

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voice and representations of accurate images of schooling, students, and educational institutions.

Television shows such as BET's *College Hill* portray college, specifically HBCUs, as social institutions, rather than educational institutions. The show rarely shows the students in the classroom, studying, or engaging in student organizations. The show focuses on students' social activities that often represent the students in a negative manner, such as violent, ignorant, or on the verge of alcoholism.

> American media portray college as an active site for everything but intellectual pursuits. College is described as a place where students have parties, make connections for jobs after graduation, find spouses, and engage in all kinds of social activities, not as a place where they engage in critical thought, do research, or deepen their understandings of the world (Brown, Donahoo, & Bertrand, p.286).

In popular movies, PWIs and HBCUs are both portrayed as social institutions. For example, in movies located at PWIs such as *Legally Blonde,* the focus of the movie is on parties, college fashion, and upper class students. When the scholastic setting is mentioned it is only shown as a place to find a boyfriend/girlfriend, rather than to enhance student academic abilities. In movies located at HBCUs, such as *Drumline,* the focus is on financial issues, scholarship, and discipline within the context of HBCU bands. Stewart (2001) noted,

> The media continue to shout messages out at consumers that are made to discredit HBCUs, leading to negative perceptions. Advancing the argument that students who attend are ill-prepared to be successful in the real world, while continuing to deem HBCUs academically inferior to predominately white institutions… When deciding

to give attention/contributions to HBCUs, the feature is Greek step shows, battles of

the bands, football or basketball classics, and the like (p.3).

The messages discussed are evident in all types of media, including movies and television.

Unfortunately, media have power that establishes the terms in which much of higher

education is judged. According to Duncan & Morrell (2005) the messages sent to young

people of color by the dominant media can foster feelings of alienation and inferiority while

also justifying individual and institutional racism. The unprecedented influence of

corporations and corporate values in media has led to a number of disturbing trends, such as

television coverage numbers that contribute to African American student perceptions and

challenge the integrity of higher educational institutions, especially smaller institutions such

as community colleges and HBCUs (Jensen, 2005). Given African American youth

consumption of media, their perceptions of both HBCUs and PWIs may be inaccurate,

misleading, and/or biased.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

A review of literature shows that in the last 40 years factors that influence the

processes associated with student's college decisions have significantly increased (Hossler,

Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989; Hossler, Schmitt & Vesper, 1999; Perna, 2000). The

literature has also shown that some of the decision making processes and perceptions of

African American students have been attributed to the expectations of youths' personal and

cultural identities, the importance of role models and schools, and each individual's

connection to religion and spirituality (McKinnon, 2003; West, 2005; Howard, 2001; Taylor,

Thornton, & Chatters, 1987; Freeman, 1997; Perry, 1993). Results of other investigations

have also suggested that African American students' perceptions are influenced by media's

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portrayal of African Americans (Inoue, 1999; Kerchoff & Campbell, 1977; McClelland, 1961; Stewart, 2001; Pitre, 2007; Giroux, 1991).

The choices made by an individual may be shaped by both the available opportunities and the norms present within the cultural milieu in which they are situated. However, culture is not static and individual responses to the environment cannot be easily predicted. Both structural and cultural forces influence choices and actions, but neither has the power to act as the sole determinant of behavior because human beings also have the ability to produce cultural forms that can counter these pressures (Lebaron, 2003). In sum, there is increasing research (Plomin & Asbury, 2005) that suggests and demonstrates evidence of the importance of cultural influences on African American youths.

Cultural differences do not appear to be the only factors impacting the academic orientations of reality. These realities emerge from social interactions. Circumstances, relationships and social structures appear to be significant in how African American students understand their cultural realities. Perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs are thus critically driven. The playing field may not be level but according to the words of Parker, Deyhle & Villenas, (1999);

> Our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed rather we construct it with word, stories, and silence. But we need not acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided. By writing and speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better, fairer world (p.181).

What is evident throughout the literature concerning African American youth culture is that they are affected by one, or a combination of factors, that can be attributed to: (a) school culture. (b) family/community influences, and (c) media. Surprisingly, little research

has been conducted on African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs. According to Noguera (2003),

> As schools, community, families, and peers are significant factors in the success of African American youth, self-motivation, resilience, and a willingness to succeed in spite of, seems to be the largest determinant behind these students' success. These stories of success may provide the motivation, necessary in academic and career aspirations, and give hope to those students who believe it happens by luck, fate, or athletic ability, rather than hard work and determination. Even if few in number, there are those who manage to maintain their identities, peers, and achieve academically. Understanding, discussing, and revealing how such students navigate and think of this difficult terrain may be the key to figuring out how to support and produce achievement for larger numbers of Black students (p.446).

According to Hearn, Griswold, Marine, and McFarland (1995), understanding the influences and decision-making process that African Americans use in determining their ideas about institutional types is, "momentous and merits serious attention." In the few studies that have been specific to African American students, the actual voices of African American students have not been heard (Freeman, 1999).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Using a case study design, this study applied qualitative methods to illustrate African American youth perceptions of higher educational institutions. Specifically, qualitative methods were employed to derive themes that capture the 'thick and rich' lived experiences of the research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal of this case study method was to describe as accurately as possible the fullest, most complete description of this case. This case study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors (i.e. family, community, media) contribute to African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)?

2. What factors (i.e. family, community, media) contribute to African American youth perceptions of predominately white institutions (PWIs)?

3. How does school culture influence African American youth perceptions of both HBCUs & PWIs?

Education researchers are concerned with social inequalities, and direct their work towards positive social change. This study sought to address social inequality in the form of prejudices and misconceptions by providing the critical knowledge of African American youths' understandings of higher educational institutions. Results could help bring about positive change through providing information that may assist students and/or parents with collegiate planning and decision making. In addition, college personnel may be able to use the results to address, transform, and/or solve concerns of African American students when

attempting to recruit and retain candidates. The present study provided individuals,

communities, and educational institutions the opportunity to understand how African

American youth perceive HBCUs, as well as PWIs. Perceptions are not easy to decipher and

thus a method that examines the thoughts and feelings of Black youth helped uncover their

realities. The following sections provide a detailed look at additional facets of the

methodology used throughout this study.

<div align="center">Rationale for a Qualitative Study</div>

Qualitative research probes deeply into the research setting to obtain in-depth

understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in

the context perceive them (Bogden & Bilken, 1982; Finn, 1988). I wanted to listen to

participants' stories, understand their words, and interpret their voices. I wanted this study to

communicate the participants' knowledge of HBCUs and PWIs to individuals, communities,

and cultures. "Most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is

constructed rather than discovered" (Stake, 1995, p. 99). Knowledge comes from experience.

Knowledge is what we come to believe. Knowledge is the foundation of this research.

Throughout the study I used qualitative methods to retrieve details about the feelings,

thoughts, and emotions that may be difficult to obtain when using quantitative methods.

Qualitative researchers argue 'the meaning' is situated in a particular perspective or context

(Lincoln & Guba, 1989). I am conducting a case study of the students. I chose case study

methods because I deliberately want to cover contextual conditions that I believe are highly

pertinent to my research.

According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994), qualitative research generally examines

people's words and actions in narrative or descriptive ways, representing the situation as

experienced by the participants. Interpretation also played a major role in my use of qualitative methods. "The researcher uses imagination, seeing into the meaning of things rather than just seeing things (Geertz, 1973, p. 17)." Learning about my participants' cultures provided meaning, and later interpretations to the symbols in their lives. Perceptions are based on interpretation. Interpretation requires an empathetic understanding and the ability to reproduce in one's mind the feeling, motives, and thoughts behind the actions and words of others (Bogden & Taylor, 1975). According to Maykut and Morehouse (1994)

> Words are the way that most people come to understand their situations. We create our world with words. We explain ourselves with words. We defend and hide ourselves with words. The task of a qualitative researcher is to find patterns within those words (and actions) and to present those patterns for others to inspect, while at the same time staying as close to the construction of the world as the participants originally experienced it (p. 18).

The qualitative paradigm allowed me to seek meaning rather than differences. For example, African American youth in this study revealed that their perceptions are composed of the words, stories, and messages they hear from family, school, and media. Their words revealed their world.

According to Creswell (2003), in the qualitative paradigm, reality is understood as "a representation (of reality) from one particular point of view" (p. 206). Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little may be known. I used these methods to gain a new understanding and/or perspective on concepts/frameworks associated with this case. The overall goal for this study was to provide ways of understanding African American youth

perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions from the point of view of those who have experience and/or knowledge about both types of institutions.

In addition, this qualitative inquiry acknowledged that the knowledge provided comes from interactions between students (participants) and me. In order to obtain stories, understandings and perceptions of my research participants, the qualitative methodologies centered on experiential information. I took into account my identity and how it influenced my approach to this research; however, my identity alone was not enough to obtain the truths/knowledge that I sought. I believe it was of utmost importance that they recognized my desire to listen to their voices. "Only through listening can one acquire the ability to see the world through their eyes" (Delgado, 1989, p. 119). Qualitative methodologies provided me a means to get to the 'bottom of things'.

Patton (1990) points out that all the characteristics of qualitative inquiries are not absolute but rather strategic ideals that can provide a goal and structure for developing research designs and data collection procedures. However, several writers have identified what a qualitative methodology should include. The eight step process consists of: (1.) describe and interpret settings as they are, (2.) researcher acts as the instrument of data collection, (3.) uses inductive analysis, (4.) research reports include the presence of voice in text, (5.) has interpretive character (6.) seek uniqueness in each case, (7.) emergent design, and (8.) judged by trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Eisner & Peshkin, 1990). To sustain a sound research project I used a systematic approach to the research design of the study, the collection and analysis of data, as well as, the interpretation and reporting of findings (Fossey et al., 2002). I chose to use qualitative methods to produce

findings not arrived by statistical procedures, in hopes of revealing the participants

perceptions in an accurate and responsible manner. This methodological framework provided

a road map to my research design and a means to explore the perceptions of this particular

group of students

Voice

In terms of voice, this study provided an opportunity for African American youth to

be active participants in the research process sharing their stories in their own ways. Ladson-

Billings & Tate (1999) strongly emphasize the importance of giving voice to empower

individuals. Often these conversations about voice surround marginalized peoples. Some may

view my participants as marginalized peoples because of age, race, ethnicity, and/or culture.

However, research subjects carry power and voice through not only participation, but through

interpretation and clarification. I sought to establish a research experience that was moving

and meaningful where the data provided rich and complex information to all parties involved.

"Listening to the voices of youths…makes young people feel that they are valued and

contributing members of society" (Burron, 2000, p. 44-45). Their voices altered past

ideological perceptions. Their voices revealed new realities. Throughout this qualitative

inquiry it was extremely important to provide the youth the freedom to communicate their

perceptions and appreciate their style of communication.

By giving the researched active participation, power, and voice in the research

process, I ensured that the data collected throughout the study was authentic. Authenticity

was important because it demonstrated that regardless of my role, I was there to listen,

capture, and deliver my participants' voices. While it was not possible to entirely escape my

interpretations, biases, power, and voice in this study, I used the aforementioned processes to the best of my ability to embrace the participants' voices and limit my own.

<div align="center">Research Design</div>

Case Study

All research designs require certain assumptions about social reality and human experience, but these are too often taken for granted (Carspecken, 1996). My research design was a 'blueprint' to address the research questions.

> Case studies present data in very public accessible ways and may lead the reader to apply the experience in his or her own real –life situation. Researchers pay particular attention to displaying sufficient evidence to gain the reader's confidence that all avenues have been explored, clearly communicating the boundaries of the case, and giving special attention to conflicting propositions (Tellis, 1997, p.4.).

Case studies establish parameters and then apply them to the research. Researcher Robert K. Yin (1984) defines case study research method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p.23). Case study methods guided me through the understandings of Black youth cultures and helped identify the variety of events and actions that formed their perceptions. This case study also strengthened what was already known about the research topic, as well as emphasized detailed knowledge and analysis of a limited number of events/conditions. Case study research, moreover narratives and interviews, place the experiences of the researched at the center of the data collection and analysis. This study not

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only provided a means of informing others of issues, topics and concerns, but provided participants with the privileged voice.

Case study research generally answers one or more questions that begin with "how" or "why" (Tellis, 1997). Hence, this case study sought to explore how African American youth perceived historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions, by addressing the factors that contributed to their perceptions. This instrumental case study, a study that accomplished more than understanding one particular case but the possible effects of the participants' perceptions, was about particularization, "a quality of cognition which gives coherence to our general knowledge of people" (Schwartz, 1982, p. 34). I wanted to gain a general understanding of the research questions from my participants. It is important to note that this case study allowed me to understand the African American youth perceptions within a specific context, James Pointe High School. However, this case was a study of 16 African American youth participants, and the factors that contributed to their perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs.

My case design required careful examination to avoid misrepresentation. Because this research generated a large amount of data, a systematic organization of materials was implemented. For example, the transcriptions were separated by names and corresponding categories, then grouped according to commonalities in themes. This strategy helped me store multiple sources of data, while allowing patterns in the research materials to be uncovered. I attempted to find links between my participants and the research question. This method provided me the opportunity, through multiple data collection methods (i.e. interviews, demographic sheets, observations, school documents) and analysis, to triangulate the data and determine validity.

Data collection

Qualitative research methods, including case studies, involve an efficient collection, organization, and understanding of materials derived from oral methods (Seidman, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 1985). In hopes of developing critical consciousness about this qualitative work, in-depth interviews were conducted to address the research topic. Interview participants were considered, by the qualitative principle, as "good informants". In-depth interviewing was chosen for this study because I believed it was the most effective way in which to hear these participant's stories, thoughts, and understandings. Interviews were my pathway to uncover their multiple realities.

In this study in-depth interviews followed a somewhat open-ended, unstructured format. The one-on-one interviews at times were almost friendly conversations. I was looking to capture participants' exact words, and the importance of what they mean. The loosely-formatted structure of these interviews provided freedom to move questions and shape conversations according to the participants' responses, as well as allow for probing questions. All interviews were tape recorded. Asking good questions was pertinent because they were the basis of this research. The questions facilitated the responses. It was my opportunity to play detective and get to the 'bottom of things.' After the one-on-one interviews with each student, they participated in a focus group. The focus groups provided a chance for each student to participate in two discussions, and allowed me an opportunity to further discuss themes that emerged in the one-on-one interviews.

Interviews began immediately following approval of the study by the doctoral committee and Washington State University's Institutional Review Board. These interviews took place at the participants' school before, during or after school hours. One-on-one

interviews were held with this sample of African American youth, as well as the high

school's counselors and principal. The interviews were guided by semi-structured interview

protocols (see appendix 4). The participants' interviews sought to address the following

areas:

Figure 1: The expectant results of participant interviews.

Participant	Anticipated Result
African American youths	Background on school, school culture. Faculty-student relations, collegiate preparations. Detailed experiences, stories, ideas, understandings, or knowledge about HBCUs and PWIs. Background on how their perceptions about these institutions were developed (i.e. media, family, school, neighborhoods)
Principal	Background on school (i.e. neighborhood, student population, policies, graduation/retention rates). Collegiate preparation, school culture, faculty – student relations, understanding of students collegiate perspectives/ perceptions of school programs/curriculum
Counselors	Role in school, collegiate preparations, school culture, understanding of student perspectives/perceptions on college, school programs/curriculum
School documents	School history, school objectives/missions. School curriculum. Statistics on schools ranking in district. Comparison to participant's words and/or statistics.

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, but participants were given

pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The interviews took no longer than one hour each.

Any participant could refuse to answer any question and stop the interview at any time. There

were times when a follow up interview was necessary for clarification. In addition, I took

observational field notes and kept a research journal, which was kept confidential as well.

The journal contained personal reflections about the research participants. The journal helped

me organize my thoughts about the data and prompted initial data analysis. I kept a record of my observations of the school environments and classrooms that the participants attended. These observations helped me understand the culture and context of the school.

I also reviewed school documents. These documents included school improvement plans, evaluations, policies, and demographics. They were used strictly to corroborate and/or argue evidence from additional sources. All of these materials were reviewed, organized, and categorized. As difficult as it was, I maintained a chain of evidence where an external observer could follow the research, ranging from the research questions to the case study conclusions.

Purposeful and selective sampling was used in this study. Logically, I chose the purposeful selection of participants to identify information rich informants who could supply the data required to answer the research questions (Crowley, 1994). I also selected the most accessible subjects. The selective sampling referred to my premeditated decision to sample a specific environment according to a set of reasonable dimensions (i.e. space, location) (Glaser, 1998).

Setting and Participants

To aid in the selection of the research site I referred to the purpose of the study and selected a location where I thought participants knowledgeable about HBCUs and PWIs could be found. James Pointe High School is located in a metropolitan city in the southern region of the United States. The high school is identified as an early college academy of education, engineering, and health sciences. The high school has over 1,300 students, and averages about 30 students in math, science, and English classes. My decision to select a research site from this geographical region was based on a personal assumption. I believe the

students in this geographical region had more knowledge about HBCUs and PWIs because this region includes a large number of both types of collegiate institutions.

All high school juniors at James Pointe High School were given a demographic sheet to complete (see appendix E) that provided background information on each student. From these demographic sheets a sample of 16 willing African American youth participants (10 females & 6 males) were selected. Each participant selected met the following criteria: (1.) were of African American descent,(2.) between the ages of 15 and 17, and 3.) knowledgeable about HBCUs and PWIs.

Figure 2: Demographic description of student participants

Shannon	16 years old, 3.2 grade point average, neither parent graduated college, one sibling currently attending in-state PWI, not a member of Early College Academy
Kimberly	16 years old, 4.0 grade point average, neither parent graduated college, no sibling in college, wants to attend either HBCU or PWI, member of Early College Academy
Nicole	16 years old, 4.7 grade point average, both parents with college degrees, one sibling attending in-state PWI, wants to attend either HBCU or PWI, member of Early College Academy
Kelsey	16 years old, 4.0 grade point average, neither parent attended college, no sibling in college, no college preference listed, member of Early College Academy
Scottie	16 years old, 4.5 grade point average, one parent completed college, one sibling attending in-state HBCU, wants to attend HBCU, member of Early College Academy
Keisha	16 years old, 3.5 grade point average, both parents with college degrees, no sibling attending college, wants to attend either HBCU or PWI, not a member of Early College Academy
Jacob	16 years old, 4.5 grade point average, one parent with college degree, one sibling attending in-state HBCU, wants to attend HBCU, member of Early College Academy
Kristen	16 years old, 3.0 grade point average, neither parent graduated college, no sibling attending college, no college preference listed, not a member of Early College Academy
Gavin	16 years old, 3.75 grade point average, neither parent attended college, no sibling in college, wants to attend PWI, not a member of Early College Academy

Carolyn	17 years old, 3.5 grade point average, neither parent completed college, no sibling in college, wants to attend either HBCU or PWI, not a member of Early College Academy
Jonathan	16 years old, 3.5 grade point average, both parents have college degrees, no sibling in college, wants to attend either HBCU or PWI, member of Early College Academy
Natalie	16 years old, 4.2 grade point average, both parents college education/degree, no sibling in college, wants to attend either HBCU or PWI, member of Early College Academy
Bryan	17 years old, 3.6 grade point average, both parents have some college, no sibling in college, no college preference listed, not a member of Early College Academy
China	16 years old, 3.6 grade point average, both parents have some college, no sibling in college, wants to attend PWI, not a member of Early College Academy
Allan	17 years old, 4.0 grade point average, mother has college degree, no sibling in college, no college preference listed, member of Early College Academy
Lauren	17 years old, 4.2 grade point average, both parents have some college, one sibling attending in-state PWI, no college preference listed, member of Early College Academy

Triangulation

I was aware that others questioned the validity of this study because of my role as the research tool, as well as my use of qualitative strategies. However, to combat this scrutiny I provided sound evidence about the myth of objectivity, the necessity of subjectivity, and how triangulation is emphasized throughout this study. Triangulation is a validity procedure where the researcher searches for a union among the multiple and different sources of information that form the themes and/or categories in case studies (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation was more about searching for additional interpretations, rather than confirmations of my own. Triangulation was used to sort through the data that emerged from participants and school documents used in this study. Patton (2002) emphasized the importance of triangulation in qualitative research by stating that "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods" (p.247). The goal of triangulation throughout this research

was to demonstrate the 'truth' of multiple perspectives (Seale, 1999). Interview transcriptions and observations from all participants were triangulated with school documents. To improve my analysis, all data were reviewed multiple times. In addition, triangulation was used to minimize misperception and invalidity of my own conclusions.

