HOW DO I CHOOSE? : BIRACIAL STUDENTS' POSTSECONDARY CHOICE OF

HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OR

PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

by

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(Under the Direction of Diane L. Cooper)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the college-decision making process of biracial students enrolled in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This combination interview, demographic survey, and document analysis study examined 11 biracial undergraduate students who attended predominantly White and historically Black colleges or universities in the Southeastern United States.

Overwhelmingly three themes emerged from all PWI and HBCU participants 1) *My family, my influence* - families influenced students' choice to attend college, 2) *Location, location, location* - location coupled with financial considerations impacted college choice; and 3) *I'm biracial. . SO?* – biracial participants did not make a conscious decision to utilize race or cultural affinity as influential factors; however, there is privilege associated with the ability to choose different institutional types. Participant's self-awareness of their biracial identity in tandem with their ability to adapt to various situations and environments as described in Renn's (2004) Situational identity model,

created a larger conversation about race 'in the margins' rather than as a central component of their decision-making processes. While family, location, and financial considerations were common among all participants, there were several interesting themes for HBCU participants and PWI participants.

The participants from the HBCU cited 1) a *strong sense of "family"* at their respective institutions – participants gained a strong sense of community although they did not choose the institution for this purpose; and 2) *Higher education is important*-these participants applied for admittance to both HBCUs and PWIs.

Biracial participants from the PWI offered unique insight into their choice of institution. A major theme among those participants was *HBCUs aren't good enough* – many participants commented on their perception of the lack of prestige in attending and graduating from an HBCU. To further support their lack of interest in attending an HBCU, only one student applied to an HBCU; conversely, all participants from HBCUs applied to at least one PWI.

Findings from this study further support the need to continue exploration of how biracial students make decisions about institutional type.

INDEX WORDS: Biracial, College Choice, Cultural and Racial Affinity, Multiracial, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Predominantly White Institutions, Race

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Student enrollments are the lifeblood of colleges and universities, and student characteristics often define the distinctiveness of individual campuses.
-- Lumina Foundation for Education Special Report 2004

In 1990, Ernest Boyer's "Campus Life: In Search of Community" illuminated the importance of Student Affair's role in creating a 'just' community which is one that rejects prejudice, affirms diversity, and "is a place where diversity is aggressively pursued" (p. 35). While this concept may seem idealistic to those who believe that a college or university campus is simply a place for in-classroom learning, the changing demographics of our country require that institutions are more than a place for academic pursuits. According to a report by Lumina (Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob, & Cummings, 2004), the change in the country's demographics had a significant impact on student demographics in higher education. Prior to the 1950's, very few women, people of color or those from low-income families planned to attend college. The enactment of federal policies such as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill, made way for veteran's returning from World War II to attend college. This was a major shift in the demographics of college-going students since historically those attending college were White, middle-class men. The insurgence of war veterans onto campuses challenged institutions to think more about who they were marketing to and recruiting as well as how they were equipped to meet the needs of this population.

In addition to the federal policies, the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Higher Education Act of 1965

provided the first opportunities for people of color, especially African Americans, to pursue higher education. The culmination of these four significant federal policies, court mandates, and social justice accomplishments increased access and growth in college attendance for many underrepresented groups (Allen, 1992; Freeman, 1999, 2002; Kinzie et al, 2004). In 1976, only 15% of college students identified as minorities or members of underrepresented groups compared to 32% in 2008 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2009).

While the increase in access to higher education for underrepresented individuals was a tremendous accomplishment, it also increased challenges of competition between historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Until the late 1960's and early 1970's, most African Americans who were enrolled in college attended HBCUs (Allen, 1992; Freeman, 1999; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Wilson, 1994). African American students were able to attend HBCUs without alienation or diminished acceptance because of their race. In the 1970's more students began to attend PWIs; by 1986 only 20 percent of African Americans were enrolled in HBCUs (Allen, 1992; Wilson, 1994). To date, there is still a thriving community of students enrolling in historically Black colleges and universities which is a strong indicator that there is a call for different types of institutions to meet the desires and needs of all students (Brown, 2001, 2002; Gasman, 2009).

Enrollment in HBCUs and PWIs are on a steady increase; however, changes in the student population attending college, shifts in the demographics of the college age population, and increased competition in the higher education environment are key reasons why institutions are taking special interest in better understanding the college

choice process. In Freeman's work on understanding African American student's college decision-making process (1999), she asserted that there was a direct connection between understanding students' selection process and higher retention rates for students. If institutions are aware of why students select specific types of institutions, institutions may also think strategically about ways to keep them there.

The literature is robust in how African Americans and other monoracial groups make decisions on the type of college or university they will attend; however, there is little to no research on the process for biracial or multiracial students – one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. In the year 2000, the U. S. Census provided the first opportunity for individuals to select more than one race (U. S. Census, 2000, 2010) from five federally defined categories (African American, Caucasian, Native American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino). Recent reports of the U. S. Census indicate that of the 6. 8 million people who selected more than one racial category, 40 percent were under eighteen-years old which indicates an increase in the number of biracial students who could enroll in colleges and universities (Jones & Smith, 2001, Renn, 2000; U. S. Census, 2000).

In addition to understanding what influences biracial students college choice decision, there is a lack of awareness of how students racial or cultural affinity may impact there decision making process. In other words, do biracial students seek institutions that are more in line with their most dominant or salient racial identity? Root's (1990) biracial identity model was one of the first to account for the impact of racism on the identity development of biracial individuals. The historical implications of race on how individuals define themselves can impact which racial identity is the most

prominent or accepted for them. In 2004, Renn expanded her work on patterns of identity for biracial individuals to include the notion that individuals may hold multiple monoracial identities and that in any situation that identity can influence their decisions. Freeman (1999) conducted a study on African American high school students to determine whether students from different types of high schools were more likely to consider HBCUs or PWIs. The author found that 1) students who attended private, predominantly White high schools were more likely to consider a prominent HBCU than students from predominantly Black high schools; 2) students in White private high schools expressed an interest in learning more about their roots through attendance at a historically Black college or university; 3) Black students attending predominantly Black high schools were interested in attending PWIs; and 4) all students, regardless of high school type who had an HBCU connection , were greatly influenced and interested in attending an HBCU(Freeman, 1999, 2002). To this end, the findings suggest that African American high school students were influenced by more than their racial or cultural affinity in making decisions about institutional type.

Statement of the Problem

Institutions of higher education are challenged to focus on best practices for recruiting and retaining a diverse student, faculty, and staff community (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Due to the change in student demographics coupled with the competition among institutions to recruit and retain students, it is critical that higher education institutions are aware of the factors that influence a growing, diverse community of biracial students. Gaining an understanding of what factors influence a biracial students college choice – a predominantly White institution or historically Black college or university – may assist

institutions in tailoring both recruitment and retention initiatives. Often time institutions have designed recruitment programs for historically under-represented, monoracial populations (i. e. White, Black, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and Native Americans) without taking into account the personal identities of biracial students who do not fit nicely into a monoracial "box". Based on a study of multiracial college students, the findings indicate that biracial or multiethnic students who make intentional decisions about their college choice are looking for institutions that demonstrate a commitment to diversity. Those students are seeking an environment that mirrors the supportive environment they grew up in or an environment that would assist in fostering and supporting their identity development (Hughes, et. al, 2004). Fortunately, many institutions are providing quality and intentional programs and services to demonstrate a commitment to diversity, admissions departments have increased their efforts in formal recruitment of diverse students, and administrators have designed departments and student organizations to serve as support for underrepresented students in hopes to create a safe space for self-exploration and celebration of multiple identities (Harper & Quaye, 2007). Although these diversity and inclusive initiatives are needed and important, it is critical that those initiatives are planned with both monoracial and multiracial student needs in mind. Unfortunately, there has been an inadvertent omission of programs and services to support a population of students who have bi- or multiracial identities (Poston, 1990; Renn, 2004; Shang, 2008; Talbot, 2008; Wijeyesinghe; 2001).

Since the implementation of the 2000 U. S. Census, more forms provide applicants the opportunity to identify with multiple racial categories hence allowing the person to more clearly define their race (NCES, 2010). Research on biracial students is

beginning to explore the increase in the number of biracial students on college campuses and the need for programs and services to support them (King, 2008; Renn, 2001, 2003, 2004; Talbot, 2008); however, there has been limited research conducted on what factors influence their college choice and if their racial or cultural affinity influences their college decision making process. There is extensive literature on the college choice process for African American students' decision between HBCUS and PWIs (Allen, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999, 2005; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2008; Tatum, 1997), which is the primary body of literature utilized in this study to provide limited understanding on perhaps, how those decisions are similar or different for biracial students. As institutions seek to increase and retain their racial diversity it will be imperative to understand how biracial students make decisions between institutional types and how their personal racial identification impacts their decisions. If institutions better understand the needs of biracial or multiracial students they will be better able to assist students in making decisions about where they would like to attend school, enhance their marketing and recruitment efforts, and redefine programs and services to be more inclusive and welcoming of students multiple identities. These fundamental changes may assist in ongoing retention efforts that can ultimately enhance students' experiences in college (Astin, 1984; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Tinto, 1993), regardless of institution type.

Purpose Statement

Predisposition, choice, and aspiration have long been fundamental, psychological components to a student's proclivity toward college attendance (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Nonetheless, the literature on African American students and the limited studies

on biracial students indicate different factors influence the college choice process. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the college-decision making process for biracial students enrolled in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This study explored how one's racial or cultural affinity affects the college decision-making process. Using a social constructivist design, this in-depth, individual interview process examined a group of 11, undergraduate students at predominantly White and historically Black universities who self-identified as biracial or multiracial students. This exploratory study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors did biracial students consider when choosing to attend either a predominantly White institution or a historically Black college or university?

2. How does cultural or racial affinity shape an individual's decision-making process?

The findings of this study are intended to contribute to the current literature on biracial students' college choice process and provide a more in-depth understanding of racial affinity's role in the decision process. A broader understanding of this process for biracial students will have an impact on both college recruitment and retention of those students.

Conceptual Framework of Study

Since the early 1990's researchers have conducted extensive studies on biracial and multiracial identity development; however, less research has been conducted on how these individuals make decisions about their racial identities. Renn (2000, 2004), Wallace (2001), and Wijeyesinghe's (2001) studies have provided some framework for further exploration of this process.

In framing biracial or multiracial students' influences of cultural or racial affinity, it's important to have an understanding of patterns of identity among multiracial students. Renn's study on multiracial identity development (2000) explains multiracial identity development through five patterns: 1) monoracial identity; 2) multiple monoracial identities; 3) multiracial identity; 4) extra racial identity; and 5) situation identity. These patterns, referred to as the five patterns of multiracial identity, indicate that biracial or multiracial students may at any point identify differently depending on the situation or the context of the situation. Of the fifty-six participants, all participants identified with one or multiple patterns. Unlike traditional stage models of identity development (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1995), Renn's model suggests that students embrace different identities and that those patterns can be fluid and contextual.

This study examined biracial students' college choice, decision-making process utilizing Wijeyesinghe's (2001) factor model of multiracial identity (FMMI) and Kassie Freeman's Model of Predetermination. Both models allowed for a joint exploration of both racial identity and college choice.

Wijeyesinghe's Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (FMMI) identifies eight factors that impact individual's choices of their racial identity: 1) racial ancestry, 2) cultural attachment, 3) early experiences and socialization, 4) political awareness and orientation, 5) spirituality, 6) other social identities, 7) social and historical context, and 8) physical appearance (p. 115, see figure 1). In concept, Wijeyesinghe's model should be used to categorize experiences of multiracial individuals to assist in understanding how they make choices about their racial identity (Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). Additionally, Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the factors represented

as distinct and overlapping circles since many of them may be interconnected. Due to the complex and multilayered factors or influences on biracial or multiracial individuals' identity development, Wijeyesinghe's factor model provided the most flexibility in examining the potential factors of biracial students' college choice decision-making process in the selection of a historically Black university and a predominantly White institution as well as how their racial or cultural affinity influences the decision.

Kassie Freeman's Model of Predetermination (2005) focuses on the college decision-making process for historically underrepresented students. Freeman's model is based on three primary questions: 1) Are the influences that determine the choice to go to college the same for different cultural groups? 2) At what age does the process to choose higher education begin? 3) What role does economics and secondary school play in the process for underrepresented groups?

In contrast to Hossler and Gallagher's linear three-stage model (1987), Freeman's model is used to address the cultural differences and describes a fluid process that looks at the influence of family on institutional type to determine the characteristics of students who choose to go to college. The combination of influences such as people, social class, or a combination of the two may encourage different options for African American students. Freeman categorizes these students as 1) Knower's 2) Seekers, and 3) Dreamers and depending on various factors and influences, students may choose to pursue higher education or another postsecondary option. Two of the three of Freeman's research questions in her study of 10th and 11th grade African American high school students (1999) were modified for this study to examine the college choice process of biracial or multiracial college students:

a. Who/and or what influences the type of higher education institutions these students consider?

b. What role does cultural affinity play in the decision making process for students considering HBCUs?

Although the racial populations are different, the interests in what or who influences the type of institutions selected by African American students were relevant and important for this study.

The use of both Wijeyesinghe's Factor Model of Multiracial Identity and Freeman's model of Predetermination and adaptation of Freeman's research questions on African American high school students' college choice allowed for an extensive examination of the intersection of biracial identity and college choice influences.

Limitations of the Study

The focus of this study was to explore the influences on college choice of predominantly White and historically Black institutions, and the impact of racial or cultural affinity on the decision making process of biracial students. One limitation of the study is that only historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions in the South were considered as sites for this study. Participants from Tribal colleges, community colleges or technical colleges may have varied reasons for college choice decisions; however, this study did not explore those participants or institutions. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable to all students who identify as biracial or multiracial. Additionally, a criterion for this study was each participant must have one African American parent. This criterion limited my ability to include students with monoracial identities other than one African American parent; therefore, the findings may

be different for students whose multiracial identity does not include an African American parent.

Importance of Study for Higher Education and Student Affairs

Over the past 50 years, diversity and the continuation of the social justice movement have arguably received more attention than any other issues in higher education. Institutions' focus on increasing diversity, creating environments which are welcoming and inclusive, and removing barriers and increasing access to a broader community have become central components of the work of higher education institutions (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt; 2005, Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Many institution websites and other marketing materials include information on institutional demographics, focus on internationalization, and how the environment will help foster students' development and appreciation for others. Many institutions have employed diversity recruiters in admissions offices and within academic colleges to intentionally focus on the recruitment of historically underrepresented students. While these efforts are commendable and certainly continue to move the conversation of diversity as a concept to that of action, biracial and multiracial students do not always receive the same level of attention as their monoracial peers.

Understanding the Language

The terms used throughout this study are further defined in the appendices section (Appendix A) of this study. It is important to note that the terms multiracial and biracial have distinct meanings; however, I have elected to use the terms interchangeably throughout this study.

Overview of Study

      With the growth of the United States population and the increase in the number of biracial and multiracial individuals choosing to attend colleges or universities, it is important that institutions gain a deeper understanding of these students, what they are seeking in an institutional environment, and ways to support them in their racial identity development. Currently the literature is deficient in information on the factors that influence a multiracial students' decision to attend a PWI or an HBCU and further, how their racial or cultural affinity informs this choice. Furthermore, providing information on the college choice process of biracial students will expand the current research on the influences of students of color college-choice decision-making. The use of a descriptive qualitative study which included individual interviews, document analysis, and demographic surveys, and the utilization of Wijeyesinghe's (2001) and Freeman's(2005) models allowed me to investigate the intersections of race and college choice influences to fully understand the decision making process of biracial students.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review offered three principal themes that were germane to the research questions. The chapter begins with a comprehensive examination of the establishment of biracial identity in the United States. Particular attention is given to significant literature that describes the historical and social construction of race. Important statistics of biracial individuals in the United States (US Census, 2000) and within higher education are also discussed. Next, is an overview of the seminal works of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) college-choice models and Kassie Freeman's model of predetermination (2005). Hossler, Gallagher, and Freeman's models of college choice encompass various aspects and factors for all students; however, Freeman's model specifically addresses additional cultural considerations for underrepresented or students of color. This model is the only one that takes race and other societal and cultural factors into consideration. Additionally, a brief history, enrollment statistics, and graduation rates of students at historically Black Colleges and Universities and predominantly White institutions is also provided. Lastly, the theoretical lens in which I will interpret the college choice process of biracial students is through the use of Wijeyesinghe's factor model of multiracial identity (2001) and Freeman's model of predetermination. These models and a brief review of other biracial and multiracial studies will be included to provide a foundation and premise for pursuit of this study.

