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# An Examination of the Adjustment of First Generation African American Male College Students

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The University of Southern Mississippi

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST GENERATION  
AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

Adina Narcisse Green

Abstract of a Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2010

## ABSTRACT

### AN EXAMINATION OF THE ADJUSTMENT OF FIRST GENERATION AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS

by Adina Narcisse Green

December 2010

Little is known about the college adjustment of first generation African American male students. The purpose of this study was to examine the college adjustment of this subgroup of students and create a profile of African American male college students as it relates to adjustment. In addition, research has found that students who do not integrate well into the college environment, both academically and socially, have a higher chance of incompleteness. With African American males exhibiting the lowest retention and graduation rates among their gender and racial counterparts, investigating their levels of adjustment might aid in explaining their high rates of attrition. Students who are of first generation college status are also deemed to be at risk of incompleteness, so students who met the criteria for being African American male and first generation are given specific attention in this study.

This study examined the adjustment of first generation African American males, as well as those who were not of first generational status, in five areas of adjustment: overall, academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional) as measured by the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ). Student demographic background was investigated using a demographic questionnaire. The sample was comprised of 140 African American males from one 4-year public Predominantly White

Institution (PWI) in the South. The majority of the participants were first generation students (n = 80). The results of the study revealed statistically significant differences among the subscales of adjustment for first generation African American students in that the score for personal-emotional adjustment was significantly different from the scores for the other areas of adjustment. In addition statistically significant differences in social adjustment based on student classification were found. No statistically significant difference was found in the adjustment of African American males who are first generation students and African American male students who are not of first generational status.

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A Dissertation  
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December 2010

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Collegiate Adjustment is fundamental to the success of all college-enrolled students. College matriculation marks the ending of one chapter in a student's life and a beginning of another. Students leave the familiarity of their family and friends, and the comfort of knowing how to navigate the environment in which they have spent all or most of their lives. Collegiate enrollment brings about opportunities for growth, new experiences, identity formation, and, in many cases, newfound challenges.

Research seems to support the notion that college adjustment falls into two primary facets: academic adjustment and social adjustment. Academic adjustment involves such things as grade point average, enrollment status, and adhering to the academic standards of an institution. Social adjustment has a broader scope and includes overall attachment to the institution of enrollment and college in general, social adaptation, extracurricular involvements, overall well-being, and faculty interaction. Research in the area of college adjustment is quite comprehensive, but little takes into account, exclusively, the adjustment experiences of high risk populations within the campus such as African American males enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) who are also first generation students (Baker & Siryk, 1989; Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007).

There is a growing body of research about both African American students enrolled in PWIs and first generation students in postsecondary education. Researchers seem to recognize that both populations are at risk of performing poorly academically,

feeling isolated and disconnected, and dropping out of postsecondary education prior to degree completion. Much of the research is geared towards adjustment concerns as well as formidable programs and services available (Fleming, 1984; Thayer, 2000; Watson, 2006).

In the study of African American college students, only recently has research begun to investigate the plight of African American males in higher education specifically. A majority of the research available looks at African Americans as one homogeneous group considering collectively both males and females, though research findings consistently indicate that African American males and African American females have very distinct collegiate experiences (Cuyjet, 2006).

On average, African American women on average are academically performing better than African American men. Women enroll in higher numbers, persist at higher rates, and graduate at substantially higher percentages than do their African American male counterparts. These findings hold true within Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and PWIs, however, the gap widens further between African American females and males enrolled in predominantly white institutions (Choy, 2001; Cuyjet, 2006).

Adjustment to the campuses of PWIs, as noted in some research, has been determined to decrease the African American male's ability to succeed both academically and socially (Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Fleming, 1984). Research suggests that considerably more so than African American females, African American males encounter cultural impacts that affect their level of adjustment. These impacts can include the deeply embedded societal racial stereotypes that precede them and to which many feel

they must acquiesce, and the pull or lack of encouragement from family and friends who may question their choice to pursue higher education (Dancy, 2009; Steele 1992, 1997).

Similarly, first generation students, particularly those enrolled in 4-year institutions, encounter some of the same challenges and outcomes as African American males enrolled in PWIs. First generation students are less likely than non-first generation students to enroll, persist, and graduate from college. Though more successful in 2-year institutions, first generation students (McKinney, 2005; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). These students often feel isolated and unwelcome in college, as do African American males enrolled in predominantly white institutions, and many first generation students lack the “college knowledge” needed to successfully navigate postsecondary education both academically and socially (Vargas, 2004).

There is a considerable body of research exploring the experiences of first generation college students. This research continues to be relevant as colleges and universities are witnessing significant enrollment increases within this population of students. In 1995-96, 47% of all first year college students were of first generation status (Choy, 2001). As colleges and universities are welcoming more and more diverse student populations, the number of first generation students to have access to higher education will continue to increase.

The institution to be examined in this study, a PWI in the South, has a very diverse population. According to the university’s Office of Institutional Research (OIR) (2008-2009), during the fall 2008 semester the university’s total undergraduate enrollment was 12,062. Of the total enrollment for that semester, 40% were male and 60% were female. Caucasian students made up 63% of all students, African Americans

accounted for 29%, with the remaining 8% including other racial/ethnic groups. Of the African American students enrolled that semester, 66% were female and 34% were male. The gender differential for Caucasian students was less as 43% of all Caucasian students were male and 57% were female. These figures indicated a 14-point differential between genders of Caucasian students and a 32-point differential between genders of African American students. These disparities are congruent with national statistics which indicate that African-Americans experience the lowest male-to-female rate of all ethnic groups, with only 38% of enrolled African Americans in postsecondary education being male (Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Roach, 2001).

As it relates to first generation students, the institution being studied has no conclusive institutional statistics regarding the enrollment of first generation students specifically. The only information regarding the parental educational status of students is documented by a student's submission of The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). All students, however, do not complete the FAFSA, thus generational information is limited (as reported by OIR). This is not surprising as research indicates that few institutions keep precise statistics on first generation enrollment (London, 1992).

Descriptive statistics, however, were available from the university's Student Support Services Program (SSSP) (2008), one of the university's two U.S. Department of Education TRIO programs, which aims to increase the retention and graduation rates of first generation students, low income students, and/or students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

During the fall 2008 university-wide freshman orientation sessions, SSSP conducted a demographic survey of participating first-time freshmen to determine the

percentages of first generation students of that cohort. The number of first-time freshmen who completed the survey was 1081; 71% of all incoming first time freshmen enrolled during the fall 2008 semester (OIR, 2008-2009; SSSP, 2008). The survey revealed that 530 (49%) of the students completing the survey identified themselves as first generation students, meaning neither of their parents or legal guardians completed a bachelor's degree, 27% indicated that only one of their parents or legal guardian held at least a bachelor's degree, and only 24% stated that both parents or legal guardians held at least a bachelor's degree. The African American constituency of the entire group surveyed was 508 or 47%. Of the students who self-identified as first generation, 303 or 57% were African American; and of the African American first generation students, 168 or 33% were male. These statistics coincide with national research which states that first generation students in higher education are disproportionately minority (McKinney, 2005; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998), and again supports the disparity in enrollment between African American males and females (Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Roach, 2001).

Research of both African American males, particularly those attending predominantly white institutions, and first generation students places both these subgroups of students on the bottom rung of the ladder to academic success. These populations seem to have the steepest climb in areas of academic success and adjustment to college. This researcher intends to examine the students who have characteristics of both these groups to determine how they adjust academically and socially in the foreign halls of institutions of higher learning. The literature review of this study offers an overview of current research depicting the journey and experience of both groups individually. Given the research on these separate populations, the present researcher

intends to investigate the African American male student enrolled at a predominantly white institution, who is also of first generational status.

#### Statement of the Problem

African American male students, particularly those enrolled in predominantly white institutions, and first generation students are failing to thrive in higher education at alarming rates. These populations perform poorly, and at rates considerably lower than their constituents, both academically and socially. They also fail to persist satisfactorily from year to year and suffer low graduation rates. Adjustment to college has been known to affect positively or negatively students' levels of performance, persistence, and graduation (Feagin et al., 1996; McKinney, 2005). Research has identified both groups, African American males and first generation students as being at-risk for lower levels of adjustment, but has not examined the adjustment experiences of students who are both first generation students and African American male. Current research supports that when African American students enroll in post-secondary education they are more likely to do so in a PWI which often increases their likelihood of being ill-adjusted. Similarly, first generation students who enroll in 4-year institutions have an increased risk of ill-adjustment, especially when compared to 2-year institution enrollment. Therefore, it appears reasonable to conclude that a student who is African American, male, and of first generational status is likely to face considerable adjustment risks when enrolled in a 4-year PWI.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the collegiate adjustment of the first generation African American male student at a 4-year public predominantly white

institution in the South, and to create a profile of adjustment for that student. The study's aim is to measure the student's level of college adjustment, determine if any differences exist between levels of adjustment in varied areas of adjustment and compare the college adjustment of first generation African American male students with African American male students who are not of first generational status. The researcher intends to identify the levels of overall adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal/emotional adjustment, and institutional attachment experienced by this population, as measured by the Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

This study is intended to provide an examination of the college adjustment of first generation African American male students independently and rather than in comparison to traditional or majority student populations. The study will, however, include African American males who do not identify as first generation students to offer some stratification within the African American male experience at a 4-year public predominantly white institution in the South. The researcher hopes to add to the body of research regarding African American males, in general, and offer new information in the area of those who are first generation students as well.

The research intends to create a profile of adjustment relative to the first generation African American student which may increase an institution's ability to assist these students in meeting the demands of higher education, persisting and higher rates, and enjoying higher graduation rates than currently experienced. Additionally, it is the hope of the researcher that this study will open the door for more institutional-level programming and initiatives geared at meeting the needs of this subgroup of students.

### Research Questions

1. To what extent do first generation African American males enrolled at PWIs adjust to college overall and in areas of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional)?
2. Is there a difference in academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional) levels for first generation African American males?
3. Are there differences between student classifications of first generation African American males enrolled at PWIs based on overall adjustment (full scale) or subscales of adjustment (academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional))?
4. Are there differences between African American males who are first generation students and African American males who are non-first generation students in their overall adjustment to college(full scale) or subscales of adjustment (academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional))?

### Delimitations

The following delimitations are applicable to the study:

1. The sample was drawn from voluntary students.
2. The study was delimited to African American male students only.
3. The study was delimited to one 4-year public institution in one state.

### Assumptions

The following assumptions are applicable to the study:

1. It was assumed that all information reported in the questionnaires were accurate and honest.

### Definition of Terms

The following definitions may be pertinent to this study:

*Adjustment* - the process of altering behavior in order to reach a harmonious relationship with the immediate environment and one's inner self.

*Attachment (institutional)* – a subscale that is composed of 15 items designed to explore the student's feelings about the college in which he or she is enrolled or about being in college, in general (Baker & Siryk, 1989) (may be used interchangeably with the term “institutional attachment”).

*Academic adjustment* – a subscale consisting of 24 items that refer to various educational demands and characteristics of the collegiate experience (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

*African American* – refers to a student's self-identification as an American of African descent or Black American.

*Personal-Emotional adjustment* – a subscale composed of 15 items aimed at determining the student's well-being - how the student is feeling psychologically and physically (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

*Employment Status* – identifies the extent to which the student is employed; full-time (30 hours/week or more, part-time (1-29 hours/week), or not employed.

*Enrollment Status* – defines the student’s status as full-time (enrolled in 12 credit hours or more) or part-time (enrolled in less than 12 credit hours).

*Extracurricular campus involvement* – participation in campus activities such as student organizations, sororities, fraternities, athletics, and intramural sports.

*First Generation Student* - a student whose mother nor father, nor legal guardian (where applicable) has attained at least a bachelor’s degree. This definition also includes students whose parents have not attended college at all.

*Gender* – distinction in sex of whether a student is a male or female.

*HBCU* – Historically Black College or University – those institutions established for African American students whose enrollment is comprised predominantly of African American students.

*Nonacademic adjustment* – a student’s emotional adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment to college as measured by the SACQ (Baker & Siryk, 1989; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

*Non-first generational student*- a student who has at least one parent or legal guardian who has attained at least a bachelor’s degree (may be used interchangeably with the term “multi-generational student”).