Credibility

According to Noblit and Engel (1991), I had to develop a strategy for 'checking' my work. Credibility standards in qualitative research are more challenging due to the necessity to incorporate rigor, subjectivity, and creativity in the research process (Johnson, 1997). Moreover, the goal in establishing credibility in this qualitative research was to exhibit the ideas and/or understandings of my topic using multiple perspectives.

Member checking and my research logs were two of the most important facets in this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member checks as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 34). Member checking was used as a source of improving my case study, and to the best of my ability, ensuring that I had all my facts straight. Member checks consisted of taking the data (i.e. transcriptions) and data interpretations/analysis back to the participants so they could confirm or refute my narrative accounts. In situations that were unclear or disputable, presentation of more detail was offered.

 Although my participants were provided the opportunity to review and comment on the material for credibility, it was not a requirement. However, for those that did choose to review the materials, I asked if the established themes made sense, were developed with ample proof, and whether they were correct. Incorporating the participants' comments and/or suggestions added to the overall accuracy of this study. I wanted to ensure that the research processes and results of this study reflected the participants in a plausible manner, and

provided meaningful descriptions of the data. Providing a substantial amount of description throughout this research process, provided an opportunity for others to make similar inferences.

Objectivity/Subjectivity

Qualitative research is often criticized because some claim it has a political agenda (Creswell, 2003). This criticism includes the impossibility of objectivity in case studies. My case is personal and subjectivity is evident. My biases extend from my previous experiences with both these institutional types, as well as being African American. I had both positive and negative experiences at both types of institutions. Several outside factors also heavily influenced my perceptions about many aspects of both institutions' policies, expectations, and objectives. In fact, I continue to have evolving perceptions about both HBCUs and PWIs. Maintaining a completely 'sterile' environment was not possible when I had a connection to both environments and the researched population. I could not ignore that my participants may have related to me in ways that they may never have related to another researcher, and I may have related to them the same. I acknowledged both possibilities.

Standard qualitative designs dictate that I was responsible for interpretations, observations, analyses, and judgments, while given attention to my consciousness. My personal views made room for subjectivity. "Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 45). This study was a labor of love, a conscious effort to share the stories of these participants, while recognizing that my life experiences and cultural makeup could not be removed from the research.

Trustworthiness

I often pondered my cultural being, the ways I had been impacted by the research topic, and how it may have affected my readiness to be judgmental as they related to HBCUs and PWIs. Groves (2003) argues that reflexivity guides the way that researchers ponder how their own involvement may have shaped data collection, analysis, and production. But trustworthiness was established when the findings accurately reflected perceptions as described by the research participants. To ensure trustworthiness, I used the following strategies: participant debriefing, triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity. These aforementioned strategies did not eliminate all threats to trustworthiness in this study, but provided me with more knowledge about these threats.

Reflexivity was an important part of this project because reflection addressed the ways my identity, knowledge, and perspectives may have assisted or deterred in the process of creating meaning in the data. To achieve an awareness of identity's role in this study, there was a consistent evolution of ideas. I reflected on the conversations, what and why certain questions were asked, and why data were generated in a particular manner.

Trustworthiness also required that I maintained empathy, sensitivity, direction, assertiveness, and knowledge for a balance to be reached (Gergen, 1994). In qualitative interviews, one cannot be neutral, distant, or emotionally uninvolved (Kvale, 1996). The interviews were affected by my personality and interests in specific aspects of conversation. Strong empathy for the interviewees emerged. This empathy came from my personal experiences, relative to theirs, and my desire to share knowledge in hopes it led them to informed decisions. My tenacity was a reflection of my identity and made this study

extremely personal. But to maintain an honest and quality study, I remained sensitive to the participants' thoughts, ideas, and understandings, and actively engaged in reflections.

Because this research project was a case study it cannot be generalized. The results of this study were used to investigate the perceptions, interpretations, and knowledge of research participants in these specific conditions. However, the design of this study may have provided information for a better understanding of a larger group, or a different geographical environment or context. Furthermore, my constructivist view, "a manner in which individuals construct knowledge rather than merely receiving and storing transmissions" (Ben-Ari, 1998, p. 257), provided the opportunity to share with readers good raw data that may be used for their own generalizing.

<div align="center">Positionality</div>

Positionality forces researchers to acknowledge their own power, privilege, and biases while denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects (Madison, 2005). For example, my personal experiences did not differ much from my participants. I was once a high school student contemplating collegiate choices. Although these experiences are in the past, they are not forgotten. They shaped my position and are the reasons I embarked on this case study.

This research required that I recognize the importance of self. Indeed, Generett and Jeffries (2003) note that "qualitative inquiry is an appropriate outlet for understanding a self that is characterized by the fierce intersection of race, class and gender" (p.7). I am African American. I am a female. I am a graduate student. I hold strong religious views. I came from a middle class background. I attended predominately white schools from K-12. These

identities shaped my positionalities and espitemologies. These and several other characteristics and assumptions are evident throughout this research process and influenced the perspectives of my study.

My role as an interpreter was an honest choice. I recognized the circumstances that surrounded my subjectivity, but it was also a characteristic/position that could not be ignored because I could not act otherwise. It was my job to recognize the significance of this case and interpret new meanings. It was my job to make participants' words comprehensible to others. I was the agent of interpretation and knowledge. As an African American female scholar, researching African American students, I understood the significance and/or consequences that came from researching my own cultural group. "Conducting qualitative research dictates that Black females in the academy will serve a number of competing, conflicting, and contrary masters, forcing us to constantly consider who we are in order to better understand the world around us" (Generett & Jeffries, 2003, p. 6). I recognized that my race, age, and gender may have aided my findings, and understood that those same characteristics may be used by some as a means to invalidate this research in other areas.

Although I would like to believe that my positionalities were less of an issue in this study, qualitative research suggests otherwise. Hill-Collins (1990) and Millings (1999) believed that the insider-outsider debate in researcher positionality is very relevant in the research process and credibility of the study. My role as both insider and outsider had a large influence on this study.

> "Insiders" (researchers who study a group to whom they belong) have an advantage
> in research because they are able to use their insider knowledge and are more likely to

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be perceived as neutral and therefore be given information that would not be given to an "outsider" (Generett & Jeffries, 2003, p. 8).

According to their definition, my racial identity made me an "insider" in this study. While interviewing African American youth, I was aware that my "Blackness" affected this study in some fashion. I was seen as a member of this marginalized community. On the other hand, some (Hill-Collins, 1990; Mullings, 1999) challenged the aforementioned argument, and suggest that "outsiders" have a greater degree of objectivity and capacity to observe participants without altering their meanings, which may have helped gain or prevented access to various levels of information. My role as a scholar led some of my participants to regard me as an "outsider" working for my own scholastic approval. This role sometimes made it difficult for my participants to 'share truths'.

As an interviewer, I was an adaptable and flexible instrument who responded to situations with skill and understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was the foundation of this study's interviewing process. I asked questions, responded to the participant, and shared my own experiences at times. At times I needed to respond to participants questions so they were aware that I was doing this study to learn about them and better provide a sense of security and trustworthiness. To some degree this role was a function of the participant's interactions with me.

Inevitably, I brought to this study an identity composed of several characteristics. Each characteristic was a prominent factor in my way of seeing and understanding. My beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors outline the way I approached this research. I used my roles to decipher and analyze the stories of my participants. My objective was to view my participants from their position, in an attempt to acquire as much knowledge as possible. I

attempted to look beyond possible relationship conflicts to understand the importance of telling their stories in a dialogue that allowed my position to not overtake theirs, while constantly being aware that subjectivity was evident.

I sought to give voice to marginalized communities, but I did not ignore the power I held as researcher/scholar, storyteller, educator, and communicator. Stating my roles was my way of taking responsibility and accountability for this study's purpose, perspectives, and interpretations. Along with paying close attention to my positionality, and adapting appropriate research methods, this study required that my influences on the research process be less intrusive and produce positive and credible findings. Some suggest (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2001; Young, 2001) that research was and is conceived as a political act that produces power for certain groups. However, this study placed the power in the hands of the research participants. My roles were a vital aspect of this research, but I advocated for the responsible study of these participants' perceptions.

Data analysis

The analysis was undoubtedly the most challenging aspect of this project. I recognize the need to be accurate in measuring people, places, and events but also logical in understanding the meaning of those measurements. Much depends on my style of rigorous thinking, along with significant presentations of evidence, and careful attention to alternative interpretations that arose. Theoretical propositions led to this study and are relied upon throughout analysis. The objectives and design are based on my propositions and are reflected in the research questions and literature review. It provides relevant analytic strategies and helps me focus on specific data.

I recognize that covering everything is impossible. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method. Analysis began with a process referred to as "open-coding" through the identification of themes that appeared from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I created explanatory categories. I used inductive analysis to find critical themes that surfaced out of the participants' interviews and/or my observations. Participants' words, understandings, and perspectives that appeared alike through the interview inquiries were grouped into identical categories. The analysis required my creativity so that data could be placed into meaningful categories. "A code gives the researcher a condensed, abstract view with scope of the data that includes otherwise seemingly disparate phenomena" (Glaser, 2004). These creative categories expressed my research interpretations/ results to varying audiences.

Verbatim transcriptions of the participant interviews about the research topic demonstrated a commitment to privileging the participants' voices, providing accuracy and clarity in the study, and improved the overall analysis. I used a thematic analysis, which involved constant comparative methodology. This methodology is best summarized as,

> A progressive process of clarifying, comparing, grouping and refining groupings of text segments to create then clarify the definition of categories or themes within the data. In, this sense, thematic analysis procedures focus on developing categories, derived inductively from the data itself, rather than from a priori theory, to enable systematic description (Fossey et al., 2002 p. 129).

As the data continued to be broken down, categorized, and further analyzed, I maintained records of the transcriptions according to the participants' code names. To speak from the

participants' perspectives, direct quotes from the participant interviews were included to support various themes that emerged from my analysis.

My analytic process required that I continuously look at the categories in hopes of finding a link between some or all of them. "In axial coding, the discrete categories identified in open-coding are compared and combined in new ways as the researcher begins to assemble the 'big picture'" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 6). During this process, I continually thought of new conceptual models that supported my data and interpretations. The study's themes, categories, models, and interpretations were transformed into a narrative that is accessible to varying audiences. Throughout this analytic process, I am privileged to assert what I find meaningful as a result of a mix of personal experiences, scholarship, assertions of others, and inquiries throughout the case study. I demonstrated that I attended to all evidence available and interpretations had been represented accordingly. Using both evidence and personal knowledge, I revealed that I am aware of current thinking and discourses on African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs.

Constant Comparative Method

According to Patton (1990), the first choice in analyzing interviews in qualitative research is to determine what method of analysis best suits your desired outcome. This study used the constant comparative method. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described this method as a process that follows well-defined stages, comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, and delimiting the theory and writing the theory. This method and its processes were used to group participant responses, and analyze various perspectives critical to the research topic.

"The qualitative analyst's effort at uncovering patterns, themes, and categories, is a process that requires making carefully considered judgments about what is real and/or significant and meaningful in the data" (Patton, 1990, p. 406). I discovered underlying patterns in multiple participants' words. I took all my understandings and participants words, tore them apart, put them back together in a meaningful manner, and communicated precisely the results of this study in hopes that any given audience find relevance, meaning, and value. It was very important that I continually refined the categories and compared them with all data materials. Ideas that emerge during my analysis were recorded, stored thematically, and verified by data. I also wanted to use this process to find more relationships that could arise. This process required me to be very flexible. Categories were critical in the organization and conceptualization of this study's data.

 I sought to make sense of certain observations of the case by watching as closely as I could and by thinking about it as deeply as I could. It was greatly subjective. "I defend it because I know no better way to make sense of the complexities of my case" (Stake, 1995, p. 76-77). Constant comparative analysis provided me the opportunity to look for statements and patterns that occurred over time during the study. In addition, this method and its process provided this study a means in which to demonstrate accurate and honest knowledge about African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions, straight from the voices of the researched.

Early in the process I decided that the title of this study would be "Beyond Color, Beyond Name" because it spoke to my need to answer personal inquiries about historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions from Black youth. I had many tell me that my title might lead to hypotheses that may not represent my study. But I

stood my ground in hopes that it would not mislead readers, but increase interest in the topic. This study's credibility lies in the findings, more than the words, stories, thoughts, and perceptions of the participants I have entrusted to assist me. The pressure built even more when the individuals of James Pointe High School constantly questioned me on why I chose North Carolina. Why I chose their school? And why I chose them (sixteen students, school principal, and junior class counselor) to answer questions for which they quite possibly have no answer. As interest built and I responded to more questions, I then realized that this study meant as much to them as it does to me. I made sure I did not assume that I knew what was intended by the participants' comments, but that I listened to what they were "actually" saying. As a member of my participants' ethnicity, and someone knowledgeable about this research topic, that was a struggle throughout the analysis. However, the participants granted me access to their words, stories and beliefs so that I could attempt to comprehend the complexities of their perceptions.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter begins with a contextual analysis of the research site. The analysis provides information regarding both the city and school district in which JPHS resides. The chapter continues with a section entitled, James Pointe High School: A historical perspective. This section discusses the history of the school and its role in the participants' perceptions. The next section, James Pointe High School: Today provides contextual descriptions of JPHS and its academic framework, the Talent Development High School Model.

Chapter four continues with a look at the demographic statistics relative to this study. The section includes three tables which provide information on student samples, college interest, and sibling(s) attendance in colleges/universities for all 11th grade students at James Pointe High School. The chapter continues with the results and findings of this study. The results are presented as themes which define the factors that contribute to the participants' perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions.

Some of the themes are clearly evident from the start of data analysis, while others require complex thought and "outsider's" perspective. The themes that emerge from this data not only came from participant interviews, but personal observations, district and school documents, and personal journal entries. The themes include participant quotes and literature directly related to their responses. Each section begins with a quote *(italicized)* that speaks eloquently to the heart of each theme.

Much of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 is discussed throughout the data analysis. The themes are presented according to the major contributing factors, theme one being the largest. The themes are (1) Blackness v. Whiteness, Whiteness v. Blackness; (2) Familial Sway, Familial Lean; (3) Media in Color. Within these three major themes, micro themes emerge as well. They are titled accordingly. The first major theme, Blackness v. Whiteness, Whiteness v. Blackness is separated into three micro themes. Micro theme one is entitled, *What is race to me*? Followed by micro theme two, entitled *Black, White, you and me*, and concludes with micro theme three, *Black v. White = HBCU & PWI*. The second theme, Familial Sway, Familial Lean is separated into two micro themes. Micro theme one, *Because they told me so…*, is followed by micro theme two entitled, *The extended family: beyond the tree*. The last theme acknowledged in my study is entitled, Media in Color. This theme is also broken into two micro themes. The first micro theme is *I see it, hear it, and sometimes believe it*. Micro theme two is entitled, *Movies, Television shows, and universities*. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results and findings on African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions.

James Pointe High School (JPHS) is located in the Piedmont region of North Carolina with a population of over 400,000(www.uscensus/nc/2007). This medium-sized city evolved from a small center of government to an early 1900s textile hub, with large factories producing denim, flannel, and overalls. During the twentieth century, the city continued to expand in wealth and population. The rapid growth led to numerous construction projects, including commercial and civic buildings, many of which remain throughout the city. Growth continued through the "Great Depression" as the city added approximately 200

families per year to its population (Robinson & Stoesen, 1981). The city earned a reputation as a "well- planned community" with a strong emphasis on education.

The city's emphasis on education garnered national attention during the Civil Rights Movement. On February 1, 1960 four Black college students from a local historically black college and university sat down at an all-white Woolworth's lunch counter and refused to leave after they were denied service. They were arrested. But their actions led to many other college students in the city, including White students from a local predominately white institution and a Women's College, to sit at the lunch counter in show of support. Within two months hundreds of others soon joined the sit-in, which spread to 54 cities in nine states. Such protests rapidly spread across the South, ultimately leading to the desegregation of Woolworth's and other similar chains.

Today, the city has approximately 250, 000 residents. It is one of the largest cities in North Carolina and the largest in the county (www. nc.gov). [1]According to the latest census (2005), the racial makeup of the city is approximately 55% White, 37% Black or African American, 4% Hispanic or Latino, and 3% Asian. The median income for a household is $39,661, and the median income for a family is $50, 192. The per capita income for the city is $26,797, however 8.6% of families and 12.3% of the population live below the poverty line (United States Census Bureau, 2005), including a large population within the school district. Almost half (48.62 percent) of the students are enrolled in the free/reduced lunch program. In 2007 voters elected the first African-American mayor of the city. The city is emerging as one of the leading centers for relocating businesses.

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[1] The reference has been altered for confidentiality.

The school district in which JPHS resides is one of the largest school districts in North Carolina, serving more than 71,000 students. Historically, the district has added between 1,200 and 1,500 students on average each year – that's the equivalent of a high school every year. In addition, it is the second largest employer in a 12 county area with more than 10,000 part and full-time employees. Both students and staff share in the district's mission: *We will graduate responsible citizens prepared to succeed in higher education or the career of their choice* (www. nc.gov). The district consists of 120 schools located in both urban and rural areas which include 67 elementary, 22 middle, 26 high schools, 7 alternative schools, with Black students comprising 40.8% and White students 39.5% of the district population. The school district is led by an African American superintendent.

James Pointe High School: A Historical perspective

James Pointe High School will become a state of the art learning institution working collaboratively with all stakeholders to promote excellence. –JPHS Vision statement

Grade schools were established early in education, but no provisions were made for Black public high schools until 1912. However, a local Methodist coeducational institution for Blacks did have a high school department. The North Carolina Board of Education provided some aid to local Black students who wished to pursue their education at the local coeducational institution until 1926. Currently, it is a women's college. It was the only high school for Blacks until The North Carolina Board of Education established a high school for African Americans (The News and Record, 2001). James Pointe High School was founded in 1929 as the first African American high school within the county. The school was named for a president of one of the local Black colleges.