Biracial in the United States

   Social and historical context of race. The context of race in the United States

has historically been situated in political and social dynamics. Race, defined as a social

construct, is seen as a capricious system of categorization (Makalani, 2001; Root, 1998;

Tatum, 1997) that inherently has no biological basis. Historically and politically, the

social construction of race in the United States has clearly drawn lines between those of a

monoracial identity (i. e. African American, Asian, Native/American Indian, and

Hispanic/Latino) and those who are White (Tatum, 1997). Although individuals may be

identifiable based on physical attributes or traits, researchers and psychologist would

argue that there is no such thing as a "pure" race. In addressing racial categorization, Paul

Spickard (as cited in Root, 1992), writes:

   The most important thing about races was the boundaries between them. If races

   were pure (or had once been), and if one were a member of the race at the top,

   then it was essential to maintain the boundaries that defined one's superiority, to

   keep people from the lower categories from slipping surreptitiously upward.

   Hence U. S. law took pains to define just who was in which racial category. Most

   of the boundary drawing came on the border between White and Black (p. 15).

A rule that further segregated or differentiated the borders between Black and White was

the establishment of the "one-drop" rule. The "one-drop" rule states that if a person had

any African ancestry they were considered Black; only individuals without any trace of

African ancestry could be considered White (Allen, 1992; Root, 1990, 1992; Tatum,

1997). This rule maintained a system of disenfranchisement of people from mixed race

heritage because they were further relegated to one racial identity rather than the option to recognize both.

Historically, socially and politically, conversations about race continue to challenge the notions of civility, acceptance, and social justice. Race has been used as both a tool for building communities and a tool for tearing down walls of unity. The introduction of a biracial identity or race extends this conversation beyond skin color and the implicitly defined one-drop rule to one of options and opportunities.

Root (2002) suggests that with the creation and exaltation of a biracial identity, this will challenge the social construction of race and the social order that supports it. Not all readily welcome the recognition of multiracial identity. Several political activists such as Jesse Jackson and Kweise Mfume argue against a biracial race or biracial category because of its negative impact on minority numbers and political influence (Makalani, 2001). Although some concerns about inclusion of biracial or multiracial as a formal category continues to exist, there has been movement through federal policies and institutions to capture and report these data (i. e., U. S. Census, college admissions applications).

U. S. Census and statistics. With the recent changes in the U. S. Census, individuals are able to identify themselves in more than one racial or ethnic category. The results of the Census report suggest that by the year 2020, multiracial individuals will surpass the number of monoracial Asian students on campus (Jones & Smith, 2001). Additionally, more than 6. 8 million indicated more than one racial category; this included 2. 8 million people who were under the age of 18 (Jones & Smith, 2001; Shang, 2008). This number implies a potential significant increase in the number of multiracial

students that could enroll in our nation's colleges and universities. In addition to an increase in the overall enrollment of multiracial individuals on campus, there has been a significant shift in the number of racial/ethnic people in the United States. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2009), between 1980 and 2008 there has been a decline in the White population from 80% to 66% and an increase of about 11% of Hispanic and African Americans. The number of people who identified with two or more races was up by 1%. To coincide with the increase of racial diversity in the United States, between 1976 & 2008, the total undergraduate fall enrollment also increased from 15% to 32% for each of the racial and ethnic groups (NCES, 2009).

Policy issues and impact on practice. Statistics on monoracial students' attendance and participation in higher education is readily available through sources such as National Center for Education Statistics and the US Census Report. Reports on multiracial students remain inconsistent due to challenges in implementation of collecting and reporting data.

In 1997, the U. S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) required that all federal agencies report data in consistent categories. The five categories were White, Black/African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan. In an effort to capture data on multiracial individuals, the OMB required federal agencies to offer the option to choose more than one racial category, and implementation of the changes were required by January 1, 2003 (Kean, 2006). Due to the extent that institutions of higher education would need to change data collection methods, the Department of Education was granted several additional years to implement the changes. In 2002, institutions were still waiting on clearer direction for how best to

report data to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which further delayed the opportunities for institutions to accurately report. Finally, in 2007, institutions received direction on how they should maintain, collect, and report data on racial and students were able to select more than one racial category.

Much like the concerns of political activists Kweise Mfume and Jesse Jackson, there is fear that this multiracial categorization will decrease the enrollment of monoracial groups; hence a perceived loss of power and recognition. The benefit to institutions is that they are better able to accurately represent the true diversity of their campuses and begin to report on multiracial students on their campuses (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008).

It is important that higher education begin to "collect and report data in order to report data within and across institutions" (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008, p. 96) to begin to recognize trends and outcomes. This reporting will also be critical in sharing with potential students and families who are in search of a college or university. Until institutions are able to connect the old data (data that did not disaggregate the two or more racial categories) to the new data, institutions will struggle with accurately representing and sharing data on multiracial students (Kellogg & Niskode, 2008).

College Choice

Institutions of higher education have become increasingly interested in how students make decisions about where they will attend college (Kinzie et al, 2004; Perna, 2006; Pitre, 2006). Due to social, political and financial implications, institutions of various types are more purposefully examining their enrollment status to ensure viability and sustainability of the institution. The number of students enrolled in colleges and

universities "accounts for 30 percent to 90 percent of all revenue"(Kinzie et. al, 2004, p. 4). Historically Black colleges and universities rely heavily on enrollment to ensure the financial stability of their institutions. Understanding the process by which students and families make decisions about institutional type is critical to the success of higher education. Over the past 50 years, the influences on students' selection processes has changed significantly; therefore, the traditional and historical models of college choice have been reexamined to include factors specific for racial and ethnic groups. The following section will outline the various models of college choice for all students and then specifically as it relates to students of color.

General. College choice has been defined as the process a student experiences as he or she makes the transition from high school to college (Hossler, et. al, 1984). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) contend that the college choice process takes place in three stages:

1) Predisposition: This is the earliest stage in which some students develop aspirations for college attendance (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). As early as the eighth grade and by the ninth grade, students have defined their aspirations to attend college. One of the strongest factors that influence students' plans is that of parental encouragement (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). This encouragement can happen in two phases- motivational and proactive. Parents encourage their students to pursuer higher education and maintain high expectations that they will participate. Secondly, parents are highly engaged with various aspects of school, discuss college and actively save for the students'

college education (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Freeman, 1999, 2000; Hossler et al, 1987, 1989; Perna, 2000).

2) Search phase: Once students have made decisions to pursue higher education, they begin the search process. Families and students begin to investigate various types of institutions (Freeman, 1999; Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Hansen and Litten (1982) conducted a study on high school students to learn more about their college choice process. According to their findings, students engaged in the search phase of the process identified college brochures, counselors, family and friends as their primary resource for information about college. They also found that male students tended to discuss their decisions with their father and females discussed with their mothers; both of which had a significant influence on the students' choice of college.

3) Choice phase: In this phase students begin to focus their options and make final decisions regarding where they will attend college. During this period, students will make college visits, submit final applications and confirm attendance. Hossler and Gallagher refer to this phase as the "courtship" (1987) phase since the individual is defining their preferences and how an institution meets those preferences. Where a student would like to attend college versus where they will actually enroll can be influences by their economic background. Several researchers and studies indicate that students with varying degrees of economic and social capital and academic attainment college choice preference and actual enrollment

are starkly different (Cabrera and LaNasa, 2000, 2001; Freeman, 1999,

2000; Perna, 2000, 2006).

Understanding these various influences about student's college choice process can be helpful in recruitment of high school students. Theorists who have examined the college choice process (Freeman, 1999, 2000, 2005; Hanson & Litten, 1982; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1995; Perna et al. , 2000, 2005) have identified several influences on the college choice process of all students. Those influences include cultural and social capital, economic and financial capital, or some combination of the two as important influences to a student's choice to participate in higher education. These findings of the influences on the college choice process assist in understanding the complexity of the college choice process; however, there are additional factors for students of color. There has been an abundance of research conducted on the African American student's selection of HBCUs and PWIs; however, there is limited research on the college choice process and influences for multiracial students. Due to the limited research on multiracial students' college choice process, the following section will highlight the significant key studies on African American students and include a study conducted to examine the process for multiracial students.

Students of color. There is a great deal of research on African American students and their attendance and retention at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (Allen, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999, 2000, 2002; Gurin & Epps, 1975; Harper and Quaye; 2007; Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2008; Taylor & Howard Hamilton, 1995; Wilson, 1994).

However, there is very little research on the college choice process of multiracial students to attend HBCUs and PWIs.

African American students and HBCUs. HBCUs were established prior to 1964 with the mission to educate African Americans (Gurin & Epps, 1975). Cheyney University in Pennsylvania, the first HBCU, was established in 1837 and soon after, in 1856, Wilberforce University in Ohio was founded. Primarily, HBCUs were established in the North and opened primarily in response to the need to have a place for newly freed slaves to attend school to avoid having to admit them to White institutions (Fleming, 1981). The growth of HBCUs came on the heels of three distinct legislations. First, the First Morrill Act, otherwise known as the National Land Grant Colleges Act of 1862, made post- secondary education available to more Americans. The Freeman's Bureau of 1872 provided support to several HBCUs and then the Second Morrill act led to the establishment of 19 HBCUs. The catalyst behind the significant growth in the number of HBCUs came in the 1896 Supreme Court decision in *Plessy vs. Ferguson.* Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), for over 50 years, supported the constitutionality of racial segregation in the United States. This court decision prompted the necessity for historically African American institutions. HBCUs increased from one in 1837 to over 100 by 1973; this was a significant time in the history of African America education.

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision dismantled the separate but equal ruling of the 1896 *Plessey v. Ferguson.* HBCUs suffered with enrollment that caused several institutions to close or merge with other institutions in order to remain in existence. According to the 2007 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), enrollment in HBCUs is at 306,515 with a percentage of total enrollments at 1. 7%.

African Americans make up 10. 6% of the total enrollment leaving 53,100 students who identify as something other than Black or African Americans as the primary enrollees.

Very little research was conducted on HBCUs and African American student success until the early 1990's when Walter Allen (1992) conducted a study to investigate relationships between student outcomes, academic achievement and social involvement and student's educational backgrounds, goals, demographic characteristics and adjustment to college. The findings of this study suggest that Black students who attended an HBCU have better academic performance, more social involvement and increased occupational aspirations than Black students who attend PWIs. Additional studies have found that African American students are more engaged and feel more support and accepted in an HBCU (Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps, 1975).

Kassie Freeman has conducted the most extensive work on African American students and the influences on college choice. In her initial study of African American high school students (1999), her research was guided by three primary research questions:

1) Who/and or what influences the type of higher education institutions these students consider?

2) What role does cultural affinity play in the decision making process for students considering HBCUs?

3) Are students from certain high school types more likely to consider one type of higher education institution over another?

The qualitative study was conducted in 5 cities with large African American populations. There were a total of 70 male and female, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade African American

students from private and public high schools. Freeman viewed the importance of this study for both recruitment and retention efforts of African American students at PWIs and HBCUs.

> Understanding the college choice process provides clues about how to increase the overall enrollment of African Americans in higher education. Therefore, this information could be useful to admissions officers at both HBCUs and PWIs. …To achieve retention at various higher education institutions, it is helpful to know how students make selections. (p. 92)

Several themes emerged from the in-depth focus group interviews of the participants relative to the considerations African Americans give to selecting an institution type. Students who attended a predominantly White private high school considered both prestigious PWIs as well as HBCUs; whereas students who attended a predominantly Black high school did not elect to consider an HBCU. The students in the predominantly White high schools wanted to "seek their roots"(Freeman, 1999, p. 99) at an HBCU as a form of reestablishing cultural attachment due to a lack of cultural awareness similar to the factors considered of multiracial students (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). On the other hand, students who were attending predominantly Black high schools wanted to attend a PWI "because the world is not just Black"(Freeman, 1999, p. 102). Regardless of the private versus public status of their high schools, all students who considered attending an HBCU were influenced by a friend, guidance counselor, or family member to attend.

Awokoya & Mann (2011) authored "Students Speak: Understanding the Value of HBCUs from Student Perspectives. " This research, funded through the Frederick D. Patterson Research institute, highlighted the experiences of African American students at

private HBCUs in the United States. Through the use of focus group interviews, researchers learned more about the college-decision making process of African American students in their choices to attend historically Black colleges and universities and what factors have assisted in their persistence at these institutions. Awokoya and Mann's findings further reiterated the work of Freeman (1999) and Allen (1992) that students are seeking "1) to be in environments with people who look like them, 2) to be in environments devoid of racism, and 3) to explore their cultural roots"(p. 15). Several participants in the study commented on how welcomed they felt during the college tour process, their desire to be connected with the faculty, and the need to be reconnected with their African American heritage. Two primary themes emerged: 1) A strong desire for sense of belonging, and 2) an engaged campus environment. Participants in this study offered countless reasons for their attraction to HBCUs and attribute their success to the support systems in place to further their emotional, racial and academic development.

Biracial/Multiethnic students' choice processes. Due to the lack of literature or research on the experiences of biracial students whose parents are not African American and Caucasian, it was important to review a study that included participants from different monoracial backgrounds. Hughes, Lynaugh, McCartney, and Novitski's (2004) qualitative study of eight biracial/multiethnic students explored participant's college choice experiences and their negotiation of the biracial identities. In terms of their findings as it relates to choosing an identity, many of the participants did not feel as if they needed to choose one identity because they felt equally supported while growing up. Also, the participants echoed the findings of other researchers (Renn, 2000, 2004; Talbot, 2008; Wallace, 2001, 2003; Wijeyesinghe, 2001) that they did not necessarily always

choose their identity but rather it was selected for them based on their phenotype or situation (Renn, 2004).

Several themes emerged from this study related to biracial/multiethnic students' development and college choice. Strong ties to family of origin and valuing a diverse academic environment influenced their college choice. The participants in this study described the relationship with their family as the most important factor in their lives. Interestingly, even those students who experienced difficult times with their families still considered those communities to be the most important. This finding is in direct relationship with the research on other biracial or multiracial students of African American and Caucasian heritage (Poston, 1990; Root, 1990; Wallace, 2001, 2003).

The second and most relevant theme was that of the student's value in a diverse academic environment. While not all students selected their institutions based on its diversity, they all stressed its importance. The researchers found that because the students were leaving an important and supportive network (their families) finding a supportive network at the institution was a strong developmental influence. Students who were attending a school they defined as diverse found it easier to develop supportive networks, on the contrary, those who were not at diverse institutions did not find it easy to connect. "The college experience is the catalyst that allows biracial/multiethnic students to value diversity even if they identified with only one of their ethnicities prior to college"(Hughes, et al, 2004). Institutions, as a laboratory for learning, should cultivate opportunities for students to explore all of their identities.

This study was one of the first to examine the college choice process for biracial/multiethnic students. Based on the student experiences the researchers were able

to group the participants into three subcategories: Knower's, Fortunate Unknowers, and Unfortunate Unknowers.

Knower's. The "knower's" are the students who grew up in an environment that celebrated diversity and felt their biracial/multiethnic identity was fully accepted. These students valued diversity and sought institutions that demonstrated the same level of commitment. "Knower's" were aware at an early age that their support networks were important to their identity development.

