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Persistence Among African-American Males in the Honors College

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The University of Southern Mississippi
PERSISTENCE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES
IN THE HONORS COLLEGE

by

Johnell Roxann Anderson Goins

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 Education

May 2014

ABSTRACT

PERSISTENCE AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES

IN THE HONORS COLLEGE

by Johnell Roxann Anderson Goins

May 2014

Retaining African American students, specifically African American males, is an issue that plagues the American higher education system. Research shows that African American male students are the lowest represented group in the gifted studies programs (Ford, 2010). Lockie and Burke (1999); Chen and DeJardins (2010) and Bell (2010a) found that barriers to African American male retention in higher education include but are not limited to the following: financial assistance, the battle of the two-self concept, lack of mentoring/advising, low expectations from faculty, and alienation. In an effort to remove these barriers, institutions have implemented retention strategies such as more faculty mentoring and retention programs.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the reported experiences of African American males enrolled in the Honors College; specifically, gathering information regarding academic and non-academic factors that impact their motivation to persist. Employing empirical phenomenology, the researcher interviewed 12 African American males from Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) in the southeastern region. The researcher ultimately determined that participation in the Honors College did not affect the males' motivation to persist in college and only affected a few males who were persisting in the Honors College.

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The University of Southern Mississippi

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The journey for African Americans to access higher education has been well documented. Several pieces of legislation and court decisions such as The Morrill Act of 1890, *Murray vs. The University of Maryland* (1935), *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950), *McLauren v. Oklahoma* (1950), *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), and *Adams vs. Richardson* (1973) were indicative of the difficulties African Americans encountered to gain the right to education equality. After they were granted access to higher education, the number of African American students attending Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) increased tremendously (Love, 2008). Now, African Americans have the option to receive a degree equivalent to that of Caucasian Americans, yet the act of earning a degree is still a cumbersome feat, especially for African American males (Strayhorn, 2008).

On a national scale, African Americans as a whole have increased their degree attainment by 54% since 1983; however, Garibaldi (2007) reported that when breaking down the percentage of African American female degree attainment and African American male degree attainment, the females surpass males by 67%. At later study, the *Task Force of Maryland's African American Males* (2009) reported that nationally, African American females in higher education outnumber African American males two to one.

Fortson (1997) contended that the African American male dropout rate in college is one of the highest when compared to other subgroups. African American males

graduate at a rate of 31.4% (Redden, 2009). Lack of retention is partially to blame for this problem (Task Force of Maryland's African American Males, 2009). Farmer (2009) contended that the overall retention rate and degree attainment for African American males is only 37%. According to Holzman (2004) of the total African American male population enrolled in college in 2001-2002, only 41% graduated.

Free African Americans were legally granted the opportunity to attend college in 1862 with the passing of the Morrill Act of 1862, which granted un-enslaved African Americans the right to learn agricultural trades at institutions funded by the federal government (Stefkovich & Leas, 1994). The Emancipation Proclamation granted freedom to enslaved African Americans in the United States in 1863; however, only 28 of those newly freed slaves could boast a higher education at the end of the Civil War in 1865 (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Consequently, there was a second Morrill Act of 1890 that contained specific language regarding the establishment of institutions of higher learning for African Americans. As a result, 16 institutions emerged for the purpose of educating African Americans (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). However, for various reasons which will be discussed later on, many failed and continue to fail to enter college, and of those who do choose to enroll, persistence to graduation is often difficult. Ranson and Davies (2012) contended that African American college student success is hindered by factors such as lack of academic preparation and social inequalities and African American males are more likely to drop out of college. Hall and Rowan (2001) argued that this high rate of dropout is due to the oppression created by racism. Harper, Patton, and Wooden, 2009 posited that while there have been many positive actions in policy and legislation,

African Americans are still oppressed due to the vestiges created by the laws that existed prior to these policies and laws. Oppression in the African American community, Harper et al. (2009) contended, is due to racism with origins in slavery, perpetuated during “separate but equal” segregation, and continued because of the precedents (Harper et al., 2009, p. 5). Clark (1983) contended that many African American males are often more underprepared in academics than white males as a result of having to endure the racist environments that are prevalent in elementary and high school (Clark, 1983). Hall and Rowan (2001) maintained that institutions of higher education do not attempt to neutralize the racist environment that African Americans endure. The results of the oppression are evident in the below average academic progress of African Americans, the low number of African Americans enrolled, persisting and graduating from PWIs, and the low placement of African Americans in gifted programs (Harper et al., 2009).

According to Clark (1983), school style and the culture of a student have much to do with that student’s ability to succeed. Hall and Rowan (2001) asserted that many African Americans suffer from lack of academic preparation as a result of living in the inner cities where schools are often impoverished and substandard. According to Berliner and Biddle’s (1995) Student Achievement Law, a student’s Opportunity to Learn (OTL) is based on what he is presented to learn. OTL is highly connected to the student’s school funding as students in impoverished school districts are often presented with less OTL than students in a well-funded districts; consequently, students in impoverished school districts are often at an academic disadvantage to students who attend well-funded schools. African American high school students enter post-secondary education as ill-

prepared college students (Hall & Rowann, 2001). Holzman (2004) stated that in comparison to white students, African Americans score lower on academic standardized tests. As a result of low test scores, African American students are often excluded during the admission process. Smith (1981) contended that high levels of African American male retention correlate with high levels of motivation and vice versa. Hall and Rowan (2001) asserted that African American males are often less motivated initially and are therefore less likely to persist through college as a result of their junior high and high school experiences.

Experience and Failure

Steele (1997) classified the African American student environment as being in a *crisis state* as the environment has more arrests, more incarcerations, and higher mortality rates than others. The results of a study conducted by the Yale University Child Center show that African American male students are disadvantaged due to their experiences in elementary, middle, and high school (Gilliam, 2005). This study revealed that African American children, ranging from kindergarten through college have lower grades and are punished more than their white counterparts (Gilliam, 2005). African American and Latino boys are more likely to be suspended from school than any other group (Fergus & Noguera, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), 10% of African American boys in the 9th through the 12th grade reported being threatened with a weapon at school as opposed to 7% of their white counterparts. Ladson-Billings (1999) contend that African American experiences are difficult due to the inability of

administrators and white teachers to understand African Americans, which is also the premise upon which Critical Race Theory is constructed.

Academic Performance and Failure

Many African American students become disadvantaged as a result of their academic performance in grade school (Harper, 2010). African American students performed lower on standardized tests, achieved lower grades, and have been twice as likely to drop out of school than their white counterparts; this trend has been consistent for the last three decades (Cokley, 2002; Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Casserly, 2010; van Laar, 2000; Williams, Saunders, & Williams, 2002). Browne-Dianis (2009), posited that black male students perform at a lower rate and enter college due ill-prepared to the lack of resources in the black community such as adequate computers, informed guidance counselors, and access to quality books. Lindsey and Mabie (2012) concluded that African American boys perform at lower academic levels due to disengagement from the curriculum as many cannot relate it to their everyday lives. Irvine (1991) discussed how many African American students, who attend school in a traditionally Caucasian environment, are frequently disconnected from their Caucasian teachers and administrators due to differences in the two cultures. Irvine (1991) suggested that as a result in the differences in culture, the teachers and administrators have difficulty understanding and relating to the African American culture and therefore cannot facilitate a learning environment that is conducive to educating African American students. Irvine (1991) described *verve*, or *stimulation*, as an example of a traditional element in African American children's lives that is not incorporated by most teachers during instruction.

African American students experience *verve* in other facets of their lives such as church, community functions, family reunions, etc.; however, the academic environment is rather boring to them and, in turn, this causes them to be disengaged (Irvine, 1991).

Husband (2012) presented findings of the National Center for Education Statistics: black boys in the 4th grade read on a lower level than all other student groups. Koebler (2011) cited a wide performance gap between African American and white test scores on the National Assessment and Education Progress in Geography given in 2009. White 12th grade students scored an average of 29/100 points higher on the exam than African American 12th grade students.

Societal Expectation and Failure

Some researchers conclude that African American male students are disadvantaged by the expectations of society. African Americans are stereotyped as excellent athletes and rhythmic dancers (Czopp & Monteith, 2006). According to Adeyemo and Morris (2012), the athletic/academic paradox gives an explanation for why African American males are expected and pushed by society as a whole to excel more in athletics rather than academics; as a result of this paradox, African American males equate athletics as being the gateway to success as opposed to academic excellence. The previous are examples of Microaggressions or subtle forms of racism that cause adverse effects on African American males (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Microaggressions, which will be discussed in detail, are related to Critical Race Theory in that they explain the perpetuation of racial stereotypes. Ford, Scott, Moore, and Amos (2013) contended that educators in the secondary school system have low expectations for African

American students in gifted education, especially Black males in gifted education. In a qualitative study of African American male students ranging from ages 11-22 regarding how society's negative expectations weighed on their behaviors, Sparrow and Sparrow (2012) found that African American males were likely to succumb to those expectations. According to Fordham and Ogbu's (1986) Cultural Oppositional Theory, many African Americans, who Fordham and Ogbu refer to as *involuntary minorities* as a result of being forcefully brought to America, view the dominant society as the cause of racial oppression; as result, members who accept the ways and traditions of the dominant society are viewed as traders or sellouts. They are often referred to as "acting white" according to Fordham and Ogbu (1986, p. 177). Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Model of Retention, one of the theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation, holds that students' characteristics entering college determine their interactions. Therefore, if African American male students' normative beliefs are that others perceive them as only exceptional in athletics, then they will have a higher self-efficacy in athletics and will be less likely to interact with the academic elements of college.

African American Males and Retention

This dissertation focuses on African American males enrolled in Honors Colleges at Institutions of Higher Learning in the southeastern region of the United States of America, specifically Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010a), of all of the states in the United States, Mississippi and Louisiana rank first and second respectively with the highest number of African American residents. Alabama ranks number 6 for highest number of African American

residents in the United States; however, Alabama has the 2nd highest dense population of multi-racial, including black and Hispanic and African American and Caucasian in the United States; Mississippi has the highest density of multi-racial residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b). Rogers, Ward, Atkins, and Flynt (1994) referred to the southeastern region of the United States as the *Black Belt* due to the large number of African American slaves that were trafficked through the area during slavery. After slavery, many African Americans remained in the region causing it was said to have the highest percentage of African Americans in the United States. Hauser, Pager, and Simmons (2000) suggested that geographic locations correlate with retention; therefore, areas with a higher population of a particular race tend to have higher retention rates of that race. One could infer from Hauser et al. (2000) that due to the high populations of African Americans in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana that college retention among African Americans in these states would be high. African American male participation in Honors Societies encourages academic persistence (Harper, 2010; Redden, 2009). Only 14.5% out of 100 African American males are enrolled in Honors Colleges (Toldson & Lewis, 2012). While the number of African American males enrolled in Honors is fairly low, one could conclude from the literature that African American male enrollment in Honors Colleges in the southeastern region would correlate with higher persistence levels.