In 1957 state and local governments opposed integration of North Carolina public schools and JPHS remained an African American high school. Until 1970, 49% of the county schools were segregated. 40% of public schools had less than 18% minority population, while 11% contained a minority population between 18-50% (Congressional Quality Press, 2008). In 1971 The Supreme Court voted to bus students to various schools to achieve desegregation. A few months later North Carolina's federal court ordered "cross-town" busing to achieve public school desegregation. In 1971, JPHS became an integrated school. Integration sent many White students to JPHS. Indeed, the school included more than 40% White students for a number of years. But over the next 30 years, many White families went back to enrolling their children in local and/or neighborhood schools (Hairston, 2003). Today, JPHS is 90% African American (www.com/community)[2].

The school remains a significant historical monument to the city. In fact, alumni are very active with the school and frequently conduct events, such as workshops and fundraisers to promote the mission of JPHS. The principal discussed how significant the alumni are to JPHS he stated,

> There are a lot of traditions here, very strong sense of pride to be at least from the alumni, from the teachers that work here, you know, at James Pointe High School, you know. It's the oldest African-American school in Wayne, so it's a sense of pride. We have a national alumni association, um, around the world really and people who come back here during the summertime and have class reunions and things of that nature and still have that sense of pride to the school. I don't think the kids have as much pride while they're here, but I see kids, I hear kids like in the early class of

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[2] The reference has been altered for confidentiality.

2005, you know. I hear from them every now and then about some of the things that they want to do and how active they are in the alumni association. So I think after they graduate and they look back onto the school, they have that sense of honor and what the school meant to them as far as being, you know, really the hub of the community and really of the African-American community for many years here.

JPHS has a significant place in North Carolina history. JPHS is no longer the "Black high school" but its legacy remains. Today, the school is comprised of predominately African American students, staff, and teachers who collaboratively work together to abide by their mission statement: *To prepare students to become life-long learners, critical thinkers and productive citizens in today's global society.*

James Pointe High School: Today

To have all students participate in rigorous and engaging learning opportunities that prepares them to graduate high school in a four year period. – JPHS Academic Statement

The school centers on a large brick building, named for one of its first administrators. Its walls are painted with college logos, both HBCUs and PWIs. The school enrolls approximately 1,300 students and averages 30 students per class. The school is 94% African American, 3% Hispanic, and the remaining 3% consists of students with other ethnic backgrounds. The administrative staff includes one head principal and 4 assistant principals. Each assistant principal is assigned to one grade level and is also the administrator of one academy. The teaching staff includes 95 men and women of diverse ages. The staff is predominately African American, who must adhere to a strict dress code which requires "professional attire." Everyday except Fridays. The dress code, however, is much stricter for the students. Shirts, turtlenecks, oxford shirts, and sweatshirts must be white, royal blue, or

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goldenrod. Pants, shorts, and skirts must be navy blue or khaki. Shirts have to be tucked in at all times. Pants must not hang below the waist and skirts must not be above the knee. In addition, denim and hats are not allowed. The dress code even enforces the colors of socks and belts. Nonetheless, the students try to stretch the dress code as much as they can. I was even stopped in the hallways by staff about inappropriately representing the student dress code. I was flattered to be mistaken for a high school student. The dress code was primarily established to reduce socioeconomic pressures. Today, it is also used to promote a positive school environment and increase school safety.

The school is patrolled before, during, and after school by teachers, staff, and security, as well as a police officer. The city has been touted as a relatively dangerous city to live in, with crime levels much higher than the national average. (www.cqpress.com/citycrime2008). The crime issues of the city have also entered the school district and JPHS. Indeed, student behavior problems have been an issue. At times, strict discipline is used. One student noted that gangs had been an issue at JPHS and that it increased the need for security,

> I must say I like it a lot, JPHS but you know, they have gangs and stuff like that. We
> have stuff that we get in trouble for here and that's unfair. That behavior doesn't fit
> with our school and it upsets me a little bit. But for the most part I like it here and a
> lot of family went here, so that makes it even better.

However, this student and many of the other students did not seem to give much attention to the negative and really focused on the positive things at JPHS. The students constantly reiterated how many of their family members had attended the school in the past. They were very excited to mention that attending JPHS made them a part of a long-lasting tradition of

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educated Black individuals. For example, Kimberly also emphasized the great atmosphere JPHS provides,

> I love this school this is the best school ever. It tends to have its rough edges but once
> you even out the edges, it's great. It gives, they give students a lot of opportunities
> and I think that's very good. Because it's not always what you get at some schools.

Throughout her interview she stated that the school had its "issues," and sometimes it is behavior problems. But she did not believe it got in the way of the staff providing her with a good education and JPHS providing her with a good learning environment. This sentiment was echoed by many students at JPHS. They believe the school is dedicated to educational success, and to providing them with the tools necessary to be successful in the "real world."

JPHS: The Talent Development High School Model

The school operates on a block schedule, from 8:50am -3:45pm. It includes four classes that are an hour and a half each. The school is structured on a Talent Development High School Model, a system that consists of academies with curriculum that aims to assist the students accordingly. The primary goal of the Talent Development Model is to establish an effective model of secondary education in which all students can succeed. The model is a "comprehensive reform model for large high schools facing serious problems with student attendance, discipline, achievement scores, and dropout rates. The model includes organizational and management changes to establish a positive school climate; curricular and instructional innovations to prepare all students for high-level courses in math and English; parent and community involvement to encourage college awareness; and professional development to support the recommended reforms"

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(Center for Social Organization of Schools, 2008). The Talent Development High School with Career Academies was initiated in 1994 through a partnership of the Johns Hopkins University Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) and Patterson High School in Baltimore. These high schools have now expanded to 15 states across the country and the District of Columbia.

The program's purpose is to break the school into smaller units, or "academies," based on career themes for students in the upper grades. The approach aims to reorganize students and teachers and to change instruction to focus on students' academic needs and career interests. The primary goal for the JPHS program is to improve achievement and other outcomes (e.g., attendance, dropout rates) for all students by creating a personalized environment that focuses on students' interests within an academic core of courses. JPHS also offers an alternative school and counseling for students with personal problems such as drugs, pregnancy, anonymity and failure.

JPHS uses the model, breaking the school into four academies. The four academies are: 9th Grade, Transportation & Technology; Business & Information Technology; and Public Service. Each student ranks an academy based on his or her interest and is placed in it. Each academy offers the same core academic courses (i.e., English, mathematics, science, and history) so that students in any academy will meet college entrance requirements. Core courses use readings and assignments that reflect the academy theme. In addition, each academy is self-contained, with its own faculty, management team, and section of the building. This allows teachers and students to know one another and respect one another (American Federation of Teachers, 1998).

The Ninth Grade Academy is further divided into interdisciplinary teams of four teachers from different content areas. It is designed to provide ninth-graders a smooth transition to high school and a caring, respectful environment in which to begin their high school careers. The ninth-grade academy, for instance, is organized into several teams of four teachers and approximately 100 students each. Upper-grade academies, likewise, have interdisciplinary teams of teachers assigned to a group of students. Career academies are self-contained small learning communities of 250 to 350 students each for students in grades 10 through 12. Though the career focus certainly does not lock students into a choice for future education and work, it does add relevance to the high school curriculum and appeal to individuals' interests (Academy for Educational Development, 1998).

JPHS also appoints an assistant principal and a teacher as the management team leaders for each academy. Nicole, a student in the Public Service Academy spoke about how the academy programs have helped her focus on her future career choice.

I think the academy is cool. Well, I really want to go into education, so I can be a teacher and me being in the education academy kind of really prepared me for that. Because that's what I want to pursue…

The Public Service Academy is providing Nicole with the tools necessary to major in education when she attends college. She further noted how the academy focuses a lot on instructional practices and diverse curricula and how those entities play a major role in educating children. She also stated that some of her class assignments required her think "outside the box" and that she enjoyed those things the most.

The academy model also offers after-hours credit recovery programs, an alternative program called Twilight School and other summer and weekend activities, to catch up on

academic components. The Twilight School takes place at JPHS for students who have serious attendance or discipline problems (including students recently released from juvenile detention centers or suspended from another school). This program averages about 100 students per academic year. Instruction is offered in small classes in the basic subjects, and extensive services are provided by guidance counselors and support staff.

In addition, the school runs an Early College Academy program. The school district implemented its Early College Academy program in August of 2002 to allow students an opportunity to pursue college credits while in high school (www.nc.com)[3]. With partnerships at local institutions of higher education, both HBCUs and PWIs, students within the program can accumulate college credits. Students in the program select a challenging high school curriculum 9th through 11th grade and are eligible to take first year college courses, earning dual credit as both a high school senior and a college student. However, entrance into the academy requires minimum SAT passing standards, letters of recommendation, successful passing of Algebra I and the North Carolina computer skills and competency exam.

Many students take advantage of this program because the school district pays for tuition and non-consumable books. In addition, the school makes a tremendous effort to provide transportation to the college campuses. I later discovered that most of my participants were members of this program. In fact, many of the students spoke about their experiences within the Early College Academy.

> I think it prepares me good as far as them teaching me, yeah. I think it's good. I'm glad that they offer AP courses, so I can have a little bit of at least what college is going to be like; The way my teachers teach, I think is on a college level.

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[3] The reference has been altered for confidentiality.

The students were adamant about the preparation that came with being a member of the Early

College Academy. They felt that the AP (advanced placement) courses were the near

equivalent to college courses. The work in these classes is structured less towards hands-on

instructional practices. The instructors emphasize studying and learning class materials and

allocate responsibility to the students. Another student noted,

> I feel like I'm better prepared in this academy. My other classes, I'm not so sure they
>
> actually prepared me for college but I know my AP classes and my teachers are there
>
> to help us with college. My AP English 11 teacher, she gives us a little homework log
>
> which tells us when everything is due. Like when we're going to have a quiz. It also
>
> shows us homework assignments for a couple weeks ahead of time so it doesn't just
>
> edge up on you. I know some professors in college who do the same thing. They put
>
> it on the internet so you can access it. The classes that don't have that set up, you're
>
> just going day by day, doing our homework. And most of the times they don't even
>
> check the homework.

He was well aware that the AP classes required extra time and effort but that it would only

help prepare him for college. He believes the Early College Academy does justice to their

mission of college preparation and wished that all teachers would utilize the instructional

practices that many of his teachers employ. He reiterated that the course logs make it

impossible for a student to miss an assignment or be unprepared for upcoming exams. He

further noted that the more he was pushed to excel, the more he excelled. And he believes

other students, if put in similar situations, will do the same.

Students and staff admitted that the Talent Development High School model, used as

the framework of JPHS's program, is very beneficial but it can use a little "tweaking." Most

agreed that the most difficult part of the program is there are limits to the amount of students that can be in an academy. Students do not always get into the academy they choose first. In addition, the students acknowledged that teaching styles differ and that it often has an effect on the learning outcome. Some teachers put forth more effort. Sometimes it is difficult for each student to take away the most important information from each class. Kelsey discussed this in detail,

> Well for the most part the academy model I say is good. Like some teachers do good and then others teachers not so much. I mean some teachers actually at (JPHS) like they pretty much tell you we're going to do this and this. You know, you're going to pass… Some of them don't really teach you like the main things. The things you would need to know for that class. I'm afraid that's why I think, I'm going to have to learn some other stuff from something or someone else. I mean ok you passed the class, that's good for now, but what about in the future? What if you go in that class again and have to learn the other stuff? Honestly, you'll probably be behind and you probably won't know the things. I mean don't get me wrong, some teachers have actually tried, you know. They teach you everything. They teach you, you know, maybe step by step. They can tell you everything, so I think that helps in a way. Some teachers actually help and some teachers actually, you know, they just want you to pass.

Kelsey acknowledged the power a teacher holds over his or her class. They are the means by which knowledge is provided to the students. She stressed that some teachers are better at sharing their knowledge than others. She also emphasized that the sharing of knowledge, or lack thereof, in her eyes was a measure of how much a teacher cared about their class,

students, and teaching as a whole. However, students and staff adamantly support the overall JPHS approach to the Talent Development High School Model. And most parties involved agree that James Pointe High School is an example of academic excellence for students, past, present, and future.

Demographic Statistics

Each student in the 11th grade at JPHS completed a demographic sheet (see Appendix E). The demographic included information such as: name, gender, age, grade point average, parent/guardian education level, ethnicity, college interest, sibling(s) attendance in colleges, and participation in any advanced placement classes or extracurricular activities. The demographic sheet concludes by asking students if they would be willing to participate in the study. The following tables are a summary of the findings provided forth by the demographic sheets.

Table 1
JPHS 11th grade student samples

	Male	Male %	Female	Female %
Students that did not indicate participation	28	24.35%	10	7.63%
Students not willing to participate	31	26.95%	29	22.14%
Students willing to participate	56	48.69%	92	70.22%
Total demographic sheets received	115	46.75%	131	53.25%

Table 1 indicates the number of demographic sheets solicited and returned. From a total of 246 sheets received only 148 students indicated their willingness to participate in the in-depth interview portions of this study. Interestingly, almost twice as many females displayed an interest to participate in the study.

Table 2 displays the student responses to their post-secondary preferences. Most students indicate no school preferences. However, the male and female students that indicate collegiate preference do not differ much. Indeed, among both male and female students there is a stronger interest to attend a predominately white institutions rather than historically black colleges. This study defines community colleges as PWIs which may have influenced student preferences.

Table 2
College interest of JPHS 11th grade students

	Male	Male %	Female	Female %
HBCU	7	6.09%	8	6.11%
PWI	12	10.43%	11	8.40%
HBCU & PWI	28	24.35%	25	19.08%
No school(s) indicated	68	59.13%	87	66.41%

***Total number of males = 115   ***Total number of females = 131

Table 3 describes the student responses to the following demographic question: Do you have any siblings currently attending college? If so, which college(s)? These results display that regardless of gender, more students had siblings attending PWIs than HBCUs. However, PWIs do include community colleges. Table 3 also displays that most of the students indicate they have no siblings currently attending college. After discussions with my selected participants they all reveal they have at least one sibling of college age. As displayed in Table 2 more students are interested in attending a PWI than a HBCU, and amongst those students that mention sibling attendance the same renders true.

Table 3
Sibling attendance in colleges/universities

	Male	Male%	Female	Female %
HBCU	11	9.57%	7	5.34%
PWI	24	20.87%	23	17.56%
Not Attending	60	52.17%	81	61.83%
Unsure of institutional type	5	4.35%	6	4.58%
No siblings/NA	14	12.18%	11	8.40%

***PWI includes community colleges

From the pool of 148 students who indicated a willingness to participate in the study, participation was requested from 54 students, 27 female and 27 male students. The students were selected according to my aforementioned criteria: they were of African American descent, between the ages of 15-17, and knowledgeable about HBCUs and PWIs. Their knowledge of HBCUs and PWIs was measured by their responses to the following questions: Do you have any siblings attending college? If so, which ones? Do you have any interest in attending a college/university? If so, which ones? If a student has at least one sibling currently attending an HBCU or PWI, or if the student is interested in attending college at either HBCUs and/or PWIs he/she was given an assent form as well as a parent/guardian permission slip. The students who returned both assent and consent forms included six male and 19 female students. All six males and ten randomly selected females participated in this study. It is important to note that although an equal number of males and females were given permission slips, only six returned both consent and assent forms to participate in this study.

Blackness v. Whiteness, Whiteness v. Blackness

[H]ow difficult it sometimes is to know…Where the Black begins and where the White ends.
-Booker T. Washington

Education has long been a symbol of power and prestige, a valued entity among people. Indeed, some of fiercest battles have been fought over the right to access education in the United States (Wise, 2005). Although laws have been amended to acquire the rights of people to amenities provided forth in our Constitution, barriers, stereotypes, prejudices, and color lines are still evident. African Americans may attend any institution of higher education, HBCU and/or PWI. But their institution of choice may be a product of perceptions. "Educational choices are a Constitutional obligation, yet individual interpretations of college settings can create varied understandings of college. Access can be legislated but attitudes and climates cannot" (Patterson, 2006, p. 86). Currently, many colleges and universities have provisions to increase ethnic and racial diversity, but the provisions do not seem to supersede the stereotypes, biases and prejudices that surround many institutions of education.

Blackness v. Whiteness reveals the contrast between white and non-white culture in societal perceptions and their personal "hidden" feelings. Participants reveal how representations of "blackness" are unlikely to change among all people. Furthermore, participant conversation concerning HBCUs and PWIs expose that participants perceive Black schools cater to the needs of all their students. Yet, the PWI is believed to be a place where there are few possibilities for African Americans to be successful. The participants believe it is necessary for them to go above the perceived capabilities society places on young African Americans. Although the participants acknowledge the stereotypes that

surround their perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs, they perceive that Black success is inevitable in an environment of Black people. Their comfort is found in their "Blackness."

What is Race to Me?

What one's imagination makes of the other people is dictated, of course, by the laws of one's personality. And it is the ironies of black-white relations that, by means of what the white man imagines the black man to be, the black man is enabled to know who the white man is.

-James Baldwin

Fields (1990) argues that race was once framed as an ideological explanation for certain distant types of social inequality

Since race is not genetic, race cannot be genetically programmed either, but must

arise historically…The preferred solution is to suppose that have arisen historically,

race ceases to become a historical phenomenon and becomes instead an external

motor of history…In other words, once historically acquired, race becomes hereditary

(Fields, 2003, p. 101).

Race is kept alive because we as human beings continue to use it as a manner to define one's past, present, and future. Race surrounds the participant's perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions.

Students begin the interviews with a discussion about their educational experiences. Although some students mention integrated educational encounters, most state that their schools are defined by race and so are their experiences. Although America is a "race-conscious" society and many people believe in a color-blind ideal, it is a contradiction of claiming not to see race, while being conscious of it (Rosenberg, 2004). Attending predominately Black and White schools, and/or both, from kindergarten through high school

impacts their outlook on whites and blacks. Allan, a student that attended predominately

Black schools speaks of his experiences,

> I mean, I think I've learned pretty much the same stuff, same concepts I think, you
>
> know. From algebra to chemistry and all that other stuff…I mean I've been in a pretty
>
> good environment when you look at people in my race and in my schools, mostly
>
> Blacks. I mean I guess. That's what I've been told…

Allan illustrates race in relation to what he believes is expected of him, as a Black person

moreover, a Black student. Indeed, Omni and Winant (2001) argue that race cannot be

ignored. Black students are aware that race is often used to define them as inferior. His

thoughts are a theme that runs throughout the group of student participants. While Allan

strongly believes he was acquiring the same concepts in his classes, as whites did in "their"

(predominately White) schools, he is aware that attending a predominately Black school

comes with stereotypes of limited resources and behavior issues. But he was academically

excelling in his environment. He later discusses in a focus group that Black success is a

societal perception that is rarely if at all acknowledged, even in times where our country has

a Black president. Jonathan also speaks about this,

> …Look now, all the hype about the President was because he was Black. It was like
>
> they didn't care about how successful he was in life. Everybody acted like it was a
>
> surprise that there are successful Black men in the country, that aren't entertainers.
>
> And then when they finally gave him a little credit for his success, everybody talked
>
> about how he was actually half White and he went to Ivy League schools.