Fortunate unknowers. Fortunate unknowers were students who grew up in a homogenous environment. These students' families and support networks represented both aspects of the students' racial identity yet the students identified mostly with the most predominant race/ethnicity in their family. As the Fortunate Unknowers made decisions about college their decisions were based on the best academic experience rather than the institutions diversity. While the students did not see diversity as the dominant factor in their decision making process, the institutions they selected were institutions that espoused diversity as an important value, therefore, the students were able to embrace their racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Unfortunate unknowers. These students did not grow up in a diverse environment, and they made their college decisions based on the institutions that would provide them the best social and academic experience. Unfortunately, the colleges they selected did not provide diverse support groups or networks, thus the difficulty in the students finding friends. The absence of diversity and support networks directly impacted the student's identity development, and challenged one participant to transfer institutions at the end of their sophomore year. Tinto's theory of student departure (1993) indicates

the importance of students becoming integrated into the academic and social life of the institution. The unfortunate unknower's recognized their need for an environment that promoted academic and social success; however, they did not consider the type of environment (culturally) that would best meet those needs.

According to the study discussed above, the students did not consider financial issues or familial influence in attending different institutional types. Some participants did choose institutions based on proximity to support networks but not due to their influence. Similarly to that of African American students, many several of the students (fortunate knower's) gravitated to an environment that supports their racial identity development (Freeman, 1999; 2000). A limitation of this study in relation to my examination of choice of institution type (HBCU and PWI) is that all participants in this study attended large, predominantly White institutions.

The next portion of the literature review continues to explore the impact of the biracial or multiracial identity development process on an individual's choice of racial identity through the lens of several theories, models, and studies.

Biracial Identity Development Theories and Models

Since 1990, there have been several identity development models but these "(mono) racial identity models do not necessarily address the needs of mixed-race students, who cannot engage entirely in an immersion in one of their component cultures without putting aside, at least for that time, other aspects of their heritage" (Renn, 2000, p. 400). William Cross, (1971) introduced one of the first racial identity stage models that looked at the development or nigrescence of the Black identity (Cross, 1971; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper; 2003; Renn, 2008). Other

researchers, sociologist, and psychologist such as Helms (1995) proposed similar model which explored the identity development process of White students and later another model that integrated people of color, both of which were stage models that indicated a person would move progressively from one stage to another. These racial identity models were deemed appropriate for individuals with a monoracial identity but did little to explain the process by which biracial or multiracial individuals' identity developed.

Poston's (1990) biracial identity development model was a foundational model for understanding biracial identity. This model included five levels: personal identity, choice of group categorization, enmeshment/denial, appreciation, and integration. Poston provided a great foundation for further evaluation of other multiracial development models and served as a springboard for other models such as Root's (1990) extension of minority identity development to encompass that of biracial adolescence and Wijeyesinghe's (2001) factor model of multiracial identity (FMMI), which looks at factors that influence the choice of racial identity. Torres, Howard-Hamilton and Cooper (2003) stated that this model should be used as a tool to "organize the experiences of multiracial people and to assist in understanding the choices multiracial individuals make regarding racial identity" (p. 65). Most recently, Kristen Renn's five patterns of identity among biracial and multiracial college students contributed to the literature of progression models of identity. The five patterns are: 1) student holds a monoracial identity, 2) student holds multiple monoracial identities, shifting according to the situation, 3) student holds a multiracial identity, 4) student holds an extraracial identity by deconstructing race or opting out of identification with

U. S. racial categories, and 5) student holds a situational identity, identifying differently in different contexts.

   While there have been great strides to further understand the identity development of multiracial students, the implications for understanding their college choice process is limited. With an increase in the number of biracial individuals converging on college campuses, it is important that practitioners and researchers begin to learn more about what attracts them, how they are influenced and their needs. The following section provides an overview of the seminal and progressive theories and models of biracial identity development. The models, relevant studies, and theories that will be discussed include Poston and Root's (1990) models of biracial identity development, Renn's patterns of multiracial identity (2000, 2004), and Wijeyesinghe's (2001) factor model of multiracial identity. Each of these theories serves as a framework for examining the experiences of biracial or multiracial identity development and the influences on their development.

   Poston and Root's identity development models. Two of the foundational theories of biracial identity development are the models published by Poston and Root (1990). These models conveyed the need to further define the differences between the identity development processes of a biracial individual from that of a monoracial individual. Poston believed that the current models of monoracial identity development did not take into account the complexities and experiences of biracial individuals and posited a "new and positive model" (p. 153). The following section outlines Poston's five levels.

- Stage 1: <u>Personal identity</u>. During childhood, individuals hold an identity that is not necessarily linked to a racial or ethnic background.

- Stage 2<u>: Choice of group categorization</u>. Based on factors such as appearance, social factors, or awareness of cultural background an individual may feel forced to choose one racial orientation (dominant culture) over another.

- Stage 3: <u>Enmeshment/denial</u>. Guilt because they must choose one racial group over another and subsequently   deny that there is any difference and feels compelled to identity with both groups. It is important that individuals resolve this guilt or anger in order to move forward.

- Stage 4: <u>Appreciation</u>. Individuals who identify with one racial group will broaden their knowledge and appreciation for the other racial group; although they may still choose to identify with one group over the other.

- Stage 5: <u>Integration</u>. During this stage the individual gains a broader appreciation of their multicultural identity and embraces their multiracial identities.

Poston's stage model is fundamentally different from the other monoracial identity models in three primary ways: 1) it takes into account the differences between monoracial and multiracial identities; 2) it does not address the influence of societal racism on how individuals may see themselves and how others see them; and 3) how multiracial or biracial individuals may develop multiple healthy identities (Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003; Renn, 2008; Wijeyesinghe, 2001).

In relation to Poston's model and earlier identity stage models, Root (1990) based her model of biracial identity development on the experiences of biracial teens that may be partially White, and the tensions that exist in attempting to wrestle with a biracial

identity. Root's model suggested that individuals may struggle with how to manage a "dual existence" (p. 200), which caused challenges for them in assuming a biracial identity. Root also considered how issues of racism or internalized oppression may negatively influence a positive resolution of individual's biracial identity. Root's model consisted of four possible solutions to the tensions that may exist with establishing a biracial identity:

- Acceptance of the identity society assigns. Individuals will accept the identity that society assigns them. Family and other strong influences acceptance of said identity allows the individual to easily accept the identity most readily identifiable and comfortable.

- Identification with both racial groups. Depending on the situation and support from others, the individual will readily and successfully navigate both or all racial groups. The individual has actively resolved their identity status.

- Identification with a single racial group. The individual has chosen to identify with one group, based on their own preferences and affinity.

- Identification as a new racial group. The individual has a stronger kinship or relationship with other biracial individuals rather than with monoracial individuals.

Root's model was one of the first to account for the impact of racism on the identity development of individuals, and allowed for individuals to move along the identity continuum in their own way. This model was a premise for other types of ecological, psychological, and sociological models of biracial identity development to

include the work of Renn's five patterns of multiracial identity (2000, 2004) and

Wijeyesinghe's factor model of multiracial identity (2001).

    Renn's five patterns of multiracial identity. As more multiracial students join

college campuses, researchers have expanded upon the identity development process of

these students to begin focusing on their patterns of development and the significant

influences on their development. Kristen Renn (2000, 2004) identified five patterns of

identity among biracial and multiracial college students. This grounded theory study's

backdrop identified college as the place where students can explore their identities

through involvement, academic engagement, and work with peers (Renn, 2000, 2004);

therefore, students' multiracial identity patterns may be influenced by the environment in

which they exist. The five patterns are: 1) students hold a monoracial identity; 2) student

holds multiple monoracial identities, shifting according to the situation; 3) student holds a

multiracial identity; 4) student holds an extraracial identity by deconstructing race or

opting out of identification with U. S. racial categories; and 5) student holds a situational

identity, identifying differently in different contexts.

    The first pattern, monoracial identity, indicates that the individual chooses one

racial background to identify. This pattern is similar to Root's third resolution (1990) in

that the individual will choose an identity, independent of social pressure, by which to

identify.

    Second, the student will hold multiple monoracial identities shifting according

to the situation. In Renn's 2000 study on patterns of situational identity, peer culture

influenced ways that multiracial students made sense of their identity. Some of the

major factors that influenced how multiracial students identify were based on both

campus racial demographics and peer culture. Some students posited that how easily they were able to navigate from various monoracial social groups represented how the university campus peer culture influenced their identity.

Next, students may see themselves as holding one multiracial identity and they do not choose one identity over the other. Across several studies by Renn, Root, Wallace and Wijeyesinghe, students elected to identify with all aspects of their identity rather than only one (Renn, 2004; Root, 2003; Wallace, 2003; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). The change in the U. S. Census (2000) further supports individual's ability to identify holistically rather than being forced to choose. Conversely, in the next pattern, students completely deconstructed race by electing to not identify with any particular racial category or group. This pattern would be similar to Cross' (1971) stage of Immersion-Emersion in which the individual becomes pro-Black and anti-White as a means to combat the social construction of race and the inherent power held by the majority culture. The primary difference for biracial or multiracial individuals is the defiance against the entire construction of race, not solely one aspect of it.

Finally, the students will hold a situational identity that based on the context or situation may differ in an effort to "fit in". The key difference is that the student is comfortable with their racial identity; however, the dominance of the most salient elements may be most prevalent dependent on the situation. This pattern correlates with various aspects of the college choice process for students of color in that students may choose an institution that either represents how they currently see themselves or an institution that fosters opportunities for them to learn more about themselves (Freeman, 1999, 2002; Tatum, 1997; Perna, 2000).

Wijeyesinghe's factor model of multiracial identity. Poston and Root's (1990) models were the first to describe the development of biracial identities. Learning more about how biracial individuals reconcile and own their multiple identities was the first step in understanding where individuals may be in their identity development process. These models prompted more opportunities to examine higher level aspects of biracial identity development, specifically as it relates to how biracial individuals understand their racial identity and their choice of identity.

In 2001, Wijeyesinghe conducted a qualitative study of African American and Caucasian American, multiracial individuals to understand their experiences and their choice of racial identity. The participants were representative of various monoracial and multiracial identities, age, socioeconomic class, and gender, which allowed for a more comprehensive examination of biracial or multiracial experiences. The factor model of multiracial identity was created as a way to represent the various factors that affect choice of racial identity and "represents the diversity of experience within and between groups of multiracial people" (Wijeyesinghe, 2001, p. 136). Subsequently, Wijeyesinghe's model serves as the theoretical framework of this study to explore biracial students college choice and how their choice of racial identity impacts their decision making process. Although Poston and Root's biracial identity models and Renn's five patterns of multiracial identity provide vital information about the identity and development process of multiracial individuals, Wijeyesinghe's factor model of multiracial identity is the most appropriate to explore this study. It is important to recognize that multiple factors may influence an individual's choice of personal, racial identity. The eight factors that affect choice of racial identity of multiracial individuals are: 1) racial ancestry; 2) early

experiences and socialization; 3) cultural attachment, 4) physical appearance, 5) social and historical context, 6) political awareness and orientation, 7) other social identities, and 8) spirituality. The following section will focus on the factors relevant to the theoretical lens in which this study will be examined. A figure of all eight factors may be found in Appendix E.

Racial ancestry. Racial ancestry is discussed first because many individuals base their identity on their family tree. For multiracial individuals who utilize their family tree to understand who they are, their identity is based in large part on the racial make-up of their families (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). However, individuals who choose a monoracial identity rely less on their ancestry to define their everyday lives.

Early experiences and socialization. Early experiences and socialization of multiracial individuals can also impact their choice of racial identity. The multiracial individual's family, community and social institution are critical in the formation of the person's racial identity. Talbot (2008) conducted a study to examine the experiences of mixed race students with two parents from racial minority groups. The process for selecting a racial label the students were comfortable with was described by three primary categories: families and communication (or lack thereof), physical appearance and features, and self-labeling. How the students' families talked about their multiracial identities directly impacted how the students viewed themselves, making the process of self-labeling and self-identity more difficult. A sense of who they are (self-identity) balanced with being comfortable with what other labels people defined for them (labeling) influenced their feelings "of 'not being enough' [not being Black enough, not Latina enough, not Asian enough]" (Talbot, 2008, p. 28). Interestingly, much like

previous stage models and Renn's situational identity model (2000), multiracial

individuals may change their choice of racial identity based on future experiences

(Wijeyesinghe, 2001).

In terms of the college choice process of African American and multiracial

individuals, early experiences and socialization were found to be quite influential.

Freeman's (2000) study of African American high school students and Hughes, et al.

(2004) study of multiracial college students found that both group's families and the

social support they received in their own racial identification influenced their college

choice process. The African American students who were strongly considering

attending a historically Black college or university were influenced by a family or

mentors relationship with the institution. Conversely, multiracial students who were

classified as "Fortunate Knower's" chose college environments that mirrored the

diverse and accepting environment in which they grew up. Ultimately, student's

personal identity in relation to college choice was embedded in the support they

received from family and social networks.

Cultural attachment. Multiracial individual's exposure and attachment to various

aspects of their culture may also influence their racial identity. In looking at the

influences of cultural attachments, or lack thereof, as it related to the college choice

process for both African American and multiracial students, several researchers learned

that a students need to either learn more about a particular aspect of their culture or

disassociate from environments that they were familiar impacted the type of institution

they chose (Allen, 1992; Freeman, 1999, 2000; Hughes, et. al, 2004; Perna, 2000). One

of the themes that emerged in Freeman's study of African American high school

students was the lack of cultural awareness (1999). One student stated, "We have a lot of problems in that we don't really know our culture. A lot of Black people don't know where they came from and they don't know their culture" (p. 101). Another student identified the lack of classes regarding their culture as an issue.

> I have been in private high schools all my life. They don't really teach you about Black history. Like this is Black History month. We will focus on Black people. But is it not worked into the curriculum as a whole like, you know, as a whole thing. (p. 101)

Similarly, multiracial students have identified similar issues with lack of awareness. In a pilot study conducted with multiracial students (Shivers, 2010), a participant shared her challenges with her lack of knowledge about her Japanese culture.

> When I know more about a certain race I will identify with it more. So like being Black, I have a predominantly Black family and you know, I know a lot about African American history but when it comes to the Japanese side of me, I really don't know much about the basic things. Like food or just like some of the cultural things that go on. So it kind of, I guess for lack of a better word, "sucks." It's not fun to you know walk around wearing the face of a Japanese girl but not really knowing much about it. (p. 19)

In a studies conducted by Renn (2000, 2003, 2004), King (2008), and Wallace (2003) multiracial students lack of cultural knowledge also affected their comfort level in occupying certain "spaces" on campus. Spaces were defined as either physical and psychological spaces that they could occupy with individuals like them or spaces to reflect on their own identity (p. 405). Students felt most comfortable in spaces that they

shared a cultural knowledge of various aspects of the culture, isolated from those in which they were least comfortable.

Physical appearance. Another important factor is that of physical appearance. Across several studies by Renn, Root, Wallace and Wijeyesinghe "how a multiracial individual looks – skin tone, hair texture and color, eye and nose shape, and so forth – strongly influence his or her identity" (Renn, 2004; Root, 2003; Talbot, 2008; Wallace, 2003; Wijeyesinghe, 2001, p. 18). Multiracial individuals whose phenotype is ambiguous or distinct may support their choice of racial identity. Often times, as discussed in King (2008), challenges with navigating cultural and social spaces on campus, come from an individual's physical appearance. Students are confronted with the proverbial "What are you?" and question their acceptance by other students.

There is a lack of research on how multiracial individual's phenotype impacts their college choice decision. In the studies on students of color and influences on choice of institutional type, phenotype has not evolved as a factor or theme.

Wijeyesinghe's factor model of multiracial identity moves from the linear stages of development to the various factors that may influence a multiracial person's racial identity. Consideration of the factors in concert rather than individually provides for a stronger, more in-depth understanding of how a multiracial individual makes sense of their identity. Further, these factors will serve as a critical lens in which to evaluate the college choice process of multiracial students.