*Overall Adjustment* – the total score on the SACQ that measures a student’s adaptation to college (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

*Parental Educational Status* – refers to the highest level of education completed by one’s parent (may be used interchangeably with the term “parental educational attainment”).

*PWI* – Predominantly White Institutions - those institutions established for white students prior to integration and whose enrollment is comprised predominantly of white (may be used interchangeably with the term “TWI”- Traditionally White Institution).

*Race* – a student’s racial identity as African American, Caucasian, Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, or other.

*Remedial status*– identifies whether a student has or has not ever been enrolled in one or more collegiate remedial course.

*Remedial student*– a student who is currently (or had previously been) enrolled in one or more collegiate remedial course.

*Residence type* – the classification of a student’s type of housing arrangement such as on-campus residential halls, off-campus apartment/house, or off-campus with parents.

*Social adjustment* – a subscale made up of 20 items that are relevant to the interpersonal-societal demands of collegiate adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

*Social integration* – identifies that the student has adapted to the social opportunities and life of college (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007).

*Student Classification* – identifies the student’s current level of educational status as in, freshmen (0-29 completed credit hours), sophomore (30-59 completed credit hours), junior (60-89 completed credit hours), or senior (90 completed credit hours or more).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### African Americans in Higher Education - A Historical Overview

Equity in higher education has been a long and tumultuous struggle for African Americans in America. Before the Civil War, the nation's policy toward African Americans was largely prescribed by the institution of slavery and determined what behaviors were appropriate or inappropriate for African Americans. Education was determined to be inappropriate (Fleming, 1981). The prescription rendered at that time has had long reaching effects into our current education practices (Fleming, 1981; Pifer, 1973).

Only in recent decades that American institutions of higher education have experienced widespread racial integration. While American higher education has been in existence since 1636, with the founding of Harvard University, African-Americans were not allowed access until much later in American history (Fleming, 1984; Lucas, 1994). The earliest record of African American enrollment was in 1774 when Ezra Stiles, prior to his serving as president at Yale, arranged for two African American men to be enrolled at the (then) College of New Jersey, Princeton (Westmeyer, 1997). It was not until 1826 that the first African American college graduates were documented. Amherst College and Bowdoin College, both white institutions, graduated one black male each within weeks of one another (Feagin et al., 1996; Lucas, 1994; Pifer, 1973). Even still, African American graduates from white universities were few and far between and would remain that way for many years to come. By the time of the Civil War there were only twenty-eight recorded black graduates (Pifer, 1973; Westmeyer, 1997).

Committed to educating themselves even before the Civil War and abolishment of slavery, African Americans began to attend Black colleges such as Cheyney University founded in 1842 and Lincoln University founded in 1854, both in Pennsylvania, and Wilberforce University founded in Ohio in 1856 (Brown, 1999; Fleming, 1984; Lucas, 1994). These institutions were private colleges intended for the sole purpose of educating African Americans and were funded by Quakers, Presbyterians, Black churches, local communities, the Freedman's Bureau, private philanthropists, and northern missionaries (Brown, 1999; Westmeyer, 1997).

Although these institutions did exist, prevailing opinion of the majority culture at that time held that blacks were inherently inferior to whites and that no good purpose was served by pretending otherwise. Sentiments of these types resonated across America, particularly in the south, and delayed the widespread educational attainment of African Americans for nearly a full decade (Fleming, 1981; Lucas, 1994). In 1877, one Virginian offered this commentary in *The Southern Planter and Farmer*:

I oppose [education for blacks] because its policy is cruelty to the negro himself. It instills in his mind that he is competent to share in the higher walks of life, prompts him to despise those menial pursuits to which his race has been doomed, and invites him to enter into competition with the white man for those tempting prizes that can be won only by a quicker and profounder sagacity, by a greater energy and self-denial, and a higher order of administrative talent than the negro has ever developed. (Lucas, 1994, p. 159)

This type of thinking did not die easily, especially in the South. Thus there would be great delays in the education of African Americans (Fleming, 1984; Lucas, 1994).

It was not until the late 1800s, with the implementation of the Morrill Act of 1890 which allowed “separate but equal” public institutions for African Americans, that valid but limited access to higher education would be granted (Fleming, 1984; Lucas, 1994; Westmeyer, 1997). This federal mandate ruled that states must either provide separate educational facilities for African Americans or admit them to existing white institutions (Fleming, 1984). The Morrill Act of 1890 mandated the planning and establishment of land-grant colleges and universities in each Southern and border state with the goal of educating African American citizens, and marked the inception of public Black colleges referred to as HBCUs (Fleming, 1984; Lucas, 1994; Westmeyer, 1997). Ironically, these schools were to be established in the part of the country where racial tensions were most high (Lucas, 1994). From 1890 to the mid 1950s, when forced integration became legal, these HBCUs offered the only opportunities in America for African Americans to pursue higher education (Fleming, 1984; Lucas, 1994; Westmeyer, 1997).

The Morrill Act of 1890 was, perhaps, the most noteworthy catalyst in the efforts to offer African Americans an opportunity for postsecondary education (Fleming, 1984). However, the simultaneous result of this landmark decision was that African Americans were overtly and covertly denied admission to white colleges and universities, particularly in the South, and were relegated to a separate system of higher education, one which may not have been truly equal (Pifer, 1973).

Whiting (1991) noted that HBCUs were developed outside of the national system of education unlike other colleges and universities. Due to the strong enforcement of segregation in the South, the initial mission and goals of HBCUs were narrow and lacked a relationship with community economic and political processes. The initial objective of

these institutions was not to afford the student with the accomplishment of a degree, but rather focused on agricultural, mechanical, and industrial pedagogy (Bowles & DeCosta, 1971). These colleges were essentially colleges in name only with many having begun as primary schools who added grades and collegiate areas as students progressed (Wilson, 1994).

According to the 1917 survey of black higher education conducted by Thomas Jesse Jones, there was only one black federal land-grant school that taught students on the collegiate level. Most students of these land-grant institutions were classified as elementary level students or secondary students (Anderson, 1997). Bowles and DeCosta (1971) found that none of the seventeen HBCUs established under the 1890 Morrill Act offered a liberal arts education prior to 1919, and only two provided 4-year degree programs. The task for HBCUs, however, was still monumental because they arose to serve a disadvantaged group in American society and did so under almost complete disadvantage and exclusion themselves. Nonetheless, HBCUs flourished during the early 1900s and adequately met their purpose of providing, encouraging, and accelerating higher education for African Americans; as well as incubating and preserving black creativity and scholarship (Whiting, 1991; Westmeyer, 1997). HBCUs served a culturally shattered group in a “bewildering, new and brutalizing environment” (Whiting, 1991, p.37). As African Americans became more educated and integrated into the society at large, interest in obtaining equal educational opportunities became more prevalent and seemed more realistic (Pifer, 1973).

Over the last several decades, college participation for African Americans has made substantial gains (Fleming, 1984; Pifer, 1973; Westmeyer, 1997; Wilson, 1998).

Yet African American students still lag behind in college enrollment, retention, and graduation, and they have the smallest increase among minority groups. The Dellums Commission study revealed that in 2006 Caucasian high school completers enrolled immediately in college at a rate of 69%, while only 55% of African American completers enrolled immediately (Harper, 2006). This gap has widened since 1972 (NCES, 2008), and continued to widen into 2008. In 2008, only 56% of African American high school completers immediately enrolled in college, while 72% of their Caucasian counterparts transitioned immediately into postsecondary education. These low high school graduation rates may lead to the inequities in higher education enrollment, but they do not solely address the issues of collegiate retention and graduation rates.

Today, African Americans are heavily involved in all types of higher education, though the greatest gains have been in 2-year institutions (Cuyjet, 1997; NCES, 2002). In the fall of 2002, African Americans accounted for 11.9% of all college enrollees at 1,978, 746 students. 12.4% or 244,442 were enrolled in HBCUs, while 87.6% or 1,734,304 students attended PWIs (NCES, 2002).

#### African American Students at Predominantly White Institutions

African American participation in PWIs in significant numbers is a fairly recent phenomenon (Wilson, 1994). Prior to historically revolutionary federal initiatives, Supreme Court decisions, and laws such as the GI Bill of 1945, *Brown v. Board of Education* case of 1954, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, HBCUs educated America's African American post-secondary students (Brown, 1994; Wilson, 1994). Prior to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, over 90% of all African American students who were enrolled in American colleges and universities were educated in HBCUs. Since the early 1960s

America began to witness a significant change in where African American college students are being educated (Kim & Conrad, 2006).

The most notable changes in enrollment occurred during the early 1980s when, according to a 1996 NCES report, “Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1976-1994,” stated that in the early 1980s only 17% of African American college students were enrolled in HBCUs. The report further revealed that by 1994 that percentage dropped to 15.9%. A subsequent report of the NCES (2001) affirmed that in 2001 only 13% of all African American college students were attending HBCUs. These percentages clearly indicate that the vast majority of African American college students were enrolled in PWIs in the decades following racial integration, and that that pattern of enrollment is unwavering. While the statistics have fluctuated over the last few decades, it remains evident that a large number of college-enrolled African Americans are enrolled in PWIs (Fleming, 1984; Wilson, 1994).

The 1954 landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case deemed the notion and practice of “separate but equal” spaces in public education both unequal and unconstitutional (Brown, 1994). The Supreme Court decision mandated the desegregation of administrators, faculty and students initially in 10 Southern states and in years later included nine other states where integration had still been practiced (Brown, 1994; Fleming, 1984). The decision commanded that segregation based on race, even if facilities and other tangible factors were equal, included intangible factors which were detrimental to the African American race. Thus public institutions of education were integrated (Harper, 1975). The *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which sought primarily to integrate public elementary and secondary schools, was the means through

which the Supreme Court spoke to all levels of education, including higher education, stating that segregation at any level of education was officially banned. Yet with these legislative requirements to admit African Americans, many institutions, especially in the South, failed to make changes accounting for the “new” race, and some continued to forwardly resist and deny the entrance of African Americans (Harper, 1975).

The 1964 Civil Rights Act increased minority access to higher education and institutions that had predominantly served the Caucasian population exclusively (Wilson, 1994). It was during the 1960s, largely as a result of the Civil Rights Movement and student unrest, that PWIs around the country began to experience the impact of African American student enrollment (Harper, 1975; Mingle, 1981; Wilson, 1994). This increased enrollment of African Americans at PWIs also signified a turning point for HBCUs (Fleming, 1984).

Wilson (1994) indicated that 600,000 African Americans were in college in 1965 with 65% of them being enrolled in HBCUs. By 1980, the number of African Americans enrolled in higher education was 1.2 million, with only 20% of the total enrolled at HBCUs (Wilson, 1994). Now that the barriers which previously disallowed African American students a choice in higher education had been removed many African Americans obviously sought admission into PWIs rather than HBCUs (Fleming, 1984; Wilson, 1994).

The integration of African Americans in higher education was in many cases a forced and unwelcome reality (Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984). PWIs, particularly in the South, were reluctant to accept and enforce that change, but gradually gave into the will of the law. As this integration manifested itself, many African American students,

now among the “elite,” realized an experience contrary, perhaps, to their anticipation of such. With this new and sudden change, major American colleges and universities had very little previous contact or experience in attending to or meeting the needs of African American students. Boyd’s 1974 survey of African American students at PWIs spoke of successful integration with the majority of African Americans boasting a positive experience (Fleming, 1984). Yet other authors pointed out that academic failure, protests and demonstrations, and revolts incited by African American students and other integration supporters indicated quite a level of dissatisfaction (Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Whiting 1991). In addition, the retention of African Americans, as well as their low graduation rates, indicated that everything was not satisfactory (Fleming, 1984).