Jonathan emphasizes that Black success is rarely shown outside the confines of entertainers.

He believes that it is unlikely anyone will credit Barack Obama with being a successful

Black man that works hard to become President. Although race is thought to be irrelevant in determining one's life opportunities the participants overwhelmingly concluded that it continues to matter to "others" (Ignatiev, 1995). Jonathan stresses that the mainstream credits the President's success to his Ivy League (PWI/ best) school and that racially he is half white. The President is viewed as a half Black man who learns from successful white people in predominately white schools. The President would not have been viewed as worthy of his title if he did not have his Ivy League college education. Jonathan insists that the credibility of his intelligence or capabilities of running a country is not questioned because of his White education.

The concept of racial expectations and what race can or cannot provide is also evident in discussions with Jacob. His parents wanted him to attend an integrated school so that he could develop the "survival" skills necessary to succeed in today's society.

Well in elementary school, I went to a magnet school. And it was a good base for my academics because my mom and dad wanted me to go to a White school. First to get the base and know how everything works at a younger age, and then they put us at Middle School so we can get the African-American environment. As people would say so we have a mix of working with both Whites and Blacks. And then we went to JPHS because we wanted to be part of the academy. Because we have heard that the academy has always had a great turn out when it comes to colleges. Your senior year you get to go to college and to experience the college life. And I've been in social activities and other educational programs along the way because my mother puts me in there. I've learned different teaching styles, different professors, and different teachers all around North Carolina to learn pretty much all the tricks to the trade.

In addition to his parents' opinions, he believes that the "White" school is the place that prepares him to cope with life in the real world. If he succeeds in a predominately white environment at a young age, as his life progresses he continues to succeed. His parents also feel that being around individuals like himself (African American) teaches him important things about his culture. Jacob, along with his parents, feel that the JPHS Academy program meets his academic needs, and the majority Black student population allows him to learn more about Black culture. When further asked of the messages he receives while participating in an educational environment with a diverse population, he states:

> I've had some teachers and friends tell me how proud they were that I was doing well, and those that treated me like everyone else. But I still felt that no matter my grades I still would not be viewed past my skin color, while others said I was an exception to the rule.

He is completely aware, from a very young age that in American society success among Whites is perceived as the norm, while Blacks are not. Indeed, Whiteness may not be a justifiable cultural identity but it certainly is used to define socioeconomic status and opportunity (Winant, 2004). He continuously acknowledges that attending educational institutions that have predominately White or Black students are beneficial to his educational experiences. But at both types of schools he has varying opinions about success. When he attended the predominately white school he felt that success was inevitable because he was a product of a White environment. But at a Black school, society attributes students' success as artificial, rather than a product of strategies and/or practices unique to a predominately Black school.

All the participants, regardless of their educational experiences, believe race is used to define what they shall, can, and will have in comparison to the majority. Unfortunately, they believe it places them at a disadvantage. Tatum (1999) states in a study about the social construction of race, "just being Black makes it hard, because people look at you like you're not as good as they are, like you're a second class citizen, something like that" (p.85). Despite their disagreement with societal perceptions and racial definitions, they believe one's race is unlikely to be overlooked. They agree that no matter the intelligence that lies within a Black person, he or she is always defined by their skin color, hair texture, nose width, and lip thickness that remain markers of racial identity in the United States (Smedley, 2002). The importance of racial identity in the participants' perceptions was further conveyed as Scottie states,

> Well elementary I went to a predominantly White school and the setting was a lot different you know. I felt looked at. When I went to a Black middle school it was different. In the White elementary school, I didn't really care, since you were young, you didn't see things. Where I mean now you see, you look back and oh this prepares you. But by going to that White elementary school, I was able to be like this is what it's going to be like in the real world. I was able to put myself in a better position coming into the Black middle school and a Black high school…

White elementary schools are perceived to provide better learning environments and resources. He does not consider Black schools as bad, or less of an educational institution, but rather that attending a White elementary provides a foundation on which to build upon knowledge. Being surrounded by a "White culture" teaches African Americans better ways to communicate, comprehend, and cultivate ideas that may be unfamiliar to them. Dominant

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groups set the parameters within which society operates. In a situation of unequal power, such as attending a White elementary, a subordinate group (i.e. Blacks) have to focus on survival, as a means to protect and educate themselves (Tatum, 2004). For Scottie, if he could succeed in the White world, sometimes a place of discomfort, he may be more open to learning from others. And better off when he moves from one environment to the next.

It was a recurring theme throughout the interviews that even when students attend school with both white and blacks, just the association with whites provides an opportunity to "get ahead of the game." But racial lines are not overlooked. Not only is race an unnatural category, but its cultural boundaries are constantly negotiated and transgressed as individuals engage the forces and discourses that shape them (Kincheloe, 1999). Race is the first feature that is used to define an individual and often the factor that "others" (Whites) use to define an individual's capabilities, responsibilities, expectations, or capacity for knowledge. Indeed, Black students carry an awareness and clarity about race (Tatum, 2004). However, if we are not careful when using race as a social category, we can reify the perceived differences between black and white.

Black, White, you and me

> *Blackness is devaluation, and Whiteness is the overprivileging/norm.*
> *-Susan Garber*

Because Whiteness is often taken for granted and not acknowledged, researchers have begun to examine whiteness and to define it in terms of social impact (Roediger, 1991; Ignatiev, 1995; Winant, 2004). Such research concentrates on "White privilege," the differences between Whites and non-Whites and the advantage White people automatically take for granted.

Whiteness may not be a legitimate cultural identity in the sense of having a discrete

"positive" content, but it is certainly an over determined political and cultural identity

nevertheless, having to do with the socioeconomic status; religious affiliation;

ideologies of individualism, opportunity, and citizenship (Winant, 2004).

Blackness has historically been defined by Whites as "dark and evil" (Haymes, 1996). The

White privilege of characteristics "as the proper way to be" has continuously undermined the

efforts of non-Whites in a variety of spheres. Whiteness is often represented by orderliness,

rationality, and self-control and Blackness as chaos, irrationality, violence, and the

breakdown of self-regulation; (Alcoff, 1995). The participants discuss the aforementioned

representations of Whiteness in conversations surrounding societal biases of Whites vs.

Blacks and the "institutions" in which they historically and presently occupy. They believe

the contrast between White and non-White culture is evident, not only in societal

perceptions, but also in their personal "hidden" feelings.

The participants voice their frustrations being grouped and/or stereotyped into

categories that do not define them. Stereotypes and distortions contribute to the development

of prejudices (Tatum, 1997). But they are unaware of their prejudices against other

ethnicities. For example, in a focus group discussion one of the participants commented on

Black v. White representation,

We put so much stereotypes on Black, but Whites, they do stuff as well. But they're

kept on a low. Like I read in the newspaper one time, these students from some, I

think [predominately white high schools] were drinking cough syrup. Having it by the

bottle and drinking it in class and getting drunk. So we [Black students] do stuff in a

way, but it's portrayed all out there, like oh we smoke weed and everything. Not

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everybody does that. But when Whites drink cough syrup for no reason, it's put on a little article this big.

So much emphasis is placed on the negative stereotypes that surround Blacks, yet the negative that sometimes are associated with Whites are not. There is a perception that all Black people do all the negative/illegal things that are too often highlighted as characteristics of Blacks. Indeed, Claude Steele (1995) argues that minority student performance is negatively affected when they have to deal with this perception of inferiority. However, the students recognize that this unfair stereotyping is not made as visible when negative/illegal things are happening with White people. bell hooks (1992) is adamant that stereotypes are often based on ignorance.

> Stereotypes, however inaccurate, are one form of representation. Like fictions, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense. They are a fantasy, a projection onto the Other that makes them less threatening, Stereotypes abound when there is distance. They are an invention, a pretense that one knows when the steps that would make real knowing them, but surprisingly are unaware of their role in these same prejudices against other ethnicities. Stereotypes black folks maintain about one another cannot be taken or are not allowed (p.170).

This aforementioned lack of knowledge is used to define people, places, or things and is believed by many to be accurate. Prejudice is a consequence of living in a racist society (Tatum, 1997). Unfortunately, for some it becomes easier to stereotype rather than educate themselves. One stereotype leads to another, and a cycle of inaccurate information becomes truth.

Stereotypes continue to be present in many of the students' responses to questions concerning predominately white institutions. The focus group discussions carried on as the participants reiterate how stereotypes that surround Blacks are amplified while those of Whites are not. One student says,

> For example, what one White person does is not an action that is believed to be representative of all whites. Yet those actions that few Blacks do is construed as an action that is representative and definitive of all Blacks.

As unfairly as they perceive they are being grouped by the ideas of "Blackness," they did so similarly in their perceptions of "Whiteness." However, Kimberly strongly asserts,

> Yeah I do stereotype. But no matter what it cannot be held to the same standard or degree. Because it's less likely that they'll believe the words of a Black girl about White people, Black president or not.

She is not only speaking to race's role in stereotyping but also the power that is associated with race. Because Whiteness is the "natural" state of affairs, nonwhites are the outsiders (Hurtardo & Stewart, 2004). Because she is Black, she believes her words are less important. And she is adamant that society believes her words carry less weight as well. She can make harsh or kind comments but neither will garner as much attention as they will from a White girl. For Whites, thinking of oneself as only an individual is a legacy of White privilege (Tatum, 1997). In a predominately White society, the color of their skin still gives Whites a power that some may or may not acknowledge remains prevalent (hooks, 1992). In her eyes, as well as most of the participants, Blackness and Whiteness and Black and White are best defined in the context of "us" and "them," with "them" being in charge.

Research contends that racial identity is unclear to Whites because they never have to leave the White-dominant world (Hartigan, 1999; hooks, 2002). Carolyn agreed,

> White's don't have to think about all that race stuff really. But they sometimes look down upon us for that race stuff. And I think they look down on HBCUs for the same reason, because yet again it's Black.

She speaks not only to power, but White privilege as well. Although America is a country with a diverse population, Whites still have privileges that were established long ago. Historically, Whites have been identified as the "norm." Because Whites are defined as norm they are not defined by race (Alcoff, 1995). She believes if race becomes irrelevant so do thoughts about race. And Whites do not understand said concept. This lack of knowledge or regard about race leads to ignorance, the foundation of prejudice.

> The minorities experience their mistreatment regardless of their individual differences…they know fully well that they don't have the option of membership in the dominant group and they also know that they cannot easily escape from their more or less ascribed membership in a subordinate and disparaged group (Ogbu, 2004, p. 187).

The participants admit to experiencing mistreatment and/or racial prejudice throughout their lives and in most instances from members of the dominant group. Because people of color can experience racism, they develop insight into how Whites behave towards them. They also acquire insight into the White ideology of superiority and the ideology defining people of color as inferior (Essed, 1990). The participants accept that it is unlikely they will escape the racial classifications and/or Blackness that are associated with people like them, and at times they blame whites for such oppression. Nonetheless, these students are less concerned

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with the obstacles that their Blackness may bring, and thankful for the comfort that they often find among the people within it. Kimberley stated,

..because I feel that people like you can kind of understand you a little bit better and could kind of relate more. Because everybody's been there to a certain extent and learned about that history down the line, you know. Both of you know how it is. And you know everybody's attitude. And you deal with the same thing from other people, just the way people look at you period. And people who can relate to you better understand you. And they won't offend you, no way, you kind of understand better…

She acknowledges that representations of "Blackness" are unlikely to change among all people, but feels that it can be used as a means for Blacks to unite, and a means to place the positive aspects of Black culture at the forefront. Indeed, researchers have found that because of the impact of dominant and subordinate status, adolescents of color are more likely to be actively engaged in the exploration of their identity (Phinney, 1996). Paying less attention to stereotypes can provide an opportunity to educate one another about realities. In some manner the participants agree with Kimberly's thoughts, and try to think about the goodness that could be found within.

Although the students are aware of the stereotypes that surround Blackness and Whiteness, they agree that they could be used as a driving force to attend an institution of higher education and break the stereotypes that surround "Blackness." Joining with one's peers for support in the face of prejudices can be a positive coping strategy (Tatum, 1997). Stereotypes can provide an opportunity to expand communications and relations. They can also provide Black students an opportunity to grow, teach, and learn. These conversations led

to an in-depth discussion about their perceptions, as well as "others," of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions.

Black v. White = HBCU and PWI

> _We are American Negroes. It is beside the point to ask whether we are from a real race…_
> _Our problem is how far and what way we can consciously and scientifically guide our future_
> _so as to ensure our physical survival, our spiritual freedom, and our social growth._
> _-W.E.B. DuBois_

The Black college to the Black student is the familiar, while the PWI for some Black students is not. However, comfort can be found in familiarity. For example, a historically black college is located nearby and most of the participants are very familiar with the university. The idea of familiarity is evident in all their discussions about their perceptions of HBCUs. The HBCU is considered the safe-haven for the Black community. Allan brought this topic to light when he states,

> An HBCU I think would be more community support by just looking at it. A&T is
> like everybody is always pushing for it, talking about it. Because I guess it's like
> home. I don't know. I guess they support you, even if they don't know you. I don't
> know how to say it. If you're from here you know. Everybody knows everything
> about A&T. So I think Black people, they push more because they want it to succeed.

Kimberley also states,

> uh huh, I believe people. Ok some people say that you know at those schools, you be
> around all the same type of people. I heard people say before you don't want to be
> around all the same kind. You want to go, you know, experience new stuff and
> everything. But at the same time at other schools, I don't think people realize that if
> people had their own perception, they come from different places. You got places that

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are real racial and you got people coming from environments like that. And they're

coming up there. You don't want to feel like oh my gosh, you know, confederate

flags on their car. That stuff can worry people. You want to be somewhere where like

a historical Black college. There isn't anybody going to have a confederate flag or

anything. Everybody feels like a family. Automatically you are going to that school,

you're already a family just because the color of your skin. You already feel close to

one another. It's just other stuff you may have to deal with, but you already feel

accepted.

A predominately white institution is not perceived as part of the Black community. She

asserts the predefined fear that can appear when a Black person steps out of the Black

community. This fear is not only due to the perception of PWIs but also the people that may

be found within their institutional walls. However, as Tables 2 and 3 previously indicate

among students and their siblings the PWI is the institution of much interest among students

at JPHS. Research suggests that Black students on historically Black campuses emphasize

feelings of acceptance and engagement. Yet Black students on predominately white

campuses emphasize feelings of alienation and a sense of hostility (Allen, Epp, & Heniff,

1991; Freeman, 2005). Discomfort can arise when individuals are presented with people,

places, or things that are unfamiliar to them.

Michelle Fine (2004) details Whiteness in relation to institutions. The PWI is seen as

a place that not only exudes good and privilege, but often a place where there is minimal

Black survival.

…If institutions, such as schools, designed to be public and democratic are in fact,

organized to be porous to the replicative winds of racial and class stratification; if in

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such institutions, being White (or male or elite) buys protection, and if this protection

necessitates the erosion of opportunities for persons of color through policies and

practices that appear race-neutral, then those who have been historically excluded

may be invited in but most will "fail" to perform "to standard" (p. 254).

Schools are open to all, but that does not mean their practices are suited for all, or provide an

opportunity for all to succeed. If the standards of success are measured by the perceived

capabilities of one group of individuals (Whites), it is unlikely that efforts will be made for

those individuals outside of the majority to attain said success. Indeed, Freeman (2005) states

that when culture, in this case Black culture, is not included in the heart of academic

curriculum and policies the feeling that something is missing is created within those students.

For many of the participants, PWIs are viewed as equally accessible institutions of higher

education, but not as a place that provide comfort or the necessary steps to ensure

matriculation. HBCUs are institutions the participants believe would ensure their success. As

Hollins (1996) indicates, for Black children, the "discontinuity between the home-culture and

school learning ultimately disrupts the learning process for many children and the resulting

failure may lead them to reject the Euro-American culture and school" (p. 84). The

participants believe that HBCUs mission is to cater to the academic needs of Black students.

They believe an opportunity for success lacks in predominately white institutions but are in

abundance at historically black colleges and universities.

HBCUs were developed not only because of the racial divide of the era in which they

were founded; they use innovative methodologies to maximize outcomes for their students

(hooks, 2002). Shannon believed these methodologies would assist her tremendously,

They can support. I'm just saying that not all colleges give opportunities to the Black

students as much as an HBCU does. An HBCU is a Black student's opportunity to

have a chance. It gives them the hope that you know what, I can do this, you know;

because I believe. And I hadn't really experienced this because I'm not in college.

But I do believe that when you go to an HBCU college that they push you. You

know, tell you. You know what, you're not going to do this. You're going to do it.

You can make it. You can graduate. You can be what you want to be. And not all

colleges do that. A lot of colleges are just like all right, well you're here.

The HBCU is a place where the school feels accountable for the success, or lack thereof of

students. From her perspective, the HBCU does not operate like a business, but as a place

that prides itself on teaching students. Retention studies reveal that students are more likely

to thrive in college if they are in supportive and caring environments (Turner, 2003; Greene,

2005; Smith, 2005; Redley, 2004). Shannon and many of the other participants perceive an

HBCU knows the entities necessary for them to succeed and provides the tools to do so. The

HBCU is a community that encourages the most out of all parties involved.

In addition, the participants speak confidently that the HBCU equates to a support

system they perceive would not be adequately provided at a PWI. The HBCU support system

includes a more personal institution because of their tight-knit community. They believe a

PWI equals large institutions and the HBCU equals small institutions. Indeed, most literature

on African American success and enrollment in HBCUs has much to do with the comfort that

is found in smaller environments (Ogbu, 2002; Akom, 2003).

HBCUs provide quality education with a personal touch. Individuals, who may lack

the intellectual and emotional maturity to compete in the impersonal environment of

larger institutions, are exposed to mentors who intervene, when into the personal lives

of the students, to motivate them to realize their potential (Dale & Krueger, 2002, p.

1471).

In a study on preparing and supporting African American college students Black students

often perceive White faculty to be insensitive, generalize, and are less willing to go above

and beyond their roles as teacher (Gruffrida, 2005). Scottie reiterates this in his interview,

… I can't really remember where, but it was when I was comparing an HBCU to a

White, predominantly White college. At White colleges more so you are a number

instead of a student. And at HBCUs they know more so the learning styles of Blacks;

which is basically they need hands-on, like one on one. At White colleges more so

you have a lot of students. They just learn if you teach it to them. Just say it's a up to

you type of learning. That's not a way that I can actually learn. I actually got to do

hands-on. And I'm like ok I need your personal help. And at HBCUs they're more

friendly. The teacher actually interacts with the students.

He perceives that PWIs are not equipped to meet the needs of Black students, especially in

terms of instructional practices. The Black college is perceived to contain a staff of educators

that is aware of the learning styles of Blacks and instruct the students accordingly. Indeed,

Hale (2006) emphasizes that Black faculty on Black campuses are accessible to students and

are committed to establishing a teaching/learning environment predicated on the principle

that all students can learn. He along with many participants perceived that Black schools will

cater to the needs of all their students. These needs include providing an environment where

faculty treats students like friends and family.