Chapter Summary

  This chapter has highlighted literature related to biracial identity in the United States, college choice models and influences on specific racial populations and specific examples of biracial and multiracial identity models and theories by which to understand the growing multiracial population on college campuses. This chapter provided a framework for the importance of examining the college choice process of multiracial students and the influence of their racial identity on their consideration of predominantly White institutions and historically Black college or universities.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the college-decision

making process of biracial students enrolled in historically Black colleges and

universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs). This combination

interview, demographic survey, and document analysis study examined a group of

biracial or multiracial undergraduate students who attended predominantly White and

historically Black colleges or universities in the Southeastern United States. A descriptive

qualitative study allowed for the voice of the participants and provided a clearer

understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Utilizing one-on-one, in-depth

interviews, data from a demographic survey, and analysis of institutional documents

assisted me in gaining a richer understanding of the participants' choices and

experiences. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What factors did biracial students consider when choosing to attend either a

   predominantly White institution or a historically Black college or university?

2. How does cultural or racial affinity shape an individual's decision-making

   process?

This chapter will concentrate on the design and rationale, sample selection, and methods

for data collection and analysis. Additionally, this chapter will provide an overview of the

validity and reliability of the design, to include the researcher bias and assumptions,

ethical considerations, as well as limitations of the study as identified by the researcher.

Social Constructivist Paradigm

A paradigm has been defined as a way to look at the world and how those beliefs inform action (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative research, operating from a social constructivist paradigm suggests that the focus is on understanding the world in which individuals live and how they make meaning of their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mayan, 2009; Patton, 2002). A social constructivist view implies that the experiences and way individuals make meaning of the world is socially constructed; hence, meanings are subjectively interpreted and formed through interactions with other individuals. How the researcher understands or makes meaning of the experiences is also informed by his or her individual background or historical knowledge; therefore "an interpretation of what they find" (Creswell, 2007, p. 21) is based on my own knowledge and experiences. The study of biracial student college selection process was best examined through a social constructivist paradigm and a qualitative research approach because it allowed the researcher to make sense of the participant's experiences (Creswell, 2007; Mayan, 2009; Stage & Manning, 2003).

Design

A qualitative research design was utilized for this study. Qualitative research is exploratory and descriptive (Creswell, 1998, 2007) and is the best approach to provide a basic description and understanding of the phenomenon (Mayan, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). The use of a descriptive, constructivist qualitative method required me to remain close to the data and encouraged me to be an active learner in the exploration process

(Creswell, 2007; Mayan, 2009; Sandelowski, 2000). According to Mayan (2009), the researcher can "conduct a rigorous, useful, and significant study through a descriptive qualitative method" (p. 53). This exploratory study utilized one-on-one interviews, a demographic survey, and document analysis to explore the relationship between the participant's biracial identity and choice of institution type. While there have been several studies conducted on biracial students identity development and needs of biracial students (Renn, 2000, 2008; Wallace, 2003; Wijeyesinghe, 2001) there have been limited studies focused on the potential differences in their college choice process.

Site Selection

I identified institutions to conduct the study due to proximity, institutional type, and access to desired participants. In 2007, Berg stated that researchers should seek sites where:

> 1) Entry or access is possible; 2) the appropriate people (target population) are available; 3) there is a high probability that the study's focuses, processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures that are part of the research question(s) will be available to the investigator; and 4) the research can be conducted effectively by an individual or individuals during the data collection phase of a study (p. 40).

For the purpose of this study, the predominantly White institutions and historically Black college and universities that were selected were the best types of institutions to explore the potential differences in the college choice process of biracial students.

Introduction of Institutions

The institutions for this study are three historically Black colleges and universities and a public, mid-size predominantly White institution located in the Southeastern United States. Each institution has been assigned pseudonyms for the purpose of this study.

Institution A, Big University of the South (BUS), is a four-year public, Carnegie class Doctoral/Research intensive, predominantly White, land-grant university which boasts approximately 21,000 undergraduates and 6,100 graduate students (Carnegie Class, 2010; Institutional Fact book, 2010). The institution offers undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees in over 300 programs. Tuition and fees for in-state, undergraduate students are approximately $15,000 per year; out-of state tuition and fees are approximately $23,000 for one academic year. The racial or ethnic makeup of the student population consists of 83% Caucasian; 9%, African American; 4%, Asian American; 2% Latino; 1%, Native American; and an additional 1% are classified as Other or unknown. Students are provided the option to select more than one racial category on their admissions application (Institution Admissions application, 2010; U. S. Census 2000).

Institution B, Tailored University of the South (TUS), is a comprehensive, four-year public, Carnegie class – Doctoral/Research intensive, urban, land grant, historically Black University with approximately 6,000 undergraduate and graduate students. TUS offers undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees in over 100 programs (Carnegie Class, 2010; Institutional Fact book, 2010). Tuition and fees for in-state, full-time undergraduate students is approximately $3,464 per semester; out of state tuition and fees is $8,067 per semester. The racial makeup of the student body consists of 85% African American, 2. 9% Caucasian, 2. 7% Multiracial, 2. 6% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian American, 0.

3% Native American, and 0. 1 % unknown.

Applicants to TUS have the option of selecting more than one racial category on their admissions application (Census 2000; Institutional Admissions Application, 2010).

Institution C, Great University of the South (GUS), is a private, four-year historically Black university that boasts 3,600 undergraduate students (Institutional Fact Book, 2010). SUS offers over 35 majors in seven academic colleges. Tuition, fees, and room and board for full-time undergraduate students for 2010-2011 academic year were $21, 432. The racial makeup of the institution is 95% African American and 5% International. Applicants to GUS have the option of selecting two or more races on the admissions application (Institution Admissions Application, 2011); however, this breakdown is not included in the institutional fact book.

Institution D, Leadership College of the South (LCS), is a private, liberal arts, historically Black college located in the southeastern United Students. There are 1,500 undergraduate students enrolled in four colleges. Tuition, fees, and room and board for full-time undergraduate students for the 2010-2011 academic year were $24, 286. Applicants are allowed to check 'other' as their racial identification. See Table 2 below for a leaner review of the sites selected for this study.

Since the primary purpose of this study was to examine the college choice process and the role of racial or cultural affinity on choice of institutional type, it was most important to focus on how they choose different institutional types versus which institution (e. g. Public HBCU v. Private HBCU or Public PWI v. Public HBCU). Therefore, the number of HBCUs and PWIs weren't the primary factors, how the participants chose the institutions was the focus of the research questions.

Additionally, the institutions categorized and counted biracial or multiracial students in various ways. Three of the four institutions allowed students to identify with "two or more" racial categories whereas one institution labeled those students with two or more racial identities as "other". As mentioned previously, federal policies mandate that all applications provide space for individuals to self-identify their racial identities; however, how those categories are presented continues to differ among institutions.

Table 1

Institutions Selected for Study

Institution (Pseudonym)	Type	Two or More	"Other" Identification	Cost (Acad. Yr.)
Inst. A – BUS	PWI, Public	YES	NO	$15,000
Inst. B – TUS	HBU, Public	YES	NO	$6,938
Inst. C – GUS	HBU, Private	YES	NO	$21,432
Inst. D – LCS	HBC, Private	NO	YES	$24,286

Sample Selection

This study focused on factors and impact of racial or cultural affinity on the college-decision making process of biracial students at historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions in the Southeastern United States.

Initially, I attempted to utilize purposeful sampling to recruit participants from both Historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions. After further investigation of institutional documents, specifically institutional fact books of HBCUs that included the racial demographics of the institutions, I realized the use of biracial or multiracial as a category was not included. However, the admissions application allowed students to identify with two or more racial or ethnic categories;

therefore, there was potential that the "other" category included participants who met the criteria of this study. Purposeful sampling, as described in Creswell (2007), is the selection of "individuals and site for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (p. 125). " Due to the small sample size and limited availability of students who identified as biracial or multiracial students at HBCUs, a non-probability sampling approach known as snowball sampling was employed in order to gather enough participants for this aspect of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 28) stated snowball sampling "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich". This approach allowed for participants, faculty, and staff to recommend other participants who met the criteria to contact the researcher to express interest in participation in this study. Since the most important aspects of this study were focused on the decision making process and how racial affinity impacts the choice of institutional type and not focused on specific institutions, snowball sampling allowed for a greater generation of interest and increased access to students who self-identified as biracial.

In terms of biracial participants who attended a PWI, a purposeful sample was employed due to the availability and access to students who identified as biracial or multiracial. Purposeful sampling means that the researcher identified individuals and sites that assisted the researcher in better understanding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). The participants who attended the PWI were readily accessible because they identified as biracial or multiracial on their college application. The institution's Registrar's office assisted in recruitment of participants by sending the solicitation email to all students who self-identified as biracial. Patton (2002) postulated that it is important for the

participants being studied to be information rich and illuminative due to their real life experiences. Additionally, the institutions' diversity and leadership offices forwarded the solicitation email to individuals who they knew met the criteria and would be willing to participate in this study. The purposeful sampling approach was appropriate because it helped to understand the choices and experiences of a group bound in a specific time and place (Creswell, 2007).

Prior to conducting this study, it was necessary to gain approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB). Once IRB approval was granted I proceeded with recruiting and identifying participants for the study.

In order to understand the phenomenon and glean information to answer my research questions, it was imperative that participants met two specific criteria: First, the participants needed to self-identify as multiracial or biracial. Additionally, one parent must identify as African American. As discussed in the previous chapters, the historical significance of race, particularly for African Americans and the extant literature on African American students' college choice process (Allen, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999, 2002; Gasman, 2009) makes it important to explore students who have one African American parent. To this end, it was important to further explore the multiple identities of biracial students and how those informed or impacted their college choice process and racial identity development.

Second, the participants needed to identify as traditional aged, (18 – 24) undergraduate students attending a predominantly White institution or a historically Black college or university. Most of the monoracial participants in studies of college choice consist of traditional-age college students. It was important to me that I include

criteria similar to that of previous studies in order to investigate similarities and differences. It was also important that students were able to recall their recent college choice experience to articulate how they made those decisions.

To recruit participants from HBCUS and PWIs, I utilized a multi-tiered recruitment approach. As mentioned previously, to recruit participants from the predominantly White institution, I sent an email solicitation letter (see Appendix B) to the Director and Associate Director of the Office of Minority Student Affairs, the Assistant Director of the Student Orientation and Leadership Development office, and the office of the Registrar. Each department forwarded the solicitation letter via student listservs or directly to individuals who self-identified as biracial or multiracial. The same solicitation letter was emailed to Vice Presidents, Directors, and Deans at HBCUs, however; the response was minimal therefore, I utilized recommendations from various colleagues and participants to recruit additional participants from various HBCUs in the Southeastern United States who met the stated criteria. Fortunately, several colleagues and other participants served as gatekeepers at TUS, GUS, and LCS. A gatekeeper, according to Creswell (2007), is defined as "an individual who is a member or has insider status with a cultural group" (p. 125). These individuals were very important in gaining access and successfully conducting this study because I did not personally know these participants, the gatekeepers had rapport and a level of credibility.

Interested participants then contacted me directly to express an interest in participating in the study. I followed up with a reintroduction of the purpose and process of the study, criteria for participation, request to complete the demographic survey, and a time and location to conduct interviews. The eleven students selected to participate in this

study met all stated criteria (biracial or multiracial, traditional- aged, undergraduate students) and offered an array of gender, social class and age diversity. I have provided more detailed information on the participant demographics below.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant (Pseudonym)	Institution Type	Racial/Ethnic Make Up	Age	Attending Another Institution Prior to Enrollment at this Institution?	Applied to HBCUs, PWIs, or Ivy League	First Choice
Beyonce	PWI - BUS	African American & Hispanic	18	NO	PWIs	NO
Blake	PWI - BUS	African American & Hispanic	21	NO	PWIs	NO
Richard	PWI - BUS	Native American & African American	18	NO	BOTH	NO
Tom	PWI - BUS	African American & Caucasian	22	NO	PWIs	NO
Melissa	PWI - BUS	African American & Caucasian	19	YES	PWIs	NO
Michelle	PWI - BUS	African American & Caucasian	21	NO	PWIs	YES
Star	HBU - TUS	African American & Caucasian	19	NO	BOTH	NO
Larry	HBU - TUS	African American & Caucasian	19	NO	BOTH	NO
Nadia	HBC - LCS	African American & Asian American	22	YES	BOTH	NO
Lorraine	HBU - GUS	African American, Asian American, & Caucasian	20	NO	BOTH	NO
Aristotle	HBU - GUS	African American, Hispanic, & Native American	21	NO	BOTH	NO

Introduction to Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative research allows for various methods of data collection to obtain substantive information from participants. Interviews (close-ended to open-ended), observations (participant to non-participant), documents (photos to written records), the use of audiovisual materials (CD's, DVD's) or a combination of these are the most widely utilized. For this study, I collected data through document analysis, a demographic survey, and in-depth interviews (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Institutional documents such as websites, admissions view books, and fact books were previewed to learn more about the institutions and to aid me in site selection. Prior to conducting the interviews, consent from the participants was obtained; participants were provided an overview of the study; and communicated about the expectation of participating in member checks of the transcribed interviews to authenticate the interviews (See Appendices B and C). Students were required to submit a completed demographic survey (See Appendix D) via email prior to the interview to assist the researcher in learning more about them and to ensure that they met all stated criteria for participation in the study. I used interviews, a demographic survey, and document analysis to collect data for this study. I discuss each in more detail in the sections that follow.

Demographic survey. Prior to the individual interviews, each participant was asked to complete a demographic survey (Appendix D). The survey served as a mechanism to learn more about the participants' demographics such as gender, age, ethnicity, and prior experiences (Thomas, 2004). Data from this survey was placed in table format (see Tables 1 and 2) to analyze each participants demographic information and to create a cross-comparison of influences, choices, socioeconomic status,

experiences, and backgrounds to further describe biracial or multiracial students at predominantly White institutions and historically Black colleges and universities. For example, the demographic survey provided information such as the type of high schools the participants attended. This information would be helpful in looking at their choice of institutional type and if there were any similarities. Additionally, the open-ended question about why they chose their particular institution provided a great entrée' for follow up during the interview portion of data collection.

Individual interviews. According to Sandelowski (2000), the use of a descriptive qualitative methodology supports the use of interviews as the primary data collection method. A semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix E) was utilized because of its inherent ability to garner an extensive amount of data through direct, open-ended questions and additional probing questions (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Patton, 2002). The questions were organized in three categories: 1) College choice process, 2) Identity development, and 3) Institutional type. Depending on each participant, each interview lasted an average of 35 - 45 minutes. The interviews were held in various locations conducive for the participants. In order to maintain confidentiality, the students were also asked to identify a pseudonym. All consent forms and demographic surveys were obtained prior to the interviews. Further, students were reminded, according to the consent form, that they were permitted to leave the study at any time without suffering negative consequences. The nature of the study also did not suggest that the students could or would suffer any negative effects or consequences from their participation in the study.

Document analysis. In an effort to better understand the college choice process of biracial students, it was important to review relevant documents related to the institution. The institutions admissions applications (both hard copy and online), the University website Fact book (racial demographics and tuition costs), and strategic plans of the colleges and universities were reviewed. When reviewing the admissions applications for all four institutions, it was important to note that each application allowed for applicants to 'check' either more than one box, the 'other' category, or delineated space for applicants to provide specific racial identification. As stated in Kellogg & Niskode (2008), since 1997 all federal agencies were required to provide opportunities for racial/ethnic self-identification, it is important to note that all participating institutions met this requirement. Providing students the opportunity to self-identify allows institutions to accurately account for the diversity of their student body (Kearn, 2006). Interestingly, only two of the four institutions included their multiracial student statistics in their institutional fact book; therefore, it was difficult to account for the actual number of multiracial students enrolled on the campus.