In fact, according to research conducted by Pifer (1973) and Fleming (1984) as the number of African American students increased at PWIs fundamental adjustment problems were initiated as well. Their research stated that these problems of mutual dissatisfaction among African American and Caucasian students had yet to be worked through. Pifer’s (1973) research found:

As the numbers of blacks in essentially white colleges and universities began to mount in the late 1960s, it became apparent that there were severe problems of adjustment involved on both sides. The prevailing expectation of white administrators and faculty was that new black students would simply conform to the mores, standards, and outlook of the majority white culture on campus. This, however, was not the case. The new students, fresh from the ghettos, felt strange, lonely, unwanted, and fearful in what they saw as an alien and even hostile white

world. They withdrew from social contact with whites and sought only the company of other blacks. (pp. 41-42)

In other research study conducted by Fleming (1994), the results echoed the aforementioned concerns regarding the adjustment of black students enrolled in PWIs.

His findings were that:

The large percentage of black students enrolled in white colleges obscures the fact that blacks are underrepresented in 4-year schools and particularly in elite institutions, the colleges most capable of providing black students with what they lacked on black campuses. Numbers obscure the adjustment problems generated by the black presence in white schools, in terms of the well-being of both students and institutions. Despite the problems, black students are on white campus to stay. (p. 13)

The integration of public institutions of higher education produced a myriad of concerns and problems faced by African American enrollees of PWIs. During the 1960s, African American students at PWIs became disillusioned by the slow progress of integration and their exclusion from campus social life, social fraternity membership and honor societies, and discriminatory treatment when seeking off-campus housing (Fleming, 1984). Of all the problems faced by African American students on predominantly white campuses, the psychosocial problems resulting from alienation and a lack of support from the general environment seemed to be the most severe (Allen, 1981; Fleming, 1984). In addition, African American students were noted as having higher attrition rates than their Caucasian counterparts and were not as academically successful (Allen, 1981).

A 1972 study conducted by Willie and McCord (Fleming, 1984), claimed that the unanticipated level of prejudice and lack of social integration that African American students found at PWIs contributed to feelings of anger and despair and the desire to separate and withdraw from Caucasians. Feagin et al. (1996) found that African American students enrolled at PWIs continued to be dissatisfied to the extent that they believed protests against varied forms of racism were still needed and, thus, organized. In addition, Feagin et al. determined that African American students at PWIs did not perform as well academically or adjust as well psychologically as their Caucasian counterparts. They attributed this finding to their notion that racial barriers continued to exist in PWIs, where full desegregation of higher education remained more of a goal than reality. The most significant problem found for African American students at PWIs was the growing feeling of alienation – the inability to feel part of a whole. Often these feelings of alienation seemed to be associated with lack of intellectual gain and a decrease in the level of career aspirations (Fleming, 1984; Feagin et al., 1996).

Students interviewed in a study conducted by Feagin et al. (1996) acknowledged feeling more or less unwelcome at PWIs. When asked to respond to the statement, “X University (a TWI [traditionally white institution]) is a college campus where Black students are generally welcomed and nurtured.” According to survey results, 89% of the students surveyed disagreed with the statement. For students who sensed they were not wanted, the college campus became an unfriendly place and was likely to have a negative impact on both self-esteem and personal identity. African American students at PWIs periodically experienced racial insensitivity, hostility, and discrimination perpetrated by other students, and a range of campus personnel who sometimes left them feeling

invisible (Feagin et al., 1996; Fleming, 1984; Sedlacek, 1987). Feagin et al. asserted that PWIs maintained racialized spaces which encompassed the cultural biases that helped define areas and territories as white or black. The spaces resulted in feelings of belongingness and control, feelings which Caucasian students enjoyed and African American students at PWIs lacked.

Feagin et al. (1996) purported that racial discrimination continued to be well entrenched in higher education in the United States and for that reason African American students enrolled in PWIs typically suffered dissatisfying college experiences. They concluded that African American students enrolled in PWIs were the targets of varied forms of discrimination, ranging from blatant actions to subtle yet destructive practices which rendered it impossible for those students to have a rewarding experience. Such actions include:

Racist joking, the recurring use of racial epithets, racist skits and floats by white fraternities, the neglect or rejection of black students' goals or interests, the mistreatment of black students by white professors, and racial harassment by white police officers. Most damaging is the taking for granted by most white administrators, faculty, staff and students that the campus is a "white" place in which blacks are admitted, at best, as guests. (p.13)

Jones (2001) concluded that in order for African Americans attending postsecondary institutions, particularly PWIs, to perform, persist, and graduate, a moderate to high level of social and academic integration into college life must exist. His research offers five factors aimed to guide efforts encouraging participation and success of African Americans engaged in the university experience.

The first factor is the need to adjust to a new environment. For many African American students, college attendance has not been considered a rite of passage, but rather represented a disjunction, more pronounced on predominantly white campuses, from one's family and cultural heritage. The second factor is the need to receive the adequate financial aid needed for financial persistence in college. Anxiety resulting from financial concerns became exacerbated when it added to the student's overall feelings of alienation and dissatisfaction (Jones, 2001).

The third factor is the need to perceive the social and academic climate as inclusive and affirming. African American students' attrition rates are correlated with feeling apart from the academic and social campus life. The fourth factor is the need for goal establishment and goal commitment. This was found to be particularly vital for African American students whose models of careers or educational opportunities may be limited, at best. The fifth and final factor is simply the student's personal and background characteristics which were found to correlate with overall successful achievement, family income and educational attainment, and the student's academic preparation (Jones, 2001).

The results of recent research of students at PWIs indicated that African American students have higher attrition rates and lower rates of graduate school enrollments than do their counterparts. Studies indicated further that, on average, these same students perform worse academically and adjust at a lower rate than their Caucasian counterparts enrolled in PWIs (Adams, 2005; Feagin et al., 1996; Phillips, 2005).

Researchers still contend that while the racial composition of PWIs has changed considerably, the "climate" in many cases has not. The curricula is the same, the racial composition of faculty is virtually unchanged and as a result African American students

seek to construct their racial identities from flawed stereotypes portrayed in the media and pop culture (Adams, 2005). A survey conducted by Phillips (2005) measuring marginality compared the environmental perceptions of African American and Caucasian students on a predominantly white campus. He found that African American students felt marginalized and that Caucasian students were unaware of the different challenges faced by African American students. The most common barriers seemed to be racial, socioeconomic, and academic issues. This marginalization caused great difficulty in a student's ability to become academically or socially integrated in their environment (Adams, 2005; Phillips, 2005). Ultimately, Adams (2005) concluded that this feeling of marginalization leads to the perception that PWIs are indifferent, or even hostile, environments as it related to the African American student experience and this perception attributed to lower retention and graduation rates of African Americans in PWIs.

#### The Status of African American Men in Higher Education

Today, education is conceivably more important than at any other time in American history. To a great extent, education determines the degree of social mobility one enjoys or will enjoy in American society. Advanced education and degree attainment are highly correlated with one's quality of life (Jackson & Moore, 2006). Society places great value on education and degree attainment as they are often seen as the vehicle for achieving social mobility in American society (Fleming, 1984; Jackson & Moore, 2006).

The numbers of Black men on higher education campuses, especially at PWIs, are proportionally less than the numbers of black women (Cuyjet; 1997; Noguera, 2003; Roach, 2001). Among the more than fourteen million college students reported in 1994, black men had the lowest male-to-female ratio of all ethnic groups with only 38% of

African American students being male (Cuyjet; 1997). This figure is not an anomaly because African American men continue to be greatly outnumbered by women on college campuses (Anderson, 2006; Cuyjet, 1997; Hall & Rowan, 2000; Roach 2001).

African American males may be the most at risk of not attaining the social status which accompanies degree attainment as they are not progressing satisfactorily alongside their constituents in higher education (Cuyjet, 1997, 2006; Jackson & Moore, 2006).

African American men on the college campus, particularly those on the campuses of PWIs, remain an enigma and in many cases of little interest to the scholars of the very institutions they attend. Research is needed to understand the impact of race and gender of African American males matriculating in America's colleges (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The problem of reduced male representation in college is further complicated by race; though men in every racial group are earning fewer college degrees now than ever before, some groups demonstrated more dismal numbers than others (Perrakis, 2008). All studies seem to indicate that African American men are enrolling, performing, and persisting at lower rates than any other racial group or gender (Noguera, 2003; Roach, 2001).

NCES's "The Condition of Education 2010" (2010) indicates that collegiate enrollment at the postsecondary level has increased from 13.1 million in 2000 to 16.4 million in 2008. At 4-year institutions female enrollment has increased by 32% and male enrollment by 28%. These increases are impressive, but a closer examination illustrates that, even with the increases, African Americans lag far behind since only 14% of all college students are African American compared to that of Caucasian students at 63%. Consequently, since African American women outnumber African American males by

almost 9%, the enrollment numbers are especially bleak for African American males (Harper, 2006.)

African American men accounted for only 4.3% of all students enrolled in higher education, and graduated less than African American females or any other group within higher education (Fleming, 1984; Harper, 2006). They also experienced lower academic performance and reported more dissatisfaction with their collegiate experience (Fleming, 1984).

Beginning in the early 1990s, American institutions of higher education have witnessed a vast decline in the enrollment of African American males from low and moderate income backgrounds (Anderson, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Roach 2001). This decrease could be attributed to any number of factors that also affected African American males in the society at large such as disproportionately high incarceration rates, African American male street culture that often fostered anti-intellectual and anti-educational sentiments, poverty, lack of academic preparation in racially segregated schools, decreased amounts of financial aid, and/or deeply rooted institutional racism (Hall & Rowan 2000; Noguera, 2003; Roach 2001; Warde, 2007). Whatever the reason, African American males, particularly those enrolled in PWIs, progressed and persisted at rates lower and slower than African American women and all other racial/ethnic groups within higher education (Anderson 2006, Roach 2001).

The American Council of Education's (ACE) "Minorities in Higher Education 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Status Report" (2004) revealed that African American women are outnumbering African American men in terms of college enrollment and indicated that the gap between the two has continued to widen. Based on the report, in 1980-81 28% of

African American women and 30% of African American men aged 18-24 were enrolled in college. Twenty years later the numbers shifted to 42% for African American women and 37% for African American men in the 18-24 age group. While both groups experienced gains, African American women enjoyed an increase of fourteen percentage points, while African American men had only a seven percentage point gain.

A study performed by The Dellums Commission and compiled by Harper (2006) suggested the same trend in enrollment. This study looked specifically into the status of African American males enrolled in 50 of America's flagship universities. The study showed that in 2004, African American males aged 18-24 made up 2.8% of undergraduate student enrollment, that 30 of the 50 flagship universities enrolled less than 500 African American males each, and that the mean 6-year graduation rate was 44.3% for African American males compared to 53.2% for African American females and 61.4% for Caucasian males. The most pronounced gaps in higher education existed among African American students. Thirty years ago, African American men represented 45.5% of all African American college students. In 2002, that percentage dropped to 35.8%. In most states black men remained noticeably underrepresented in higher education when compared to their female or white male counterparts (Harper, 2006).

The dismal enrollment numbers of African American males speak for themselves, but offer little insight into what's holding African American's hostage from higher education pursuits. Some attention should be given to the high school graduation rates and high school-to-college matriculation rates of African American males. The 2000 Census indicated that 86.4% of Caucasian males aged 18-24 graduated from high school,

while 80.2% of African American females graduated, and only 74.3% of African American males received a high school diploma (Harper, 2006).

The degree attainment of African American men, as designated in The Dellums Commission study, is of great concern as well with Caucasian men earning more than ten times the number of degrees awarded to their African American counterparts. As of 2004, less than one-third (32.4%) of African American men who start college across the U.S. finish within six years. This graduation rate was the lowest among gender and racial groups in higher education (Harper, 2006). NCES (2009) reported that in the 2006-2007 academic year only 33.9% of the degrees conferred to African Americans were awarded to men as compared to the 43.7% of all degrees conferred to Caucasians being received by men. Ten years prior statistics revealed that in 1996-97 degree attainment percentage for African American men was 35.9% of all African American degrees conferred, while the percentage for Caucasian men was 44.8% of all degrees conferred to Caucasian graduates. Thus, over the ten year period from 1996-97 to 2006-07 degree attainment for Caucasian males decreased by 1.1% while for African American males the decrease was 2.0%. The gap in degree attainment within African Americans and between African American males and Caucasian males has expanded, and in neither case was it to the advantage of the African American male. Of all student cohorts in higher education, African Americans have the lowest male-to-female ratio (Cuyjet, 2006). Additionally, African American males from low socioeconomic backgrounds have also been found to have higher attrition rates (Mason, 1998).