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In addition, Gavin speaks to his perceptions about what the HBCU could provide Blacks. But he realizes that societal perceptions of these institutions probably differ significantly.

Some people see it as like ok, it's an all-Black school. This must all be ghetto, this is not even a type of school I want to go to. Some people will be like you know, let me just say about it. Because some HBCUs are really, really help people out. Some people don't realize it, but it really does help people out. And they're made for a reason. I mean you have the Black colleges it's just mainly about culture, education, who you're around. As long as it just doesn't change who you are, that's what matters.

He recognizes the negative stereotypes that can surround some HBCUs, but is adamant that they can provide an environment and experiences unique to their institutions. It provides a culture for its students to succeed, while being surrounded by people, events, and ideologies more recognizable to African Americans. In fact Julian B. Roebuck and Komanduri S. Mutty's *Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Their Place in American Higher Education* (1997) presents the HBCU as institutions where students feel a sense of territorial integrity, ethnic pride and authentic selfhood, an experience Black students rarely have at PWIs. And Gavin suggest that society does not see the whole picture, rather a glimpse of what HBCUs can provide to all students. However, he went on to discuss his view on the societal perceptions of PWIs, and how some Blacks may prefer those schools.

…well people do like their classes. Only society's perception of a PWI is they most of the time usually assume it's going, you're automatically going to have a good education at a PWI. And sometimes that's true. They can't lie about that. But it cost

serious money. And African-Americans…don't really want to go to a school for

White people. Some want to go to an all-Black college. And it's just like sometimes

they don't really have that choice. Like some Black schools may help somebody. And

some White schools may help somebody.

He perceives that predominately white institutions are revered as institutions where a good

education is guaranteed. For that reason alone many students prefer to attend these schools,

including a large population of Black students. Larger institutions can provide a wider range

of academic and financial opportunities. According to Gurin and Epps (1995) a significant

difference between African Americans who selected HBCUs and those who selected PWIs

was the financial support available to them. "Only one-third of Black students in Black

colleges but one-half of those in White colleges held scholarships or grants that covered most

of their college expenses" (p. 29).In addition, they are perceived to be institutions with the

resources to offer more majors and scholarships.

However, Gavin was the first participant to mention the cost differential that exists

between the two types of institutions. The cost of higher educational institutions impacts

post-secondary choices. In fact, Elling and Furr (2002) surveyed students at a predominately

white institution to examine why African American students dropped out after the third or

fourth semester. According to the data, the major reason for dropping out is because the

students do not have sufficient funds to pay tuition. But neither institutional type is

perceived to be better than the other. Rather Gavin perceives that institutional preferences are

a result of which school best suits an individual. While the participants have similar remarks

regarding the perceptions of both HBCUs and PWIs, they also give much attention to the

social and/or entertainment opportunities they feel are available at HBCUs. They believe they are not the "same" at PWIs.

In Hale and Holbrook (2006), Wingate states, "HBCUs attempt to facilitate success by enriching each student through activities that provide avenues for success" (p. 47). The participants emphasize their desire to participate in the perceived social life that exists at the HBCU. These social aspects included college bands, Greek life, sporting events, and cultural events. In a focus group discussion a participant states,

> … with the sororities and fraternities you see at a Black college, you see how like more traditional they are. How close they are. It's like there's something that could teach everybody who's in the color or outside the color or something.

Greek life at an HBCU provides another means of familial support. Although the sororities and fraternities are praised for the social aspects, they are heavily acknowledged as academically-based organizations that include members who excel both inside and outside the classroom. These members represent role models rather than "party-people." Scottie further emphasizes some of his perception on social life at HBCUs, when he was asked what he would tell a student about PWIs.

> I'd say you're on your own for that one because I don't know. I haven't done as much research with them. Since I was at the stage where I can pick what college I want to go to, I haven't really looked at PWIs. Because I've been around, basically all my family has gone to HBCUs. I've seen how much environment, how much fun they actually have. They have interesting games. Everybody you know when you go to an HBCU football game, you're going to have ribs, chicken, fried fish, smoked turkey

legs. You're going to have the whole bill because it's like more so of a family and

social setting. Because Blacks tend to try to come together wherever they are.

The HBCU provides an environment similar to his own. His culture includes strong familial

bonds, fun, food, and festivities, elements that can be seen within Black culture. HBCUs

have developed a unique culture that surrounds such traditions. These traditions have a

distinct significance for African Americans (Davis, 2006). It is evident that Scottie's desire

to maintain access to these important cultural elements plays a large role in his choice of

post-secondary institutions. Indeed, Harvey and Williams (1996) study notes that

participatory ethos and engaging social environments are among the many luxuries that

Black students believe occurs when attending an HBCU. If Scottie chooses to be away from

his family, he wants his Black culture nearby. Many of Scottie's perceptions of higher

educational institutions are linked to the experiences, or lack thereof, he has with both

HBCUs and PWIs. As the interviews progress, similar trends are evident amongst all the

participants.

As previously mentioned, the participants display comfort in discussing their

perceptions of HBCUs, but do openly share their thoughts about the PWI and how they

believe them to be "academic" institutions. Taylor (1989) discusses a challenge to PWIs for

African Americans revolved around the "curricula, teaching styles, student services and the

campuses in general are tailored to white students" (p. 3). They comment on how life would

be for them attending a PWI. Nicole speaks about this in the following way,

> I think they'll push us more. I mean I think they'll push us. Because it's like if you
>
> fail at a White school, then you'll feel like oh. I'm trying to say like I think they'll
>
> push you to work harder because you don't want to be the Black girl that failed at a

White school. It's like you don't want to be looked at like oh they're Black. It's all

right if they're at the bottom of the class. I think they'll push you to work to be the

best.

She deems the pressure that comes with attending and succeeding at a predominately white

institution pushes Blacks harder. According to Freeman (2005) Black students attending

predominately Black high schools tend to believe it is important to consider attending PWIs.

Indeed, Table 2 displays that both male and female students at JPHS showed interest in

attending PWIs. The participants want to actively compete with their White counterparts.

These students want to be an example of intelligence, hard work, and perseverance. They

want to go above and beyond the perceived capabilities and expectations society places on

young African Americans. Despite the perceived PWI academic standards, elitist status, or

national recognition Black students want to prove themselves at these institutions. A Black

student attending a predominately white institution is believed to represent all Black students

in the eyes of the PWI community.

Numerously during the student interviews, the participants' perceive predominately

white institutions to be places of elitism, competition, and better job opportunities because of

the high praise and recognition the institutions receive. These descriptive terms were not only

mentioned in regards to societal perceptions but personal opinions as well. Keisha states,

I think I would just say make sure you, um, make sure you're going there to do your

work and not really to have fun. Just make sure you're doing what you're supposed to

do. I think that those schools are much better. And I think if you're trying to get a job

it will be helpful if they know which school you went to.

In her opinion, PWIs are institutions where academics are priority. She further suggests that

their academic standards do not provide leniency. PWIs have been assumed to be the best

places for Black student development (Allen, 1992). Because academics are believed to be

the measure of a great institution, PWIs are perceived as better. They are also perceived to

have the resources to service students of color. Better academics can lend itself to better

programs, courses, recognition, and better job opportunities. Additionally, she believed that

no one would question the intelligence or academic capabilities of a student who

matriculated through a predominately white institution. Indeed, Lang and Ford (1992)

suggest that in terms of prestige and values in this society, degrees from PWIs seem to carry

more weight than degrees from HBCUs. As shown in Tables 2 and 3 this may be a reason

that students indicate more interest in PWIs. But in spite of the perceived academic

accolades, the PWI is not a place that all Black students choose to attend. Allan states, what

he would tell someone about attending either an HBCU or PWI. He discusses the HBCU

first,

> What would I tell them? I would tell them overall it's a great institution to go to
>
> where you can go and get help. You know there's going to be time to have fun.
>
> You're going to learn. You're going meet new people. It's a place where you're going
>
> to feel independent. And there's going to be time to do work. So I think overall I
>
> would tell them that it would probably be a place that you will love and that you will
>
> enjoy. And a place where you could tell your kids in the future, yeah, I went here, you
>
> know. I really enjoyed myself and I probably think that you would be able to go there
>
> and be who you want to be if you go there.

Allan emphasizes the positive things he perceives a historically black college or university

would provide. The HBCU was a place that put forth the efforts to help students succeed. In

fact the HBCU philosophy asserts that they "take students where they are and help them get

to where they need to be" (Benton, 1998, p. 3). The HBCU is a place that promotes

academics, while allowing the students to mature, socialize, and take pride in their culture.

The HBCU is a place, because of its history, that students should hold in high regard and

enjoy the experiences that will take place. Allen then follows with his assessment of

attending a PWI,

> PWI, predominantly White, um, I would tell them, you know, I would tell them the
>
> same thing. But then again I would tell them maybe you don't really want to go here.
>
> I will want you to go to school, with the White, you know, but you'll probably get
>
> more work … and they'll probably go somewhere big. And I'd probably tell them ok,
>
> this is some place where you probably want to go, but give it serious thought. If
>
> you're serious about going to work and serious about everything, and you're not
>
> going to let peer pressure and that get in the way, then you should go there.

His comments about PWIs differ from his conversations about HBCUs. Similarly to other

participants, he places all the emphasis on attending a predominately white institution on the

academic components. Students that attend PWIs have to work hard and make studying and

attending class a priority. He believes there is little room for mistakes at PWIs. In addition,

he discussed his perceptions of how HBCU and PWI life would differ.

> With the Black you're going to have more parties. And um, you know you come to
>
> homecoming, you know, predominantly its Blacks there. But you know as far as
>
> homecoming, you're going to have a lot more parties. You're going to have a chance,

you know, to get on the wrong track. Because it's going to be right there in front of

you. And predominantly White, I mean they're going to have parties too. At the same

time they know what they're there for. And they know that all right, we're in college.

We got to make smart decisions. I mean some will act out. White makes mistakes

because everybody makes mistakes. I'm just saying like overall they'll probably

know that, ok, we're in this college, like for a reason. Even if you get kicked out, it's

like we're going to keep you. You're going to stay on track.

The HBCU is a place that students attend for social purposes first, followed by cultural and

academic purposes. The PWI is a place students attend for academic purposes first, followed

by social and post-collegiate opportunities. Indeed, Black students at Black colleges have

been found to be more integrated into campus life, social involvement, and cultural activities

(Davis, 1994). Yet, PWIs human, material, and financial resources are believed to be a valid

indicator of its educational quality and effectiveness (Pascarelli, Nora, Springer, & Teranzini,

1995). The HBCU is a place that provides too many opportunities to let the fun get in the

way of attaining a degree. The PWI is a place that rarely allows the aforementioned

opportunities to occur. His comments are followed by similar remarks from several of the

participants.

Throughout the remainder of the discussion emphasis was placed on how they

perceive the predominately white institutions as unsupportive and unwelcoming.

Schools do not merely inherit or manage racial and ethnic identities; they create and

enforce racial meanings. Schools as contested spaces, structure the conditions for the

embodiment, performance, and/or interruption of sustained inequitable racial

formations. In such institutions, whether or not the buildings are in fact "integrated"

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Whiteness is coproduced with other in a symbiotic relation (Fine & Weis, 2003, p.

125).

Natalie says, "I think they are good schools, but I don't really think they welcome

everybody…" However, some participants agree that PWIs are welcoming in some ways,

like to those individuals they believe were outside the "negative stereotypes" that often

surround minorities. Bryan replies,

…because you're not predominantly, maybe in a predominantly Caucasian school,

they're going to be like you make the high grades we want you. But we don't want

this other person. We want you because you went there and you got high grades.

You're in. You're not in the minority. You're still doing well.

Black students that are perceived better than the "average" Black student are the ones that are

accepted and succeed at predominately white institutions. Those Black students that the

majority (White) assumes cannot meet the standards set by their institutions are the students

that are overlooked.

Through all of the student participant interviews HBCUs are incessantly perceived as

institutions that provide support, entertainment, Black history, and culturally based

instructional practices. In spite of the bad publicity they often receive, they are institutions

that are believed to be cheaper, contain smaller environments with a large population of

Black people. Indeed, literature on African Americans and college choice suggest the same

(Freeman, 2002). On the other hand, PWIs are perceived as institutions known for being

academically challenging, with a strong emphasis on sports, maintaining their credibility,

while using standard instructional practices and curriculum. In addition, they are believed to

be large, unwelcoming institutions that are costly to attend and are populated by a majority of

White people. But most of the participants' perceptions are based on the type of institution they are most familiar with, and/or which one's they prefer to attend.

The participants emphasize that attending a school where they feel unwelcomed would probably have a big impact on their collegiate experiences. Negative attitudes about the presence of Blacks produce an unfriendly environment for Blacks to reside (Saddlemire, 1996). The students stress their attitudes about attending a predominately white institution contribute significantly to their views on PWIs as well. They strongly associate PWIs with academic standards and HBCUs with supportive environments and social opportunities. But it is important to note, as shown in Table 2 many of the students have more interest in attending a PWI. And in Table 3, the students that indicate they have sibling(s) attending college are at predominately white institutions. However, when it comes to their perceptions of higher educational institutions as a whole, Kelsey says it best,

> Despite the differences between the historically black college and the predominately white college, or what I think about either of them, or which one I choose doesn't matter. They both can help you. Neither one of them will hurt you because it's college. On your resume, you want to put I went to college. You don't want to put I just went to high school.

Familial Sway, Familial Lean

Family is a collective expression of individual perspectives…a living work of art
-Wes Fessler

There is general consensus in educational literature about the impact of family on youth (Howard, 2003; Billingsley, 1992). Indeed, a study entitled, *The Strengths of Black Families: 25 Years Later* suggests that Black families have five prominent strengths that

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contribute to the overall lives of Black youth (Hill, 1999). These strengths include: adaptability roles, strong kinship bonds, strong work orientation, strong religious orientation and achievement orientation. All of these strengths are believed to significantly contribute to the survival and advancement of Black youth. It has been the responsibility and task of Black parents/guardians and the Black community to prepare Black youth for today's society. For many Black parents education is the foundation to success.

The participants' families view education as a priority and post-secondary education as a necessity. However, familial preferences of college are a direct product of familial perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs. The participants stress that their parents may not know everything about higher educational institutions, but they all demand their children attend college and obtain a degree. In addition, many of the participants address the role of "the other family" in their collegiate perceptions. For the participants the extended family provides much insight into historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. To the students, family includes a diverse group of individuals with varying opinions and experiences. They not only provide additional perspectives on college but specifics on college life. However, they concede that the "blood family" at times supersedes the "extended family."

Because they told me so…

> *As a child my family's menus consisted of two choices: Take it or leave it!*
> *-Wes Fessler*

African Americans have always had "a deep historical and cultural belief in the efficacy of education. Blacks have sought education in every conceivable manner and at

every level" (Billingsley, 1992, p. 181). Sociologist Billingsley (1992) often discusses

African Americans and education in his literature. He contends,

> Education is the traditional opportunity through which black families find their place
>
> in life. And having found it, they replicate their experience again and again through
>
> their children (p. 172).

Among African American families, a group of individuals that was prohibited access to

schools and institutions of higher education, when given the opportunity has made schooling

a fundamental goal to obtain the skills that can be found through a "good" education.

However, both administrative and student participants cite they want to receive beyond a

"good" education, especially in discussions related to higher education. Throughout the

interviews attending college is a necessity amongst all their families. Indeed, the students

consistently mention that most of the knowledge and information they receive about college

comes from their family. Jonathan insists,

> I get all my information from my family, because they give me a heads up of what
>
> life is like, and what I have to look forward to when I go to college. So they like
>
> inform me and give me a chance to kind of get ready and think about it all now. And
>
> what I'm going to do in college, my study habits and stuff.

China also mentions the impact her family on her collegiate outlook,

> um, my mother and sisters and school talk a lot about going there. Then you'll have a
>
> better future if you go to college. And if I ever have kids when I grow up, I want them
>
> to have a good stable environment. I don't have a good stable environment at home
>
> right now because of money. But I don't want my kids to go through that, either.

Most of the responses about "college knowledge" vary in context but the content was consistent; their perceptions about institutions of higher education are a reflection of what their families have told them about college. Indeed, Freeman (2005) asserts that education has always been a matter of interest for the entire family. The students concede that some of the information they may have been given by their families is inaccurate, misleading, biased, or based on personal experiences, but they all believe in some manner that their parents are right. Despite the favoritism that surrounds their family's perceptions of colleges, the priority is placed on receiving a post-secondary education. Their families perceive education to be the key to their children's success therefore, the students do as well.

The students are provided "specific" parental/familial perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs, but not always because a family member attended a particular college, or even received a high school diploma. The families want these students to achieve beyond the level of others. The Black family believes that each generation should have more opportunities than the previous generation (Freeman, 2005). Bryan chats about what his cousin says college life is like,

> Well its going to be a bigger difference. In high school we're mostly living off our parents. And when you get to college, you're going to be living on your own or in dorms. And you might be moving out of state. So you have to actually try harder if you were to move out of state or leave your parents house.

His cousin emphasizes that college would be an experience unlike all of his previous educational occurrences. College is a time for maturity and a place where independence, prioritization, and responsible decision-making are necessary. His cousin reiterates the parental support system that a K-12 student becomes accustomed to changes when students

attend college. The changes are evident whether or not he attends a HBCU or PWI. But students and parents believe that HBCUs can provide a support system similar to a Black family. HBCUs assume it takes an institutional family to produce competent Black graduates (Davis, 2006). A Black college family includes faculty, staff, and students familiar with Black culture and has the student's best interest at heart.

Hossler and Gallagher (1997) indicate parents "play an important role in shaping attitudes toward higher education and college choice" (p. 211). Most of the families perceive that the HBCU provides the students with the best opportunity for success. But as previously shown in Table II most students have siblings attending PWIs. Nonetheless, some of the students emphasized that Black colleges are diverse and give them the opportunity to interact with many different races, which their families believed is very important. Yet, a student more familiar with HBCUs spoke passionately about the diversity these institutions provide. In a focus group discussion, one participant, whose parents both worked at an HBCU, states

> The majority, I'm already having plans for A&T because I've looked up a way to get a full ride and everything like that. A&T, I've been around it since my 7th grade year and it's an interesting campus. You have a little bit of everybody there. You may not see everybody at one time, but as you go on through your semester or go on through the summer, you see a little bit of White, Asian, and Chinese, everything right over here. It's good. You work with different counterparts from all around the world. It's just not you dealing with Black peers, Black lower class, Blacks here, Whites in this class. They're mixed together because you can all learn from each other. Work is not bias or color. People, we are bias or color. We only want to work for people of our color because we feel we can relate better to them. But we never know if we reach out

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to that Chinese or Asian person, he may be able to teach us a way that we can make

the work faster. It's going to be interesting.

One of the perceptions that surround HBCUs is they are institutions comprised of only Black

people. Different ethnicities may be underrepresented sometimes at HBCUs, but it does not

mean diverse individuals are non-existent on Black college campuses. HBCUs generally

have more diverse faculties than PWIs. In many HBCUs there is a large international faculty

(Davis, 2006). The diversity opportunities HBCUs can provide is not often used by families

to define these institutions. But some participants address it as an important factor in their

collegiate decisions. Indeed, family members have some objective perceptions of higher

educational institutions, but throughout the student interviews it becomes evident most

families perceive the HBCU to be the best choice for their child.