Hossler and Gallagher's college choice model (1987), specifically the predisposition phase, highlights various ways students utilize institution view books and websites to learn more about the higher education institutions. It was important that I also review those documents to gain a sense of what students might find if utilizing those documents to inform their college choice process. Document analysis is viewed as a good supplement to other forms of data collection and may provide information about things that may not be observed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). During the analysis of the application materials, websites, and institutional fact books, memoing

was utilized as a formal way to remember descriptive data concerning each institution (Creswell, 2009; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Merriam, 2009). I noted similarities and differences of institutional applications regarding race/ethnicity, tuition and fees, as well as racial demographics of the institution (see Table 2).

Data Analysis

Qualitative inquiry is generally an inductive activity that helps to make general sense of the data one piece at a time in order to compose a story or theory (Mayan, 2009). The inductive inquiry process is best enacted in a general descriptive qualitative study through the use of content analysis as the primary data analysis technique (Mayan, 2009; Stage & Manning, 2003). "The primary purpose of content analysis is to identify underlying themes, assumptions, beliefs, and the narrative, sense-making and meaning-making structures of the document's author" (Stage & Manning, 2003, p. 93). Content analysis is divided into two types: manifest and latent. For the purpose of this study, latent content analysis was the best method for understanding and analyzing the interviews. Latent content analysis is a way of organizing and categorizing the data (Mayan, 2009). Due to the amount of data obtained through interviews, review of documents, and the information gathered through the demographic survey, it was critical that the information was organized in a way that made sense. Once the interviews were transcribed, a cross-analysis of the demographic data and document analysis was coded using both deductive and inductive approaches. As stated in Patton (2002), the "use of computer software to assist in analysis, is partly a matter of individual style, comfort with computers, amount of data to be analyzed, and personal preference"(p. 446). In order to really understand and become most familiar with my data, I chose to hand-code all of my

data, line by line. The more I read the data the more familiar I became with different categories and emergence of themes. The line by line coding allowed me to cut data into large pieces, highlighting words or phrases that emerged multiple times related to existing codes or created the need to invent new ones. For example, the use of the semi-structured interview protocol and the demographic survey allowed me to gain a sense of the participants' influences to attend college. Each time a participant responded to this question, I created index cards with the response and recorded the number of times each response was articulated (Huberman & Miles, 1984). This approach was used for each of the proceeding questions and assisted me in reducing the codes to themes. In addition, the use of data and findings from studies of how African American students make decisions about college choice were used to identify deductive codes. These codes related directly to one of the lenses used to analyze the findings, Freeman's model of predetermination. The inductive coding embodied the experiences of the biracial students who participated in this study; which were different than those identified in studies of African American students' college choice process. For instance, African American students' characterized their interest in learning more about their cultural heritage as a primary motivator for attending an HBCU; however, when reviewing the transcripts and demographic surveys, biracial students at HBCUs offered differing opinions. The use of inductive codes allowed for a focused view on the current participant experiences. The codes were then organized and used to help identify common themes across participants from HBCUs and PWIs. Identifying themes allowed for the discovery of commonalities or differences in the participants' interviews. For example, participants who stated that they grew up with 'less than enough' were also the participants who said they didn't apply to or visit more

than one institution due to financial constraints. Based on the themes and categories, I was then able to make conclusions about the overall findings.

Trustworthiness and External Validity

Lincoln and Guba (1981, 2000) examined the use of rigor in qualitative research. Instead of using quantitative terms like validity and reliability, Lincoln and Guba introduced credibility, transferability and dependability as criteria for trustworthiness in qualitative research. I utilized data triangulation of the individual interviews, document analysis, and demographic survey to establish credibility. Triangulation is a method of checking the consistency of findings by utilization of different data collection methods (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999, 2002). The use of triangulation helped to provide rich, substantive, and robust data and helps to guarantee the accuracy of my findings. In addition to triangulation of the various data collection methods, the use of member checks also assisted the researcher in verifying the findings. Participants' feedback on the accuracy of the transcripts as well as the preliminary themes was crucial to the data analysis process. In several instances, participants verified and clarified their statements, which in turn, influenced the accuracy of preliminary themes.

To ensure dependability (reliability), the use of an audit trail (memoing, journaling, and descriptive field notes) was utilized. The audit trail outlined the type and process for data collection, assisted me in making sense of the data, and helped clarify any potential challenges or discrepancies of the study (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002). In terms of transferability, qualitative research is meant to provide an understanding of a phenomenon rather than offer generalization about a population or subject (Lincoln and Guba, 1995; Merriam, 2002). Instead " rich, thick description allows researchers to make

decisions regarding transferability"(Creswell, 2007, p. 209). The use of rich, thick description, member checks, audit trail, and triangulation of the data demonstrates a thorough approach was utilized to increase overall trustworthiness and validity of the study.

Limitations of the Study

In terms of limitations for this study, there are several that may impact how this study would best inform the literature and practice. First, it was my hope to enlighten current research on the differences in how biracial students make decisions about college choice, particularly between institutional types. There are very limited studies on biracial or multiracial choice processes and this study could add another perspective to the discussions. Second, the use of purposeful sampling for the predominantly White institution and snowball sampling at the historically Black colleges and universities limited my ability in understanding one community of biracial students at one historically Black college or university. It was reaffirming to note that in Rockquemore and Brunsma's (2002) study on biracial students, they also ran into numerous difficulties in the "ability to attract enough respondents to draw meaningful generalizations" (p. 31). The small sample size of this study makes it challenging to make broad generalizations or conclusions about the significance of these themes across different predominantly White or historically Black colleges and universities. The timeframe in which this study was conducted directly influenced the amount of data gathered. Students were either preparing for finals or in the middle of finals; therefore, accessibility and availability were challenges in this process.

Researcher Biases and Assumptions

As an African American female who grew up in a small, predominantly White town in the Southeastern United States, race was predominantly framed as Black and White, separately. Due to the lack of diversity in my hometown, it is not surprising that diversity also equated to Black and White. This experience or lack of cultural understanding impacted both my own ability to understand and appreciate my African American heritage and to believe beyond Black and White, literally. African American and Caucasian people existed separately, and it would have been taboo for the two to ever "mix"; therefore, my exposure to individuals with parents of different races was non-existent. As society changed and I attended college, there were many more opportunities for exposure to not only different cultural and racial groups but to witness dating relationships between African Americans and another race.

During my transition into the field of Student Affairs and working in Multicultural Student Affairs, I became increasingly aware of the increase in the number of students attending the institution who "looked" biracial. Unfortunately, there were no mechanisms in place that would allow the students to self-identify in any formal way. This lack of inclusiveness perpetuated false assumptions that in turn fostered a system of labeling to encourage students to join organizations or self-identify in a way that was not comfortable or representative of how they viewed themselves.

My interest in this topic is two-fold: 1) I am concerned about the lack of research on efforts to recruit and retain biracial students. There is limited research to assist admission offices or Student Affairs units with understanding what attracts biracial students to different institutional types (i. e. racial or cultural identity); and 2) Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White institutions (PWIs)

are often structured in the research and in the opinions of many as two separate systems of education with the PWI viewed as superior to the offerings of an HBCU. I was interested in examining the two institutional types to focus on what attracts different types of students to these distinct and relevant institutions of higher education.

I understood the importance of outlining my own personal assumptions and biases in order to effectively situate myself as a qualitative researcher. The biases and assumptions that I bring to this study include: 1) belief that biracial students struggle more with identity development; 2) biracial students select a college or university based on financial support; 3) make uniform choices due to lack of exposure to different types of institutions; and 4) make decisions about college type based on the racial identity they are more interested in learning about or is the most salient for them.

Ethical Considerations

As a qualitative researcher, it is imperative that I account for any potential ethical considerations while conducting this study. In the submission of the Institutional Review Board application to gain permission to conduct this study, researchers are required to account for various ways we will ensure the safety of all participants. First, I reviewed the consent form with participants to remind them that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could decline to participate during any portion of the interview. Additionally, to ensure confidentiality of the students' participation, each participant selected a pseudonym that would be used throughout the interview, in the final transcription, and in the published copy of this dissertation. Further, participants were assured that all materials related to this study would be placed in a locked file for security and confidentiality.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the qualitative methodology, participants, and data collection and analysis processes employed to understand the college decision-making process of biracial or multiracial students who attend historically Black colleges and universities or predominantly White universities. Through the use of various data collection methods and an intensive data analysis process, I was able to thoroughly explore the phenomenon. The findings from this study provided responses to the research question and assisted in further exploring the phenomenon of college process and influences of biracial students.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the college-decision

making process of biracial students enrolled in historically Black colleges and

universities (HBCUs) and predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and how their racial

or cultural affinity impacted their decision-making. To address this purpose, interviews,

demographic surveys, and documents were analyzed. The findings of the study are

addressed in this chapter.

Following a description of the participants, the findings are presented in terms of

the research questions:

1. What factors did biracial students consider when choosing to attend either a

    PWI or HBCU?

2. How does cultural or racial affinity shape an individual's decision making

    process?

Introduction of the Participants

The selection criteria for this study were that students must identify as biracial or

multiracial, traditional-age undergraduate students; have at least one parent who

identified as African American; and be enrolled at a predominantly White institution or

historically Black college or university in the Southeastern United States. The criteria for

the sample were very important; however, how the students' racially identified as biracial

or multiracial and their attendance at HBCUs or PWIs was essential. It was very

important for the purpose of this study that the students identified as either multiracial or

biracial and were able to articulate how they chose to attend their respective institution.

The participants were recruited primarily through professional colleagues, university

department (Registrar's office), and students who knew other participants that met the

stated criteria. In totality, 17 students agreed to participate; however only 11 students met

the stated criteria. The eleven students, from HBCUs and PWIs who participated in this

study were selected based on their self - identification as biracial or multiracial, gender,

age, and enrollment in predominantly White or historically Black institutions.

Beyonce is a first-year student at BUS majoring in pre-medicine whose biracial

identity is African American and Hispanic. Blake, a third-year student at BUS,

Journalism/electronic media major is proud of his African American and Caucasian

heritage. An African American father raised Blake, along with his three siblings. Richard

is a first-year student whose diverse cultural make up is an African American father and a

Native American/African American mother. Richard is the only participant from a PWI

who applied to both HBCUs and PWIs. Tom Sawyer, a third-year student's primary

motivation to attend college was to make his African American father proud. Tom's mom

is Caucasian. Melissa, a second-year student spent the first part of her undergraduate

career at another institution prior to transferring to BUS. Melissa attributes her interest in

attending a PWI was to live in a "more diverse environment". The final participant from

BUS, Michelle, a third- year student, identifies as biracial but connects more with the

African American heritage of her father than her Caucasian mother.

Star, a second-year student at TUS, identifies as biracial with an African

American mother and a Caucasian father. Star enjoys her HBU experience because it's

allowed her to learn more about her African American heritage. Larry, a first-year biracial student at TUS, appreciates the opportunities and experiences that TUS has afforded him. He grew up with both African American and Caucasian parents; therefore, he expresses a balance in appreciation for both cultures. Nadia, a third-year student athlete at LCS, transferred from a PWI to a HBCU. She loves the HBU experience and expresses how comfortable she is with celebrating her African American and Filipino heritage. Lorraine, a third-year multiracial student at GUS has embraced the rich diversity of the HBU. She is actively engaged in many student organizations that cultivate numerous cultural experiences. Lastly is Aristotle, a third-year biracial student at GUS who is committed to his education in an effort to create a solid path for his and his family's future. More details about the participants' demographics and their institutions may be found in Tables 1 and 2.

Presentation of Themes

Understanding what factors influence biracial students to attend college, their selection of an HBCU or a PWI, and how their racial or cultural affinity impacts decision-making are addressed below. Overwhelmingly, all participants indicated 1) families and self-motivation influenced their choice to attend college, regardless of institutional type; 2) location coupled with financial considerations; and 3) their race or cultural affinity was not a conscious influence on their decision making process to attend a PWI or an HBCU. Individually, students from HBCUs valued their HBCU "family" environment. Although it was not initially a primary factor in their decision making process it has influenced their persistence. Participants from PWIs articulated a negative perception of HBCUs notoriety; therefore, only one participants applied to an HBCU.

These participants also demonstrated more unique challenges in appreciating and valuing their biracial identity, specifically their African American heritage.

To thine own self and family, be true. Freeman (1999, 2005), Hossler and Gallagher (1987), and Perna (2006) all discussed various influences and factors on the college decision-making process for individuals making decisions about the pursuit of postsecondary education. Several tangible and intangible factors include cost, institutional size, access, and knowledge about higher education institutions. Throughout the interviews and after a review of the demographic surveys, participants identified their families as primary influences on their decision to attend institutions of higher education. Several participants stated that specific individuals, with or without college degrees, affected their interest in participating in higher education. For example Lorraine, a first-year student at a HBU, GUS, whose parents do not have college degrees, explained the significance and influences on her pursuit of a college degree:

> My Dad, basically my whole family. They always supported me and encouraged me to go to college and get a degree and not just a Bachelor's degree – to go for my Masters. Because [a lot of people] in my family haven't achieved to get their Masters degree; actually, a lot of people in my family haven't gotten their Bachelor's degree. So I would kind of be the first person in my family, in a way, to have been to college.

Several participants from both institutional types commented on the fact that neither their parents nor immediate family obtained college degrees; however, this did not lessen their desire to attend a college or university.

Ironically, there were several participants whose parents or other family members demonstrated success in completing college with either a bachelors, masters, or terminal degree. These participants, attending HBCUS and PWIs, spoke very highly of their influences and hinted at a bit of pressure to be successful; however, the pressure served as a motivational factor rather than a hindrance. In the following quote, Melissa, a first-year student at the PWI, BUS, speaks emphatically and positively about her familial influences and unwavering support of her academic pursuits. She found comfort in knowing that they understood her experiences and could support her:

> Well, I think my parents and grandparents probably were a huge factor in me choosing to go to college. Most of my family members on my Dad's side are college educated. They are doctors, dentist, a couple of them are lawyers so it's kind of a thing you need to do. . go to college in my family. I think they were big influential factors.

Tom's experience was much like Melissa's in terms of family influence. "My father, definitely. One of the main reasons we moved here from Africa was so my Dad could go to college and get a Ph. D. He left Africa and a good paying job to come here for higher education. He was a good role model. "

Melissa and Tom, along with several other participants, would be considered "Knower's" according to Freeman's model of predetermination (2005). They are predisposed to access and knowledge about the importance of higher education; therefore, the preparation and interest in college may be realized sooner than those who are not (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987). Freeman (2005) challenges the Hossler and Gallagher (1987) predisposition stage because it does not account for the cultural and

environmental factors that impact African American students college choice process. Melissa's exposure to individuals who have obtained college degrees provided her with a wealth of knowledge about the outcome of graduating from college. Less emphasis was placed on the type of institution but rather the expectation that she would attend. Similarly, another participant, Blake, spoke candidly about not only the family motivation to attend college but the expectation that he must attend – "Everybody went to college and I didn't want to be the person that didn't' go to college…it was almost a requirement. . a guilty conscience if I didn't. " Blake mentioned that he would have decided to attend college regardless of his family's influence; however, there was pressure to attend.

Another important and common statement among participants was the self-motivation to succeed and enroll. During the interviews, participants were asked how they would define their socioeconomic status during their youth and adolescent years. Perna (2006) and Barratt (2010) discuss social and cultural capital as the access to resources students need in order to be successful. To gain a better understanding of the participant's access to capital (financial) students were given the options to categorize their family's financial resources as 1) enough, 2) more than enough, or 3) less than enough in terms of resources. There was a universal thread between those who stated they grew up with enough or less than enough financial resources and the intrinsic motivation to attend and graduate from college. Michelle, a 22-year old student who attends BUS, a PWI, attributes her motivation to attend college on the desire to "do better" than her current family situation:

Probably myself 'cause my family is a low-income family. My mother is a single mother so I [just] really want to push further and not really get stuck in that low level cycle of people who really don't get out of poverty and really didn't see any type of brighter future for themselves. I really just pushed myself to be able to get into college.

While Michelle's desire to attend college was seemingly self-motivated, external factors such as her family's low-income situation, specifically her Mom, were also important.