In a study conducted by Hall and Rowan (2001) African American male college students at PWIs were given several questions to answer designed to quantify their

experiences in college. Overwhelmingly these students indicated that the factor that most encouraged them to attend college was personal (N=543); familial influence ranked lowest (N=144). When asked about the special issues they faced, Race was the most significant issue (N= 809), followed by campus environment (N= 94). Campus environment, however, was the variable identified as the leading problem they had enrolling and staying in school (N=218). The significance of this study is it illustrates that even in the Twenty-first century African American men on college campuses perceive both race and campus climate to remain an obstacle in their collegiate success.

Some research attributed the disparities between African American male and female gains to the belief that African American females were more motivated about college attendance than their African American male counterparts (Cokley, 2001). Others purported that the negative influences and stereotypes of society, exacerbated by the media, have taken hold on African American males (Dancy, 2009; Steele 1992, 1997): “Black male college students feel pressured to fulfill media-spun social expectations to be overly sexual, aggressive and athletic in college” (Dancy, 2009, p. 21). Unfortunately attempts to live up to these stereotypes pull African American males further from academic success and collegiate adjustment (Dancy, 2009; Malveaux, 2006; Steele, 1992).

Steele (1992) concluded that African American men in higher education often endured and internalized some of the negative stereotypes aimed at African American men that preceded their arrival to campus. He insisted that these negative stereotypes of black males were epidemic in society and the frequency of their occurrences results in a devaluation stemming from images society uses to compartmentalize black men. He

deemed it important to understand how black males internalize these socially constructed notions of race in ways that cause detriment to their lives and life chances. In 1997, Steele referred to this danger as the “stereotype threat” and warned that it may be to blame, at least in part, for why Black students drop out of school and college at significantly higher rates, and for their poor academic performance. It is his contention that as a result of this “threat,” social identity becomes connected to negative stereotypes, resulting in anxiety which negatively affects performance (Dancy, 2009; Steele, 1997).

The fact that African American males are often stereotyped in America does put them in a tenuous position both in society and in higher education. African American males face countless challenges in America and are frequently referred to as endangered, uneducable, dysfunctional, and dangerous (Jackson & Moore, 2006). In addition, they are often characterized as a population at-risk in education (Cuyjet 1997; Noguera, 2003; Roach 2001). It is therefore really not surprising that many African American males are not successful in their collegiate endeavors, when many are in trouble in many other areas of society (Watson, 2006).

Black men have been portrayed quite negatively in the United States, beginning with slavery when they were depicted as docile and amiable. As freed men they were considered ferocious and brutal and in current times are stereotyped as being criminal, overly sexual, cool, and of low intelligence. These depictions and stereotypes reinforced in all types of media could easily impact the psyche of any human being, or group therein (Stevens, 2006).

The outcome for African American males in college is that they are outnumbered in all constituent groups, they perform more poorly academically, and experienced

markedly high attrition rates (Steele, 1992) They feel they must act as if the culture they believe has rejected them does not matter by putting on a “cool pose” which often gets in the way of their academic pursuits (Malveaux, 2006; Steele, 1997). They realize that higher education is essential for a better life, but they have little self-efficacy or incentive (Malveaux, 2006). African American males from all backgrounds were found to be at risk. Both African American males from low socioeconomic backgrounds and those from middle class families lag significantly behind their Caucasian peers in grade point average and standardized tests. Young African American men face the same type of rejection in higher education and both assume the “cool pose” to confront it (Malveaux, 2006; Noguera, 2003; Steele, 1997).

Wyatt (2009) reviewed a multitude of literature regarding African American male success at the college level and determined that “African-American males do not achieve at the same academic levels as their counterparts” (p. 463). Further, African American students at PWIs are laden with barriers to their academic success which result from a greater sense of isolation and alienation and a perceived lack of support from faculty (Chism & Satcher, 1998). Spurgeon and Myers (2010) explored the relationships between racial identity and wellness for successful African American male college students attending HBCUs and PWIs. African American males attending PWIs seemed to be at greater risk for impaired wellness in multiple areas than their peers attending HBCUs. African American males in higher education seem to be in a state of crisis (Cuyjet, 2006; Spurgeon & Myers, 2010).

### The First Generation College Student

“Being a first-generation college student means that you are in uncharted territory. There’s no one who’s gone before you, that you are close to, that can tell you the ups and downs. You are on your own; you’re going to have to learn on your own” (Cushman, 2006, p. 57). This statement by a first-generation student interviewed in Cushman (2006) represents the sentiment felt by many first-generation students as they have matriculated to universities and campuses across America. Further, this statement is worthy of great consideration as more and more first generation students, with their feelings of uncertainty, are pursuing higher education. Their insecurity affects their ability to thrive, persist, and graduate from post-secondary institutions (Bui, 2002; Cushman, 2006).

The increase of first generation students in higher education makes this category of students quite a significant force. Yet few American postsecondary institutions keep precise statistics on the number of first generation students enrolled. There is, however, a general consensus that those numbers will continue to grow as a college degree becomes a qualification for more and more jobs (London 1992; Padron, 1992; Striplin, 1999). In 1995-96, 47% of all first- year postsecondary students were first generation, taking into account all types of postsecondary institutions (Choy, 2001).

First-year students who are also first generation students have a demographic profile different than that of their non-first generation counterparts. According to the 1998 study, “First Generation Students: Undergraduates Whose Parents Never Enrolled in Postsecondary Education,” when compared to non-first generation students, first-year, first generation students were more likely to be: female, 30 years or older, African American or Hispanic, married, independent either with or without dependents, and had

lower family incomes. They were more likely to attend on a part-time basis, work more hours, and stop out one or more times during their collegiate career. Their experience in college was often less intense and less continuous than their non-first generation counterparts (McKinney, 2005; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Richardson & Skinner, 1992).

In addition, their reasons for college enrollment revolved around such things as gaining respect/status, bringing honor to their families, and putting them in a posture by which they could help out their families financially. This differed from other students whose reasons for enrollment included that college offered them the opportunity to get out of their parents' home or because siblings or other family members went (or were going; Bui, 2002; Cushman, 2006; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998). In addition, first generation students enrolled in higher education were much more likely to attend 2-year institutions, but were enrolled at all levels of postsecondary education (London, 1992; Striplin, 1999; Thayer, 2000).

In a 2002 study of third quarter, first-year freshmen conducted by Bui, it was found that first generation students more often came from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, reported pursuing higher education to help their families financially after college completion, and worried more about financial aid for college. In accordance with previous research, the study also found that first generation students were more likely to belong to ethnic minority groups and scored lower on the SAT than did other students (Bui, 2002; Thayer, 2000).

While more and more first-generation students are attending college, overall college enrollment rates differed to a great extent depending on level of parental

education of enrollees (Bui, 2002). For instance, in 1999 the immediate collegiate enrollment rate following high school for students whose parents had a bachelor's degree was 82%, for students whose parents held only a high school diploma the rate was 54% and for those whose parents had less than a high school diploma the rate of enrollment dropped to 36% (NCES, "Special Analysis Report," 2001).

Choy (2001) documented similar statistics in the NCES Report "Students Whose Parents Did Not Go To College." This report found that among 1992 high school graduates, by 1994 59% of the students whose parents did not attend college were enrolled in higher education as compared to 75% and 91% of students whose parents had some college and whose parents held at least a bachelor's degree, respectively. The study revealed that postsecondary enrollment is strongly related to parental education attainment (Choy, 2001).

For many in American society, going to college is viewed as a rite of passage for high school graduates, but for those students who are the first college enrollees in their families to do so it marks a significant separation from the past. Friends, siblings, and even parents who have no or little experience of college or its rewards may be non-supportive. First generation students may come to feel isolated at home, lack an appropriate place to study, and may even be disparaged for allocating time to their studies rather than family responsibilities (Billson & Terry, 1982; Hsiao, 1992; London, 1992, Padron, 1992; Striplin, 1999; Thayer 2000). In fact, "first generation students may find themselves 'on the margin of two cultures,' and must often renegotiate relationships at college and at home to manage the tension between the two" (Thayer, 2000, p. 5).

Parents have the most influential and direct impact on the collegiate aspirations of their children. The development of these aspirations is often a prerequisite for college attendance and success. The encouragement of college attendance is most often the experience of non-first generation students (Vargas, 2004). The variation in first generation students' educational expectations can be observed as early as 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Only 55% of 1992 high school graduates who were first-generation students aspired in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to obtain a bachelor's degree, compared to 71% and 91%, respectively, of 8<sup>th</sup> graders whose parents had some college experience or whose parents had earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Similarly, the first generation students lagged behind in their likelihood of taking the SAT or ACT in high school: 25% of first generation students, 42% for students whose parents had some college experience and 73% for students whose parents had earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree, respectively (Choy, 2001).

The value that a family places on higher educational pursuits may be among the first variables that sets first generation students apart from non-first generation students (Vargas, 2004). Families of first generation students sometimes discouraged them from pursuing a college education and this discouragement could lead to alienation from family support. In many cases, first-generation students were also acutely susceptible to doubts about their academic and motivational abilities; they may fear that they are not college material. Their movement into another culture "in unfounded territory" was likely to lead them to critical self-evaluations. These were only compounded when they also lacked the support of their families (Cushman, 2006; London, 1992; Striplin, 1999).

Quite simply, the more educated the parent the higher the expectation for their children to attend college (Hertel, 2002).

Researchers assert that it is not uncommon for first generation college students to enter college with less academic preparation than their counterparts, to possess limited access to information about the college experience, either first-hand or from significant others, and to lack knowledge of time management, college finances, and appropriate budget management. They faced obstacles that include: lack of knowledge of the campus environment, its academic expectations, and bureaucratic operations of higher education; and lack of family support. First generation students may, in fact, encounter irreconcilable cultural conflicts between home and college community (Cushman, 2006; Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Thayer, 2000). First generation students also experienced feelings of being less prepared for college and believed that they had to put more time into studying than other students in order to keep up. They worried more about finances and financial aid, feared failing, and reported knowing less about the social environment at the university (Bui, 2002).

These deficits further compounded the challenges researchers claimed these students face in establishing and navigating a clear path to degree completion. Research consistently acknowledges that as students with a strong sense of direction do better in college. Many first generation students lack this sense of direction (McKinney, 2005). One third of first generation students entered college without an intended major, compared to only 13% of their non-first generation peers, and on average had a lower grade point average and took fewer credit hours than the students whose parents attended college (Hsiao, 1992; McKinney, 2005; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004;

Schuman, 2005). First generation students often faced unique challenges in their quest for a degree such as conflicting obligations, false expectations, and lack of preparation or support (Hsiao, 1992; Striplin, 1999).

Differences between first generation students and their non-first generation counterparts were also apparent in the area of remediation (Hsiao, 1992; McKinney, 2005). Of the students enrolled in remedial courses, more than half of all first generation students took some remedial classes while only 27% of non-first generation students enrolled in remedial courses. This inclusion of remedial courses is significant because it slows down the credit earning potential of far too many first generation students during their first year. Research indicates that students who are on track during their first year of college are much more likely to graduate (McKinney, 2005; Schuman, 2005).

Research conducted by Choy (2001) concluded that first generation students were at a disadvantage throughout their entire collegiate careers. They entered without as much preparation, they earned lower grades, and they were more likely to drop out. McKinney (2005) discussed a study which examined a cohort of 1992 high school graduates, 28% of which were first generation students but only included the 22% of first generation graduates to enroll in college between 1992 and 2000. Of this cohort, 43% left college before attaining a bachelor's degree, compared to the 24% of first generation students who earned the degree. Of those whose parents were college graduates 68% received the degree by the year 2000. Students whose parents had no collegiate experience were also determined to be less likely than other students to ever earn a bachelor's degree (McKinney, 2005; Schuman, 2005).