The same adjectives the students use to define both the HBCU and PWI are almost

identical to the words their families told them about the institutions. Their knowledge or lack

thereof, sometimes provides their children with misguided, incomplete, and predisposed

information about historically black colleges and universities and predominately white

institutions. But these families play such a large role in the student's thoughts and decision-

making processes that it may lead some of the students to make future collegiate decisions

that are not precise. In one focus group, a student states,

Whether or not like a parent has been to college or not, I'm pretty sure they will push

you. Now my mother, she has some college, but she pushes me to go to college. She

wants me to go to college and everything. So I know there's always going to be a

parent to push you to go to college. But she has her preferences, which I don't agree

with though.

Besides the pressure to choose the college their parents feel best fits them, and believing only what their parents say about school, there are a few students who say they seek information about college from additional resources. These resources include the internet, peers, and counselors. But the family is a predominate factor contributing to their perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs, Kelsey says,

> um, I guess since my, most of my family on my mother's side went to Howard. So again they keep talking about that, go to Howard. Not to really just be with the family tradition, but because of what they tell me and from what I've seen. I don't know if I have any other choice.

This study reveals that familial preferences of college are a direct product of familial perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs. "The majority of African American students exist in families where there is interest in their participation in and benefitting from higher education" (Freeman, 2005, p. 17). Kelsey, as well many of the participants, cites the considerable influence their families will have on their choices, or lack thereof, of which higher educational institution to attend.

Like all students, whether by educational influences, socioeconomic level of their parents, or the type of K-12 schools they attend, most African American students cannot remember exactly when they begin thinking about higher education. But they know it probably is a conversation started by their family (Freeman, 2005). They all have the same opinion; they are attending college. And it is a decision greatly influenced by their parents' perceptions. However, one participant, Scottie does assert that although families can be overbearing and may be guided by a lack of knowledge about collegiate institutions it is

ultimately the student's choice of which colleges to attend. And what they should

think/believe about said colleges.

> Well basically it comes down to a personal choice. You can have your family
>
> influences. Like you got some friends telling you what they're going to do and it
>
> doesn't always turn out to be that way. Because when they actually do try it, they try
>
> to make the parents happy. But then again they're like I don't want to be there. I want
>
> to be such and such. So they're not truly happy. They're not going to put in their full
>
> effort at this if they actually want to go to the school they chose for themselves. So
>
> parents can be overbearing when it comes to it. But it basically depends on where you
>
> want to go and what you want to major. That's how you're going make it.

The Extended "Family": Beyond the tree

> *"Blood may build a population, but love builds a family"*
> *-Rabbinic saying*

Outside of the confines of the family tree lies the extended family. Schools, teachers,

counselors, neighborhoods and communities have a tremendous influence on the outlook of

college (Barnes, 1992; Freeman, 2005). The extended family proves to play a significant role

in the perceptions of higher educational institutions. For the participants the extended family

provides much insight into historically black colleges and universities and predominately

white institutions. They not only provide additional perspectives on college, but they often

have knowledge on specific aspects of college, like financial aid or classroom practices. They

also provide the students with not only personal experiences, but also insight into how they

perceive college would be for the students. According to the students, the extended family

often includes school personnel (principal, counselor and teachers) and community organizations/members (church, coaches, and neighbors).

For many of the students high school is a family. It is a home away from home, a place where they can have many of the same discussions they have with their parents. These are discussions about their personal lives, academic, financial, emotional issues and assistance with post secondary plans. The 11th grade counselor, Ms. Langel mentions that her role is significant in assisting with the post secondary plans of the participants and often mentions her close relationships with students. She discusses in-depth about what information she provides them about both HBCUs and PWIs. She states,

> … a large portion of what we do as high school counselors, um, is pretty much making sure and steering the students in the direction of making sure they're taking the courses they need to graduate…If they're seniors, of course, that involves scholarships, um, financial aid applications, um, college admissions applications, so it just, it varies to all of that. So we do meet with students quite a bit…mostly for schedule related or academic related purposes, and career planning. We set up parent conferences on a needed basis for the parent, for the teacher…we're advocates. That's our biggest piece. And I feel like that's the piece that I probably try to keep as a badge of honor for what I do. Because I realize that sometimes students don't have advocates outside of the school…

She is passionate about her role in the students' thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about institutions of higher education. Counselors provide guidance. Indeed, research suggests that counselors are important in the process to increase the number of students applying to college (Freeman, 2005). Counselors provide information on college that many parents do not have access to.

She recognizes that the proximity of A&T and many local colleges does provide parents with some information on colleges. However, she suggests that the limited exposure to local colleges may lead to misperceptions of all colleges. She wants to be the source of "college truths." The counselor supplies the students with the steps necessary to apply, attend, and succeed at either HBCUs and/or PWIs. In a focus group discussion, the students reiterate the significance of the counselor in providing them additional knowledge about HBCUs and PWIs. Indeed, when used effectively, counselors can mediate social and cultural influences and influence the type of postsecondary school selected (Freeman, 2005). One participant discusses how a campus visit that the school and counselor coordinated helped shape her thoughts about college and collegiate institutions,

> She told me about [community college], going there for a two year for an associate's degree and then transferring to another college and picking that stuff up. She always said that it's not really about, um, high school, it's about once you get out and doing what you got to do. Then building it up, so regardless of college essay that it's about going somewhere else. Transferring, that's looking at what you get in college. Not do I have to go where everyone else is, but going to [community college] or community college period, because it's cheaper, a little bit cheaper and stuff. It won't let, you know, get in over your head, but help you prepare for anything later on in life.

Although this participant is the first to mention community colleges, she asserts that the community college is a PWI. As indicated in Tables 2 and 3, community colleges are considered PWIs. However, community colleges differed from other PWIs because they are perceived to include a much more diverse student, staff, and faculty population. Students

attend community colleges because they are inexpensive and/or close to "family", not because of cultural needs. And JPHS staff helped her to learn those components of college.

Although JPHS lacks some of the financial resources that schools in upper class communities have available, the school emphasizes maintaining and providing a structured guidance and counseling program to aid in producing successful students. Cuyjet (1997) in support of Boyle (1966) indicates that without having created a culture of belief in the abilities of its students, a high school cannot be successful in motivating and/or assisting them with higher education. Among high school personnel the perceptions of higher educational institutions vary, but the school strongly advocates for both HBCUs and PWIs. Dr. Pitts (principal) discusses how both institutions are advertised and promoted,

> …counselors and the teachers. really, you know. We have some teachers still have them up. Some of them fell down. They are asking about, I don't know whether you've seen them in their classrooms or outside their door, but then you know, it says ask me about East Carolina University. Ask me about North Carolina A&T. So we're trying to, um, just make it, and make students aware of some of the opportunities out there for them. We have, you know, a college application day. And (name) kind of organized that where the state was waiving all the fees for kids to apply for college. And so they signed up and they went into, um, the library, the media center and went on-line and applied for as many colleges that they wanted to apply for. Its free of charge and we have, I think it was over 200 kids out of 300 seniors sign up to participate. I don't know whether they actually showed up or not to participate, but it still was a high number. It shows some form of interest in going to some post-education, 4 year, at least a 4 year institution.

JPHS personnel highly promote higher education. Teachers use their classroom doors to advertise the college(s) they attended in hopes that students will inquire about all higher education institutions. The school also supplements possible financial constraints and brings post-secondary resources to the students. Freeman (2005) suggests that it is very clear that information about higher education must be incorporated in some structured format within schools. If the students are provided the tools to think about college they may choose to attend. He believes that the conversations and displays of higher educational institutions throughout the school positively impact the student's beliefs about the necessity of post-secondary degrees. However, he acknowledges that the students 'perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs is quite possibly influenced heavily by those entities, especially conversations surrounding finances.

> … most of our teachers graduated from North Carolina A&T. And once we got some from NC State. And we also have some from UNCG, Appalachian State, which is not, um, HBCU, so I don't know. I never thought about that. I never asked them that, you know. And some of it could be financial, dependent on athletic scholarships and things of that nature, kids may consider that. But if they don't get the scholarship or the money or something of that nature they may choose another institution over another. And maybe that is the drive out here. Bottom line is the cost and how much in money they're getting to go to the institutions. Now, more so than in the past, when you knew I'm going here because it is, you know, part of the African-American community. People are now choosing their options and saying who's giving me the most money.

It is possible the student's perception of higher educational institutions is influenced by the school. The students may define the college by the JPHS teacher that attended it. However, Dr. Pitts suggests that student, staff, and familial perceptions of post-secondary institutions are influenced more by institutional costs. Most JPHS students are from lower class families. Their perceptions of higher educational institutions may not be affected by their socioeconomic standing; however it is likely that their socioeconomic standing affects their college choice. Indeed, research suggests that socioeconomic factors influence students' aspirations and achievement (Allen, Bonus-Hammarth & Teranishi, 2002; Hale, 2006). These variables can create differences in access to information, financial resources, academic experiences and academic preparation. As previously mentioned, having an HBCU nearby does heavily influence the students' perceptions. Both administration and students agree that the "school family" does their best to aid in the collegiate process as much as possible, regardless of the school. The school is important to African Americans participation, or lack thereof, in higher education (Freeman, 2005). They are there to guide them and are evidence that receiving a college education is possible. They want to be positive role models. Nevertheless, most school personnel have the same thoughts as the participants "blood family." HBCUs provide the support system that is most helpful to the students.

Ms. Langel (11th grade counselor) perceives the role models that Black youth need are found in an HBCU. It may benefit the students to see those individuals.

> …going to post-secondary just a higher education, I think it presents more
> opportunity for students. For me I think that our students here would probably, for me
> personally, benefit more from an HBCU because they wouldn't get lost. And because
> they may already have that self-esteem issue there, and if they're on a college campus

that may be predominantly White, they may feel like I don't see anybody looks like

me, I don't see anybody that I can pull from, glean from here as much. As if I'm at a

Black college, wow, you know everybody. Everybody's here, and most people look

like me. Even down to if they start singling out professors. And you know A&T for

example has an African-American Chancellor. So these people look like me and they

have doctoral degrees. They have doctor in front of their name. It's just not, it's not a

medical doctor. I know my medical doctor has a degree whether they look like me or

not you know. Now I'm at a school where people look like me and so I have

something to aspire to and look forward to. Maybe that's their motivation. I think you

know any post-secondary will help any student. But I think for us, um, being

predominantly African-American here at JPHS I think maybe even HBCUs for me

personally, may expose them and a lot. It may give them the opportunity and allow

them the opportunity to excel maybe a little more. They can see more people that look

like them and make more efforts to succeed, than if they were at a PWI.

The "comfort" that is perceived to be accessible at the HBCU is found in the teaching and

administrative staff. Black students at many HBCUs are given an opportunity to see

successful Black individuals on a daily basis. In turn, successful students can become

products of successful environments. Coyjet (1997) believes that positive role models can

have a positive effect on African American youth, especially in the participation of higher

education. The HBCU staff can serve as role models and/or inspirations for students to attain

college degrees. In addition, the negative stereotypes that can surround Blacks and scholastic

achievement may be outweighed by the sight of positive Black images in academia. In truth,

discussions about positive role models are met with enthusiasm from both staff and students

when they converse about opportunities they perceive an HBCU could provide. Having students interact with role models is noteworthy. Teachers sharing personal college experiences with students garner discussions that may have not been available in families outside the doors of academia (Freeman, 2005). China feels that the HBCU is sometimes the choice because of the role models and/or celebrities that support them,

> HBCU are like regular schools. They just stand out more because for minorities and stuff like that. And African-American celebrities, they try to endorse it and stuff. And if you're an African-American teenager and you idolize that celebrity, it will make you want to go there.

China believes the HBCU garner positive perceptions because of their celebrity endorsements. Moreover, based on economic, neighborhood, and other conditions role models provide support for African American students' academic success. Indeed, in addition to fostering pride and inspiration, effective role models and mentors can expand confidence by students' association with achievers (Hale, 2006). Student participants believe that the "school family" heavily influences their scholastic perceptions, and the family that exists between the school and the home does as well.

Throughout interviews all participants are aware that their "race " alone made things a little harder, but that they are surrounded by a community that would not let that be used as an excuse. Education has always been a matter of interest for the community (Hale, 2006). Their community included churches, neighborhood youth groups, relatives, and friends. As members of a community that include so many individuals that work hard to attain success, regardless of individual perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions, all anyone wants is for them to be successful. The students

emphasize that most people within their communities only cares about them attaining the educational skills necessary for them to "pay it forward." In a focus group discussion, one student talks about his community,

> Our church, I mean it gives out like scholarships for you know doing stuff around the church. But like the recommendation of education goes, they really push that. The community goes like crazy and stuff when it comes to education, you know. It's like they really go crazy. It's not a choice. They say you will go.

Nicole discusses how her participation in community organizations assists her in gaining knowledge about college,

> um, I was in girl scouts and I was in a youth group that prepared me. The Zetas, it was a youth group under people from surrounding colleges. They prepared me because I got to actually be on a campus all the time and see how they act and everything. And it's like helpful because you got to really see what the college campus is. So it was like they prepared me to know what to look out for. It's going to help me, big time.

The focus group discussions further repeat that community equals family and it is a factor in how they learn about higher education. Although many of the community messages are not geared towards specifics on HBCUs or PWIs, they speak to the importance of higher education.

> Well I would say basically what I consider family to be like the church and your neighborhood; neighborhood so much. You have the families that look out for everybody else. So you have to push the education. You got to help these people out here on the street because all they're going to do is push you in the right direction.

And our church, they push it. They push it on the youth that you need to go to

college. You need to get your education. You can't walk around with your pants to

your knees all day and expect to get an education, you know that's really serious…

We've been raised up since we were little to know you're going to pursue it, you're

going to get a career. You're going to get a job. You're going to do all these things,

and our church pushes that. You need to make sure you go to college. They always

talk about scholarships. They say apply for this one, apply for that one. This one will

help you, this one's got more money.

The church family emphasizes the importance of education. Indeed, research states that the

Black church is vital to the religious and spiritual ties of the African American community

because it is the oldest and most influential institution founded, maintained, and controlled

by Black people (Sanders, 2002). The church believes education is the means in which Black

youth embody intellect and achievement. However, the participants stress that the church

does not perceive that either the HBCU or PWI is better. The church perceives an education,

regardless of the location or type, to be best. The participants stress that their communities,

especially church want them to have successful futures. Their communities seek to break

societal perceptions of Black youth. The community wants more representation of positive

Black images. If possible financial, educational, and personal resources are made available to

assist students in attaining a college degree. Another focus group participant states,

I think the community is somewhat family. They play a little role because if your

family doesn't get the information to you, somebody in the community will. And it

depends on your community as well. Because if you only have selective friends in

your community that you can only go to as being encouraged, then that's really a

problem in the neighborhood itself. Because I know our neighborhood was like that. And it's still kind of like that. Because we have a majority of people who don't really want to do that. They like to smoke and drink. They have fun and go to parties. But then we have our community members and friends who all like are pushing each other to take the step ahead, to go to college. Then the rest of them, we know those people are not necessarily going to help you get to college. We have the, people ok if you need tutoring, come to us, we can help you with math. Reading, I don't know, but we can help you with math.

Not all communities provide positive role models. Not all neighborhoods provide images of successful, educated Black youth. However, minimal positive images and/or surroundings can still produce students who want to receive a college education. When and if a student wants academic assistance it can be found. Community members who are willing to assist students will be found. Not everybody went into detail about the influence the community has on their perceptions of higher educational institutions. Nonetheless, they all agree whether the community provides good or bad examples, they provide them enough to know what to do when they finish high school.

The concept of "success" becomes a part of the fabric that led all familial parties to perceive that the HBCU would be the student's better/safer choice. Kristen, a student that has chosen to attend an HBCU, states

It gives you a chance to talk to people who look like you, your age or older than you, that can help you with many different things and in many different ways.

And from the parents, school, community, and all in between these same perceptions repeat. These students perceive the historically black college and university to provide a necessary

support system. Colleges and universities are communities for learning. And the African

American student must be aware of, prepared for, and committed to the requirements for

success in that community (Fine, Powell & Wong, 1997). By no means do any of the familial

parties perceive a PWI to be an institution where these students could not succeed, but rather

a place where they believe the "family unit" would not be as available as they would like.

Media in Color

Whoever controls the media, the images…controls the culture.
-Allen Ginsberg

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Media is full of images and stereotypes. Media can sometimes be viewed as art. Art is

productive, generative, and fables about the operation of power and the production of

meaning and values in society (Alvermann, 2004). This order of power is deeply registered in

popular culture and in academic/social institutions as well, such as schools. The media is

rooted in the representation of what someone decides to show, believe, perceive, and share.

Ideally, a media system provides its audience with broader perspectives, but these students

are aware that it is not always the case, and they are products of media's influences as well.

Reality has been redefined by and through media. During discussions on media and

the participants perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs media's role is eminent. And as evident

throughout school observations these students are living in an age where media is the answer

to all of their questions. Youth are the largest consumers of media, and participants' credit

media with defining what is relevant and irrelevant. Media's influence is obvious in their

discussion about television, movies, and historically black colleges and universities

All media exist to invest our lives with artificial perceptions and arbitrary values
-Marshall McLahen

It has become very difficult to separate what happens in the realm of popular culture from what happens in the "real world." According to McCombs (2004) the media set the public agenda. For example, notions of what people are like are invented then re-invented in the media. The media, whose role is to bring information to masses, have a strong impact on the construction of social reality (Stack & Kelley, 2006). And now television, film, radio, and the internet are the most powerful means for educating people. However, these means are often provided through narrowed views that inevitably lead to skewed or inaccurate perceptions. Mrs. Langel provides a detailed description of how media affects African American youth perceptions of post secondary education.

> unfortunately that varies, too, because there are some families that are rich in heritage. you know, rich in there, what their personal beliefs are about education so they're drilling their children and they're grooming them to prepare them for college, for post-secondary education. So they're putting that in their heads and so they know, so there's a parental influence that's being placed there. Teachers have a small piece of that because we're, they hear it in the classroom. I advise them at high school. Like I said, they're hearing it from counselors. Um, but then every child in this generation I think is influenced by the media. Because they watch the statistics, I mean they're shown all those numbers, but you know I've seen statistics. I've done studies. I did a study when I was in my master's program on African-American males and the drop-out rate. I learned then that a lot of their influences come from the outside, the media, the sports arena, the music arena. So they're all influenced by what they hear and see

in the media is my perception. Like I said I haven't seen recent studies and statistics

on that, but I think that. I think because kids are more influenced at this age by what's

popular and what the latest fad is. That's what's presented and that's being presented

by the media, you know. What they see in pop culture I think that the media may play

a little larger across the board when you look at in generalities, than when you look at

specifics. What's going on at this time as opposed to overall, they need to see the big

picture. I think it's still media.