Harper (2010) contended that African American males enrolled in honors curricula are more likely to persist in academics than those enrolled in the regular curriculum. Harper (2010) also wrote that African American males who are involved in honor societies are also more likely to be retained. From this literature, one can

hypothesize that African American males who are enrolled in honors colleges located on college campuses in Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana should be more likely to persist than those students who are not in honors.

In 2008 Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi received the grade of a *D* from the National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education on *Preparation and Participation*, meaning that students in these three states scored below average when compared to students in other states (National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, 2008). *Preparation* measures how well a high school graduate from the state is prepared for college. *Participation* measures the likelihood of high school graduates to access educational opportunities beyond high school (National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education, 2008). One could infer from the literature that preparation contributes to higher rates of college course completion. Literature also suggested that better college preparation contributes to college course completion (Slavin & Calderon, 2001). This dissertation aimed to examine whether the effects of enrollment in the Honors College in institutions located in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, which all have high populations of African Americans but low college preparation scores, is conducive to promoting African American male student persistence.

African American Male College Retention in Mississippi

The population distribution for Caucasian Americans and African Americans is fairly close in Mississippi. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010b), Caucasian Americans represent 59.1% of the population in Mississippi and African Americans represent 37% of the state's population. Mississippi has the highest African American

population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b); however, the number of African Americans represented in enrollment in the Institutions of Higher Learning in Mississippi is lower than 37% and is not reflective of the state's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010b).

The National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education (2006) reported that the number of students from Mississippi who enroll in college by age 19 is low because the number of students who graduate high school is the lowest in the country. Moreover, The Alliance for Excellent Education (2008) claimed that more than 50% of African American males in Mississippi do not graduate high school at all.

Beaulieu, Guillory, Rubin, and Teater (2002) reported that 41% of the Caucasian college-age students enroll in Institutions of Higher Education in Mississippi. Only 26% of African Americans and Latinos enroll. According to the Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning (IHL) in 2008, there were 8,452 African American males and 17,597 African American female students enrolled in Mississippi IHLs. The University of Southern Mississippi was the top degree-conferring body for African American males in the State of Mississippi, and they represented 21% of the graduating Class of 2009 (Borden, 2010). According to the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (2010), there was a 3.2% drop in African American male college graduation rates in Mississippi from 1996 to 2006 while the graduation rate for African American females grew steadily. The average retention rate for African American males who persist from freshman to sophomore year in Mississippi IHLs is 20.4% (Burns & Scraggs, 2004), which is far below the national rate of 42% (Mississippi IHL, 2009).

Despite the increase in African Americans in higher education, it is evident that there is a need to recruit and retain more African American males in the state of Mississippi.

African American Male College Retention in Alabama

The Census Summary File 1 (2010) indicated that the racial distribution of Caucasian Americans in Alabama is double the amount of African Americans. Caucasian Americans make up 67% of the population, while African Americans make up 26.9%. The educational demographics of students do not reflect the demographics of the state. According to Holzman (2004), only 44% of African American males graduate from high school in Alabama compared to 60% of Caucasian males. In 2012 the National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2012) reported that in the Fall of 2011, 19.7 million students attended post-secondary institutions in Alabama, and of that, 27% were African American. Only 11.8% were African American males. The NCES (2012) revealed that over the past decade, there has been a 3% increase in African American enrollment; however, the African American enrollment numbers still lagged behind Caucasian enrollment. Sorensen (2002) noted that the University of Alabama has been successful in its targeted efforts towards minorities by increasing African American recruitment and retention to 34% higher than that of its sister institutions in Alabama; compared to other Alabama institutions that reported a 3.4% growth in African American freshman retention from 1993-2000, the University of Alabama reported a 15% growth. As in Mississippi, the numbers for African American students enrolled in higher education, specifically African American males are far below that of Caucasians.

African American Male College Retention in Louisiana

The state of Louisiana has an African American population that has remained stable in number for the past decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a). According to the Louisiana Census Bureau, of the 4,533,372 residents in the state, 32% are African American. Holzman (2004) reported that only 8% of African American males in the state of Louisiana read on a proficient level. He also found that the graduation rate for African American males in Louisiana high schools to be only 44%. Nevertheless, the number of African American males matriculating in Louisiana colleges is somewhat more comparable to whites as opposed to Mississippi and Alabama. Of the 22,542 freshman males attending post-secondary institutions in Louisiana, 34% are African American and 54% are Caucasians (Provasnik & Shafer, 2004). If Holzman's report is correct, one could infer that Louisiana colleges may be accepting African American males who are under-prepared for college.

Table 1

African American Population by State

State	Mississippi	Alabama	Louisiana
%Total AA Males	37	27	32
% AA Males High School Grads	50	44	44
% AA Male College Attendance Rate	26	12	34

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation will employ Bean and Eaton's Psychological Theory of Retention and Delgado and Stefancic's Critical Race Theory in order to explore the effects of race relations and psychological constructs of African American male retention in the Honors College.

Bean and Eaton's Psychological Theory of Retention

A psychological model, Bean and Eaton's Psychological Theory of Retention was built on Tinto's sociological model of student retention (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Tinto (1993) identified four areas of integration for a student that contributes to their ability to persist in higher education: informal and formal academic integration as well as formal and informal social integration. In essence, Tinto (1993) posited that a student must make an effort to excel academically, acquaint themselves with their professors/staff, become involved in extracurricular activities, and acquire a social life with friends of the same environment in order to be successfully retained.

Bean and Eaton (2001) contended that the main constructs of retention are social integration and academic integration. Both forms of integration lead to social (formal and informal) interaction, academic (formal and informal) interaction and bureaucratic interaction. Before this process takes place, Bean and Eaton (2001) posited that a student first comes to an institution with psychological attributes that will shape future experience such as self-efficacy, normative beliefs, past behaviors and coping.

According to Bean and Eaton (2001), psychological attributes that students possess prior to entering an institution will affect their retention in higher education.

Self-efficacy assessment is the student's perception regarding his or her ability to perform successfully in the academic environment. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is specific to one area; for example, if a student perceives they are competent in English, they may not perceive themselves to be competent in science as well. Bean and Eaton (2001) contended that high self-efficacy leads to persistence, which leads to integration and then to retention. Normative beliefs are the students' perceptions on whether or not their family or home environment would support his or her journey in the particular institution. Bean and Eaton (2001) contended that students who do not feel support from home will be less likely to succeed in an academic environment. Past behavior is the psychological attribute that evaluates whether the student is academically or socially prepared to succeed in the current environment (Bean & Eaton, 2001). In essence, past behavior that creates student success creates confidence for future successful behavior. Bean and Eaton (2001) described the last behavioral construct, coping, as adjusting to conditions or learning to fit in with others in the academic environment. Bean and Eaton (2001) suggested that this type of behavior is an external control and it is not the most likely path to integration because the desire to persist is not truly present. Instead coping involves adjusting behavior to survive in the environment.

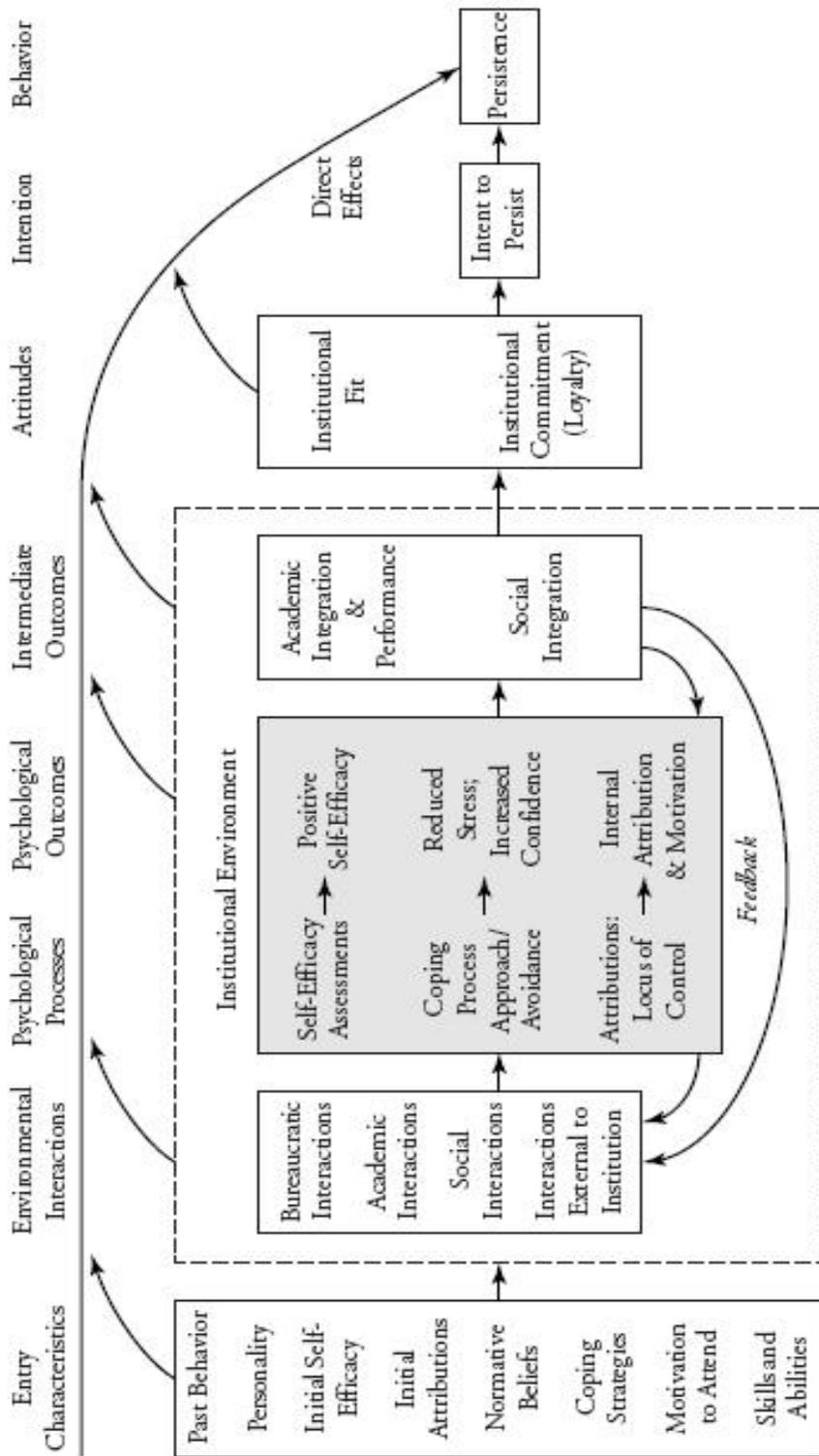
According to the Psychological Theory of Retention, social, academic, and bureaucratic interactions lead to social and academic integration. Social integration is the process of adapting to the surrounding environment by way of social involvement (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Social integration occurs mostly outside of the classroom with peers from the academic environment (Bean & Eaton, 2001). When students enroll in an

institution, they begin to acclimate to the culture (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Bean and Eaton (2001) noted examples of Social integration such as making friends, socializing, and other behaviors that indicate that an individual intends to remain at the institution. Tinto (1986) suggested that freshmen retention numbers lag behind other classifications due to their inability to integrate successfully into the academic society. Tinto (1993) suggested several best practices for encouraging social integration such as living on campus within a community of peers, joining organizations, and attending social events at the institution. Social approach and social avoidance are behavioral constructs of social integration. Bean and Eaton (2001) suggested that social approach is an engagement of activities by the individual that lead to acclimation to the university such as taking advantage of formal university services that aid in social integration, student life, extracurricular activities, and informal relationships with students.