First generation students fail to persist in higher education at alarming rates (Choy, 2001; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998):

First generation students are likely to persist in college at lower rates than their non-first generation peers. A national study of first generation students found that the first generation student persisted and attained credentials at lower rates in both four-year and two-year institutions. The study concluded that even when controlling for factors that are commonly associated with first generation students, such as socio-economic status, institution type, and attendance status, first generation status still has a negative effect on educational attainment. (Thayer, 2000, p. 5)

According to Choy (2001) first generation beginning students at 4-year institutions were twice as likely as students whose parents had a bachelor's degree to leave college before their second year (23% compared to 10%). Another study determined that almost half (45%) of first generation students who enrolled in higher education in 1989-1990 had not earned a degree and were no longer enrolled in 1994, compared with 29% of non-first generation students (Choy, 2001; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

In addition to the academic concerns, postsecondary students who were also first generation were more likely than their non-first generation counterparts to document minimal levels of academic integration (30% compared to 19%), as determined by students' responses to questions regarding how often they attended career-related events, met with academic advisors, or participated in study groups. Interestingly, these differences existed at public 2-year schools where first generation students were more

highly concentrated (40% compared to 29%), while the differences were virtually nonexistent at public 4-year schools (16% compared to 15%, respectively; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

Low income, minority, and first generation students are at a specific risk of lacking what Vargas (2004) referred to as “college knowledge,” and purported that this “college knowledge” is of significant importance. He concluded that first generation students lacked knowledge about college that non-first generation students learn throughout middle and high school. He asserted that this knowledge plays a key role in having access to college, being cultivated to have college aspirations, and choosing the right college and financial aid: “They often do not understand the steps necessary to prepare for higher education. These steps include knowing about how to finance a college education, how to complete basic admissions procedures, and how to make connections between career goals and educational requirements” (Vargas, p. 7). Padron (1992) indicated that large numbers of first generation students were intimidated and bewildered by the entire educational system, which results in what many first generations students refer to as a culture shock (Padron, 1992; Richardson & Skinner, 1992).

First generation students also tended to be less socially integrated than non-first generation students (38% compared to 1%), meaning they were less likely to go places with friends from school or to participate in school clubs. Unlike the previously noted figures for academic integration, these differences existed at both public 2-year and 4-year institutions (Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

The challenges faced by first generation students as they seek a postsecondary degree are both overwhelming and varied. In order for this high-risk group to succeed

academically, and socially, institutions of higher education must first recognize and value the differences in the backgrounds, needs, and experiences of first generation students. With this understanding, post-secondary institutions must systematically identify and track these students while providing a range of viable and specific programs and services aimed at addressing the weaknesses many of them bring to campuses and assist them in building strengths once they enroll (Hsiao, 1992; Striplin, 1999).

### Student Involvement and College Adjustment

Student involvement theorist Alexander Astin defined involvement as the level of energy, both physical and psychological, that a student commits to the overall academic journey. He purported that students who spend substantial energy on their studies, spend a considerable amount of time on campus, participate actively and regularly in campus organizations and activities, and interact often with both their peers and faculty can be considered highly involved students. Conversely, those who neglect these areas are deemed uninvolved students. Further, the more highly involved the student, the higher the levels of adjustment, satisfaction, and success he or she experiences in college (Astin, 1985, 1999).

Astin theorized that student involvement is a vehicle for learning. His theory emphasized behavior, rather than motivation and other inactive variables, as the most important aspect of involvement, and purported that the act of doing is what constitutes involvement. Astin's theory of involvement includes five postulates:

- (1) Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects.
- (2) Regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum.
- (3) Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.
- (4) The

amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program. (5) The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. (Astin, 1985, pp. 135-136)

In short, Astin asserted that involvement requires action and that in order for students to have a productive experience in higher education they have to be committed and actively involved members of the process at every level. Students, he contended, must commit themselves to measuring and monitoring their level of physical and psychological activity on a consistent basis in order to maximize the rewards of active involvement (Astin, 1985, 1999).

Similarly, adjustment to college has been found to correlate with both collegiate experiences and persistence in higher education. A growing body of research indicates that adjustment to college is not simply academic in nature, but requires adaptation in social and personal arenas, as well as that of academic (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Sedlacek, 1987). Tinto (1993) confirmed that less than one fourth of collegiate withdrawals are the result of academic dismissal. Many students opt to leave as a result of poor integration into the social and aspects of the campus. However, regardless of whether the student's departure is voluntarily or involuntarily, lack of adjustment often serves as the basis for the exit. Research has determined that academic performance accounts for no more than half of the reasons students drop out or stop out of college. Variables such as motivation to learn, having an identified purpose and set of goals, and

being generally satisfied with the academic environment all impact students' adjustment and ability to persist in college (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

In a study conducted by Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994), newly accepted college students were asked to complete a survey concerning their transition to college. Subjects were given The Anticipated Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (ASACQ) and were asked to respond to the questions of the questionnaire with their expectations rather than their hopes for anticipated adjustments. The findings of the study revealed that personal adjustment and integration into "the social fiber of campus life" (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, p. 286) are as important to the study's participants as academic factors.

Students must adapt to an institution and its social constructs. While they must create a balance between their social opportunities and outlets and their academic requirements, social adaptation is as key to their adjustment as academic success (Enochs & Roland, 2006; Friedlander et al., 2007). Among the aspects of social adjustment that are important are the development of social systems, effective management of new social freedoms, becoming a part of the social life of college, and feeling a sense of belonging (Freeman et al., 2007).

Additionally, research suggests that support networks, such as peers, friends, and mentors, facilitate adjustment to college (Chiang, Hunter, & Yeh, 2004). Social support promotes positive academic achievement and overall collegiate satisfaction among college students. This support may consist of emotional support and encouragement from loved ones, encouragement from an authority on campus, or assistance from faculty and administration of the institution. Students cope and adjust better in atmospheres in which

they feel adequately supported. Social support and self-efficacy relate substantially to measures of academic achievement, adjustment, and persistence (Phinney & Haas, 2003).

Tinto (1993) highlighted the importance of peer relationships in understanding the process of social adaptation and cognitive development. Social and academic extracurricular activities involvement propels students toward positive academic adjustment (Astin, 1985; Bohnert, Aikins, & Edidin, 2007). A lack of involvement creates social isolation. Extracurricular involvement and activity provide opportunities for social integration, provides emotional benefits, and facilitates interpersonal development (Bohnert et al., 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

The adjustment of freshman students is regularly studied in the literature; students of other classifications may also be affected by poor collegiate adjustment and lack of involvement as upperclassmen sometimes leave postsecondary education for reasons of dissatisfaction, academic and social. If students do not experience a successful adjustment and transition to college, they may be inclined to drop out at any level of classification.

#### Development and Student Development Theory

The process of development refers to human growth and change, and can also refer to the characteristics of the products of the change process. Student development theory can be defined as the

application of the principles of human growth and change to the context of higher education. Student development theories provide maps or guides by which to understand the ways individuals and groups experience higher education and the

factors that interact with their satisfaction, achievement, and persistence (Arnold & King, 1997, p. vii).

Theories regarding student development for college students have been a topic of considerable research which has given way to varied philosophies of student development. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) concluded that theories of student development fall into one of two major categories: developmental theories and college impact theories. Developmental theories offer hierarchical levels of student development and illustrate the manner in which students navigate and rise through these levels. As one advances from one level to the next, complexity in thinking increases along with maturation of behaviors. The transition in these developmental stages is a result of biological and/or psychological maturation, personal experiences and interactions, outside environment, and one's interaction with the environment. Understanding the growth and changes students undergo is critical to gaining necessary insight about them (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993).

College impact theories focus on providing variables that serve as mechanisms for change in student development. These variables may exist in the form of a characteristic of the student, the organization or institution, or the environment. While developmental theories are quite focused on understanding the change students experience, college impact theories are more concerned with the origins of the change (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Two developmental theories that are of particular relevance to this study are Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and Arthur Chickering's theory of student development. Though Erikson's theory is not one specific to student development, the

researcher deems it relevant due to its structure and implications for human development in general.

Erikson's theory of psychosocial identity development contends that people's opinions about themselves and others change through life. Life challenges, he maintained, occur when physical growth and mental maturity collided with environmental demands. Erikson's theory identified eight stages of psychosocial development: (a) trust versus mistrust, (b) autonomy versus shame and doubt, (c) initiative versus guilt, (d) industry versus inferiority, (e) identity versus role confusion, (f) intimacy versus isolation, (g) generativity versus stagnation, and (h) integrity versus despair (Erikson, 1950).

The most pertinent stages for the college student are those of "identity versus role confusion" and "intimacy versus isolation," as these occur during adolescence and young adulthood, respectively. During the identity versus role confusion stage students are attempting to discover themselves, their career aspirations, and ultimately their place in society. This stage is also the stage of development when other's opinions and extrinsic influences have the most impact, thus the collegiate environment, and, perhaps, the institution itself, should provide an atmosphere conducive to positive growth and healthy identity development. In stage six, intimacy versus isolation, young adults are still interested in blending their identities in with their friends as they work to establish committed relationships. However, students in college are in a relationship with the postsecondary institution and the collegiate experience. Rejection in this realm can also cause isolation (Erikson, 1950).

Chickering's theory of student development, though specific to the collegiate experience, was influenced by Erickson's model. In this theory of student development, Chickering offered seven vectors, or stages, through which the college student travels. Unlike Erikson's theory in which one stage follows another, Chickering contended that movement along one vector (stage) can occur alongside movement in another, and that all seven are germane to the development of the collegiate students. In Vector One, Development Competence, students develop competence in three areas: intellectual competence, physical and manual competence, and interpersonal competence. The focus of this vector is to develop skill using one's own mind, body and talents, and personal attributes such as cooperation and communication (Chickering & Reisser, 1997).

Vector Two, Managing Emotions, focuses on students' ability to appropriately manage and channel their emotions in an effort to not allow emotions to derail the educational process. Vector Three, Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence, involves a student's ability to be self-sufficient and responsible, behave more independently, and be less confined to the expectations and opinions of others. Of additional importance is that students maintain an understanding that individuals must work together (Chickering & Reisser, 1997).

Vector Four, Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships, is characterized by the development of mature relationships, the ability to respect people's differences and to have the capacity for healthy levels of intimacy. Vector Five, Establishing Identity, involves students' self acceptance in every aspect of themselves and culminates in the emergence of a solid sense of self (Chickering & Reisser, 1997).

In Vector Six, Developing Purpose, individuals envision their path in life and seek it with identified goals, intention and determination to overcome obstacles. Vector Seven, Developing Integrity, includes three sequential stages: humanizing values – balancing the interests of self and others, personalizing values – affirming one’s own core values and beliefs while respecting the point of view of others, and developing congruence – reconciling personal values with responsible behavior (Chickering & Reisser, 1997).

### Summary

Students develop by moving through various stages both as humans and as students in postsecondary education. In higher education these developments are often contingent upon the student’s level of adjustment and adaptation academically, socially, and within the university setting, in general (Astin, 1985; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Often students who are of African American ethnicity or first generation backgrounds have particular difficulty with successful collegiate adjustment. This inability to adjust, or lack of an environment that cultivates such, may account largely for the higher attrition rates these populations experience (Fleming, 1984; Thayer, 2000). This may be especially true for the African American male who is also a first generation student, as males persist at a lesser rate than do females.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a description of the participants included in this study, participant selection process, instrumentation and validation of such, methods of data collection, and research design for the study. This quantitative study investigated the areas of academic and nonacademic adjustment in the areas of overall collegiate adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional) of first generation African American male undergraduate students. The study determined the adjustment levels of first generation African American male students, examined differences among the various scales of adjustment for this population as well as differences based on student classifications within this population. In addition, the study examined the differences in overall and subscales of adjustment of African American first generation male students and non-first generation African American male students. The study seeks to expand the existing body of knowledge of African American male college students, particularly those who are also of first generational status.

#### Participants

Participants for this study included 140 African American male students, freshman through senior classification, enrolled in one 4-year public Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the South. After receiving approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) the researcher contacted university faculty, Student Affairs professionals, and campus organization advisors to obtain permission and access

to students for the inclusion of this study. A copy of the letter of IRB approval is included in Appendix A. Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and the researcher explained the purpose of the study to those who were interested in participation. The approval from the IRB included a waiver of a signed informed consent form.

Participants for this research study were 51 freshmen, 29 sophomores, 38 juniors, and 22 seniors. All participants self-identified as African American male, and either self-identified as first generation ( $n = 80$ ) or non-first generation students ( $n = 60$ ).