Nadia, a 21-year old student who attends the HBCU, LCS, was also motivated and encouraged by her father and her brother's lack of education:

My dad did. He said 'you know without education you can't do anything with your life. ' So he really drilled that into my brother and me at a young age. And from then on, I've been in college and my older brother Chris, he dropped out of high school- he didn't finish his senior year and I see what he's doing now. He's working at Wal-Mart distribution and you know, he can't really do anything else because he doesn't have a high school diploma or a GED. And you know. . so he's pretty stuck. That really pushes me; I try to do it for him [brother] and my Dad because I feel like it will make them proud.

The participants in this study seemed to be as motivated by their own goals and aspirations as by those who have played a significant role in their life. For better or for worse, the students were motivated to attend college. Whereas, in the example provided above, family and self-motivation were primary influences in the students attending

college, another major theme that emerged from participant's college-decision making process was the location of the institution.

      Location, location, location. Tim Russert coined the phrase "Florida, Florida, Florida" when discussing the hotly debated 2000 Presidential election. During the election, there was much debate about the number of democratic and republican votes in the state of Florida and how the discrepancy in the votes could determine the outcome of the presidential election. Some would argue that this finding is not at the same level of importance as the outcome of the presidential election; however, the significance of location of institutions is important for this study. Throughout the interviews, participants articulated the importance of location in their decisions about where they would attend college. For some, the location and its proximity to home attracted them to the institution. For others, the need to be close to home was due to the potential financial implications for the family. Although the reasons are varied, participants from HBCUs and PWIs discussed the location of the institution as a primary reason for selecting their current institution. On the other hand, this was not a common factor or desire articulated by African American students who chose to attend HBCUs or students who chose to attend PWIs (Allan, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987). Aristotle, a third- year student at GUS, recounted how he made his decision to attend his institution:

      Well, to tell you the truth, I was not aware of PWIs and HBCUs. I found out

      when they told us, you know, that it was an HBCU and I said 'oh, ok, that

      sounds cool. ' But no, I solely chose the school based on the reasons I

mentioned. It was near a beach. Had it been a PWI that was near a beach that I

liked I would have went there as well.

Aristotle's approach to college choice, while not popular or scientific, does

provide additional insight into the simplistic nature of some students' college choice

process. Students are seeking environments that are conducive to their interest and

provide a space for exploration of ideas. Aristotle mentioned several times during the

interview that not only was GUS an ideal institution to pursue his education but it

provided him with opportunities for social and cultural engagement. As indicated, his

basic concerns were centered on the location of the institution and less on institutional

type since there was no knowledge of GUS as either an HBCU or a PWI.

Lorraine, also a student at GUS, took a more deliberate approach in her selection

process. Lorraine is originally from Connecticut and relocated to Florida when she was

12-years old. She has grown up with both of her parents and believes in the importance of

family unity and support. Lorraine's interest in going away to college was a family

decision and not one that they took lightly. Lorraine reflected: "Yes, I did visit other

institutions. I visited FIU in Miami, which I know isn't close to home, but it's a city of

diverse people and I wanted that but… Lorraine began to explain why ultimately she

stayed closer to home:

> Basically it was distance. I just felt comfortable you know getting out of the
>
> house and being on my own and taking the responsibility when I go to college.
>
> But at the same time, I felt close, I mean I felt comfortable to be close to my
>
> family because I do have a great bond with them. It's just a benefit.

Another participant, Richard a first-year student at BUS, reiterated the impact of distance and financial constraints on his family as one primary reason for choosing BUS:

Mainly distance – getting to the college was a major factor because my family isn't exactly rich so they couldn't afford to take me back and forth to college on breaks and weekends, and things of that nature. So distance played a larger role on what college I decided to go to. I didn't want to go far enough to where I would feel totally alone, but I didn't want to stay near home where it's like they're up the street from me.

Throughout this study, socioeconomic status and financial constraints seemed to permeate each theme. Richard's concerns were for his family's ability to fund his education and for his family to be accessible to him, and him to them. Richard, as noted in Table 1, applied to several institutions but ultimately selected the institution closer to his family and one that they could afford.

Financial implications. As previously discussed, participant's chose locations that were close to home. Furthermore, participants linked location to their financial ability to fund their higher education experience. Students had great concern for the financial implications of attending an institution in which they or their parents couldn't afford. For many of the students in this study, without additional support and assistance during their high school years, enrolling in college would have been less feasible.

Pre-college exposure. In reflecting on their pre-college experiences and exposure to institutions of higher education, many credit their high school guidance counselors or pre-college programs for their ability to visit colleges or universities. Aristotle, who attended a predominantly, Black low-income high school reflects on how he was able to

gain exposure to institutions: "My high school was very limited on opportunities. We never sponsored trips to go to visit universities, however, universities came to visit our school. " It was through these on-campus college visits that Aristotle was able to view institutional view books, learn about the credentials required to enroll, and the location of the institutions. Additionally, these counselors awarded application fee waivers to encourage students to apply for acceptance. For students from low-income families, this was a tremendous benefit and opened doors of access to students who otherwise would not possess the cultural or social capital to participate in higher education (Barratt, 2010; Perna, 2006).

Pre-collegiate programs, such as TRIO's Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search also serve as a great conduit for exposing students to institutions of higher education. Larry, a student at TUS, remembers how he first came to learn of the University of Maryland: " In 9th grade I was a part of a pre-college program at the University of Maryland and they sent us on college trips. " Larry shared that although he was not accepted to the University of Maryland, going to different campuses and meeting other students inspired him to work hard to be academically eligible to enroll in college.

Blake, a student at BUS, was fortunate that he was able to participate in three to four college trips. "They were at predominantly Black schools like Tuskegee, Fisk, and TSU. I also participated in a summer program where we got to tour the University of Cincinnati. Those were the only places I could visit – sponsored by the school. " Interestingly, Blake did not apply to any HBCUs; however, his exposure to college campuses through his participation in the pre-collegiate programs made college a 'real' possibility for him.

Tom, a third year student from BUS, describes how his family's financial situation impacted his interest in applying to several different schools:

My parents aren't really big on money. They said if we really can't afford it and they wouldn't give us enough financial aid, we shouldn't go and visit. They weren't doubtful of my abilities or didn't think I couldn't get in but we just couldn't afford it. "

Well, I grew up kind of poor so I never wanted to put that strain on my parents to pay for me to have to go somewhere to visit another school. So, but I mean, they always told me that to never have money be an option as to whether or not you wanted to go somewhere or not. But, just always as a child seeing your parents' struggle for money it's nice to not have to worry them with that.

Melissa, a second year student at BUS, explained a similar experience in terms of wanting to be thoughtful about her parent's ability to fund not only her education but also the institutions that she applied for admissions. Melissa has a extensive family history of college-educated individuals; however, financial concerns are still an issue for her family. Here are Melissa's thoughts on how she and her family discussed applications and college visits:

My parents aren't really big on money. They said if we really can't afford it and they wouldn't give us enough financial aid, we shouldn't go and visit. They weren't doubtful of my abilities or didn't think I couldn't get in but we just couldn't afford it. "

According to the interviews and the analysis of the demographic surveys, students applied or considered applying to both in and out state institutions, however, based on the availability of scholarships or significant aid packages they opted to remain in state or closer to home. Michelle, a student from BUS desired an institution with a strong basketball tradition. She was a high school basketball player who hoped she would receive an athletic scholarship to cover the out of state tuition cost. "I wanted to go to

Georgia Tech or Emory and they were trying to recruit me for basketball. . but once I learned about the difference in tuition for out of state students I knew I had to stay in state. BUS offered me the most money so here I am. " Likewise,

Beyonce, a first year student, knew that she wanted to pursue a medical degree and wanted to attend LSU but BUS offered "a full ride compared to other schools" and it was closer to home.

Location and costs are inextricably linked in the decision making process for biracial students. The students in this study most often linked location with financial considerations and therefore, those factors were primary influences in their college-decision making process.

I'm biracial…so? As previously discussed, common among all participants were the primary factors that influenced their decision –making about college choice: 1) family or individual-influence and 2) location associated with financial considerations. It was quite unexpected that participants from HBCUs or PWIs did not articulate or attribute their racial or cultural identity as an influence on their college choice. More specifically, all of the students who were interviewed shared the reasons outlined above as their primary reasons for choosing their institution, nothing more, and nothing less. When asked specifically about the impact of their racial identity on college choice, one participant provided the most direct response to this question. Larry, a first year student who attends a public, HBCU said, "Really, race didn't have anything to do with me coming to TUS. " Larry described his college choice process as more about access and location than any other factors. The research and studies conducted on African American student's college choice, particularly students who select an HBCU, suggest that students

are motivated to attend because of a need to be with others who look like them, to be in an institution without racism, and to learn more about their culture (Allen, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999, 2005). While the biracial students did not verbalize their racial identity as a primary factor or influence, the students from both PWIs and HBCUs have a natural level of privilege in how they choose or situate themselves in different institutional environments based on their multiple identities. Several interesting themes did emerge about the institutional environment, perceptions of different institutional types, and the complexities of

There are various aspects of Wijeyesinghe's Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (2001) and Renn's Patterns of Situational Identity model (2000) that several biracial students from HBCUs and PWIs demonstrated in terms of how they negotiate and understand their identities in the context of their respective institutions. According to numerous studies of African American students who select HBCUs many of them are seeking ways to further develop or understand their African American heritage or (Allen, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999, 2005). In this study, several participants spoke about their abilities to honor their biracial identity and learn more about their African American heritage by attending an HBCU. Here Star comments about how attending an HBCU has strengthened her resolve to be who she is and learn more about her history and heritage.

> I think that being at an HBCU has shaped me. A lot of people ask me what you consider yourself. Like, do you consider yourself Black or do you consider yourself White? And I mean, I just consider myself biracial because either way at an HBCU I have an opportunity that I wouldn't have at a traditional college.

Either way I feel like me being mixed at an HBCU makes me feel, well it gives me a different experience. Because you know, most mixed-race people would go to a traditional school [PWI] and put down they are Black to get the scholarships and other opportunities but I just decided to go this route because I figure I don't really know a lot about Black history. I know a lot about American history but there is a lot that I have to learn about Black history.

Nadia, an African American and Filipino student, strongly identifies with her African American heritage and embraces her Asian heritage as well. In a previous study conducted by Shivers (2010), a biracial student at a predominantly White institution, discussed her lack of cultural knowledge about the Asian culture and how it impacted her ability to fully embrace this aspect of her identity. Nadia, on the other hand, has found both the environment and her exposure to both cultures helpful in shaping her biracial identity (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Here she describes her experiences as a biracial female, with strong Asian features, at an HBCU:

And if anything people you know, they say 'you look different than everybody else, we know you aren't Black'. And I'll be like yes, I am Black. ' It doesn't bother me, I just explain to them you know my Dad is African American and my mom is Filipino. Once they get to know me as a person, they see I'm just like them – you know skin color doesn't mean anything. I just embrace the African American culture and I'm comfortable being at an HBCU and it doesn't bother me.

Additionally, Nadia's feelings about being biracial demonstrate an ability to negotiate and claim both identities in an environment that responded to what she looks like and how she personally identifies.

Interestingly, the participants at the predominantly White institutions offered limited perspective on the negotiation or true acceptance of their biracial identity. An extensive amount of literature and research on biracial students' identity and development suggest that biracial student's process of understanding and ownership of their biracial or multiracial identity may be impacted by many factors and influences (Banks, 2008; Renn, 2000; Rockquemore & Brunsma 2002, 2008; Wijeyesinghe, 2001). The participants in this study from predominantly White institutions reflected on different experiences and influences that challenged their ownership and understanding of their identities at various points in their lives.

Blake, a third-year student at BUS whose features are predominantly African American, remembers one of his first conversations about his identity:

I was always raised with my Dad [who's Black] but my grandmother always let me know in my face that I'm technically White on my birth certificate as it says by my mother. I had no problem with that but sometimes I felt uncomfortable with my Mom's side of the family; not my Mom, but her side of the family. But I think that's because I was almost indoctrinated to think that way. I wasn't able to think for myself before 8th grade. Sometimes even if you feel that you are biracial you are going to be what the world sees you as. You know you can't prove that to anybody.

Blake's feelings were not uncommon to other participants in this study as several of them voiced feeling 'labeled' because of their phenotype. Michelle identifies as biracial but has a strong allegiance to her African American heritage because that's the environment in which she is most familiar (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Although she has grown up in an African American neighborhood and the majority of her friends were Black, it was difficult to be comfortable with self-identification. As she reflects on growing up biracial, Michelle recalls the experience of her siblings:

> I really didn't think about it [being biracial] until elementary school because the kids had a lot of trouble identifying. They would say 'what color are you'? I'm like 'I'm mixed'. They were like 'no, you got to be Black or White. ' I'm like 'I'm not. ' If me and my siblings tried to hang out with the Black kids it's like ya'll White and if we hang out with the Black kids we're Black to them. So it's just we're always the opposite.

Wijeyesinghe's factor model of multiracial identity development (2001) situates Michelle's physical appearance, early experiences and socialization, and cultural attachment as primary influences on her racial identity. Additionally, Renn's situational identity model (2004) supports the ability of students to identity differently based on the situation. Michelle accepts her multiracial identity; however, often others will identify her based on what she looks like rather than her own self-identification as multiracial.

Conversely, Melissa, a second-year student at BUS, has negotiated her biracial identity or the African American part of her identity to benefit her. Renn (1999) refers to this as one of five situation identities a multiracial person may negotiate. For example, "I know that when I have to fill out a legal document I put African American because my

parents want me to because they say you can keep minority benefits or something like that. " When completing the demographic survey and in response to participation in this study, Melissa wholeheartedly identified as biracial; however, when there was a need or a benefit to being African American, Melissa and her family responded accordingly.

There were also instances in which the participants struggled and celebrated various aspects of their African American identity. Several participants talked about their struggles with being "seen" as Black although they do not formally acknowledge or value that aspect of their identity. Tom Sawyer, a third year student, explains his lack of affinity toward being African American because of his lack of connection or relationships with African Americans growing up:

> I guess I never really had much of the Black pride that a lot of African Americans have. My siblings and me were all in higher-level classes and it just turned out we were always the only non-White people in the class. So most of my friends were White.

Tom's relationships with African American's were limited during high school; therefore, his perspective is limited. When I explored his feelings about any pride he felt about the President of the United States as a biracial male, he commented, "I really didn't think much about it. I don't get into politics; I just vote for the best person but I don't have a lot of faith in the government – no matter what his race his. " The previous comments would lend examination through Poston and Root (1990) biracial identity model and Cross' model of Black identity development (1991). Poston and Root's model includes stages where individuals are less connected or completely disconnected to a

particular aspect of their racial identity. In this instance, Tom's inherent disconnect from his African American heritage is related to exposure and environment.

Michelle, on the other hand, has managed to appreciate her biracial and other identity while at the same time feeling fully connected with her African American heritage. For example Michelle said,

So I realize and I know all the time that I am biracial but I don't really look for a way to identify with both sides because I identify with African American for so long it's just like I'm a Black person too so I just try to be more involved that way. I think I feel more awkward just because of my sexuality and not because of who or what color I identify with.

This comment is a good example of the intersection of race and how other facets of their identities can be more salient (Wijeyesinghe, 2001) in biracial students development process.

Strong sense of "family". The data obtained from the biracial student participants from historically Black colleges and universities supports the literature on African American student choices and experiences at HBCUs. While the participants in this study did not initially pursue attending an HBCU because of their desire to explore their racial identity, to gain a sense of freedom from otherwise hostile racial environments, or to feel a stronger sense of belonging (Allan, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999, 2005) these participants have found the HBCU environment a perfect fit for them and their needs. Nadia, a student athlete who transferred from a PWI to an HBCU, talks explicitly about the social and cultural differences in the institutional types.

I have to say at LCS I love the atmosphere. I love the culture you know and I just like the HBCU experience. There is just so much culture. And I don't know, I like the sororities and fraternities when they get on the yard and their parties. The atmosphere at my basketball games, the crowd is so alive. When I went to a PWI, it was like I was at a community college – you just go to school and go back home. But at LCS, it's a good atmosphere; like a real college atmosphere – that's what I really like about it.