According to Bean and Eaton (2001), Academic integration, an attitudinal construct, is much like Social integration in that it measures the individuals' acclimation into the academic climate; furthermore when a student begins to participate in Academic integration, he or she reaches out to form relationships with the academic community. Bean and Eaton (2001) divided the Academic integration construct into two viewpoints: *current satisfaction* and *future perception*. *Current satisfaction* is the individual's attitude toward his/her progress of Academic integration; *future perception* is the individual's attitude toward the continuance of Academic integration (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Student retention is often contingent upon a student's academic integration, which is affected by his or her perception of how integrated he or she currently is and will be

(Bean & Eaton, 2001). Bean and Eaton (2001) contended that Academic integration contains both intentions and behaviors; therefore, if a student assesses his academic competency to be on par with others in the environment, he will behave in such a manner that will indicate his desires to stay. There are formal and informal academic interactions that both lead to academic integration (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Formal academic interactions are made inside the classroom between students and professors or students and colleagues (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Students engaging in Academic interaction will make relationships or mentorships with teachers (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Informal Academic interactions are made outside of the classroom between the student and their advisors, staff members, and other college personnel (Bean & Eaton, 2001). Bureaucratic interactions are made between the student and the campus offices such as workers in the Registrar's Office, Business Office, or Financial Aid Office. Bentler and Speckart (1981) contended that academic integration contains both intentions and behaviors; therefore, if a student assesses his academic competency to be on par with others in the environment, he will behave in such a manner that will indicate his desires to stay.

Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model of College Student Retention



SOURCE: Bean and Eaton, 2000, p. 57.

Figure 1. This figure shows the progression of Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model.

According to Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Model of Retention, Social and Academic interaction lead to Social and Academic integration; this in turn leads to retention. The Honors Program/College incorporates both Social and Academic integration, which according to the Psychological Model of Retention should lead to retention. Bean and Eaton (2001) wrote that a student enters an institution with psychological attributes that will shape his or her college experience. Bean and Eaton (2001) hold that self-efficacy assessment affects a student's competence in his ability to succeed; if a student is confident in his ability to perform, he will be motivated to persist. On a national average, African American males suffer lower test scores, GPAs and graduation rates than their Caucasian counterparts (Cokley 2002; Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, & Thomas, 2004, Van Laar 2000); therefore, if the self-efficacy levels of African American male correlates with the disparities, his perception about educational success should be expected to be low. Bean and Eaton (2001) wrote that normative belief or the belief that those from one's original environment support his educational pursuit affects his desire to persist. Also, the differences in culture can make a student's transition to college difficult (Irvine, 1991). Irvine (1991) claimed that students may originate from a culture and social class that are quite different from that of the instructors and the other entities in the school setting.

According to a report conducted by Sparrow and Sparrow (2012), African American males report that society expects them to drop out of school. Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory uses the *Voice of Color* further explain racial injustices that are not perceived by mainstream society to be unjust. Pluviose (2007),

wrote that African American males struggle with being perceived as *acting white* by their communities if they excel in academics. Bean and Eaton (2001) cited past experience as a psychological attribute that affects the student's perception of performance ability based on past performance. According to the study conducted by the Holzman (2004), African American males are more likely to have lower grades and be punished in school as compared to their white male counterparts; therefore, African American male students' perceptions of future performance ability based on past performance may be low due to actually past experience. Porter (1990) contended that student persistence could be motivated by his or her involvement in areas such as Honors Programs. This dissertation sought to determine whether African American male students in the Honors Colleges are encouraged to persist due to their enrollment in the Honors College, despite the disparities that, according to Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Model of Retention, do not support retention.

According to the Mississippi IHL (2009) African American Males in College Report (2009), African American males are the lowest retained demographic in higher education. Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama have low college retention rates for African American males, and they lead the nation in incarceration rates for African American males (Schott Foundation). It is necessary to research whether the Honors College is an activity that is influential in the African American male's decision to persist in higher education.

Delgado and Stefancic's Critical Race Theory

As this dissertation discusses the African American male's persistence in higher education in Predominantly White Institutions, Critical Race Theory (CRT) will also serve as a framework for the research. Critical Race Theory asks the question, "What does race have to do with it?" (Brown, 2004, p. 1486). Critical Race Theory sheds light on how white teachers and administrators often do not fully grasp the challenges of African American students and therefore cannot properly help the students to persist (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Brown (2004) contended that CRT looks at the people of color as a whole race and not as individuals. According to Valdes, Culp, and Harris (2002), all African Americans have been subject to unfairness in some part of society due to their race. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argued that racism has a significant effect on the holistic progress of African Americans as compared to whites; this framework further explained the effect of racism on African American male persistence.

CRT seeks to examine and expose the relationship between race and power to further explain the tumultuous experience of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), there are five tenets of Critical Race Theory: 1) Centrality of Race, 2) Challenge to Dominant Ideology, 3) The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge also referred to as Voice of Color, 4) The Interdisciplinary Perspective, and 5) Commitment to Social Justice. According to Brown (2004), there is no concrete method to explain Critical Race Theory, therefore it encompasses a number of ideas involving race. Hackney (2003) identified a risk of using Critical Race Theory

as its potential of growing into too large of a framework due to the many findings that are continuously added.

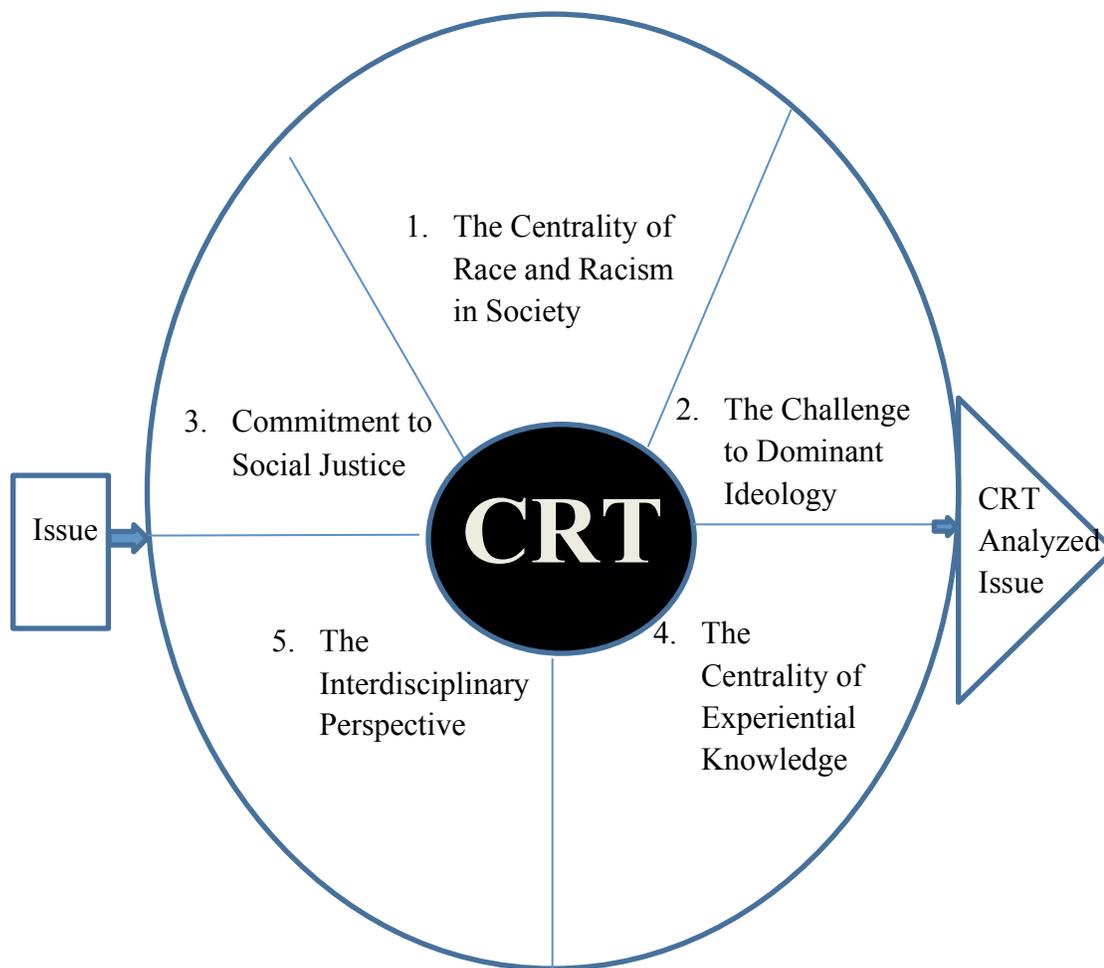


Figure 2. *Critical Race Theory*

Tenet #1: Centrality of Race

Abrams and Miow (2009) claimed that although most U.S. citizens profess that they are not racists and many even profess to be colorblind, racism still occurs, and it is not obvious because racism is the norm in America. DuBois (1903/2003) claimed that the color line was the major problem that would hinder our progression toward healthy race relations in America. Justice John Marshall Harlan stated a dissenting opinion in *Plessy*

v. Ferguson that illustrated the definite color line in America, “The White race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country” (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896, p. 509). In today’s society, it is no longer politically correct to overtly exhibit open racism; therefore the current trend has become to colorblind (Eisenberg & Johnson, 2004). Gotanda (2000) contended that attaining the state of being colorblind is impossible because one must first acknowledge color in order to denounce knowledge about it. Abrams and Miow (2009) posited that Critical Race Theory challenges those in the United States who claim to possess racial neutrality or people who claim to be colorblind, arguing that they actually perpetuate racism by not acknowledging the many inequalities that still exist and cause turmoil for citizens of color. Sack and Elder (2000) polled white and African American U.S. citizens and determined that 38% of 100 white Americans felt that African Americans received the same treatment as whites; however, only 9% of 100 African Americans felt that African Americans were treated the same as whites.

Tenet #2: The Challenge to Dominant Ideology

Bell (1995), the father of and a premiere researcher of Critical Race Theory, described that the second tenet as racial convergence in which white people will tolerate racial victories that benefit other races as long as it can benefit the white race. During racial convergence, white people are psychologically assured that racism does not exist because a successful African American exists to prove that equality exists (Abrams & Miow, 2009). Solorzano (1997) posited that the education system boasts racial neutrality, but the actuality is that whites only do so to camouflage self-interest with objectivity. According to Abrams and Miow (2009), white people do not consider African American

opinions when creating a racially neutral society; therefore, the society appears to be neutral to whites only.