Participants represented a convenience sample in that they were obtained from the primarily freshmen-level undergraduate courses of Learning Skills (LS) 101 and University (UNV)101, from a National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) Informational for students interested in Traditionally Black fraternities and sororities, and an organizational meeting of the campus organization Men of Excellence. A total of 147 students volunteered to participate in this study. Seven participants were eliminated due to incompleteness of the SACQ or failure to meet the criteria of the study.

#### Instrumentation

For the purposes of this research study, the researcher used the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) created by Baker and Siryk (1989) and a demographic questionnaire authored by the researcher (see Appendix B).

##### *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ)*

The SACQ is a 67-item self-report, carbon-based questionnaire designed to assess student adjustment to college and the academic and nonacademic demands of the collegiate experience. It aims to detect the potential, developing, or actual problems in collegiate adjustment. Developed in 1989 to measure the adjustment of college freshmen,

it has been commonly used to study and assess the adjustment of college students from every level of undergraduate classification. The SACQ assesses adjustment in the four areas of Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Personal-Emotional Adjustment, and Attachment (institutional). Consequently, the SACQ is divided into four subscales for each of these specified areas in an effort to examine college adjustment in a multidimensional manner. Standardization, reliability, and validity procedures for the SACQ were achieved on samples consisting of predominantly freshmen students.

The SACQ has been found to be both a reliable and valid measure of college adjustment. Cronbach alpha values were used to estimate reliability for both the full scale and the subscales of the instrument. The full scale is reliable within a range from .92 to .95. The subscale values range as follows: from .81 to .90 for Academic Adjustment, .83 to .91 for Social Adjustment, .77 to .86 for Personal-Emotional Adjustment, and .85 to .91 for Attachment (institutional).

Questions on the SACQ aid in determining how well a student is coping with the demands of college and assesses the overall adjustment to college. The Full Scale score is derived from responses to all 67 items of the SACQ. It is not suggested that the Full Scale alone be used to assess student adjustment as it alone sacrifices a considerable amount of information relevant to students' patterns of adjustment. The distinct areas of adjustment, the subscales, are considered to provide unique and specific information about students' adaptation to college. The Academic Adjustment subscale contains 24 items that measure a student's level of adjustment to the educational demands of college. The Academic Subscale examines student motivation, application, performance, and satisfaction with the academic environment. It includes statements which revolve around

the students' ability to acknowledge why they are in college, assess how well they are meeting the demands of their academic work, and to what extent they are succeeding on and during examinations. The Social Adjustment subscale, comprised of 20 items relates to how well a student is managing interpersonally within the social environment. It considers social adjustment in the context of general adjustment, adjustment with other people, adjustment with relocation, and satisfaction with the social environment. Statements included in this scale ask students to rate, among other things, how much they fit or feel a part of the college environment, whether or not they have close social ties within that environment, and their overall feelings of loneliness and belonging. The Personal-Emotional subscale is composed of 15 items designed to explore the students' intrapsychic state during adjustment and level of psychological distress. It considers the student's well-being, both physically and psychologically, and its statements allude to the general mood experienced by the student, the students' sleeping patterns, and whether or not the student is managing a healthy and regular diet. Finally, the Attachment (institutional) subscale includes 15 items aimed at determining the student's feelings and satisfaction associated with the institution of enrollment or being in college, in general. Items of this subscale examine how pleased the students are with their decision to attend college and/or their college of enrollment, and whether or not the student anticipates completion of a degree (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

Participants respond to each of these 67 items on a nine-point scale ranging from (1) *Applies very closely to me* to (9) *Doesn't apply to me at all*. A mean score is determined for each individual scale and the mean score is associated with corresponding percentile ranks and T scores delineated by gender and whether or not the participants are

freshmen. Items on the SACQ are scored in the direction of positive adjustment, thus higher score indicates better self-assessed adjustment to college and a lower score represents a more difficult adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

### *Demographic Questionnaire*

The demographic questionnaire was authored by the researcher of this study and determined the demographic characteristics of the study's participants. Questions included that of race, gender, student classification, enrollment status (full-time vs. part-time), transfer student status, residence type (on-campus vs. off-campus), employment status (full-time, part-time, or not employed), campus organizational involvement, remediation status, and parental educational status (Appendix B).

### Data Collection

Permission to use and administer the SACQ and demographic questionnaire was obtained from Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the participating institution. The researcher contacted university faculty, Student Affairs professionals, and campus organization advisors to seek permission to administer the instrument and to determine the most desirable manner to administer the instrument to study participants.

The researcher administered the SACQ and demographic questionnaire to students enrolled in 7 freshmen-level classes (LS 101 and UNV101), members of a predominantly African American male student organization (Men of Excellence), and students attending a NPHC Informational meeting. The researcher informed students that they were being asked to voluntarily participate in research that examined collegiate adjustment of African American males. The procedures of the study and the estimated time requirement of 20 minutes were discussed as well. Students were informed that

their participation was both anonymous and confidential as no identifying information was disclosed. Students in attendance at each event were given the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the research study or they could elect to decline participation and leave the event without penalty or question.

Packets containing the SACQ and demographic questionnaire were distributed to all student volunteers. The approval from the IRB included a waiver of a signed informed consent form. Once both questionnaires were completed they were returned to the researcher by each participant. Data collection was conducted during the first four weeks of the fall 2010 semester.

#### Research Design

Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used to answer the research questions of this study.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### Introduction

This chapter describes the data gathered from 140 African American male college students enrolled in a 4-year public Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the South. The results of this quantitative study are presented as well. The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) and a demographic questionnaire authored by the researcher were used to collect data. The SACQ collected self-reported data regarding collegiate adjustment in the areas of overall collegiate adjustment academic adjustment, and the subscales of: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional).

The purpose of this study was to identify levels of collegiate adjustment of first generation African American male students. The study aimed to determine if the generational status of college-enrolled African American male students affected the students' overall adjustment to college, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and/or institutional attachment. Descriptive statistics were conducted to investigate the collegiate adjustment of first generation African American males and the difference in collegiate adjustment between first generation and non-first generation African American male students. An ANOVA was used when analyzing overall or full scale adjustment. A MANOVA was used for the analysis and comparisons of the subscales of adjustment.

Data were scored in accordance with the instrument manual and converted to T scores. T scores were used, rather than raw scores or percentile rankings, for each scale,

to analyze results T score are more normalized and comparable with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 for all scales. Items on the SACQ, which has been widely used in the field of higher education, are scored in the direction of positive adjustment, thus a higher score indicates better self-assessed adjustment to college and lowers score represent a more difficult adjustment. SPSS Version 17.0 was utilized to analyze the data of the study. The .05 alpha level was used in all tests. The data were shown to be devoid of outliers.

### Description of Participants

In meeting with the various classes, organizations, and activity participants for this study, this researcher contacted 147 undergraduate students, all of whom agreed to participate in this study. It was difficult for the researcher to reach all eligible first generation African American male students as the institution of the study has no method by which these students may be independently identified. A total of 147 undergraduate students participated in the completion of questionnaires for this study. However, the final data set of the study included only 140 participants. Three participants were eliminated as their questionnaires failed to meet the criteria established for accurate scoring as required by the SACQ. Of the 144 participants remaining participants: three failed to meet the racial ethnicity sought (one student identified himself as Caucasian and two others as Multiracial) and one student was excluded from the study as his generational status was deemed undeterminable (indicated for both mother and father that their educational status was “Not Applicable”). All included participants were African American male students from one 4-year public PWI in the South. Descriptive statistics

were conducted on the variables of the study. Information regarding the demographic variables of the 140 participants in the data set is provided in Table 1.

The majority of the participants were of first generation student status. The largest portion of students identified themselves as either or freshman or junior students. Most of the students were enrolled on a full-time basis and most lived on campus.

Table 1

*Description of Demographic Variables*

Variable	n	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	140	100
Female	0	0
<b>Race</b>		
African American	140	100
Caucasian	0	0
Other	0	0
<b>Classification</b>		
Freshman	51	36.4
Sophomore	29	20.7
Junior	38	27.1
Senior	22	15.7

Table 1 (continued).

Variable	n	Percentage
Transfer		
Not a transfer	116	82.9
Transferred from 2-year institution	19	13.6
Transferred from a 4-year institution	5	3.6
Enrollment Status		
Full-time Student	137	97.9
Part-time Student	3	2.1
Residence		
On Campus	89	63.6
Off Campus with parents	4	2.9
Off Campus without parents	47	33.6
Employment		
Full-time (35 hours/week or more)	8	5.7
$\frac{3}{4}$ - time (21-34 hours/week)	17	12.1
Part-time (20 hours/week or less)	32	22.9
Not employed	83	59.3

Table 1 (continued).

Variable	n	Percentage
<b>Organization Membership</b>		
None	63	45.0
1 – 2 organizations	45	32.1
3-4 organizations	24	17.1
5 or more organizations	8	5.7
<b>Remedial Course Enrollment (present or previous)</b>		
None	90	64.3
1 Remedial Course	21	15.0
2 or more Remedial Course	29	20.7
<b>Mother/Female Legal Guardian's Education</b>		
Some High School	8	5.7
High School Graduate	38	27.1
Some College	43	30.7
College Graduate	50	35.7
Not Applicable	1	.7
<b>Father/Male Legal Guardian's Education</b>		
Some High School	20	14.3
High School Graduate	49	35.0
Some College	39	27.9
College Graduate	21	15.0
Not Applicable	11	7.9

## Research Questions

### *Research Question 1*

To what extent do first generation African American males enrolled at PWIs adjust to college overall and in areas of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional)?

Descriptive statistics were run to determine the collegiate adjustment levels of first generation African American male students enrolled at PWIs in areas of overall collegiate adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional). Significance testing was not used. The scores reported for social adjustment were the highest of all scales. The lowest scores reported were in the subscale of personal-emotional adjustment. Results are included in Table 2.

Table 2

#### *Means and Standard Deviations of First Generation African American Males (N=80)*

Scales	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall Adjustment	26	75	51.96	11.39
Academic Adjustment	31	75	53.05	10.47
Social Adjustment	32	75	53.25	10.62
Personal-Emotional Adjustment	25	28	47.55	11.32
Attachment (Institutional)	28	75	52.06	10.63

First generation African American male students in this study scored in the average range on the measures of college adjustment. With the T score mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10, the mean T scores of the 80 first generation participants on the

SACQ fell within the average range for collegiate adjustment. With means ranging from 47.55 to 53.25, this held true for each subscale score of the SACQ and the overall adjustment score. The means for all scales, as noted in Table 1, are within plus or minus five points of the instrument mean of 50. T scores of 40 are considered low and those of 30 are considered as very low. Conversely, T scores of 60 are considered high while those of 70 are considered as very high.

### *Research Question 2*

Is there a difference in academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional) levels for first generation African American males?

A Repeated Measures ANOVA was performed to investigate if differences exist among the adjustment levels of first generation African American males when comparing the subscale areas of academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional). Results from the ANOVA indicated a statistically significant difference, Roy's Largest Root,  $F(3,77) = 12.60, p < .00$ . As indicated in Table 3, personal-emotional adjustment mean score was statistically significantly less than that of academic adjustment, social adjustment, and attachment (institutional).

The personal-emotional subscale of the SACQ measures the extent to which students experience general psychological distress or demonstrate symptoms of distress. The implication of the results outlined in Table 3 expresses that first generation African American males of this study are more challenged in their personal-emotional adjustment to college than they are in any other subscale of adjustment and are most at risk for

Table 3

*Adjustment Subscale Means and Standard Deviations of First Generation African American Males (N=80)*

Scales	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Adjustment	53.05	10.47
Social Adjustment	53.25	10.62
Personal-Emotional Adjustment	47.55	11.32
Attachment (Institutional)	52.06	10.63

distress in this area of adjustment. However, the mean score of 47.55 for the personal-emotional adjustment of first generation African American males is within average range.

*Research Question 3*

Are there differences between student classifications of first generation African American males enrolled at PWIs based on overall adjustment (full scale) or subscales of adjustment (academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional))?

An ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference between student classifications of first generation African American males regarding overall collegiate adjustment. According to the ANOVA results there was a statistically significant difference in overall collegiate adjustment between freshmen and junior students, Roy's Largest Root,  $F(3, 76) = 3.118, p = .031$ . While freshmen were less adjusted overall than any other classification of students the only level of significant difference in overall adjustment occurred when freshmen were compared to juniors, as indicated in Table 4.

Table 4

*Means and Standard Deviations of Overall Adjustment Based on Student Classification*

(N=80)

Classification	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Freshman	30	47.77	10.17
Sophomore	13	54.69	11.84
Junior	22	55.86	12.03
Senior	15	52.27	10.56
Total	80	51.96	11.39

The overall adjustment score of the SACQ serves as an overall indicator of how well a student is adjusting to college. In this case all classifications appeared to be adjusting at an average level with the highest levels of overall adjustment being reported by first generation African American male students of junior classification. The means noted in Table 4 indicated a peak in overall collegiate adjustment during the junior year as compared to the lower levels challenges in adjustment reported by freshmen, as might be expected.

A MANOVA was used to determine if there was a difference between classifications of first generation African American males regarding the subscales of adjustment (academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional)). The researcher selected four multivariate significance tests (Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root) to examine the relationship among classifications of first generation African American male students and the various

subscales of adjustment (academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institution)). The results indicated again that freshmen reported the lowest level of adjustments among all classifications in the adjustment subscales of academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional), however, the only statistical significance revealed was between freshmen and juniors. Roy's Largest Root,  $F(4, 75) = 2.614$ ,  $p = .042$ , determined a statistically significant difference. There was a statistically significant difference in the area of social adjustment between the two classifications of freshmen and junior students, as revealed in the Tests of Between-Subjects Effects,  $F(3, 76) = 3.508$ ,  $p = .019$ ). Results are displayed in Table 5.

The results of this study indicated that first generation African American male students of junior status are the most well adjusted of all classifications of this subgroup in areas of overall adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional). In the area of social adjustment a significant difference existed between freshmen and juniors. According to Baker and Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations of Adjustment Subscales Based on Student Classification*

Subscale	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Academic Adjustment</b>			
Freshman	30	50.57	10.32
Sophomore	13	54.92	10.82
Junior	22	55.60	10.89
Senior	15	52.67	9.65
Total	80	53.05	10.47

Table 5 (continued).

Subscale	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Social Adjustment</b>			
Freshman	30	48.50	9.07
Sophomore	13	56.00	10.99
Junior	22	56.23	10.56
Senior	15	56.00	10.85
Total	80	53.25	10.62
<b>Personal-Emotional Adjustment</b>			
Freshman	30	44.73	10.38
Sophomore	13	49.38	12.14
Junior	22	51.86	12.70
Senior	15	45.27	8.75
Total	80	47.55	11.32
<b>Attachment (Institutional)</b>			
Freshman	30	48.10	9.56
Sophomore	13	54.46	11.67
Junior	22	55.18	10.82
Senior	15	53.33	9.99
Total	80	52.06	10.63

Siryk (1989), lower scores of social adjustment correlate with such things as less participation in social activities, having less success in separating from home ties and establishing self autonomy, and perceptions of little opportunity for involvement in social

activities. It must be noted, however, that with a  $M = 48.50$ , the scores of the first generation African American freshmen male students of this study still fell within the average range of adjustment in the area of social adjustment.

*Research Question 4*

Are there differences between African American males who are first generation students and African American males who are non-first generation students in their overall adjustment to college (full scale) or subscales of adjustment (academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional))?

An ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a difference in overall collegiate adjustment between African American males based on generational status. ANOVA results revealed no significant difference. Results indicated that the scores for first generation African American males and non-first generation African American males were very similar. First generation African American males did score slightly higher in the area of overall collegiate adjustment than non-first generation African American males, however, that difference was not statistically significant,  $F(1,138) = .006$ ,  $p = .940$ . A summary of results can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

*Means and Standard Deviations of Overall Adjustment Based on Generational Status*  
( $N = 140$ )

Generational Status	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
First Generation	80	51.96	11.39
Non-First Generation	60	51.27	9.43

A MANOVA was used to determine if there was a difference between African American males of first generational status and those of non-first generational status in the subscales of adjustment (academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment (institutional)). As noted in Table 7, no statistically significant difference was found, Roy's Largest Root,  $F(4,135) = 1.853$ ,  $p = .122$ .

Table 7

*Means and Standard Deviations of Adjustment Subscales Based on Generational Status*

Subscale	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Academic Adjustment</b>			
First Generation	80	53.05	10.47
Non-First Generation	60	50.65	9.52
<b>Social Adjustment</b>			
First Generation	80	52.25	10.62
Non-First Generation	60	54.53	7.91
<b>Personal-Emotional Adjustment</b>			
First Generation	80	47.55	11.32
Non-First Generation	60	47.81	11.86
<b>Attachment (Institutional)</b>			
First Generation	80	52.06	10.63
Non-First Generation	60	51.92	9.26

While no statistically significant difference was found, the mean score of non-first generation African American male students was higher than that of their first generation counterparts in the areas of social adjustment and personal-emotional adjustment.

However, in the subscales of academic adjustment and attachment (institutional), and overall adjustment first generation African American male students reported a higher mean than non-first generation African American males.

Based on the SACQ interpretation, these results imply that non-first generation African American male students of this study felt more socially engaged with the people and activities of campus and had a stronger sense of psychological and physical well-being than first generation African American male students of this study. Further, the results indicate that first generation African American male students of this study possessed slightly more motivation and application towards academic work and goals, higher academic performance levels, were more satisfied with college and/or the idea of being in college, and were generally more adjusted than their non-first generation African American male counterparts of the study. The mean scores of both subgroups, however, fell within the average range on all measured scales of adjustment.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

#### Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to examine the collegiate adjustment of African American males, particularly those who are of first generational status as well, at a 4-year public Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the South. Overall collegiate adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional) were measured by the full and subscales of the SACQ. In addition, a demographic questionnaire was used to obtain needed demographic information. There is a substantial amount of research literature on African American males and first generation students, but there appears to be a dearth in the area of African American male college students who are also of first generational status. This research study was needed to fill a gap in the literature regarding African American males and first generation students.

The findings of the research suggest that, despite their having the lowest persistence and graduation rates of all ethnicities and genders, African American male students, both those who are of first generational status and those who are non-first generational status, are adjusted to college “averagely.” A slight, but not significant, difference existed between the two subgroups of African American males; however, both subgroups reported average levels of collegiate adjustment. As it related to first generation African American male students specifically, their highest level of adjustment occurred in the area of social adjustment. The lowest scores reported were in the area of personal-emotional adjustment which was found to be significantly different from the

other subscales of adjustment. As might be expected, first generation students of freshmen classification reported the lowest levels of adjustment of all student classifications and their adjustment was found to be statistically different from that of generation students of junior status in the area of social adjustment.

## Discussion

### *The Collegiate Adjustment Profile of First Generation African American Males*

Analysis of the data indicated that first generation African American male students enrolled at the institution being researched are averagely adjusted in the full scale of overall collegiate adjustment, and the subscales of; academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional). Based on T scores with a mean of 50 and standard deviation of 10, the SACQ adjustment scores of first generation African American male students were average among college students. On the subscale of Academic Adjustment the mean for this subgroup was 53.05 (minimum score of 31, maximum score of 75 ), for Social Adjustment the mean was 53.25 (minimum score of 32, maximum score of 75 ), the mean for Personal-Emotional Adjustment was 47.55 (minimum score of 25, maximum score of 74 ), the Attachment (Institutional) mean was 52.06 (minimum score of 28, maximum score of 75), and the mean for Overall Collegiate Adjustment was 51.96 (minimum score of 26, maximum score of 25). These scores are within the range considered as average by the SACQ (Baker & Siryk, 1989) as a score of 40 is considered low and a score of 60 is considered as high. The instrument stipulates that scores of 30 and below are extremely low, and those 70 and above are extremely high.

The results of this study indicated that first generation African American male students are academically motivated, socially integrated, experience physical and psychological well-being, are connected to being in college and their institution of choice, and are generally adjusted to the collegiate environment. It should be noted, however, that some participants in this study individually reported low and extremely low adjustment scores, while others reported the high and extremely high levels of adjustment.

The first generation African American male students of this research study were found to have adjustment levels comparable to other groups of college students. One such example was found in the research study of Ayres (2007). This study utilized the SACQ to examine overall collegiate adjustment and the subscales of adjustment of college students affiliated with social Greek letter organizations. The study reported T scores and the following means for the males of the study: Academic Adjustment:  $M = 49.00$ , for Social Adjustment:  $M = 54.00$ , Personal-Emotional Adjustment:  $M = 45.00$ , Attachment (Institutional):  $M = 49.00$ , and Overall Collegiate Adjustment:  $M = 49.00$ . The female participants of this study reported slightly higher, yet similar results and are as follows; Academic Adjustment:  $M = 53.00$ , for Social Adjustment:  $M = 58.00$ , Personal-Emotional Adjustment:  $M = 47.00$ , Attachment (Institutional):  $M = 57.00$ , and Overall Collegiate Adjustment:  $M = 49.00$ . The students of this study seem to be most similar in adjustment to that of the males of Ayres study. The females of the study scored higher and significantly higher in some areas which is supportive of the literature on adjustment. Race was not a variable of Ayres' study which included no specific data regarding African American male students.

While the largest body of knowledge regarding first generation college students paints a dim and difficult picture, there is research that supports the findings of this study which indicated that first generation African American male students are averagely adjusted to college. Zalaquett (1999) in his study of students of non-college educated parents found that first generation students do not always do worse academically when compared to their non-first generation counterparts. Additionally, he found that these first generation students don't always have a more difficult time with adjustment and are possibly aided by instructors who help to facilitate their adaptation to the collegiate environment.

*Differences in Subscales of Adjustment of First Generation African American Males*

Analysis of data indicated that there was a difference in levels of adjustment experienced by first generation African American males between the subscales of adjustment; academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional). First generation African American males were found to adjust statistically significantly lower in the area of personal-emotional adjustment when compared to all other areas of adjustment. Items relevant to this scale included statements regarding the general mood of the student, the student's ability to control his emotions, the student's ability to cope with the stresses of college, the student's overall level of fatigue, and the student's perception of his overall level of health. The findings of this study indicate that first generation African American male students are not as well adjusted physically or psychologically as they are academically and socially adjusted or attached to college. The lowest scores in this subscale of adjustment were reported by freshman participants who are presumable still in the transitional phase of the adjustment

process. According to Baker and Siryk (1989) lower scores in this domain are associated with: greater emotional dependence on others; conflictual reliance on parents; fewer psychological coping resources; and greater experience of negative life events.

These results are similar to previous research studies of first generation students of varied racial backgrounds. Reynolds-Shaw (2006) conducted a study of first generation and second generation students regarding collegiate adjustment and utilized the SACQ as the instrument of measure. This study's aim was not to comparatively levels of adjustment specifically for first generation students so no significant tests were run in that regard. However, the reported means of the first generation students of Reynolds-Shaw's study painted a picture similar to what was found in this researcher's study. The results yielded an Academic Adjustment of  $M = 53.46$ , Social Adjustment of  $M = 51.66$ , Personal- Emotional Adjustment of  $M = 47.51$ , Attachment (Institutional) of  $52.37$  and Overall Collegiate Adjustment of  $M = 51.69$ . As was revealed in the current study, the mean score for Personal-Emotional Adjustment was notably less than the mean score of any other scale or subscale of adjustment.

#### *Collegiate Adjustment of First Generation African American Males Based on Student Classification*

Substantial difference was found concerning the variation in adjustment based on student classification. Although the mean scores were similar for sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the area of overall adjustment, freshmen students reported a substantially lower level of overall adjustment. A significant difference was found between freshmen and juniors in the area of overall adjustment.

In relation to the subscales of adjustment, again substantial difference was found concerning the variation in the subscales of adjustment based on student classification. The mean scores for sophomores, juniors, and seniors across three subscales of adjustment; academic, social, and attachment were quite similar, with the mean scores for personal-emotional adjustment showing more distinction between scores. Freshmen students reported the lowest mean scores of all classifications for all subscales. A significant difference in the area of social adjustment was found between freshmen and junior students.