In another example, Nadia spoke candidly about her relationship with faculty at LCS compared to that of the lack of personal relationships with faculty at a PWI.

I just feel like I can have relationships with my professors outside the classroom. I don't know, at the other school [PWI] I couldn't have a relationship with my professors- like they didn't really want to be bothered with diverse students – they were just ready to leave school. At LCS, you know the professors are always smiling, you know going to your games. They ask about your games and tell you 'good game' or 'keep it up'. They even come up and asked me 'what is your race or nationality?' You know they are interested in me. At the other school [PWI] they would never know who I am.

Lorraine also shared similar sentiments regarding her involvement and relationship with faculty in the classroom and her academic pursuits.

So I like how GUS has a small campus, it has small classrooms that consist of maybe 20 – 25 people. Because I like to sit up front and ask a lot of questions, I want my professors to get to know me as a student.

I'm not an average student and I am really here to learn and get a great

education and a 4. 0 gpa. I can go to my professors here and I'm not just

a number.

In Awokoya and Mann's article, "Students Speak! Understanding the Value of

HBCUs from Student Perspectives" (2011), the students who participated in this study

spoke about their desire to be in an environment where they felt "nurtured, supported, and

known by their professors" (p. 13). Both Lorraine and Nadia expressed their appreciation

for being in an environment that provided the physical and emotional space to feel like a

valued part of their HBCU community.

Star, a 3rd year student, struggled academically in high school and TUS was not

her first choice of institution; however, since arriving on campus she has come to

appreciate the HBCU environment:

When I was in high school, I came to campus to visit and that's when I really

fell in love with it. It was exactly what I thought a college campus would be and

how the people were. They [people on campus] were just so much help. There

are so many places that you can go to for help. I can't imagine being on a

campus that cannot help you. At TUS, whether it is financial aid or if you just

need to talk to someone about personal issues, there is someone for everything.

As previously mentioned Aristotle selected the institution based on its location

near the beach, however, since being at GUS he has come to appreciate more than its

scenic location: "I fell in love with the school when I came to campus. I love the

atmosphere; the environment it's just so open and welcoming. It is just so pleasing. I love

the school. I love it. It's just an amazing place. "

Larry, a first-year student at TUS, was not comfortable during his first semester. He commented that he had trouble adjusting to the class lectures and many of the comments made by professors were racist. However, after completing his first year, Larry has come to appreciate TUS for its diverse experiences:

I'm glad I came to TUS because it's a different experience. I feel like now that I'm here, I'm comfortable. And I'm glad I came here because I wouldn't have gotten the experiences I've had here. Like, say if I went to a traditionally White school, all the experiences would be a lot different than here at TUS. I'm glad I had something different.

Based on analysis of the demographic survey, each HBCU participant also applied to predominantly White institutions. The students found both HBCUs and PWIs as viable options for pursuing higher education. As with most students, they utilized the assistance from their guidance office to inform their interest. When asked if they would attend a different institution than the one they are currently enrolled, each replied with an emphatic "no". While they did not select HBCUs as their first-choice of institution or have expectations to have a particular experience, they have learned to appreciate and value the opportunities an HBCU affords them.

Conversely, students from predominantly White institutions did not speak positively or negatively about their institutional environment. In discussing the institutional environment with Richard, a 1st year student at BUS he had this to say about whether or not BUS felt like college or a community:

I wouldn't say that it's a community to me because most of the time I am doing work for classes I don't exactly have time to focus on actually building a social

life because I'm trying to make sure that everything stays right with my school

….otherwise I'm back at home. So with doing just my work I don't really have

time to exactly build the social life that I wanted with my peers because of the

constant work that I have to stay on top of. Because I know if I let my eyes off

of it for a minute then it becomes a problem.

Richard's comments were very similar to other participants from PWIs who

spoke about the environment. The major similarity between the HBCU and PWI

participants was that neither stated expectations of the environment; however, HBCU

participants seemingly have a space that is conducive to both their learning and

engagement.

HBCUs aren't good enough. Several studies on African American students'

college choice of HBCUs indicate that HBCUs have more of a welcoming, small

community feel that many students are attracted to (Allan, 1992; Awokoya & Mann,

2011; Freeman, 1999, 2005; Fries-Britt, 2002; Gasman, 2008). However, several students

in this study voiced their perceptions about the level and quality of education they would

acquire at HBCUs; therefore, they did not view HBCUs as options. A common theme

among all participants was the impact of family on their decisions to attend college;

however, participants from PWIs expressed additional concerns about HBCUs.

One major concern that they voiced was the perceived lack of prestige or

credibility of a degree from an HBCU. In the instances where perception is reality, these

students' opinions of the value of an HBCU degree were perhaps unique to this particular

group of biracial students. For instance, Blake, when asked about why a PWI v. HBCU

had this to say:

Honestly, it was the reputation they had. Some of the requirements were lower

and my Dad said that HBCUs were a joke. I also just looked for myself and I

wanted to go to institutions in the state that were held in the highest regard. They

were predominantly White institutions and I actually wanted to go to a

predominantly White institution because I felt like I was around Black people

enough or at least Black students. It was funny, it was the education and then it

was the racial makeup.

Another student, Beyonce, has a strong lineage of family members who attended

and graduated from HBCUs; however, rather than encourage her participation actually

discouraged her:

See, I've lived in an HBCU area and was influenced by a lot by them. My Dad's

family graduated from HBCUs but I've heard them say, multiple times, that they

see BUS's degree as more prestigious than their HBCU degree. I was like ok,

that must mean something so I will go to a non-HBCU.

In the previous comment, Beyonce's perception of HBCUs was reinforced by the

family's feedback and their beliefs about the strength of PWI degrees. This perception is

further substantiated by Michelle's belief that other's will view the HBCU degree as less

prestigious and the concerns about revisiting high school:

Honestly, the reason I didn't choose an HBCU is because it didn't seem like

they have as much credit. Like if you say I got my bachelors from [HBCU] they

would probably say 'oh'. When I was in high school, the HBCU was considered

13th grade and it was everybody who couldn't get into a better school. I wanted

something a little better and with a better image.

As described by Blake, Beyonce, and Michelle, their choice of a predominantly White institution was less about how great BUS was but more about what they felt they would lose by attending an HBCU.

On the contrary, through analysis of the interviews and demographic survey, it was apparent that each participant from HBCUs applied to PWIs; however, only one participant from a PWI applied for admission to an HBCU.

Chapter Summary

Based on the cross-analysis of individual interviews, demographic surveys, and document analysis, the data from this study identified several commonalities among biracial students and the factors and influences they consider when choosing to attend a predominantly White institution or a historically Black college or university. The first section of the chapter was in response to RQ 1: What factors did biracial students consider when choosing to attend either a PWI or HBCU? and RQ 2: How does cultural or racial affinity shape an individuals' decision-making processes? There were three key common themes among participants, regardless of institution type: 1) the importance of family influences in deciding to pursue postsecondary education, 2) proximity and access to home coupled with financial considerations, and 3) the indirect influence of racial or cultural affinity as an impact on college choice. The indirect influence of racial or cultural affinity findings did not support existing literature about the influence of race on African American student's decision making process; however, the participants' perspective about race did emerge in some unexpected ways.

This chapter featured notable differences in HBCU and PWI research participant's perspectives on their identities and institutional type. Research participants

at both institutional types provided in depth perspective and experiences about their

college choice, decision making process. The data gathered through the interviews,

document analysis, and demographic survey provided thick, rich description of the

students pre-collegiate thought process as well as their current experiences as

undergraduate students.

The following chapter will offer a discussion of the findings, directions for future

research, and implications for practice and policy.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The participants in this study provided important insight on the college decision-making process for biracial or multiracial students. This study encouraged students to reflect on their pre-college experiences to inform their process of choosing to participate in higher education, articulate how they chose the institutions they decided to enroll, and consider how their biracial identity may have influenced those choices. Three primary themes emerged from all participant interviews and demographic survey along with interesting and unique themes from participants at predominantly White and historically Black colleges and universities. This chapter will highlight my understanding of the findings in conjunction with earlier literature and research. The findings in this study further substantiate the results from other research related to the influences and factors of African American and other students of color college choice processes as well as offer challenges to the preconceived power of racial or cultural affinity on the choice between HBCUs or PWIs. The findings related to 1) family influences, 2) location and financial considerations, and 3) the indirect influence of racial or cultural affinity in the college choice process will be discussed. Direction for future research and implications for practice and policy will conclude this chapter.

Analysis of the Findings

The themes of participants from each institutional type were generated from the cross - analysis of interviews, demographic surveys, and documents in response to

research questions one and two. The research questions were designed to explore what factors influenced students to attend either a predominantly White institution or historically Black college or university and how their racial or cultural affinity may have impacted those decisions. Participants identified parental influence and location coupled with financial considerations, as the primary factors when selecting an institution of higher education. Interestingly, the participants did not articulate racial or cultural affinity in their decision-making process; however, their were indirect indicators that their racial identity does play a role in how they made decisions and navigate their environments.

Research question one focused on the factors that influenced their choice of predominantly White institutions and historically Black colleges and universities. Ironically, the participants offered several examples of ways in which their family, directly or indirectly influenced their decisions. In review of the demographic survey, I learned that all of the participants responded to the questions regarding their parents' educational background. Over half of the participant's parents did not attend college, however, during the interviews all participants cited their families as significant influences. More recent and older studies on college choice state that the parents continue to play a significant role in encouraging students to participate in postsecondary education (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Freeman, 1999; Hossler and Gallagher, 1987; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Hughes, et al; 2004; Kinzie, et al. , 2004). In Hossler and Gallagher's college choice model (1987), parents are integral during all three stages of the process: predisposition, search, and choice. In the predisposition stage, the parents are passively or actively involved. As active members in the predisposition stage, parents are strongly encouraging students to attend college. In the case of most of the biracial

participants in this study, although their parents did not have hold a bachelors or masters degree, they strongly encouraged their student to attend college. Several participants commented on how important it was for them to go to college to "make their parents proud" or to "do better for themselves" because they witnessed the struggle of their parents and other family members. The impact of family on the college decision process for biracial students is aligned with the findings on African American students (Freeman, 1999, 2005) college choice processes. The level of familial involvement in the college choice process for biracial students was not surprising. The college journey is still much like a 'rites of passage' and families view this as an opportunity for everyone to succeed, not just the student. For those students whose parents did not attend college, the participants were motivated to attend and succeed in college – not only for degree attainment but to create a sense of pride and accomplishment within the family. Beyonce describes her motivation in the following way, "My parents did not go to school but they expected me to because they always wanted me to have better than what they had. " This was a common sentiment in this study and one that reminds us that family is still an important influence.

Another important and interesting finding in response to research question one was the focus on the location of the institution. While some participants made a conscious decision to remain close to home, many participants concerns were in the context of costs associated with attendance. Previously we discussed the two phases of the predisposition stage (Hossler and Gallagher, 1987) as passive and active. In the more active approach, parents begin to save money towards the students' enrollment in college. The participants in this study did not discuss their parent's ability to save for them to

attend college. As described above and in previous portions of this study, the majority of the participants selected their institutions because there was a cost-benefit. Students received either scholarships or the cost of in-state tuition was such that they could manage the costs in other ways. Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) search phase assumes that all students with the academic credentials will also have the resources to go through the search phase and eventually migrate to the choice phase. According to Freeman (1999) and Perna (2006), the ability for students of color to apply to institutions is impacted by several factors such as financial access and/or capital. Several participants considered their parents financial status before applying or making plans to visit institutions. Many students utilized college visits arranged by their guidance counselor or through pre-college programs that funded their visits. For those students who were able to make college visits, those visits were limited based on costs associated with attendance. The participants in this study realized and took into account both their needs and their parent's financial capacity to fund their education. Location wasn't viewed in a negative way; it was actually an important and positive part of their choice process. While I'm certain this is not uncommon to most students deliberating on the type, size, and cost of an institution, it was a common and pronounced concern of the participants in this study.

The most revealing and surprising finding in this study was related to research question number two; the omission of race or cultural affinity in the decision making process for biracial students. One major challenge/benefit with this study was the lack of research on the college choice process for biracial students; therefore, the study was grounded primarily in college choice processes and influences for African American students choosing either a PWI or HBCU (Allen, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011;

Freeman, 1999, 2005; Gasman, 2008, 2009). While this research was helpful and there were similar themes in terms of financial considerations and parental/family influences, the participant's articulation of the impact of race on their decision-making processes of race was glaringly missing. The research on African American students who choose an HBCU suggest that students "who choose HBCUs are often motivated by three desires: 1) to be in an environment with people who look like them, 2) to be in environments devoid of racism, and 3) to explore their cultural roots" (Allen, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999). The biracial students in this study, regardless of institution type did not identify any of the reasons listed above as central to their selection process. Equally, several participants made direct comments that "race was not a factor" and that location, family influence and costs were their primary concerns. Interestingly, while race was not articulated as a factor in choice, participants at HBCUs did offer support for existing literature regarding the welcoming and inclusive nature of the environment. Lorraine, a student at GUS, expressed her excitement about choosing GUS and is saddened to think about her impending graduation:

> I hate when I hear that people left GUS. I am just enjoying my time here so much. GUS has given me so many opportunities and they have given me a great experience here. I just totally love this school. I'm involved in extracurricular activities and everything…I enjoy every minute of it. But I'm not ready to leave, that's depressing.

Lorraine's experience and involvement at GUS is best examined through Astin's theory of Involvement (1984) which states "an involved student is one who devotes considerable energy to academics, spends much time on campus, participates actively in

student organizations and activities, and interacts often with faculty" (p. 292). She has

taken advantage of the opportunities at GUS; therefore, is having a good experience.

Each of the student participants from HBCUs commented on the positive environment

and the welcoming and positive relationship with faculty; however, they were not aware

of these benefits during the selection process. Nadia, the transfer student from the PWI to

the HBCU thoroughly and enthusiastically supports her new HBCU experience and said,

"I just feel more comfortable at an HBCU".   HBCUs have traditionally held the

reputation of being a smaller, more family oriented environment and the participants in

this study confirmed this positive attribute.

   The biracial students at BUS are also very comfortable with their decision. During

the demographic survey analysis and the one-on-one interviews, I learned that the

participants who chose to attend BUS had attended either predominantly African

American or racially diverse high schools. The students shared that since coming to BUS,

they have appreciated a diverse environment. Several participants from predominantly

African American high schools commented about being around Black people all of their

lives and enjoying the choice of 'hanging out' with them or not. This perspective is

supportive of the study of Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera (2008) in which they

looked at the diverse experiences of White and students of color prior to attending college

in order to predict how they would transition to college. The study found that "the nature

of interactions with diverse peers in college is affected by the demographics of students'

precollege environment. " Yet again, the aforementioned study is not solely focused on

biracial students; however, the experiences of biracial students in this study align with the

finding of this study. The students found benefit in attending a predominantly White institution albeit an unanticipated advantage.

Lastly, the students' process for understanding, accepting, and managing their biracial identities differed for students at PWIs and HBCUs. In examining the finding's through the lens of Wijeyesinghe's Factor Model of Multiracial Identity (2001), participants from both PWIs and HBCUs cultural attachment and early experiences and socialization impacted how they operationalized their identities. Participants at PWIs spoke of their biracial identity in a manner that was matter of fact but 'not a big deal'. For example, Michelle grew up in a predominantly Black neighborhood and claims a Black identity (early experiences and socialization); however, in coming to BUS, she has renegotiated this identity to connect with a diverse group of individuals. Michelle and many of the other participants from BUS could also be examined through Renn's Situational Identity model in terms of maximizing monoracial, multiracial, or a non-racial identity depending on the situation and environment. In many ways, biracial individuals carry a level of privilege in their ability to "choose" their dominant identity or not negotiate their identity at all. For the participants attending HBCUs, the majority of them talked about their biracial identity in a very positive manner and not feeling different or alienated; they could claim both identities and it was embraced. The students who chose to attend HBCUs have found significant ways to continue accepting and embracing their biracial identity within the framework of historically Black colleges and universities. They offered examples of their involvement in student organizations, opportunities to discuss and answer questions about their identities, and a feeling of acceptance from faculty and their peers; these experiences of biracial students at HBCUs are in complete

alignment with the research on the experiences of African American students who chose to attend and persist at historically Black colleges and universities (Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Allen, 1992; Freeman, 1999, 2005).