Tenet #3: Centrality of Experiential Knowledge

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) suggested that the Voice of Color is of importance to Critical Race Theory. Solorzano and Yosso (2002) posited that Critical Race Theory can serve as a representative voice for minorities affected by racism while revealing the constructs of racism. Abrams and Miow (2009) suggested that people of color do not recall history and that vestiges of historical occurrences differently than whites. The Voice of Color comes from members of the referenced race, meaning that only individuals of a particular race can give true accounts of how an event affected the race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Without the Voice of Color, the holistic view of history is lost (Abrams & Miow, 2009). Critical Race Theorist Bell (1995) contended that it is important to gain the perspectives of African Americans in order to fully understand the barriers during their educational experience.

Tenet #4: The Interdisciplinary Perspective

Critical Race Theory calls us to various forms of oppression in education through the lens of several pieces taken from various theories (Solorzano, 1995). Critical Race Theory evolved after scholars and Civil Rights activists sought to explain the relationship of race, racism, and power in the United States, and it was motivated by the work of activists including Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and Caesar Chavez (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), CRT owes its origin to two previous theories; one of which is Radical Feminism and the other Critical

Legal Studies. Billings and Tate (1995) posited that Critical Race Theory not only analyzes race and racism, but also the inequalities of gender as well. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) explained that CRT adopted the theme of feminism and how the construction of social roles, habits, and patterns contributed to a patriarchal dominated society. Delgado and Stefancic (2001) claimed the second theory that CRT originated from was Critical Legal Studies.

Tenet #5: Commitment to Social Justice

Russell (1995) explained Critical Race Theory as “a central rather than marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of the law” (p. 762). According to Cummings (2010), Critical Race Theory was created as a means to uncover the racial injustices that were supported by law. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), Critical Race Theory adopted the idea of interdeterminacy, which means that one legal case can have more than one outcome depending on the situation and interpretation of facts. The legal system tends to rule in favor of the dominant groups in society. Calmore (1992) stated that Critical Race Theory challenges the notion that the legal system is color-blind and makes decisions based on racial neutrality. CRT also adopted the idea of favorable precedents losing their effect over time (Delgado & Stephancic, 2001). In the past, the traditional approach to addressing problems within academia was to examine current laws, find the missing parts of the law, and suggest a suitable solution. Any problem outside of the written law was considered irrelevant. Critical Race Theorists do not accept the traditional approach to fixing problems within academia (Cummings, 2010). Cummings (2010) also contended that the new approach to Critical Race Theory

is to reexamine and observe the law. For example, Civil Rights Law is an effort to redress inequalities in society that went unaddressed by the law and the law aims to convey there are racial problems specific to only the United States. Cummings (2010) posited that America's legal system has been formulated from the "top down" as a result of not using the voice of color. Instead the system should be based from the "bottom up" to prevent favoritism towards the "privileged and powerful" (p. 502). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) gave examples of disparities such as the lower likelihood that a black or a brown person would be approved for a loan, live a long life, or be hired for a job as compared to a white person. Solorzano (1997) stated that Critical Race Theory calls the education system to illuminate the legal battles that affected African Americans and attribute the current struggles to the litigious process.

Delgado and Stefancic (2001) discussed what is considered to be an important theme of Critical Race Theory, social construction. Banks (1995) claimed that race is a construct used to establish those who are superior and inferior people due to a focus on differences. Social construction of a particular race explains how society deems that race's characteristics, presumed personality, and behaviors. For instance, while people of the same race may have commonalities such as skin tones, hair texture, and physique, other traits such as personality and behavior are not predetermined by our race. By analyzing the social constructs within races, one can begin to see the voice of the race (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002). Cummings (2010) posited that traditional open racism is not present in the United States as it once was; however, there is a new form of subtle *everyday* racism. The social construction idea creates specific characteristics and

qualities that are considered to identify a particular race regardless of how the actual characteristics an individual sets expectations or how the individual is presumed to act according to their specific race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). An example of the social construction idea is categorizing all Asians to be strict intellectuals who cannot drive. Critical Race Theory aims to create circumstances in which social constructs do not influence educational outcomes. Instead the outcomes are based on the good of all human-kind (Fernandez, 2002).

Dixson and Rousseu (2006) stated that Critical Race Theory has been applied to education in previous studies. Love (2004) claimed that Critical Race Theory serves as the explanation for the achievement gap between white and black students. Promoting the notions that individuals have equal opportunity to education and that institutions do not foster racial biases are instrumental in creating student labels. Valenzuela (1999) argued that schools tend to make negative assumptions about students who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and of certain races that typically lack knowledge and societally accepted skills. The students with privilege, often white students, are labeled as normal, while others are labeled as subordinate and deviant (Love, 2004).

Critical Race Theory can be applied to this research as it highlights race relations between people of color, including African Americans and the rest of society and the effects the relationships have on people of color. African American males who attempt to persist in college may be met by some of the tenets of Critical Race Theory that are a natural, accepted part of society. As a result, this may hinder the African American male student from academic persistence. Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Theory of

Retention highlights components that lead to student retention. Several barriers to retention for African American males have been identified in the literature (Lockie & Burke (1999); Chen & DeJardins (2010); & Bell (2010a). These barriers greatly correspond to the components of Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Model of Retention. The two theories will be used in conjunction with each other to explain what African American males must overcome to persist in academics.

Delgado and Stephancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory explained racism as a normal part of American Society: White hierarchy exists materially and mentally and race as a construct. In the study conducted by Sparrow and Sparrow (2012, p.44), one of the participants refers to "A Salute to Gangbangers" in a letter allegedly written by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) which circulates the Internet showing gratitude towards members of the African American community for killing one another, as an example of how he perceives society to feel towards African American boys. While the KKK is a radical example of traditional American society, Cummings (2010) contended that racism is more subtle today than in the past; this explained the act of the KKK circulating hatred on the Internet as opposed to open acts of terror that were performed in the past. African American boys' perception of society delighting in the African American community crisis could connect to the African American males' state of desperation and decisions not to persist in their education pursuits. Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory held that White hierarchy is present in the United States. Research shows that the tenet of White hierarchy is indoctrinated in African American boys. Sparrow and Sparrow (2012) noted that African American boys are taught that the darker their skin,

the less likely they will be to succeed in their education and career pursuits. Adeyemo and Morris (2012) described the Athletic/Academic paradox, which explains why African American males are expected and encouraged to excel in athletics and not academics as their White counterparts.

This dissertation will evaluate the motivations of African American males in the Honors College. This research aims to determine whether the Honors College's components are effective in the retention of African American males. Callahan (2007) posited that it is critical to evaluate a Gifted Program, determine whether it is fulfilling the goals and outcomes initially set forth. Digby (2003) explained that Gifted Programs in secondary education are the equivalent of Honors Programs in higher education as most gifted students apply, are accepted and are successful in Honors Programs. Porter (1990) contended that students are more likely to persist when active in organizations such as the Honors College. According to the National Collegiate Honors Council, Honors Programs are based on the belief that students profit more from being enrolled in Honors Education as they interact more with faculty and staff and thoroughly engage in academics with small classes and a closer teacher/student ratio while in the presence of other gifted students.

Statement of the Problem

According to Ford (2010), African Americans males have always been underrepresented in gifted education at all levels of formal education. African American males also encounter barriers that affect their retention in the regular college curriculum (Cokley, 2002). African Americans are often not recruited to be in Honors Colleges

despite the fact that the Honors College is known to promote persistence to graduation. Little research has been conducted regarding African American male retention in Honors Colleges. There is even less data available on the relationship between enrollment in an Honors College and African American male students' persistence to graduation. This study explored whether Honors Colleges at Predominantly White Institutions in the southeastern region were addressing barriers blocked academic persistence of African American male students.

Research Questions

Specifically this study explored two questions: 1) In the African American male student's opinion, how did enrollment the Honors College influence his decision to persist in college? 2) Considering that Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana have higher percentages of African American than many other states, why were there not more African American males in the Honors College?

These questions were guided by the Psychological Model of Retention and (Bean & Eaton, 2001) and Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory. According to Bean and Eaton (2001), Social and Academic interaction is a key component to retention. The research questions seek to examine if Academic and Social interaction in the Honors College leads to persistence. Critical Race Theory details several tenets. Critical Race Theory suggested that white teachers and administrators are not familiar with African American culture which, in turn, causes African Americans to have difficulties in school. The research questions will use the Voice of Color tenet and examine the African

American males communicate how their experiences in the Honors College led to higher or lower levels of persistence.

Definition of Terms

Higher Education Act (1965)- Legislation passed to assist students access better financial resources during their post-secondary educational pursuit (Title 20, Chapter 28, Subchapter IV, United States Code 1070, et seq).

Historically Black College or University (HBCU)- An institution initially created for the purpose of educating African American Students (Wilson, 2012).

Persistence- The desire and action of a student remaining in school from admission to graduation (Berger & Lyon, 2005)

Predominantly White Institution (PWI)- An institution, typically founded as a single race institution, whose patrons are majority Caucasian (Wilson, 2012).

Retention- The measure of student continuance from one year to the next; high retention rates often denote student success rates (Arnold, 1999, p. 1)

War on Poverty (1964)- Address delivered by President Lyndon B. Johnson regarding initiatives to aid poor Americans in achieving success (Johnson, 1964).

Civil Rights Act (1964)- Legislation passed to prevent race and gender discrimination (Civil Rights Act, 1964)

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the 19th and early 20th Century, equal rights for all citizens were considered to be a protection under the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution (Freedman, 2004). However, the United States, specifically in southern states, ran higher education on an allegedly dual but equal system that separated the races by Black and White (Hinrichs, 2012). Blacks and Whites attended colleges that were governed by the same state, but housed in separate facilities (Hinrichs, 2012). The first case involving segregation in education was *Roberts v. City of Boston* (1849), In *Roberts*(1849), which took place in the North, parents of 5 year-old Sarah Roberts of Boston, Massachusetts sued the Boston Public School District citing racial discrimination for barring her from enrollment in the all-white elementary school (Kendrick & Kendrick, 2004). Discussions of *Roberts v. Boston* (1849) questioned whether or not segregation infringed upon the rights of Blacks. While this case did not alter segregation, it started a conversation about the accepted practice of separating the races (Douglas, 2005). Later, in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) the Supreme Court upheld the decision of lower court judge John Howard Ferguson in the conviction of Homer Plessy, an African American who attempted to sit in an all-white railway car. This decision helped to sustain segregation in public facilities on the condition of there being an equivalent facility available for Blacks and it also instituted the legalized “Separate but Equal” doctrine for public facilities (Fry, n.d.). In the case of *Berea College vs. Commonwealth of Kentucky* (1908), the separate but equal doctrine was formally extended to private institutions. Berea College attempted

to escape the separate but equal laws by educating African American students in a private institution, but the courts of Kentucky held that desegregated education was unlawful even in private institutions (Hacher & Blake, 2006). Haskins (1998) suggested that the separate but equal doctrine was true in name only as Black venues were almost always subpar to white venues during period.