She asserts the media has a large influence on youth. And it has a larger effect on Black

youth. Today's youth are at the helm of technology. Today, youth's knowledge base is

media. Indeed, by the time American youth finish high school they have spent more time in

front of televisions than in the classroom (Dolby, 2003). The internet, television, music, and

movies influence the thoughts of students. Furthermore, she contends that media messages

overshadow reality. Media representations of college prevail over the realities of college.

False representations can equate to false perceptions. False perceptions can produce

inaccurate understandings of schooling and post-secondary education. She credits the family

and the teachers as contributing factors in the educational perceptions of African American

students but, like many researchers contend, this is a generation that consumes media more

than anything (Stack & Kelley, 2006; Wilson & Sparks, 1999).

From news coverage to entertainment, images shape, reflect, reinforce and define the

world in which we live. Dyson (2003) concluded that among a sample of 2,000 students from

third through twelfth grade, African American youth average almost ten hours of media

exposure daily. One participant, Kristen admits a lot of her information about college comes

from "T.V. or something." Scottie follows with, "different websites." During further

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discussions all of the participants note that although one medium is not the best way to gain information on a topic, it is often the most convenient; skewed, inaccurate, or not.

The media is a pervasive presence in young people's social, cultural, and educational experiences. Indeed, evidence suggests African American youth consume popular culture at a far greater rate than their white counterparts (McChesney, 2000; Kenway & Bullen, 2001). And as evident throughout school observations these students are living in an "age of technology," where access to media, on a variety of topics, is available to them with the push of a button. Because technology is so readily available, and students are the largest consumers of media, it's inevitable that what they "see" or "don't see" may have an effect on what they "perceive" is important or unimportant. Because television is the most potent of the media, its influence on public impressions of higher education is crucial (Bates, 1993). For example, the students overwhelmingly mention how often "big schools" are on T.V. Shannon states, "All they show here is UNC and Duke…I think that's all they care about." Nia follows with similar remarks, "I mean we talk about A&T all day, but UNC, NC State and those schools is what I read and see, and those apparently are the important ones."

They believe the schools that get media attention are the ones society deems as most important. It affects the way in which they perceive institutions of higher education. Ms. Langel reiterates this point,

> …some of them may tell you that they think that Duke, Carolina, um, because they watch sports on TV, too. I think that may have some bearing. They may think that Duke and Carolina and Wake Forest are better schools per se than A&T or Central or some of the other historically Hampton or Howard or somewhere like that. They may think that those schools are lesser than, um, because of what they heard or their

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perceptions. ACC, you know, seeing all of the TV, you don't see much about MEAC

and the conference that, I'm sorry, that state is in. You don't hear much about that. So

those may seem in their minds lesser than, unless they have some people that they

know personally that went to those schools. You know, a lot of people don't; this

generation doesn't realize that Jesse Jackson, Sr., went to A&T and ran for President

one day. Or at one time, that Jesse Jackson, Jr., went to A&T, a historically Black

college and is now, holds a Senate seat in Illinois, you know…

Sports are a major facet of college life. Depending on one's perspective college athletic

programs are seen as having important positive or negative effect on the perceptions of

higher educational institutions (Putler & Wolfe, 1999). Indeed, sports can define the

credibility of an institution. Sports can define the financial resources schools possess. In fact,

a quite significant facet of relations between higher education and the American community

is the widespread interest in college sports, above all in American football, but also in

basketball and athletics (Benjamin, 1993). The male participants support these thoughts,

especially in terms of sports. Sports influence the perceptions of higher educational

institutions. For example, Jonathan declares "I can't see myself leaving North Carolina for

school, but USC football is always on television, it must be a good school." Gavin says, "I

know Black schools are good, but the Black people I see on television are playing sports at a

White school and it seems a lot better." Indeed, intercollegiate athletics have an effect on an

institutions' reputation and on the behaviors/attitudes of past, present, future, and potential

students (Hansen & Wolfe, 1997). However, the participants are aware of media's control

over images and how the images of college, including sports are biased. And that their

images of college are biased as well.

Nonetheless, the limited inclusion of visible racial/ethnic groups in media also conveys a relative lack of power and importance of these groups in larger society. For these students, the limited inclusion of African Americans in college media, outside of sports, provided them a perception of their role, or lack thereof, in society as well as the institutions many of them attend. Bell hooks (1992) argues that institutionalized representations of race via mass media support and maintain the oppression, exploitation, and overall domination of all Black people. They all agree that PWIs are given considerably more media attention than HBCUs. And when the HBCUs are represented they are done so in a manner, described by the participants, as "stereotypical". According to Duncan & Morrell (2005) the messages sent to young people of color by the dominant media can foster feelings of alienation and inferiority while also justifying institutional racism. Although the students acknowledge the media perceptions of both HBCUs and PWIs are misleading, they believe that HBCUs have less opportunity to counteract such misleading information. However, misleading information on any type of institutions affects collegiate decisions.

Media representations or lack thereof, affect youth perceptions and understandings. In a study (Wilson & Sparks, 1999) on racial stereotyping and the media, they concluded the high number of stereotypical portrayals of Blacks in the media give Blacks an "image" and impact they way "others" perceive them as Blacks. In a focus group discussion on media portrayal of Black colleges a student states, "things on Black college, they always show entertaining, dancing, a lot of dancing, drug runners, or Black people acting a fool, things like that." The students then voice their concerns about the media's portrayal of all colleges as places of socializing rather than a place for academics.

American media portray college as an active site for everything but

intellectual pursuits. College is described as a place where students have

parties, make connections for jobs after graduation, find spouses, and engage

in all kinds of social activities, not as a place where they engage in critical

thought, do research, or deepen their understandings of the world (Brown,

Donahoo, & Bertrand, 2001, p. 568).

They continue to emphasize that they felt HBCUs get a "raw deal" when it comes to media

representation or lack thereof, but it is evident how much media's perceptions of higher

educational institutions does not differ much from their personal perceptions of historically

black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions.

Movies, Television shows, and universities

Cinema, radio, television, and magazines are a school of inattention.
People look without seeing. Listen in without hearing
-Robert Bresson

Compared to thirty years ago, there indeed are more non-Whites on TV and in the

movies (Signorielli, 2001). Though the numbers are limited, the portrayals of racial/ethnic

groups are relevant to television's capacity to create, maintain, or modify stereotypes and

prejudices (Greenberg & Collette, 1997; Schroeder, 2002). The variations in representations

are clear and depending on the dimension studied, there is disagreement about the degree to

which current portrayals are positive and/or real (Hall, 1997). Even when TV and movies

dramatize real life events involving African Americans, Latino/as, and other non-Whites, the

stars and main characters still tend to be white. One focus group discusses some of the

variety that can be found in movies, especially those highlighting Blacks,

Well depending on the movie because the piloted movies like the Christian movies, they do universities as a highlight. And historical ones like the one where the female becomes the quarterback, stuff like that, certain ones portray it at different levels, but some of them do colleges and universities negative. Then there are ones where it's only about football games, basketball games and nothing about education

They conversation continues with,

well it depends on the movie, because you have *Drumline* where it shows A&T in a lot of ways. And A&T got a lot of publicity from that movie. And you still know that A&T has a good band, even though they were talking about two different A&Ts. But it stills put the college in the highlight with some movies and then other movies, they put them into the negative. Like if you look at one of the basketball movies with starring like 5, basic controversy over the five Black players and stuff. You see that a bunch of White colleges showing their racism during that time. They were showing them in the bed like where they want to cover that up.

In the focus groups the conversations continue to center on the entertainment aspect of the HBCUs. However, the themes mentioned in Black college movies, are also themes mentioned in regards to their personal perceptions of HBCUs.

The movie *Drumline* becomes the focus of discussion. *Drumline* is a 2002 film about an African American male in his freshman year. He is attending an HBCU on a band scholarship. The movie's plot surrounds his inability to read music. However, reading music is a requirement to remain in the band. The participants believe the movie represents the HBCU as a socially based institution to individuals unfamiliar with those schools. But the

students emphasize that the movie was more about academics rather than the band. Kelsey states,

> I think they'll have some bad thoughts. If they just look to the news and see that they're from Montana, like different HBCUs and see the negative. But if they see *Drumline* is just more academic, it shows that hey what the news has been putting out there may not necessarily be true. Because I think he's doing his work and they're doing well in class and also had obstacles. But it depends on if you're really entertained by academic movies. But for those that already know about HBCUs and everything like that, it won't affect them. But for people who don't know about it, watching *Drumline* was more academic than the band. It'll show a better balance of what's really going on behind the band and the football games.

Many of the participants agree that *Drumline* was a better depiction of HBCUs than many movies past, present, and probably in the future. The themes identified in these movies are not simply interesting readings of a trivial entertainment medium; in reality TV and movies are a central location for the production of knowledge and the generation of ideological currents that engage a diverse audience (Napoli, 1999).

The conversation shifted to television shows, specifically BET's *College* Hill. "BET (Black Entertainment Television) is the nation's leading provider of entertainment, music, news and public affairs programming for the African American audience" (www.bet.com). *College Hill* is a reality television series that visits historically black colleges and universities. It is currently in its sixth season. The half-hour reality series follows the lives of eight college students studying at various HBCUs. They live under one roof for one semester.

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The cameras follow their lives daily, including school, family, friends, social, and personal experiences (www.bet.com/collegehill).

The conversations about *College Hill* are intense. It is clear the show strikes a nerve with the participants. They are adamant that the show leads to misperceptions of Blacks and historically black colleges and universities. Focus group participants' state,

> *College Hill* is a drama. It does not show the school. They just put it in the name. You're thinking the name and the people presume when you go to college, that's where the party life is and stuff like that. But they're really missing that you're there paying thousands of dollars for your education, not to party like they show.

The participants agree that *College Hill* should not be called a reality show. It should be labeled a drama series. In fact, restricted images lead young viewers to develop stereotypes and prejudices (Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994; Signorielli, 2001). The participants believe the show stereotypes Black colleges and does not accurately depict college as an academic institution. It depicts college as a place to socialize. Little attention is given to students attending class, studying, or homework. There are no discussions about the academic responsibilities a student must meet in order to matriculate. Furthermore, the students agree that the title of the show is misleading as well. Another participant states,

> I have barely watched *College Hill* because I'm not all for the drama and everything like that. But I looked at it like the other day and it was talking about how the kids on *College Hill* are all from professional backgrounds, like they dance, doctor moms, stuff, accountants and stuff like that. So it's actually taken from the rich aspect of the Black race on *College Hill* instead of all around. You have people from different classes there probably and then you have your upper class ones and they're not all

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mixing together. You're not getting the full effect. You're just getting the rich kids

getting together and trying to do what they want to do to be cool like everybody else.

So they really put a bad image on everybody else.

The HBCU is believed to be a place that Black students attend for comfort, culture, social,

and academic entities. The relative inexpensive cost of HBCUs, in comparison to PWIs, is

also perceived to play a factor in student attendance. This participant emphasizes that the

affordability of HBCUs provides a diverse population of socioeconomic statuses. But the

show is presenting a small group of financially well-off students. In this case, the financially

well-off students are producing negative images of African Americans. The show is not

presenting the diversity that can be found within HBCUs. The media has chosen to draw

attention to one segment of the African American population and label it a "Black reality

show." Another focus group states their feelings about the shows depictions of HBCUs and

African Americans,

It's like, don't always believe what you see and don't automatically assume you've

had it all. Things aren't really like that in school. On *College Hill* like, you have to

understand that they're not even showing college. The name is misleading because

you see *College Hill* and it says ok you're expecting to see a college. You're

supposed to get their experience from college. How that college is and what the

classes are like. They're supposed to show you that it's nothing like high school, but

that's not what the TV advertises.

The participants continuously voice the irony of *College Hill* being labeled a reality show.

They perceive that none of its college depictions are "real." Instead the show focuses on a

group of Black college students that are rarely seen at college. The show unfairly represents

the aforementioned pride many African Americans have about their educational institutions. Claussen (2004) notes, Blacks continually struggle for both a voice and representation of accurate images of schooling, students, and educational institutions. The participants insist that the opportunity to attend college should be appreciated rather than demeaned. The show presents African Americans as students that lack academic obligations. However, depending on the role dimension studied, there is disagreement about the degree to which current portrayals are positive or realistic (Hall, 1997; Givens & Monahan, 2005; Kearn-Foxworth, 1994). But *College Hill* is a popular television show. And it unfairly represents HBCUs. In spite of this, students admit that whether one is familiar with any higher educational institution, media's representations affect everyone's perceptions.

The effect media has on their perceptions supports Jhally & Lewis (1992) research on audience reactions to black portrayals on *The Cosby Show*. The research suggests that the line between the television world and the world beyond the screen has for most people become exceedingly hazy. Wright et al. (2001) found that heavy television viewers and those who regard TV as more realistic are more likely to believe television depictions. Research has also shown that identification with media representations affects adoption or rejection of particular behaviors and/or perceptions (Austin, Pinkelton, & Fujioka, 2000; Harrison, 1995; King & Multon, 1996). Despite media's role, familiarity with and exposure to higher educational institutions contributes immensely to African American youth perceptions. And the participants agree that individuals that have more experience with both Whites and non-Whites may have perceptions of both HBCUs and PWIs outside those provided through media. But they feel that population is in the minority as well.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS

Pretty much all the honest truth telling there is in the world… is done by CHILDREN!!!
-Oliver Wendell Harris

This final chapter will do several things. First, it summarizes the findings in this study. This section revisits the original research questions and also includes discussions on the implications of this study, and brings light to some recommendations for practice. The chapter discusses implications for further research based on conclusions drawn from this study as well as some of the limitations of this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the topic and the title of this study, and a poem entitled "Beyond Color, Beyond Name" written prior to embarking on this study.

Summary of Findings

Of all the complexities and uncertainty that is revealed throughout the data process, the stories, content, and findings revealed clear results. One's interpretation of the world consists of perceptions. Perception consists of one's experiences and defines ones reality (Crane, 2005). Based on the in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with the participants, I would like to return to the original research questions:

1. What factors (i.e., family, community, media) contribute to African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)?

2. What factors (i.e., family, community, media) contribute to African American youth perceptions of predominately white institutions (PWIs)?

The participants' reality reveals that Blackness v. Whiteness, family, and media are the contributing factors in African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. Researchers (Hall, 1999; Smedley, 1993) agree that "institutional fit" and campus integration are important to recruiting and retaining African American students, and it is a priority in the participant's thoughts about HBCUs and PWIs. In depth interviews not only reveal their perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs, but also prejudices and stereotypes they are unaware they possessed.

Participants conclude that race matter to "others," regardless if research (Ignatiev, 1995) suggest otherwise. They believe that they will not escape their racial classifications as Black individuals and that race will remain their defining physical feature. In the participant's eyes "others" will use race to describe their capabilities, responsibilities, expectations, or capacity for knowledge. What the participants shall, can, and will have is defined by race. Nonetheless, these students look beyond the labels that come with their race, and choose to be thankful for the comfort found in their race and culture.

For these participants, their families play a large role in their lives, especially education. Their families view education as a priority and post-secondary education as a necessity. Their perceptions about institutions of higher education are a reflection of what their families tell them about college. Students and their families provide a few objective perceptions of higher educational institutions, but it is clear the families perceive the HBCU to be the best option for their child. Most of their families believe HBCUs provide Black students with the best opportunity for success. In addition, the extended family provides insight into historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. They often provide knowledge on specific aspects of college. Also their communities (i.e.

neighborhoods, church), who seek more positive Black images, emphasize the importance of education and are there to help Black students break societal perceptions of Black youth.

Today, youth's knowledge base is media. Media representations of college prevail over the realities of college. In this study, discussions of media and higher educational institutions were centered on the movie *Drumline* and the television reality show *College Hill*. These media conversations included discussions of positive and negative images of HBCUs, and academic and social representations of HBCUs. Students acknowledge the media perceptions of both HBCUs and PWIs are misleading. In spite of misleading representations, the participants strongly asserted their experiences, or lack thereof, often define their knowledge, or lack thereof, of higher educational institutions.

To the participants, HBCUs are safe-havens for the Black community. HBCUs are institutions that provide support, entertainment, black history, and culturally based instructional practices. PWIs are places the participants believe are uncomfortable and inaccessible. PWIs are institutions known for being academically demanding that emphasize sports. Regardless of variations, between HBCUs and PWIs, the participants believe that college is college. College is where they want to be. A college education can help them in their futures. These participants', regardless of Black and White stereotypes, familial influences, and media representations place priority on receiving a college education. The institutional type that students choose to attend, however, is yet to be determined. However, in an effort to address the recruitment and retention of African American youth both historically black colleges and predominately white institutions must create an identity that demonstrates the importance of Blacks to their communities.

First, historically black colleges must be aware that some Black students are defining these institutions as social environments followed by academic institutions. There must be incentives and strategies that place academics as the institutional priority of these schools. Although HBCUs missions focus on academic and educational pursuits, Black youth of today are not making those missions the foundation of their possible postsecondary decisions. Largely because of media influences and experiences at social events (sporting events) at HBCUs, Black youth continue to see HBCUs primarily as cultural social centers. HBCUs must provide substantial awareness of the academics of HBCUs. At the very least HBCUs need to provide students with workshops and/or programs that strictly discuss the academic responsibilities that come with attending an HBCU. And as this study reveals, the HBCU must also communicate that attending a university with faculty of similar ethnicities does not equate to curriculum, instructional strategies, or grades that best suit African American students. HBCUs must promote academic standards that are perceived above or equal to those standards perceived at PWIs.

Once Black youth leave the confines of their cultural communities, there may be discomfort upon entering the new community. Universities (PWIs) should be aware of the ways that African Americans may feel about the racially slanted environments present on their college grounds. PWIs must acknowledge the uneasiness of African Americans attending their institutions. Black youth perceive that there is little regard for their thoughts, ideas, and existence on predominately white campuses. PWIs must understand the perceptions of African Americans to more effectively recruit and retain said students. Perceptions of PWIs could transform with the implementation of curriculum, such as required classes dedicated to the exploration of people of color. Another approach may be to

invite and/or include a larger number of African American faculty, staff, and students on campus. As this study revealed, PWIs are perceived to be academic institutions. However, PWIs need to demonstrate that their academic institutions that provide opportunities for African American success beyond athletics.

Nonetheless, many of the aforementioned biased perceptions of few come from practices and people within the school. In view of that, the study answers the third research in the following manner:

3. How does school culture influence African American youth perceptions of both HBCUs & PWIs?

These participants are heavily influenced by their school culture. James Pointe High School is a historically Black high school with a predominately African American staff. In fact, most of the staff attended historically black colleges. Hence, the participants are familiar with Black school culture and the population that lies within. The school is structured on an academy system which aims to assist students and provide an education and environment in which all students can succeed. Most of the participants in this study are part of the Early College Academy and have post-secondary plans in their near future. To the participants, the academy provides the tools to be successful in college, and the school provides a staff of individuals equipped with the knowledge to produce successful African American youth. Indeed, both the school principal and counselor perceived that JPHS school culture is more similar to black colleges and HBCUs may be the best "fit" for their students.