Implications for Policy and Practice

There are several implications for policy and practice for student affairs and higher education administrators in understanding the college choice process for biracial students. Several bodies of research on both college choice and biracial/multiracial identity development (Allan, 1992; Awokoya & Mann, 2011; Freeman, 1999, 2001, 2005; Kinzie, et al, 2004; Renn, 2000, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002, 2008; Wijeyesinghe, 2001) continue to support the importance of understanding and supporting this growing population of college age students. As the participants in this study indicated, race was not a primary factor or influence in their college choice process. Biracial students of the 21st century seem to understand that racial and cultural differences exist; however, they have determined that other factors are more important in determining where they enroll in college. This information is important for not only student affairs practitioners but for admissions recruiters and counselors. As stated in Kinzie, et al (2004), institutions are becoming more competitive and it is important that institutions pay close attention to students needs in order to recruit and retain them. The participants in this study appreciated campuses that were relatively close to home and provided financial assistance. Additional scholarships and more of a focus on in-state recruitment may be of benefit for institutions seeking to diversify and maintain a strong presence of in-state students on their campuses.

Although participants in this study did not identify institutional resources (e. g. brochures, websites) as their primary information tool, it will be important that institutions utilize technology in a way that effectively connects with students. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, may be great venues in which institutions can showcase themselves and it's more of the way student's access information. In reviewing the websites of the participating institutions, they all have Facebook and Twitter links on their main pages; however, the participants did not mention their use of those tools to gain insight about the college or university.

Additionally, in compliance with the OMB policy related to providing students the opportunity to self –identify with more than one race on college applications (Kern, 2006), institutions should begin to cite those actual statistics in their institutional Fact Books and social media outlets. It's important that this information is readily available to those students who are seeking information about the diversity of the institution. Currently, many institutions are only including categories such as 'other' or 'two or more' nonetheless; it may be more helpful to provide the ethnic or racial breakdown of their biracial or multiracial populations.

Administrators should also continue focusing on ways to engage students of color on campus, regardless of institutional type and size. As demonstrated in this study, students at HBCUs articulated their sense of comfort, sense of belonging at their institutions. Most of them attributed it to the size of the institution but also the level of faculty and staff support that they deemed helpful and important in feeling a part of the fabric of the institution.

The information obtained through this study may offer additional insight for higher education administrators in their recruitment of biracial students. It may also reaffirm the type of environments that some students seek in order to remain engaged on campus.

Future Research

This study has provided useful and relevant information by examining the growing community of biracial students enrolling in colleges and universities in the United States. According to the 2050 Census, there will be a significant number of individuals who will identify with more than one racial or ethnic category, a large number being college age individuals. The 2004 Lumina Foundation report on the college choice process indicates that the change in demographics on college campuses is forcing institutions to refocus their energies and efforts on better understanding the college choice process for students in order to compete. To this end, I recommend several areas for future studies.

As previously discussed, biracial students are attracted to institutions for a variety of reasons (i. e. location, parental influences, financial considerations); however, there is a greater need to create the environments that are conducive to student's personal and academic growth in order to retain them. This study consisted of two students who transferred to different institutions after their first year. For those students who transfer from one institutional type (e. g. HBCU to PWI and PWI to HBCU), it will be important to understand what the needs are for socialization or specific programs to assist those students during their transition. Tinto's theory of student departure (1993) cites one main source of student departure is the failure of students to remain engaged in the social and

academic life of the institution. It should not be assumed that students with one year of experience understand how to manage and negotiate in different institutional types. It will be important to engage in more conversations about transfer student transitions in order to account for potential differences in experiences of participants.

I was very surprised to learn that participants' did not articulate that racial or cultural affinity did not impact the type of institution they chose to attend. In other words, students did not espouse their affinity to their Black, White, Native American, or Asian heritage to make decisions about institutional type. However, in several instances related to the prestige of the institution, the use of their race to gain acceptance or benefits (e.g. scholarships), and a lack of African American identity pride, it seems that race did play some part in their unconscious decision making processes. This lack of articulation begs the question of how students understand the social construction of race in the 21st century, the impact that society's "salad bowl, we're all the same" philosophy may be pushing conversations about race "to the margins", or that there is an inherent privilege to have an identity in which you can choose different institutional types and negotiate those in a way that is most comfortable and beneficial. For example, the biracial students who opted to attend a PWI versus and HBCU because they viewed the HBCU degree as less powerful than one from a PWI demonstrate that race did matter. Based on other's feedback and their knowledge of HBCUs, the "Black" college is not as good as the White. This is an indication that the racial makeup of the institution did impact their decision to attend a PWI. The idea that the PWI was a "better" institution was based on their perception of the HBCU not being as diverse or of "high quality". To this end, it is important to consider how race is constructed and understood by incoming and current

students. The use of photo elicitation as another form of data collection would have been helpful in learning more about how the students understand issues of race and diversity both pre-college and currently at their institutions.

Interestingly, the biracial participants enrolled at HBCUs were able to articulate how their current institutional environment has met and/or exceeded their expectations although they did not consciously select the institution for those reasons. With that said, I would encourage future studies on college choice include another element of investigating retention factors for biracial students at different institutional types. Since the study unintentionally delved into environment, it would have been noteworthy to further explore recruitment and retention simultaneously.

Finally, there were several instances in which students struggled with embracing all aspects of their biracial identity. Several biracial students from the PWI articulated dissatisfaction or embarrassment by their African American peers. At times, these students choose to disassociate from that aspect of their identity. Several stage and fluid models of biracial identity (Poston & Root, 1990; Renn 2000, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2002, 2008; Wijeyesinghe, 2001) discuss the many ways that biracial individuals may encounter and negotiate their identities. This particular finding highlights the need to expand on the current models and create additional conversations about ways we can assist students with fully embracing their multiple identities in ways that are comfortable for them.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter provided highlights of the findings, corroborates some extant literature on college choice processes and retention, offers recommendations for further research, and implications for policy and practice.

Participants in this study were able to articulate their decision-making processes as well as discuss their biracial identities in the context of their respective institutions. The students seemed to have a solid understanding of their identities and are managing to successfully navigate their institutions.

Historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions have an important role for students of all racial, ethnic, social, and cultural identities. The experiences these institutions provide students are important in their academic, social, personal, and morale development. Each student in this study chose to pursue higher education because of family influences and the location of the institution coupled with financial considerations. While the students did not articulate race as a factor in their decision making processes; indirectly, their racial identity informs how they make meaning of their institutions and experiences. Ultimately, each of the students in this study is exactly where they are supposed to be – with their biracial identities intact and an overwhelming sense of making the right college choice.

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APPENDIX A
DEFINITION OF TERMS

Affinity- likeness based on relationship or causal relationship

Biracial/ethnic- **"**Having recent ancestry from two ethnoracial groups; a word to describe the dual ethnic or racial nature of one's heritage and/or identity; here synonymous with multiethnic/racial" (Wallace, 2001, p. xi). Individuals who have parents from two socially designated racial categories (Root, 1996; Tatum, 1997).

College Choice- the process a student experiences as he or she makes the transition from high school to college (Paulsen, 1990; Hossler et al. , 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982).

Historically Black college or university- institutions that were established prior to 1964 with the mission to educate Black Americans (Allen, 1992; Freeman, 2002).

Monoracial- referring to a person or thing that claims membership in a single racial group and is constructed as belonging to one racial group (identity and social consciousness). (Kelley & Root, 2003).

Multiethnic/Biethnic – referring to a person or thing that claims membership in two or more ethnic groups, and is constructed as belonging to two or more ethnic groups. Note: Can be multiethnic without being multiracial (e. g. White multiethnic Irish, German, and Italian, Asian Multiethnic Pakistani and Japanese).

Multiracial/Mixed-Race/Biracial: referring to a person or thing that claims membership in two or more racial groups and constructed as belonging to two or more racial groups.

Predominantly White institution – Predominantly White Institution (PWI) is defined as an institution that has, traditionally or historically, a majority of its student populations from White (European American) backgrounds (Banks, 2008).

Race – "A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups. " (Wijeyesinghe et al. , 1997)

APPENDIX B
STUDENT SOLICITATION EMAIL

Dear Student,

My name is Melissa Shivers and I am a PhD. candidate in the College Student Affairs Administration program at the University of Georgia. As part of my requirement for graduation I will be conducting a study entitled "How do I Choose? Biracial Students Postsecondary Choice of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominantly White Institutions". This study is under the direction of Dr. Diane L. Cooper in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia (706-542-1812).

Participation in this study is voluntary and as a participant you can refuse to participate or stop taking part without giving any reason, and without penalty. You can ask to have all of the information about you returned, removed from the research records, or destroyed. As a participant you will be contributing information and knowledge to the areas of racial identity, college choice, Additionally, this study hopes to provide useful information to college and university personnel on the recruitment process of biracial students.

The study will consist of two parts: 1) an individual interview and a demographic survey. The interviews and your participation in this study will be confidential. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for further data analysis.

If you are interested and willing to participate in this research study, please email Melissa Shivers at mshivers@uga. edu at your earliest convenience to schedule an individual meeting. I will be visiting your institution on _____ and _____ and would like to set up an interview at that time.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Melissa S. Shivers
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to take part in a research study titled, "How Do I Choose?: Biracial Students' Postsecondary Choice of Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Predominantly White Institutions" which is being conducted by the University of Georgia, through the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services under the direction of Diane L. Cooper, Ph. D. , 706-542-1820. My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed. As a participant you will be contributing information and knowledge to the areas of racial identity development, and college choice. Additionally, this study hopes to provide useful information to college and university personnel on the recruitment needs for biracial students.

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine the college-decision making process of biracial students enrolled in historically Black colleges and universities and Predominantly White institutions. I will not benefit directly from this research. However, my participation in this research may help the institution identify recruitment initiatives to better understand the decision making process of biracial college students.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

1) I will be asked to participate in an individual interview where I will be asked to speak about my college-choice decision making process as well as any influences or factors that contribute to my choice. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes ,will be digitally recorded and later transcribed for analysis purposes.
2) Additionally, I will be asked to complete a demographic survey. This survey will provide the researcher with important information about my background, racial/ethnic identification, age, gender, and familial influences.
3) No discomforts or stresses are expected. No risks are expected.
4) Any identifiable information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified will remain confidential. Any individually identifiable information about me will be kept confidential.
5) Participants will never be mentioned by name in any published results, and only general statements will be used.
6) The digital recordings will be kept on a separate, locked computer and will be transcribed. Transcripts will be kept until the spring semester 2014 and then destroyed.

The researchers will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. Contact the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at (706) 542-1812 or email the co-researcher Melissa Shivers at mshivers@uga. edu.

My signature below indicates that the researchers have answered all of my questions to my satisfaction and that I consent to volunteer for this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date   Signature of Researcher   Date

_____
Signature of Participant   Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to the Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone 706-542-3199; email address IRB@uga. edu

APPENDIX D
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please complete this survey by writing or checking the appropriate answers below. It is not required you provide your name on this form. All information included on this form will be kept confidential and secured in a password-protected computer file. Thank you.

1. Enrollment Status: □ Full-time   □ Part-time

2. Gender: □ Female   □ Male   □ Transgender

3. Racial Identity: □ Biracial   □ Multiracial □ Other

4. Father's Racial Identity (check all that apply):

   □ African American □ Asian American □ Hispanic/Latino □ Native American

   □ Caucasian

5. Mother's Racial Identity (check all that apply):

   □ African American □ Asian American □ Hispanic/Latino □ Native American

   □ Caucasian

6. Age in years: □ 18-20   □ 21-23   □ 24-26   □ 26 and over

7. Campus Residency: □ On-Campus □ Off-Campus, Commuter Student

8. Did you attend any colleges of universities prior to attending this university?

   □ Yes □ No
   If yes, the college or university you previously attended was classified as a(n)?
   □ HBCU(s)   □ I attended both an HBCU(s) and a PWI(s)
   □ PWI(s)   □ other _____

9. Was this University your first choice institution to pursue higher education?
   □ Yes □ No

10. Besides this University, what kinds of other institutions of higher education did you apply to? Check all that apply.
    □ HBCU(s)   □ other _____
    □ PWI(s)   □ I did not apply to any other institutions

11. Name and Location of High School:

    _____

12. Please rate the ethnic/racial diversity of the student body at the high school you graduated from:
    □ Very Diverse
    □ Somewhat Diverse
    □ Not Diverse

13. Did your parent(s) attend college?   □ Yes   □ No

If yes, what type of institution did they attend?
- □ HBCU □ Both an HBCU and PWI
- □ PWI □ Other

14. What was the key factor(s) that influenced your decision to attend this institution?
_____
_____
_____

Adapted from Carter, (2010)

APPENDIX E
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

College Choice
Who and/or what were the influences on your choosing to participate in higher education?

When did you know that you wanted to attend higher education?

How knowledgeable were you regarding opportunities to visit university campuses?
    Probe: If you did participate in campus visits, what types of institutions did you visit and Why?
    Probe: If you did not participate in campus visits, why not?

Were there any limitations to the type of institutions you considered?
    Probe: If so, please describe them.

What are the major factors that influenced your decision to attend this institution?

Identity Development
How and when did you come to understand your biracial or biracial identity?
    Probe: Describe any experiences that may have helped you understand your identity.

In your opinion, who or what influenced the shaping of your biracial or biracial identity?

Describe how or if your racial or cultural identity informed the college decision making process?
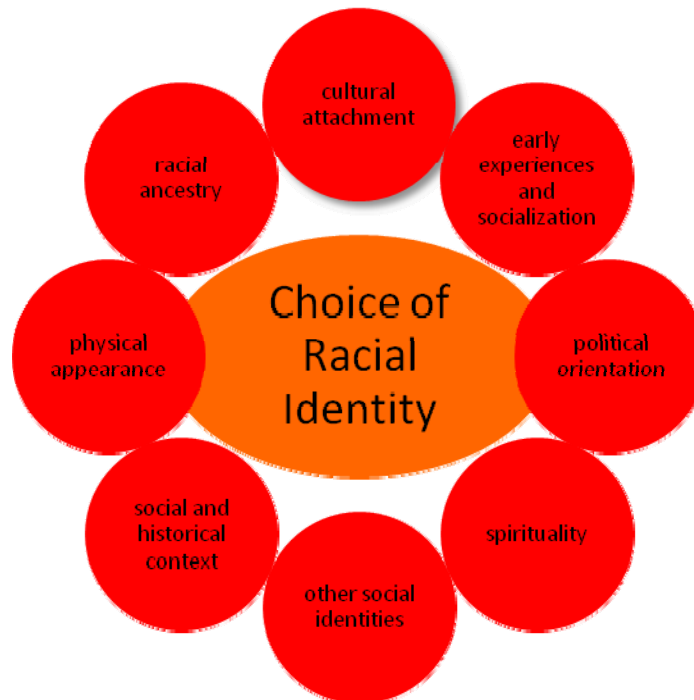
Institution Type

Describe your experiences at this institution.

Describe how those experiences have influenced your racial or cultural identity?

After the successful completion of one semester here at your institution, would you agree that this was the best institution for you?

APPENDIX F
WIJEYESINGHE'S FACTOR MODEL OF MULTIRACIAL IDENTITY

Adapted *from* Wijeyesinghe, C. L. (2001). Racial Identity in multiracial people: An alternative paradigm. In C. Wijeyesinghe & B. Jackson III (Eds.), *New Perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology* (pp. 129 -152). New York: New York University Press.