The Morrill Act of 1862 was the first instance that the federal government provided funding to African Americans in higher education by allocating monies for the creation of the nation's land grant colleges (Stefkovich & Leas, 1994). While the language in the Morrill Act of 1862 did not specifically mention African Americans because the Emancipation Proclamation had not yet been written, Mississippi, South Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky all created land grant institutions that at least in theory could educate free African Americans on the mechanics of agriculture under the act (Preer, 1982). The federal government allotted monies through the Hatch Act of 1887 to both Black and White agricultural institutions of higher education that were already in existence to fund agricultural experimental stations (Bowman, Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, & Ransom, 2010). Under the Morrill Act of 1890, the government provided money specifically for the creation of institutions that would provide African Americans with an agricultural based education ("The land grant," 2012). Between 1890-1899, the majority of the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established as an assurance that African Americans would have a separate facility to gain an education (Bowman et al., 2010).

In the 1930s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hired Charles Houston, dean of the law school at Howard University along with attorney Thurgood Marshall to advocate for African American access to an integrated higher education system (Aldred & Lehr, 2009). It was not until *Pearson v. Murray* (1936), when Donald Gaines Murray brought the registrar at the University of Maryland Law School to trial for denying Murray admission for being an African American, that courts gave any consideration to end racial segregation in the higher education sector (Berry, Fleming, Horn, Ramirez, & Saltzman, 2002). Aldred and Lehr (2009) wrote that the NAACP strategically hired Nathan Ross Margold, a white Harvard graduate who had also served as the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District in New York; Margold was instrumental in NAACP victories as it was his idea to attack the *separate but equal* doctrine. Thurgood Marshall, co-counselor for Donald Gaines Murray in *Pearson v. Murray* (1936), noted that while the *separate* part of the *separate but equal* doctrine had been closely followed, no state had ever held an educational system accountable for upholding the *equal* part (Aldred & Lehr, 2009). *Missouri State ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938) also made progress toward integration in higher education (Dietz, Hamilton, Reddick, & Vasquez-Heliz, 2010). *Missouri State ex. rel Gaines v. Canada* (1938) challenged the validity of the *separate but equal* doctrine (Douglas, 2005). In both cases, African American students attempted to seek admission into all-white law schools in states that had no separate and equal facilities for blacks, and in both cases, the students were denied admission due to race (*Missouri State ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*, 1938; *Pearson v. Murray*, 1936). The courts ruled in both *Pearson v. Murray*

(1936) and *Missouri State ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938) in favor of the plaintiffs, citing that there were no separate and equal facilities available for African Americans to attend in either state; therefore, the University of Missouri Law School was ordered to admit Lloyd Gaines, and the University of Maryland was ordered to admit Donald Gaines Pearson (Aldred & Lehr, 2009; Dietz et al., 2010; Douglas, 2005; Hebel, 2004; *Missouri State ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*, 305 US 337, 1938; *Pearson v. Murray*, 169 Md. 478, 182 A. 590, 1936). After the two forced integrations that resulted from *Pearson v. Murray* (1936) and *Missouri State ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938), courts began to force state legislatures to provide institutions that were equal to existing white institutions for black students to attend (Bowman et al., 2010). In *Sipuel v. Board of Regents* (1948), the University of Oklahoma denied admission to Ada Sipuel due to race. The court cited *Missouri State ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* (1938) and ordered the state to provide Sipuel with an equal opportunity to learn (*Sipuel v. Board of Regents*, 332, U.S. 631, 1948).

States were able to keep the *separate but equal* doctrine with the exception of a few instances until the United States Supreme Court ultimately overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) as a result of the landmark case *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) (Dietz, Hamilton et al., 2010). *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) addressed the question, “To what extent does the 14th Amendment provide equal protection?” (p.631). Herman Sweatt was denied admission to the all-white University of Texas Law School and sent to a lower quality school with sub-par faculty and courses (*Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629, 1950). The Supreme Court found that the two law schools were not equal, and the decision of the

court led to the desegregation of professional and graduate schools in the United States (*Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629, 1950; Dietz et al., 2010).

During the early stages of integration in higher education, several newly integrated Predominantly White Institutions made efforts to preserve the essence of segregation by creating and enforcing policies that would separate African American students and white students from one another (Tushnet, 1994). In *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents* (1950), the United States Supreme Court held that segregation within integrated institutions was a violation of the 14th Amendment (*McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, 1950; Tushnet, 1994). George McLaurin was admitted to the University of Oklahoma, but the university required McLaurin to sit in separate sections of his classroom away from his white classmates, refrain from participating in class discussion, go to separate sections of the library that were reserved for only McLaurin, and eat in the cafeteria alone (*McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, 1950). The Supreme Court Justices ordered Oklahoma State to allow McLaurin to matriculate without restrictions, holding that policies enforced by the university on McLaurin would hinder his ability to learn as the educational experience encompasses all of privileges that he was denied due his segregation from the rest of the academic community (*McLaurin v. Oklahoma State*, 1950).

In 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education*, a consolidated case of 5 independent cases from around the country where the plaintiffs challenged the *separate but equal* doctrine in public schools, Supreme Court Justices determined that *separate but equal* was inherently unequal and ordered that all public schools be integrated (*Brown v. Board of*

Education, 1954). While all of the plaintiffs in *Brown v. Board of Education* were in the secondary education sector, the decision to completely overturn the *separate but equal* doctrine affected higher education as well (Tushnet, 1994). Immediately after the decision to end segregation was handed down from the United States Supreme Court on May 17, 1954, West Virginia opened all eleven of its state supported institutions of higher education to African Americans who qualified for admission; other institutions of higher education to follow shortly after were the state supported institutions of higher education in Missouri, the University of Maryland, the University of Delaware, and the University of Louisville (Freedman, 2004). One year after the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, records show that over 250,000 black pupils were attending public secondary and post-secondary schools in the United States with larger numbers of African American students in D.C., Baltimore, Delaware, Kansas, & Arizona (Stefkovich & Leas, 1994).

Reports of integration in higher education in the northern United States came quickly after the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision, but southern states followed the integrated model at a much slower pace (Freedman, 2004). Riots and protests occurred at several Predominantly White Institutions in the southern portion of the United States when African American students attempted to integrate; the University of Georgia, the University of Tennessee, the University of Mississippi, and the University of Alabama each have recordings of violence that resulted from African American student attempts to desegregate their campus (Hebel, 2004).

In the 1960s, the forced dismantling of segregation can be attributed to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Freedman, 2004). In March of 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson made a special address to Congress to propose a Nationwide War on Poverty (Johnson, 1964). In this plan, Johnson offered poor Americans, who were once unable to afford an education, ways to pay for college. The Civil Rights Act (1964) was introduced to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race. Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act (1965) proposed to financially assist all students in higher education (Title 20, Chapter 28, Subchapter IV, United States Code 1070, et seq). Johnson's (1964) speech declaring *War on Poverty*, the Civil Rights Act (1964), and the Higher Education Act were efforts designed to help African Americans to afford and be more successful in their pursuit of higher education (Pierre, 2010). The Basic Education Opportunity Grant was signed by Congress in 1972; this provided need-based financial assistance to post-secondary education students (Harper, 2007). Considering the amount of legislation passed, the struggle for racial equality is still a legitimate concern as there are still large disparities between African Americans and Caucasian Americans in educational attainment (Harper et al., 2009). Education opportunities for American college students remain unequal across the races (Strayhorn, 2008).

Access Granted

Perna (2000) contended that the number of African American students who attended college increased from 38%-90% from the 1990s to the millennium. Of the degrees conferred to African American students, 87.1% of those students attended Predominantly White Institutions (Provasnik & Shafer, 2004). After the integration of

Higher Education, African Americans increasingly enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions (hereafter referred to as PWIs). However, African American retention rates are still much lower than their Caucasian counterparts (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Farley, 2002; Holmes, Ebbers, Robinson, & Mugenda, 2001; Schwitzer, Griffen, Ancis, & Thomas, 1999; Williams et al., 2002). Seventy percent of African American students seeking baccalaureate degrees from a PWI dropped out before completion as compared to 20% attending HBCUs (Williams, et al., 2002). Studies show that African American students at PWIs report to have lower academic self-concepts and lower academic performance than African American students at HBCUs (Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

The number of African American students who complete a degree within six years at a four-year institution is lower than that of Caucasian students (Khumoetsile-Taylor, n.d.). Only 36.4% of African American students earn a degree in six years at a four-year institution (Marklein, 2006). African American male graduation rates at public four-year institutions trail that of African American females. On a national average, of the African Americans who enroll in college, only 31.4% of African American males graduate opposed to 43.1% of African American females (Redden, 2009).

Barriers to Retention

African American student retention is affected by various factors. Student success occurs less often among African American students who report experiencing alienation and racial stereotypical behaviors from faculty members (Love, 2008, p. 118). Love (2008) used the theoretical framework of Luhman's social systems theory to facilitate

ongoing evaluations and open dialogue in order to increase awareness about university climates from the perspective of the African American student. In a report compiled by the University of Georgia system, data showed that African American male students report retention barriers such as lack of financial aid, lack of preparation, lack of advising/mentoring/orientation, and the two-self concept, meaning that the student lacks a sense of belonging to either the academic society or their community (Report of the retention issues subcommittee, 2002). Nelson, Quinn, Marrington, and Clarke (2012) contended that student engagement is the key to elevating the levels of student persistence and retention. For example, The Student Success Program in Queensland University of Technology, a successful program that has increased persistence, has done so by academically and socially engaging students (Nelson et al., 2012). Research suggested that while resources (e.g. quality teachers and academic programs) are greater at PWIs as compared to HBCUs, students at HBCUs report having more collegial support and supportive learning environments and are therefore more likely to be persistent than African American students at PWIs (Conrad & Kim, 2006). Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) cited a successful retention program aimed at aiding African American males that was titled the Meyerhoff Program. The program has increased retention to 96.5% by increasing faculty involvement with students, scholarship opportunities, and mentorships.

Harvey-Smith (2002) suggested that universities should focus less on acclimating a small number of the African American students, which facilitates *tokenism* and focus more on studying the dynamics of the entire group to increase retention. Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn and Terenzini (1996) found that organizations such as African

American Greek Letter organizations have a positive impact on African American socialization efforts. Rodgers and Summers (2008) contended that as a result of membership in specialty organizations on campus, African American students experience a positive effect because membership encourages the students to embrace the campus community in addition to the Black community on campus.

Lack of Preparation and Retention

The decision of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896 upheld segregation of African American and Caucasian society by deeming the separate but equal doctrine legal. African Americans however received substandard educations, schools, books, facilities etc. After *Sweatt vs. Painter* and the *McLaurin vs. Oklahoma* decisions in 1950, the courts held that it was not lawful to require an African American to attend an institution that was not of equal standard (Berry et al., 2002). African Americans were then allowed to attend PWIs; however, the unequal or non-existent secondary education system meant that few African Americans were prepared for college, which effectively caused an achievement gap between Caucasians and African Americans, and caused the two races to be worlds apart academically. Lockie and Burke (1999) contended that attrition among African Americans in higher education is due to the lack of academic preparation in high school. According to Nnedu (2009), African Americans have poor writing, reading, and communication skills, which prevent them from performing well in school. African Americans are often considered inferior due to their low academic performance in mainstream educational institutions and their poor ability to communicate in writing and expressing themselves in society, which hinders their employment opportunities.