Baker and Siryk (1989) indicated that lower scores in the subscale of social adjustment are associated with: less success in separating from home ties and establishing social autonomy; greater feeling of loneliness, increased social avoidance and social distress; less success in managing life changes; less perceived social support; and less participation in social activities of college. It is reasonable to presume that students who are newly enrolled in an environment, such as freshmen on a college campus, might experience challenges in creating a harmonious relationship between themselves and their new-found environment, particularly more so than students who are of higher classification and no longer new to the environment. Likewise, it is reasonable to presume that by the time a student reaches his junior year that successful and healthy adjustment to college has been achieved. Barring extenuating circumstances, persistence into the junior year would be expected to be accompanied by some valuable level of adjustment, as opposed to the uncertainty experienced by many first year students. Additionally, the peak in adjustment during the junior year revealed in this study may be attributable to the fact that by the time students are engaged in their senior year of study

their focus may have become more on exiting the collegiate environment than remaining connected to it. The findings of this study revealed that the mean score for overall adjustment of seniors and that of freshmen were very the lowest among all groups at  $M=52.27$  and  $M=47.77$ , respectively.

*Collegiate Adjustment of First Generation African American Males Compared to Collegiate Adjustment of Non-First Generation African American Males*

No significant difference was found at any level of collegiate adjustment as it relates to the generational status of African American males. In fact the results indicated that the scores for first generation and non-first generation African American male students were very similar for overall adjustment, academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (institutional). Non-first generation African American males reported slightly higher mean scores in the areas of overall adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment. Interestingly, first generation African American male students reported slightly higher mean scores in academic adjustment.

These findings are contrary to most of the literature which states that first generation students, regardless of race, enter college with less academic preparation than their counterparts and face obstacles that include a lack of knowledge of college's academic expectations (Cushman, 2006; Richardson & Skinner, 1992; Thayer, 2000). The slight edge on academic adjustment that the first generation students of this study reported may be attributed to a belief that they, as first generation students, must put more time into studying than other students in order to keep up (Bui, 2002). Research has noted that reasons for college enrollment of first generation students revolved around

such things as gaining respect/status, bringing honor to their families, and putting them in a posture by which they could help out their families financially. This differed from other students whose reasons for enrollment included that college offered them the opportunity to get out of their parents' home or because siblings or other family members went (or were going; Bui, 2002; Cushman, 2006; Nunez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998).

These same reasons for enrollment may also impact the first generation student's level of academic motivation and application, as measured by the SACQ's subscale of Academic Adjustment.

The study of adjustment of first generation and second generation college students conducted by Reynolds-Shaw (2006), utilizing the SACQ, reported results even more surprising than that of the current study in that its results revealed higher mean scores obtained by first generation students than by second generation students. The results of the study indicated that on all scales of adjustment; overall, academic, social, personal-emotional, and attachment, the first generation students of the study reported higher levels of adjustment than their second generation counterparts. The mean scores of the two groups, however, were not significantly different. Reynolds-Shaw's study results proved to be contrary to the majority of the literature on the collegiate experience of first generation students.

#### *Policies and Practice at the Institution of Study*

The vast body of research on both African American males students enrolled in PWIs and students of first generation status declare that these student subgroups consistently adjust at lower and less satisfactory rates than so their majority and non-first generation counterparts. These students are reported as being less academically prepared

for college and thus less academically successfully once they matriculated. They are reported as being poorly integrated into the collegiate environment and less connected to their college experience and institution of choice (Feagin et al., 1996; McKinney, 2005).

This study, however, found differing results regarding the adjustment of first generation African American male students at the PWI researched. This subgroup of students at this 4-year public institution reported average levels of adjustment in all scales examined: academic, social, personal-emotional, attachment (institutional), and overall. This may be attributed to this university's years of commitment to and programming for minority students.

The university has a very rich history of diversity and inclusion and boasts of a 29% minority student enrollment rate. Offices such as the Office of Minority Affairs and the Center for Black Studies provide leadership, direction, and an appreciation for diversity and provide opportunities in the development of appropriate experiences and study relevant to students of color (OIC, 2008-2009; Minority Affairs Office, 2004). In addition, programs such as the Student Support Services Program, the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, and the Alliance for Graduate Education in Mississippi aim at providing both academic and non-academic support to students of color and first generation students. Chartered organizations on the campus include more than 20 active student organizations developed specifically for African American students or providing support for African American and other minority students. These organizations are both Greek and non-Greek and include, but are not limited to, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Afro-American Student

Organization, Future Black Law Students Association, Men of Excellence, I.D.E.A.L. Women, and the National Society of Black Engineers. Five of the last 12 Student Government Association presidents have been African American, and African Americans have been frequently elected as homecoming maids and queens over the last several years (Student Activities Office (Office of Student Activities, 2010).

African American students seem to be well integrated into the institution of this study and that level of integration may be reflected in the findings of this study. Students who are more integrated academically and socially experience higher levels of adjustment and success (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1993). As a group it appears that the first generation African American male college student participants of this study experienced appropriate levels of adjustment perhaps due to the available programs, resources, organizations, and leadership opportunities made available by the institution.

#### Limitations

For an accurate interpretation and use of the results from this study, it is important to understand its limitations. One factor that should be considered is the number of participants of this sample. Since the population sought was very specific, and participation was drawn solely from a convenience sample of student volunteers, the number of respondents was small. A larger sample size may have yielded different outcomes toward the various levels of collegiate adjustment. In addition, as it relates to the sample of this study, many of the students participating were already involved in campus organizations which was evidenced by their attendance at the organizational meeting and/or activities from which a large number of study participants were sought.

Had questionnaires been distributed on an entirely random basis different adjustment outcomes may have been yielded.

Another limitation of the study was the homogeneity of the study participants. All participants were African American male students. More diverse racial groups may have changed the results of the study. This limitation could cause issue with the generalization of the study's findings, though results of similar studies on more varied populations yielded similar results.

A third possible limitation results from the data having been collected from only one 4-year public PWI in the South. This research study did not include or make comparison with an additional institution or institution type, which again limit the ability of the results of the study to be generalized.

A final limitation rests in the use of a single measure of adjustment, the SACQ. This instrument provides a snapshot measurement of participants' self-reported perceptions. In addition the survey itself is very transparent, as even without an explanation of the study, one can easily decipher what the instrument seeks to assess and participants may respond as they believe is expected or more acceptable rather than with complete honesty and integrity. This risk is consistent with any self reported measure.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

This study demonstrates that African American male students, both first generation and non-first generation, are adjusting well to college. Positive adjustment helps in both the transition to college and persistence to graduation. When a student is well adjusted to an environment it is expected that he/she would be more likely to thrive,

yet despite the adjustment rates of the students of this study, African American males have the lowest graduation rates of all racial and gender groups.

Areas that warrant attention in the future include:

1. Considering the complexity of the issues of adjustment, a study using qualitative methods may enhance understanding of how first generation African American males adjust to college. While the results of this survey offer a glimpse into the adjustment levels of this population it does not delve into the intricacies of adjustments, collective or individual. A qualitative study or case study approach may offer a more realistic option to do so.
2. A study which compares first generation African American male students with other first generation students of all racial identities and genders.
3. A study which considers how the variables of employment, transfer status, remedial education, etc. impact the collegiate adjustment of African American males, first generation and non-first generation.
4. A study comparing the adjustment of first generation African American males enrolled at PWIs with those enrolled in HBCUs.
5. A model incorporating adjustment interventions into senior curricula at the high school level for college-bound first generation student African American males.
6. A longitudinal study on a sample of first generation African American male students enrolled in one institution from freshmen to senior year.

## Conclusion

In this study it has been demonstrated that first generation African American males have adapted adequately to college. Although there is a large body of research that suggests that both first generation students and African American males face challenges in college unique to themselves, this study suggests that those first generation African American students enrolled in the 4-year public institution in the South studied perceived that they function well within their collegiate environment. They reported being adjusted well academically, socially, personally-emotionally, and feel appropriately attached to college. In addition, they reported experiencing average overall collegiate adjustment. There was, however, a statistically significant difference in the subscales of adjustment as personal-emotional adjustment, though still in average range, was significantly lower than the other subscales of adjustment; academic, social, and attachment (institutional). Additionally, a statistically significant difference in social adjustment was found between freshmen first generation students and junior first generation students.

When compared to their non-first generation counter parts, no statistically significant difference was found. However, in all areas of adjustment, except academic adjustment, the non-first generation participants scored slightly higher than the first generation students. In the area of academic adjustment, the first generation students reported a higher mean score.

College adjustment, by most accounts, seems to fall into two primary facets: academic adjustment and social adjustment. Academic adjustment involves such things as grade point average, enrollment status, and adhering to the academic standards of an institution. Social adjustment has a broader scope and includes overall attachment to the

institution of enrollment and college in general, social adaptation, extracurricular involvements, overall well-being, and faculty interaction (Baker & Siryk, 1989; Friedlander et al. 2007). While students perceive or experience college in unique ways, those who are academically and socially adjusted have the ability to successfully navigate the collegiate environment. The results of this study indicate that first generation African American males at one public 4-year PWI in the South are adjusting at levels needed to successfully navigate, persist in, and graduate from college.

## APPENDIX A

## IRB LETTER OF APPROVAL



## THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Institutional Review Board

118 College Drive #5147  
 Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001  
 Tel: 601.266.6820  
 Fax: 601.266.5509  
 www.usm.edu/irb

**HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION REVIEW COMMITTEE  
 NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Human Subjects Protection Review Committee in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **10072005**

PROJECT TITLE: **Severely At-Risk: An Examination of the Academic and Social Collegiate Adjustment of First Generation African American Males**

PROPOSED PROJECT DATES: **07/12/2010 to 12/10/2010**

PROJECT TYPE: **Dissertation**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS: **Adina Narcisse Green**

COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Studies & Research**

FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**

HSPRC COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **07/27/2010 to 07/26/2011**

  
 Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.  
 HSPRC Chair

8-2-2010  
 Date

## APPENDIX B

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

**Demographic Questionnaire**

Please provide one answer for each question.

1. Gender:

- Male  
 Female

2. Race/Ethnicity:

- African- American (Black)  
 Asian/Pacific Islander  
 Caucasian (White)  
 Hispanic  
 Native American  
 Other, Specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. Student Classification:

- Freshman, First semester  
 Freshman  
 Sophomore  
 Junior  
 Senior

4. Transfer Student Status:

- Not a transfer Student  
 Transferred from a two- year institution  
 Transferred from a four-year institution  
 Number of completed semesters at Southern Miss \_\_\_\_\_

5. Enrollment Status:

- Full-time (12 credit hours or more this semester)  
 Part-time(Less than 12 credit hours this semester)

6. Local Residence:

- Live on campus (Residence Hall, Greek House)  
 Live off campus WITH parents/guardians  
 Live off campus WITHOUT parents/guardians

7. Employment Status:

- Currently work Full-time (35 hours or more per week)  
 Currently work  $\frac{3}{4}$ -time (21-34 hours per week)  
 Currently work Part-time (20 hours or less per week)  
 Not Currently Employed

8. Number of Student Organizations in which you currently hold active membership or leadership:
- None
  - 1-2 student organizations
  - 3-4 student organizations
  - 5 or more student organizations
9. Number of remedial/developmental courses you are currently or have been enrolled in during college:
- None
  - I am currently enrolled in or have been enrolled in 1 remedial/ developmental course
  - I am currently enrolled in or have been enrolled in 2 or more remedial/ developmental courses
10. Mother's (female guardian's) Educational Status (Indicate the HIGHEST level of formal education):
- Attended High School, but did not graduate
  - Graduated High School
  - Attended college, but DID NOT receive a Bachelor's degree from a four-year institution
  - Graduated from college (holds at least a Bachelor's degree)
  - Not Applicable (either unknown or did not reside with prior to college)
11. Father's (male guardian's) Educational Status (Indicate the HIGHEST level of formal education):
- Attended High School, but did not graduate
  - Graduated High School
  - Attended college, but DID NOT receive a Bachelor's degree from a four-year institution
  - Graduated from college (holds at least a Bachelor's degree)

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