The findings of this study concluded that most of the participants perceived a comfort in attending an HBCU but also indicated that their knowledge of PWIs was limited. Outside the university logos and college fairs, JPHS provides little information on institutions outside

the confines of both the high school and student comfort zones. This study provides high schools with insight into the influence that instructors, administrators, and staff have over students in relation to their postsecondary understandings. Students can not only be products of their home environments but of their school setting as well. If students have limited exposure to diverse populations or experiences it may have an effect on their perceptions of both individuals and environments. There is a dual responsibility for African American youth and all parties involved to expose themselves to the work and company of other ethnicities and institutions.

In terms of implications for participants, high schools, and higher educational institutions this study provided some useful findings. My interview questions created an opportunity for African American youth to reflect on their knowledge, or lack thereof, of postsecondary institutions. Indeed, many of the participants noted that they had not thought about many of the topics that were discussed throughout the study. Specifically, topics such as: their perceptions of race, familial influences, and media's role in the production of biased materials (i.e. television, movies). In many ways, it validated information previously known about the importance of family and community in the lives of African American youth (Freeman, 2005).

This study offered participants conversations on their thoughts, understandings and ideas about higher educational institutions prior to making their collegiate choices. In addition, for campuses which have large Black populations, such as James Pointe High School, methods that explore diverse cultures and educational institutions may prompt favorable conversations about prejudices and stereotypes as well. The fact that many of the

participants used preconceived notions of Blacks and Whites is evidence that these participants should have more discussions about race's role in perceptions.

All parties involved in the perceptions of African American youth must become involved in ensuring the information students receive is based on diverse exposure to multiple perspectives. To recruit and retain African American youth teachers, faculty, family, counselors, and communities must be willing to lead in the efforts to promote the academic ability of African American youth at both HBCUs and PWIs. If African American students are not exposed to differing views prior to making collegiate decisions, youth may make choices based on the biased perceptions of few, rather than diverse perspectives and experiences.

Limitations of the Study

Because the study focuses on African American youth, one of the main limitations is the responses, conclusions, and perceptions cannot be assumed to be similar among students of other ethnicities. The small sample of African American students' perceptions also cannot be representative of the entire African American or youth population. The sample was both purposeful and selective. It is specific to African American juniors at JPHS in North Carolina. The geographic location of the research site may have also influenced the participants' perceptions. An HBCU and a medium sized PWI are in close proximity to the research site, which may have limited the knowledge, experiences, and/or thoughts about both HBCUs and PWIs to those particular institutions. In addition, the age of the participants also limited the availability of student participants and their willingness to open up about this

topic. For many of the participants, the interviewing process was intimidating and their discomfort was evident as times.

African American students exist in diverse populations, but those labeled 'college bound' are often overlooked in the statistical reports (Hebert & Reis, 1999). Yet, this study takes place in a predominately black high school within a predominately black school district. The study selected participants that have limited exposure to other ethnic populations in their school setting. In addition, this study uses a number of high-achieving students. These students are within one semester of taking college courses on college campuses. As a result, these students may have differing perceptions of higher educational institutions, in comparison to the larger Black youth population, because these participants will be making decisions on which colleges to attend shortly.

The study was also limited by the number of willing male participants. The males who turned in both their consent and assent forms were the males who participated in this study. Unlike the female participants, male participants were not randomly selected amongst a pool of willing participants. Later discussions among male students revealed that many of their parents did not want them to participate in the study. Students also only received information concerning the study one week prior to the study beginning, which may have limited participation. In addition, this study only interviewed the school's principal and 11ith grade counselor. Later inquiries reveal that the teachers and staff play a significant role on the students' perceptions. Interviews with teachers and/or head of the school academies may provide more knowledge about African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs.

Implications of Further Research

Some literature has revealed African American students perceptions may be a result of factors related to decision making (Fleming, 1984). Additionally, although researchers (Allen, 1992; Freeman, 1997; McDonough, 1997; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Wright, 2005) know a great deal about the experiences of African American students within different higher education institution types less is known about the influences on students' understandings of institutional types. This study has provided a detailed understanding of African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs, as well as the factors that contribute to their perceptions. In many ways it has validated information previously known about the influence of family, school, and media on Black youth (hooks, 2002). This study emphasized the importance of success in Black youth perceptions of higher educational institutions and how personal experiences, or lack thereof, are the product of stereotypes. In addition, it helped to introduce information on race's role in personal identities, "others identities" and higher educational institutions' identities. Indeed, this study introduced how African American youth perceptions of higher education, and how those perceptions may affect future collegiate decisions. Consequently, this study has helped to emphasize the gap in research that lies between institutional perceptions and institutional choices.

There remains much to learn about the perceptions of African American youth as they begin to contemplate their postsecondary options, such as geography and age's roles in postsecondary perceptions. Further research may also include studying aspects of Blacks not included on the demographic sheet, such as religion and/or spirituality's influence on college education and institutions of higher education. Additional research may also include an examination of the perceptions of institutions not specifically addressed in this study. These

institutions include community colleges, trade schools, liberal arts colleges, in-state schools, and/or schools of medicine and law.

This study also uses qualitative means to address the contributing factors to African American youth perceptions of HBCUs and PWIs. A quantitative assessment of this study could reveal additional factors that affect the perceptions of Black youth concerning postsecondary institutions. On the same accord, a study that included a larger sample of students, both numbers and ethnicities, may also provide new information on perceptual influences. Conducting interviews with additional teachers and family members may also provide insight into African American students' perceptions. As the results of this study demonstrate both school and familial thoughts contribute to youth knowledge, or lack thereof. Research on what factors contribute to both school staff and familial perceptions may demonstrate a link between all parties involved in youth perceptions.

The Topic and the Title

The title of my study, which I aptly named before I embarked on this research, proved to be a significant descriptor for the project overall. It not only displays my commitment to this study but became a very appropriate means in which to describe the participants' perceptions; the "name" of the school often defined the "color" of people they believed resided within those institutional walls. Nonetheless, I left with unimaginable insight into African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. They provided me with perceptions only they could describe. They granted me access to their words, stories and beliefs and I comprehended the

complexities of their perceptions. And now I have shared their "truths." Thank you JPHS!

Thank you very much!

"Beyond Color, Beyond Name"

Have we really come that far in our beliefs?
To look beyond color, beyond name would certainly be a relief

Less than 50 years ago there were limits on peoples' education
Our country, our nation held back some with its legislation

This racial history led to HBCUs, institutions' to expand knowledge
However, many stated that only PWIs could be considered college

Today, both types of institutions continue to be prevalent
But what do people really perceive are the ones' that remain relevant

Studies have shown that families, media, and schools contribute to all of our perceptions
However, are those influences based on misconceptions?

So how does the world perceive HBCUs?
Their education can't compete…why try, cause they will lose

If I were to ask you what do you think of HBCUs
Would you say it's a place only Black people choose?

If I were to ask you what do you know about HBCUs
Would you say they want to help, teach you society's rules?

So how does the world perceive PWIs?
Their education guarantees that you will rise?

If I were to ask you what do you think of PWIs
Would you say it's a place of academics, make friends and socialize?

If I were to ask you what do you know about PWIs
Would you say they are the best… it's no surprise

But what if we take a minute to search… beyond color, beyond name
We might be surprised that whether black or white, they really are the same

Yes both have their sports, their parties, and their fun
But attention to only those few things and your college life is done

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They both have a history that differs indeed
But both have made their marks and planted the educational seed

They want students to become better people and to succeed
They believe that determination, perseverance, commitment is what we all need

Both institutions want to give us all a top-notch education
In hopes that all their efforts work, and leads to graduation

How these institutions are alike… we do not concede
How they differ, how they're ranked, is all that we read

If you had a choice between the two which would you select
Would the choice you make be based on facts, or biases you tend to neglect?

If I told you my degree came from a Black college
Would you question these words, my intellect, and all of my so-called knowledge?

If I told you that my degree came from a PWI
Would you assume that this decision was better, I learned my lesson, and chose wise?

But what will it truly take for us to see there's common ground?
What will it truly take for us to turn our biased judgments around?

If it takes another 50 years… it would be a shame
*Because we could all change the world…if we look **Beyond Color…Beyond Name***

-Shiron Velyvette Patterson

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APPENDIX

October 7, 2008

Principal: Dr. Jesse J. Pratt
James Benson Dudley High School
1200 Lincoln Street
Greensboro, NC 27401

Dear Dr. Jesse J. Pratt:

My name is Shiron Patterson, and I am currently a fifth year Ed.D. student in the College of Education at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. I plan on beginning my data collection for my dissertation research this semester and I am looking for a high school that would be willing to host me.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of African American youth about historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. For this study I plan on using a sample of sixteen African American students. The data will be collected through one-on-one interviews which will take place in the school setting. If they choose to participate their names will be held confidential. All interviews will be tape recorded, and the participants identities will be disguised in the final report. If the participants feel any discomfort or stress from the interview, they may stop at any time. No specific time constraints will be placed on the interviews. When analysis begins, there may be times when follow up interviews will be necessary for clarification purposes. This study will seek answers to the following research questions:

1.) What factors contribute to African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs)?

2.) What factors contribute to African American youth perceptions of predominately white institutions (PWIs)?

3.) How does school culture influence youth perceptions of both HBCUs and PWIs?

Results of this study could be useful to practitioners, theorists, and researchers in K-12 and higher education. Practitioners may be able to call on these results when working with students on collegiate planning and decision making. This study might provide educational staff with the knowledge of what ideas to communicate with students in order to better assist them with clarification and guidance rather than pressure when final decisions are needed. After reading this study, teachers could gain insight into the concerns of youth with regards to higher education. In addition, college personnel may be able to use the results of this study to address, transform, and/or solve the concerns of African American students when attempting to recruit and retain candidates. Results may further be useful to African American high school students,

high school teachers, administrators and counselors, as well as the parents of African American youth.

Those who agree to participate in the study will be given a consent form to be signed by the participant and their parents/guardians.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions at spatterson1@wsu.edu, or at (517) 303-4521.Thank you for your time, it is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shiron Patterson/Washington State University
Ed.D Candidate /Curriculum & Instruction /Cultural Studies and Social Thought

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
TEACHING & LEARNING/ COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
ADULT CONSENT FORM

Research dissertation: Beyond Color, Beyond Name: African American youth perceptions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions

Researchers: Shiron Patterson – Doctoral Candidate, Teaching and Learning (517) 303-4521; Dr. Paula Groves Price- Associate Professor, Teaching and Learning (509) 335-7987

<u>Researcher's Statement</u>

We are asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a participant, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Purpose and Benefit

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of African American youth concerning historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. Results could be beneficial by providing information that may assist schools, students and/or parents with collegiate planning and decision making.

Procedure

If you decide to be in the study, we will ask you to participate in a one-on-one interview. The interview will take place at the school, before, during, or after school hours. We will audio-tape the conversation. The audio-tape will be transcribed and then destroyed. The interview will take approximately one hour. You may refuse to answer any question. Your responses will be kept confidential and you will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. If you feel any discomfort or stress from the interview, you may stop at any time, without penalty.

<u>Participant's Statement</u>

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-9661. This project has been approved for human participation by the WSU IRB. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____	_____	_____
Printed name of participant	**Signature of participant**	**Date**

B

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
TEACHING & LEARNING/ COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
PARENT/GUARDIAN PERMISSION FORM

Research dissertation: Beyond Color, Beyond Name: African American youth perceptions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominately White Institutions

Researchers: Shiron Patterson – Doctoral Candidate, Teaching and Learning (517) 303-4521; Dr. Paula Groves Price- Associate Professor, Teaching and Learning (509) 335-7987

Researcher's Statement

We are asking your child to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether you want your child to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask your child to do, the possible risks and benefits, your child's rights as a participant, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want your child to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Purpose and Benefit

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of African American youth concerning historically black colleges and universities and predominately white institutions. Results could be beneficial by providing information that may assist schools, students and/or parents with collegiate planning and decision making.

Procedure

Your child will participate in two interviews. One one-on-one interview and one group interview about their experiences in school and their opinions about college. Both interviews will take place at the school before or after school hours. We will audio-tape the conversations. The audio-tapes will be transcribed and then destroyed. Both interviews will take approximately one hour each. Your child may refuse to answer any question. Your child's responses will be kept confidential and they will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. If he/she feels any discomfort or stress from the interview, he/she may stop at any time, without penalty.

Participant's Statements

C

This study has been explained to me. I grant permission for my child to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have general questions about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. If I have questions regarding my child's rights as a participant, I can call the WSU Institutional Review Board at (509) 335-9661. This project has been approved for human participation by the WSU IRB. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____   _____

Printed name of student participant   **Signature of student participant**   **Date**

_____   _____   _____

Printed name of parent/guardian   **Signature of parent/guardian**   **Date**

C

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
TEACHING & LEARNING/ COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
ASSENT FORM

Study Title: Beyond Color, Beyond Name: African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately white institutions (PWIs),

Researchers: Shiron Patterson- Doctoral Candidate, Teaching and Learning (517) 303- 4521
Dr. Paula Groves-Price – Associate Professor, Teaching and Learning (509) 335-7987

My name is Shiron Patterson. I am from Washington State University. I and the other person at the top of this form are inviting you to take part in a research study. Your parent(s) know we are talking with you about the study, but it is up to you to decide if you want to be in the study. This form will tell you about the study to help you decide whether or not you want to take part in it.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of the study is to help us learn about African American youth perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately white institutions (PWIs).You are being asked to take part because you are of African American descent, between the ages of 15-17, and are knowledgeable about HBCUs and PWIs.

What am I being asked to do?

If you decide to be in the study, we will ask you to participate in two interviews about your experience at school and your opinions about college. One interview will be one-on-one and the other will be a group interview. Both interviews will take place at the school before or after school hours. Both interviews will take approximately one hour each. The conversations will be recorded. The audio-tapes will be transcribed and then destroyed. Your responses will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by federal and state law. You will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.

Are there any risks to me if I am in this study?

The potential risk is that you might feel uncomfortable talking about yourself or your family. If you do feel stress, you can skip questions without any hard feelings.

What are my rights as a research study volunteer?

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You do not have to be a part of this study if you don't want to. There will be no penalty to you if you choose not to take part and no one will be upset or angry at you, and you can change your mind and not be in the study at any time.

Who can I talk to if I have questions?

If you have questions at any time, you can ask the researchers and you can talk to your parent about the study. We will give you a copy of this form to keep. If you want to ask us questions about the study, call or email: Shiron Patterson (517)303-4521; spatterson1@wsu.edu

The Washington State University Institutional Review Board has reviewed this study to make sure that the rights and safety of people who take part in the study are protected. If you have questions about your rights in the study, or you are unhappy about something that happens to you in the study, you can contact them at (509) 335-3668 or irb@wsu.edu.

What does my signature on this consent form mean?

Your signature on this form means that:
- You understand the information given to you in this form
- You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
- The researcher has answered your questions and concerns
- You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

Statement of Consent

I give my voluntary consent to take part in this study. I will be given a copy of this consent document for my records.

_____   _____   _____

Printed Name of Participant   Signature of Participant   Date

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands the purpose, procedures, potential benefits, and potential risks of participation.

I also certify that he or she:

- Speaks the language used to explain this research
- Reads well enough to understand this form or, if not, this person is able to hear and understand when the form is read to him or her
- Does not have any problems that could make it hard to understand what it means to take part in this research.

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

_____   _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Role in the Research Study

Demographic Sheet

Name

Student ID Number

Gender (circle one)   Male   Female

Age

Grade Point Average

Mother/ Guardian highest education level (circle one)   Did not finish high school   High school diploma

       Some college   Associate's degree   Bachelor's degree   Master's degree   Doctorate degree

Father/Guardian highest education level (circle one)   Did not finish high school   High school diploma

       Some college   Associate's degree   Bachelor's degree   Master's degree   Doctorate degree

Are you enrolled in any advanced placement classes?   Yes   No

Do you participate in any extracurricular activities?   Yes   No   If so, which one(s)_____

_____

What ethnicity would you classify yourself?   Caucasian/White   Hispanic/Chicano(a)

      Asian/Pacific Islander   Native American   Black/African American   Multiracial   Other

How many people (including yourself) live in your household?

Do you have any siblings currently attending a college/ university?   Yes   No   If so how many? _____

      Which college(s)/university?_____

Have you applied to any college(s)/universities?   Yes   No

If so, list the top 5 colleges/universities for which you will apply in order of preference.

1.) _____ 2.)_____ 3.)_____

4.)_____   5.)_____

Will financial aid be necessary for you to attend college?   Yes   No

Will you be willing to participate in a research study that will seek information on your perceptions of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately white institutions (PWIs)? Please note all your personal information will remain confidential?   Yes   No

African American Youth Perceptions of Historically Black Colleges and Universities
(HBCUs) & Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)

Interview Protocol (Students)

1.) Tell me about your educational experience to this point in your life? (Probes; K-5, 6-8, 9-11)

2.) What are your thoughts about college?

3.) Where does your understanding about college come from?

4.) How does your understanding about college contribute to your perceptions about historically black colleges (HBCUs) and predominately white institutions (PWIs)?

5.) What is it like to be a student at this school?

6.) How has your school contributed to your college understanding?

7.) How has your school prepared you for college?

8.) How have your experiences outside the classroom prepared you for college?

9.) How do you believe an HBCU can support African American students? PWI?

10.) How do you believe your thoughts about college may or may not affect your future   collegiate decisions?

11.) How do you believe societal perceptions of HBCUs and PWIS can contribute to African American youth perceptions about these institutional types?

12.) What do you believe it takes to be successful in college?

13.) If a fellow student was to ask you about HBCUs what would you tell them? About PWIs?

Interview Protocol (Principal)

1.) Tell me about the students at your school.

2.) What is this school's mission?

3.) How would you describe the culture at this school?

4.) How does the school's curriculum prepare students for college?

5.) What information do you provide students about college? HBCUs? PWIs?

6.) How does the school support students' collegiate futures?

7.) How does the school advise students about college?

8.) What do you believe the students perceptions are of college? HBCUs? PWIs?

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9.) Who do you believe plays the most important role in your students' perception of college?

10.) Do you believe students here are more successful attending HBCUs or PWIs? Why?

Interview Protocol (Counselors)

1.) Tell me about the students at this school?

2.) How would you describe the culture at this school?

3.) What do you believe is the schools' vision for its students?

4.) How does the school curriculum prepare the students for college?

5.) What is your role as a school counselor?

6.) What information do counselors provide to students about college? HBCUs? PWIs?

7.) How do you advise students about college?

8.) What do you believe these students perceptions are of college? HBCUs? PWIs?

9.) Who do you believe plays the most important role in students' perceptions of college?

10.) What do you believe it will take for these students to attend college? To be successful in college

Focus group interview protocol (Students only)

1.) How are colleges and universities portrayed in movies and television? Examples?

2.) How do you think HBCUs are portrayed in movies and television shows that you watch? Examples?

3.) What do you think college will be like for you? Where did you get those ideas from?

4.) How has your school portrayed college life? What colleges does your school talk about? How are they presented?

5.) How has your family impacted how you look at college?

6.) How has your community impacted how you look at college?

7.) What or who do you think has provided the greatest influence on your knowledge about college?

8.) What or who has been the greatest influence in your decisions about which colleges to apply to or attend?

***All other questions come from themes/ topics that emerge in the one-on-one interviews that are relative to the research topic.