One example of this perception is exhibited in the following quote by Francis Lawrence, President of Rutgers University. In 1995, Lawrence made a generic statement about African Americans which details the importance of academic preparation. Kayola (2006) wrote:

. . . When you're looking at assessment, you got to look at the input. Do we assess in the same way at Rutgers that we would in an open admissions county college? Do we assess—let's look at the SATs. The average SAT for African-Americans is 750. Do we set standards in the future so that we don't admit anybody with the national test? Or do we deal with a disadvantaged population that doesn't have that genetic hereditary background to have a higher average. (para. 3)

African American males who wish to successfully integrate academic society, must perform on a level with and equivalent to the members of that society. Results from a qualitative study conducted by Bell (2010b) indicated that African American males wish to be successful; however, they have no idea of how to reach that goal due to lack of academic preparation.

Alienation and the Two-Self Concept and Retention

Before the *Sweatt vs. Painter* decision in 1950, all PWIs in the South did not intend to allow access to African Americans; consequently, the culture on PWI campuses that was set by many years of tradition did not include African American culture. Jones (2005) posited that prejudicial actions established as a result of Jim Crow laws had a great effect on African American acceptance in higher education. Literature reveals that African American males at Predominantly White Institutions suffer from alienation,

isolation, and hostility (Cuyjet, 2006). Guiffrida (2005) contended that students bring their cultures to school with them, and in the difference of the African American culture mixed with the culture at the PWI, where white teachers do not understand the cultural background (Irvine, 1991), situations will result in feelings of isolation for the African American student.

Dubois's (1903) theory of dual consciousness explained how African Americans had to maintain two different personas: one for mainstream society and the other for the African American community. Dubois claimed that African Americans view themselves through two souls, as an American and as a Negro causing two different perceptions of self. The two-self concept is an extension of the theory of dual consciousness.

According to Bell (2010a), African American males are forced to deal with the two-self concept when attaining an education; they must balance the academic society, which expects academic excellence with their community, who expects loyalty. Bell (2010a) contended that one self is often sharpened more than the other, leaving the individual feeling alienated from one part of himself.

Noguera (2012) contended that students' perceptions about school are highly influential on students' aspiration; in a study of 147 African American male students, results indicated that students' efforts correlate with whether they perceived that the teacher treated them fairly. Cuyjet (2006) contended that African American males on a Predominantly White College campus often experience self-doubt about their presence on the campus; therefore, they fail to integrate into the society which contributes to attrition.

Ford (1999) contended that the majority of African American parents of males do not support their sons' quest of excellence in education. This lack of motivation, in turn, causes African American males to strive less to achieve academic excellence. Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) found that inner city African Americans felt ostracized by their communities when they enrolled in PWIs. Pluviose (2007) noted the challenges of attendees at the *Black, Brown and College Bound* minority conference; they were labeled as *acting white* when they showed any indications of acclimating to an academic society. Forham and Ogbu (1986) stated that gifted African American males are labeled as *acting white* more often than those not classified as gifted.

According to a study conducted by Bell (2010a), results indicated that minority males are more concerned about self-perception from their community than academics. According to Forham and Ogbu (1986), African American males try not to apply themselves academically in order to avoid labeling from their community and acceptance from the community within an institution of higher education. Cooley, Cornell, and Lee (1991) held that placing African American males in gifted programs may be detrimental when dealing with the two-self concept, as traditionally gifted programs are predominantly white. Consequently, African American males continue to struggle with the two-self concept through a disconnect from the home environment and academic society.

Financial Assistance and Retention

Perna (2000) found that the availability of financial aid for African American students is directly tied to attrition and completion. Strayhorn (2008) wrote that African

American male athletes who receive financial and academic support are more likely to participate in social and academic integration; therefore, they are more likely to be academically successful. Essien, Ford, Johnson, Mi-Ting, and Peters Jr. (2011) conducted a study that positively linked psychological distress to ability to obtain financial aid. According to a report from the Task force of Maryland's African American Males (2007), institutions that abandon need-based scholarships in favor of merit based scholarships largely exclude the African American male from competing. In a study of Meyerhoff Scholars, a program for African American males at the University of Maryland, financial aid was rated as the top priority for African American males (Cuyjet, 2006).

Retention and Persistence

According to Berger and Lyon (2005), retention refers to the institution's ability to keep a student from the time they first enroll until graduation. Similarly, Berger and Lyon (2005) describe persistence as the student's desire and the act of remaining enrolled in an institution. Nelson et al. (2012) contended that keeping students engaged increases persistence. Williams et al. (2002) noted that university programs and services, which are designed to serve specific target populations, increase retention. Tinto (1986) contended faculty involvement and engagement may increase student desire to remain in college. Escobedo (2007) contended that retention levels are increased when universities involve students in learning communities, intensive advising, and student support. It is important for the university to make correct retention efforts early and forcefully as retention efforts may affect a student's desire to stay (Seidman, 2005).

Honors Program

According to Bratt (2010), honors programs in higher education originated for the purpose of educating academically gifted students. Nineteenth Century German and British influences helped to inspire elevated curriculums in the 1800s for academically exceptional students at universities in America such as Harvard and the University of Michigan, the first institutions to confer *honors* upon graduates (Sternberg & Davidson, 1986). According to the National Collegiate Honors Council, honors education offers a variety of teaching styles, education objectives, and courses in order to employ multiple ways of mastering a subject. The purpose of honors education is to offer enrichment to high achieving students through research opportunities, active learning, and elevated course work (National Collegiate Honors, n.d.).

According to Oterro and Spurrier (2005), most Honors Colleges offer high level courses in the form of small class sizes and active learning experiences. In essence, honors education offers the top educational opportunities to the top students through superior faculty, personal attention from advisors and faculty, and unique classes (National Collegiate Honors, n.d.). According to the National Collegiate Honors Council (2012), Honors Education is offered at private, public, two-year and four year institutions. There are two classifications of Honors Education: Honors Colleges and Honors Programs. This dissertation will focus on the Honors College.

Honors College

Slavin, Coladarici, and Pratt (2008) indicated that universities created the Honors College to enable students to further develop talents to their full potential. According to Cosgrove (2004), the Honors College movement began in the United States in the early 1920s. There were two waves of Honor College implementation; the first implementation began as a response to the Soviet's Sputnik satellite and the second implementation began as a call to produce more graduates capable of being globally competitive (Baker, Reardon, & Riordon, 2000). There are basic characteristics that are present in every Honors College (Barnard & Treat, 2012). Sederberg (2005) wrote that an Honors College is more complex than an Honors Program. An Honors College encompasses the aspects of both a small liberal arts college and a research intensive university. According to Oterro and Spurrier (2005), when creating an Honors College, three objectives should be kept in mind: to improve, to inform, and to prove. According to the National Collegiate Honors Council, the Honors College is to be treated as any other functioning college in the institution; therefore, it shall be allocated operational funds, administration, staff, and facilities. An Honors College is not specific to one area of academics; instead, it is a multi-collegiate structure (National Collegiate Honors, n.d.). Barnard and Treat (2012) explained that the Honors College is to have a central location referred to as an Honors Center in order for students of the various disciplines to congregate in a social setting as well as collaborate as academicians. Eckert, Grimm, Roth, and Savage (2010) described the Honors College students as members of cohorts. According to the National Collegiate Honors Council, a fully functioning Honors College

must be headed by a Dean. In most cases the Dean of the Honors College reported to the Chief Academic Officer of the Institution. Faculty teaching in the Honors College may or may not be hired directly by the Honors College (Barnard & Treat, 2012); however, the Honors College does have the right to exercise control over the curriculum and academic policies. Honors College support staff consists of secretaries and student workers who trouble shoot problems within the College and complete required administrative tasks (Barnard & Treat, 2012). Benard and Treat (2012) described the Honors College professional staff, which is comprised of coordinators and directors, as managers of various components such as academic advisement and retention.

According to the National Collegiate Honors Council (n.d.), Honors College students are offered financial assistance to attend college in addition to the supportive academic experience. Sederberg (2005) noted that Honors College students are rewarded continued financial assistance through travel expenses and research funding. An Honors College curriculum should be comprised of at least 20% of the student's overall coursework; upon completion the student will be publically awarded a degree of distinction (National Collegiate Honors, n.d.).

Honors College Experience

The Honors College seeks to add enrichment to the university experience through components such as smaller class sizes, active learning, study abroad, and an elevated curriculum (National College Honors, n.d.). General experiences can be gleaned from university Honors College webpages. Graduates from Louisiana State University are positive in their reviews about the Honors College; they wrote that without the Honors

College, the graduates would not have been able to achieve accolades such as National Scholarships and admission into prestigious professional schools (Louisiana State University Honors College, 2013).

Honors Programs vs. Gifted Education

This dissertation will focus on African American males in the Honors College. Gifted education students on a secondary level often transition to being Honors Student in higher education (Bratt, 2010). The research conducted about gifted students in secondary education is remarkably similar to the research on Honors College students in post-secondary (Slavin et al., 2008). Ford (1999) contended that a gifted student performs higher at either or all of the following levels: intellectually, creatively, or artistically. Sternberg and Davidson (1986) contended that the perception of an academically gifted student depends on who society deems as a normal student. Slavin et al., (2008) contended that universities often select their Honors College candidates from the gifted education pool in secondary education.

Honors College and Persistence

Research suggested that participation in the Honors College is more beneficial to students than attending college in the regular curriculum (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Cosgrove (2004) found that students who completed the Honors College curriculum maintained a higher GPA than those who did not complete the Honors College curriculum. Cosgrove (2004) also reported that the average Honors College student's GPA is 3.71. Eckert et al., (2010) wrote that students who are recruited to matriculate in

Honors Programs are those that the institutions consider as serious individuals who will complete a program while exhibiting academic excellence.

According to Porter (1990), students' persistence could be motivated by their involvement in programs such as the Honors College. Astin (1993) contended that students who enroll in Honors Colleges have higher retention and graduation rates than those enrolled in regular curriculums. Honors college students matriculate in the cohort model to promote completion (Eckert et al., 2010). Honors College students' 4 year or less graduation rate is 57% out of 100 (Cosgrove, 2004). Slavin et al. (2008) wrote that students in the Honors College encompass the components of Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model of Retention through social and academic integration. Barnard and Treat (2012) contended that the Honors College promotes retention through a student support component. Plunker, Rinn, and Stocking (2010) stated that students in the Honors College seek to establish faculty mentorships more than non-Honors College students. Scager et al. (2012) contended that students in the Honors College are more likely to engage in classroom discussions with faculty than non-Honors College students. Astin (1993) wrote that students in the Honors College are more likely to participate in extra-curricular activities, which facilitate social integration. Slavin et al., (2008) wrote first year retention of Honors College students is almost always higher than that of non-Honors College students. The Honors College model is a best practice for increasing retention due to design with smaller class sizes and a more attentive and supportive academic community (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

Honors and African American Persistence

According to Harper (2010), African American males enrolled in honors show academic growth. However, a study conducted at the University of Connecticut reported that there was lack of diversity within the college (Pittman, 2001), which is similar to the alienation component of Bean and Eaton's Psychological Theory of Retention. Lucas, Hull, and Brantly (1995) suggested that the majority of students who participate in Honors Colleges are white females. Pittman's (2001) Honors College study indicated that students of color were apprehensive about joining the Honors College due to fear of the unknown about the Honors College. Nevertheless, African Americans male college students, who on a national average, have the lowest college retention rate as compared to other demographics (Redden, 2009) are encouraged to persist as a result of participation in the Honors College.

African American Male Representation in the Honors College and Gifted Programs

There is a scant amount of research on African American males in the Honors College due to the Honors College being mainly comprised of Caucasian students (Slavin et al., 2008). There is also limited research on African Americans in gifted education (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001). Ford (2010) contended that African Americans are now and have always been the most underrepresented population in K-12 gifted education. The number of African American male students in honors colleges is a much lower representation than that of Caucasian students (Anderson, Anderson, & Graham 2008). African American males are the least represented demographic in all of gifted education in the United States (Ford, 2010). African American students are less likely to be selected

to be in honors courses due to their significantly low standardized test scores and grade point averages which most often serve as qualifying criteria for Honors Colleges (Noguera, 2012). White male students are twice as likely to be placed in honors/gifted programs as black male students (Schott Foundation, 2010).

African American Male Disparities

The National Center for Education and Statistics (2012) provided data that indicate African Americans were academically out-performed by their Caucasian counterparts in 2009. The disparities in academic performance caused by the disadvantages of African American males not only hinder African American males' academic performance, but also hinder their ability to pursue academics in elevated curriculums (Noguera, 2012).

Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius, and Worrell (2012) gave details of a task force created by the American Psychological Association to further research the disparities of African American males in gifted education; the findings are categorized as inputs, throughputs, and outputs. Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones and Vance (2002) identified three categories of disparities that needed to be addressed: different treatment of African American males in gifted education, different socio-economic status of African American males in education as a whole, and different responses to the education system when compared to African American's specific needs. Throughputs, or necessary information needed to understand how the inputs such as socio-economics, differential treatment in the education system and societal expectations cause disparities for African

Americans in the United States as a whole (Subotnik et al., 2012). Finally, the output was the African American male performance (Subotnik et al., 2012).

Disparities Caused by Differential Treatment

Ford et al. (2013) claimed that microaggressions, or passive forms of racist treatment of other races, can explain the feelings of mistreatment among African American males in gifted education. Ford (2010) concluded that microaggressions are such a common part of American society that very few recognize its occurrence or qualify it as a problem except the aggressee. Most professionals have undergone some form of diversity education, but microaggressions can still be a prevalent problem within a sector due to the deeply engrained tradition of racism (Gunshine, 2004).

Microaggressions play a large role in determining whether African American males feel encouraged or discouraged to persist or continue studying in the gifted education system (Ford, 2010). While not all microaggressions are blatantly intentional attacks made against African American males many can have an adverse effect on their educational success as they often interpret the aggressions to be personal attacks that occur as a result of being an African American (Ford et al., 2013). Constantine (2002) contended that African Americans perceptions of Caucasian administrators and authority have a direct correlation with their satisfaction of the education sector. African American's perceptions about microaggression occurrences heavily affect their desire to persist in their studies (Constantine, 2002). Sue (2010) identified the types of *Microaggressions as microassaults, microinsults and microvalidations*.

Microassaults are racist attacks that are made against a particular race in a more aggressive and obvious manner (Ford et al., 2013; Sue, 2010). Most Americans no longer make egregious racist attacks against other Americans (Eisenberg & Johnson, 2004); therefore, this type of microaggression is the most obsolete (Sue, 2003). The most prevalent accounts of microassaults occurred in the education system during the Civil Rights movement with students, parents, and local governments holding demonstrations in protest of integrated schools; this type of attack sent messages to African American students that they were unwelcome and not worthy of being in the same system as whites students (Sue, 2010). According to Allen (1992), there have been recent accounts of *microassaults* on students at some of America's prestigious institutions including the Citadel, the University of Michigan, Princeton, the University of Texas, and the University of California at Los Angeles. These attacks which included mass distribution of hate literature and verbal attacks resulted in an increase in attrition among African American students (Allen, 1992).

Microinsults, or belittling students through racist comments, is a more common microaggression made in the school systems today (Sue, 2010). This type of microaggression is often times unnoticed and thought to be harmless by the aggressor, but to the African American, the interpretation can be detrimental (Gunshine, 2004). An example of a *microinsult* would be a teacher asking an African American student if he or she had help on an assignment for which they received an *A*; African American male students interpret the question as an assumption that they are not good enough to complete an assignment at such a high level (Sue, 2010).

Finally, *microvalidations* are subtle insinuations that assert negative stereotypes about the African American way of life (Sue, 2003; Sue 2010). Negative stereotypes can cause the African American male student to have a negative perception about himself, which can lessen his desire to better himself with an education (Hale, 2001). An example of a *microvalidation* would be a white teacher feeling threatened of physical danger by an angry African American student and not sharing the same fear when a white student becomes angry; an African American student would interpret this microaggression to mean that he or she is perceived as violent and uncontrollable (Sue, 2003). The media is a prime source of *microvalidations* in that the stereotypical African American male who is portrayed is often a negative reflection on the African American community; this, in turn, causes the African American male student to view himself negatively (Jackson & Moore, 2006). According to Lipsky (1987), this phenomenon is referred to as internalized racism. Lipsky (1987) wrote that after seeing himself portrayed in a negative light for a long period of time, the African American male can begin to believe the negativity has merit. As a result, the African American male starts to purposefully demonstrate the behavior and influence other African American males to do the same (Lipsky, 1987).

Microaggressions correlate with several tenets of Critical Race Theory (Solorzano, Caja & Yosso, 2000). Microaggressions can double as Critical Race Theory's first tenet, Centrality of Race (Ford et al., 2013). Often times, Caucasian instructors will find it easier to work with and mentor white students; this deprives African American students of the benefits of academic support from the academic

community (Ford, 2010). According to Ford, Scott, Moore, and Amos (2013), gifted education instructors who claim to be colorblind for the sake of neutrality deprive African American students of the special attention needed to combat the barriers that block the African American educational pursuit; as a result, these instructors subtly perpetuate racism. Instructors who say, “I don’t see color,” or “There is only one race: the human race,” are choosing not to acknowledge that races are indeed different and therefore so are the experiences of the members of each race (Constantine, 2002; Ford et al., 2013). Hale (2001) claimed that endemic racism is to blame for academic disparities in the African American community. The ideology that freedom of choice in America allows African Americans to make decisions that will lead to success without first considering the factors that hinder success is engrained and an instance of blind racism (Hale, 2001).

Solorzano et al. (2000), contended that white instructors who attempt to fill African American quotas for the sake of appearing non-biased or the second tenet Challenge to the Dominant Ideology, send a racist message to the African American student. Ford et al. (2013), gave an example of a white gifted instructor stating “I’m not a racist, several of my best friends are black.”(p. 63). Ford et al. (2013), contended that African American gifted students perceive this microaggression/tenet to mean that the presence of the African American is only valued when it can equate a completed quota. Also, within this microaggression, African Americans gifted students can suffer feelings of separation from their community as they feel singled out as tokens and no longer a part of their traditional background (Ford, 2010).

Disparities Caused by Socioeconomic Status

Poverty is a barrier for African American males that must be addressed by institutions in order for African American males to successfully persist in higher education (Levine & Lezette, 1990). According to Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz, and Casserly (2010), 36% of all African American students come from impoverished households. Nettles (1988) claimed that African American students are more likely than non-minorities to come from households with either or all of the following: single parents, parents with little to no college education, and low socioeconomic status. The U.S. Census Bureau (2001) stated that of African American births, 20% are to teenage mothers. Allen (1992) contended that most teenage births lead to poverty. The majority of African American households in American do not maintained set roles for family members; hence, African American male students often share what society considers adult responsibilities (Hale-Brown, 1986). Thirty-eight percent of all African American students' parents list their income source as *unstable* (Lewis et al., 2010). High rates of employment or unstable income in the African American household often leads school aged males to working to help support the family; in turn, African American male students often neglect their studies for survival (Davis, Hilton, Moore, & Palmer, 2010). Allen (1985) held that as a country, the United States' efforts to address the poverty issue that affects African American persistence and completion are poor.

According to McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, and McWhirter (1995), African Americans with low socioeconomic statuses are more likely to be categorized as *at risk* and therefore less likely to succeed academically. Langram (1997) posited that

impoverished African Americans have high rates of depression and suffer feelings like alienation; therefore, they are less likely to succeed in academics. Poverty in the African American community can cause African American students to feel less valued and frequently these feelings of self-defeat that will lead to the student leaving the academic sector before completion (Garibaldi, 1984).

Somers, Owens, and Pilansky (2001) contended that poverty negatively correlates with student engagement; student engagement correlates with student retention. African American male students from impoverished households are less likely to engage with their fellow students and seek assistance from their college professors (Garibaldi, 1984). African American male students from low-income families are less likely to seek and maintain mentorships at Predominantly White Institutions (Allen, 1985). African American male students with a low socioeconomic status are more often less involved in extra-curricular activities in school; in turn, their lack of involvement decreases their desire to remain enrolled in school (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007).

Phelan (1992) posited that poverty has a negative impact on academics in African American students. Tuck (1989) stated that impoverished African American male students are 78% more likely to drop out of school than non-impoverished African American males. According to Allen (1985), impoverished African American males tend to have lower high school GPAs, have a lower tendency to attend college, and those who do attend college, do not complete their studies within six years. Impoverished African American male students often have lower graduation rates, make less money than the Caucasian counterparts, and begin families that continue the same cycle (Harvey, 2008).

According to the United States Census Bureau (2001), out of all African American families classified in the low socioeconomic status, only 18.4% of African American males 25-29 hold bachelor's degrees.

Most African American students from low income homes are not exposed to gifted programs (Rainwater & Smeedy, 1995). African American parents from low income homes often refuse to place their children in gifted programs either because they are unaware of the benefits of gifted placements or because they are satisfied with their children taking the classes in the regular curriculum. (Gehrke, 2005). Teachers often refer poor African American students at a lower rate than poor white students (Harry & Klingnen 2006). Poor African American students are often less articulate and perform poorly on gifted screening test (Nieto, 2000). African American students who are considered gifted report having problems with the curriculum due to racially biased topics within the curriculum (Ford, 1999).

Disparities caused by societal expectations

Society portrays African American males in a negatively light more often than not (Nogeura, 2003; Palmer & Maramba, 2011; Strayhorn, 2008). The media is largely responsible for African American images (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). African American males are more likely to be cast as delinquents than successful college students (Harper, 2006). Networks have given ownership to negative behaviors such as recreational drug use, the use of profanity, and gang affiliation to African American males. Furthermore, when a Caucasian individual demonstrates the same behavior they are considered to imitating an African American (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). African American males

often respond negatively to society's portrayals by developing an inferiority complex (Hale, 2001).

The negative portrayal repeats itself in education and has an adverse effect on African American males' psyche and student success (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Teachers and administrators often treat African American males according to the negative stereotypes found in the media (Jackson & Moore, 2006). African American males are less likely to be tested for gifted education and more likely to be placed in special education classes and labeled in need of remedial education than their white counterparts (Noguera, 2003; Palmer & Maramba, 2011). African American males are more likely to be perceived as being more academically challenged by white administrators than their white counterparts (hooks, 2004). According to Strayhorn (2008), school officials are more likely to discipline African American male students; consequently, African American males accrue write-ups, in-school suspensions, and expulsions in secondary education than any other demographic in the United States. African Americans' participation in secondary education affects their overall educational pursuit and success (Harper, 2006). Oftentimes, school climate greatly affects the African American male's perception of how the system sees him, which affects his response to the system (Adkinson-Bradley, Johnson, Sanders, Duncan, and Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). There is a positive correlation between African American males' college completion and income (Strayhorn, 2008). Lower participation in academics leads to poor performance in secondary education, which leads to fewer attempts of pursuing post-secondary education; this, in turn, leads to unemployment or underemployment for African

American males (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). The Schott Foundation (2010) claims that unemployment and underemployment in the African American community leads to a vicious cycle of crime due to criminal acts being performed to sustain livelihood.

Disparities in Relation to African American women

Acting White labels mostly apply to African American males and not females; therefore, it is acceptable for African American females to pursue education (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Lundy 2003; Noguera, 2003). Although disputed by other scholars, hooks (2004) claimed the increase of college completion rates of the African American female has greatly affected the familial expectations the African American male. When African American females gained gender equality during the 1970s, more of them started to attend college, seek employment, and depend less on African American males as providers (hooks, 2004). To a great extent, African American males are no longer required or expected to be the sole providers for the African American family (hooks, 2004). African American females are now enrolling in college at a higher rate than African American males (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). African American female college completion has passed African American males (Cross & Slater, 2000). College enrollment and completion for African American males has dwindled back to the completion rate of 1976 (Strayhorn, 2008).

African American Males Psychological Effects

Graham (1994) argues that African American males respond differently to educational programs and educational institutions due to their psychological processes. The vestiges of slavery still greatly affect the African American male (hooks, 2004).

Motivation, values, and parenting styles have a significant impact on how the African American male reacts in an educational setting (Graham, 1994).

Psychological Effects of Slavery

During slavery, African American men were not taught to read; instead, they were conditioned to work and protect the African American family (hooks, 2004). An educated African American male was chastised and sometimes killed; consequently, African Americans discouraged education among each other (hooks, 2004). During the Civil Rights era in the 1950s and 1960s, African Americans fought for equality through movements such as the infamous Black Power movement, which sought rights through demands and demonstrations (hooks, 2004). Educated African American males or those who sought education during this era were targeted by hate groups and the government as they were considered threats to breaking the cycle of inequality (hooks, 2004). During the 1970s, African American men developed a cool pose where men exhibited a nonchalant attitude towards conforming to the norms of society (hooks, 2004; Majors & Billson, 1992). Young African American males during this time were pushed to be tough but were not pushed to pursue academics (hooks, 2004).

Psychological Effects of Native Community

As a result of the cool pose developed and maintained by African American males, assimilating to the norms of society has negative connotations (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). Many African American communities consider school a waste of time because neither a secondary nor post-secondary education is needed to succeed in their environment (Williams, Saunders, & Williams, 2002). An African American from a

community with peers who have lower retention rates in school is less likely to remain in school because he does not want to be an outcast (Williams et al., 2002). African Americans who embrace academic environments are often labeled as *Acting White* by their community (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Palmer & Maramba, 2011). The label of *Acting White* disconnects an African American male from his community, which, in turn, decreases his support system and makes it difficult to succeed (Palmer & Maramba, 2011).

Psychological Effects of Parenting

Parents play a large role in shaping the mindset of their student (Spera, 2003). African American families are eight times more likely to have only one parent, most likely the mother, in the household (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). There is a current trend for African American single mothers to work extensively outside of the home to financially support her children; consequently, they neglect to support their children in academic and student engagement (Wentzel, Feldman, & Weininger, 1991). Students from single parent households report to have less parental involvement than those students from nuclear families (McKinnon, 2003). Students who come from households with lax parenting styles are less likely to persist in school due to a lack of familial motivation (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). African American students who come from households with authoritative parenting styles are more likely to maintain higher GPAs than those without authoritative parents (Hines & Holcomb-McCoy, 2013). Boyce-Rogers and Rose (2001) conducted a study on African American students and concluded that two parent households positively affect the likelihood of parental support

and student persistence. Adkinson-Bradley, Johnson, Sanders, Duncan and Holcomb-McCoy (2005) also concluded that students with parents who take their children to church have higher GPAs.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This chapter will expound on the qualitative method used and the purpose behind the selected method. Phenomenology was the qualitative method used in order to better understand the participants lived experiences as an African American student in the Honors College. The literature holds that African American males in the Honors College are more likely to persist in school, and this research intends to explore various facets of the African American male Honors College students' lived experience in the Honors College to better understand why they believe the Honors College has contributed to their persistence. According to Creswell (2003), phenomenology is practical for gleaning the perspectives of those who have lived the experience being researched.

Retention efforts are plentiful in number; however, they are ineffective if students are not benefitting from them. Retention efforts can be costly and time consuming as well. Honors Colleges encourages Social and Academic integration; therefore, Honors Colleges encourage retention (Barnard & Treat, 2012). African American male students suffer from barriers to retention; therefore this study will employ qualitative research methods to examine the retention of African American male students in the Honors College.

According to Rudestam and Newton (2007), the purpose of qualitative research is to thoroughly explain a situation, event, experience, group, or interaction for being understanding. Creswell (2003) explained that phenomenology seeks to express the holistic essence of an experience from the perspective of those who live or have lived the

experience. Because this study was intended to provide insight regarding the essence of persistence in the Honors College through the voices of African American male students, the phenomenological approach to qualitative research was employed. Merriam (2009) explained that the purpose of the phenomenological approach is to identify a particular phenomenon as perceived by those experiencing it. The purpose of this study was to examine how participating in the Honors College affects the African American male's decisions to continue his studies and why more African American males are not participating in the Honors College. By using phenomenology, this research discovered the essential structures of the African American male's persistence in the Honors College. Koch (1995) suggested that phenomenological research is conducted for the viewing the phenomena through the consciousness of the person(s) of focus. This research sought to inform parents of high school aged African American male parents, college counselors, and Honors College administrators.

Rudestam and Newton (2007) wrote that phenomenological researchers pose questions that will lead to the exploration of a lived experience or phenomena. In particular, this research used empirical phenomenology. Creswell (2003) explained that empirical phenomenology data is collected through questions that seek to allow the participant an opportunity to describe the experience without many constructed leads from the researcher. In this study, data was collected from participants through in-depth interviews with questions that seek to explore how participating in the Honors College influences African American males to persist. The theoretical frameworks that guided the interview questions were that of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic,

2001) and Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Model of Retention. Questions posed to participants were intended to explore Social and Academic integration as well as understand the Honors College experience from their point of view.

Sample

The researcher used criterion-based sampling strategy to select the participants. Participants completed at least one semester prior in the Honors College to participation in the study. Participants were African American male college students who were currently enrolled in the second semester of the first year or higher of the Honors College at one of five Predominantly White Institutions located in the southeastern region of the United States. Participants enrolled in Honors Colleges at Historically Black Colleges and Universities were excluded from this study to ensure that the participants' experiences were not influenced due to differences in environment. The southeastern region was more densely populated with African Americans; Mississippi and Louisiana ranked 1 and 2 respectively in the United States and Alabama was the sixth most densely populated with African Americans and had the 2nd highest multiracial (i.e. African American and Caucasian) population second only to Mississippi (U. S. Census, 2010b). Creswell (2003) wrote that phenomenological research explores experiences that occur in a natural setting. Predominantly White Institutions in this region better reflected the mixed demographic makeup of each state and thus, yielded a more accurate depiction of the state's natural society as opposed to a Historically Black College or University that fostered a more homogeneous society. Data was collected in the form of face-to-face interviews located at or in the vicinity of the institution.

Locations

The literature suggested that African American males are less likely to be enrolled in college and less likely to be enrolled in the Honors College than their white counterparts. This influenced the criterion-based selection strategy that was used when determining the participating institutions. The research was conducted at Predominantly White Institutions that have functioning Honors Colleges.

Pilot Study

Prior to this dissertation, a pilot study was conducted to explore experiences of African American males in the Honors College at a PWI and to determine how it affected their persistence in Honors College at one institution in the southeastern United States. Three African American male students enrolled in the Honors College at The University of Southern Mississippi were interviewed. This dissertation study employed identical sampling strategies, research approach, and methods. The instrument used in this study was a ten question interview protocol generated by the researcher to explore how the participants' enrollment in the Honors College affected his will to persist. (See Appendix B).

Although the pilot study included only three participants, the participants who participated in the pilot study reported similar experiences that were consistent with the literature on African American males in higher education. For this reason, two to three students were chosen from each institution to participate in this research.

Procedures

Participants were selected from a pool of individuals that fit the previous criterion, and who were recommended by the Honors College Administration at the institution. The researcher contacted the Honors College at each university to explain the purpose of the dissertation and gather contact information for African American male students in the Honors College. Consent forms were approved by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi sent to each contact for signed content. Potential participants were initially contacted via telephone to be briefed about the logistics of this study and the time requested for participation (1-1 ½ hours). Questions from the participants about the study and usage of the data collected were answered during the initial telephone conversation. Potential participants were assured that data collected were only used for the purpose of research and that their anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. Potential participants verbally consented and scheduled a face-to-face interview with the researcher during the initial phone conversation. The researcher contacted the participant between the initial conversation and the interview to confirm the face-to-face interview and answer any questions. Participants were given the researcher's contact information to answer any last-minute questions. The participants signed a consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board at The University of Southern Mississippi before beginning the face-to-face interview.

Instrument

The instrument used to collect data was an adapted list of questions used that were in Hall and Rowan's *African American Males in Higher Education: A Descriptive Qualitative Analysis* (2001). The open-ended questions addressed the Honors College influences the participants experienced during their college tenure. The instrument's questions aligned with both Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Model of Retention and Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory. The instrument addressed social and academic interaction and the perceived results. The instrument also assessed whether and/or how race and racism was a factor that contributed to or deterred from the academic persistence of the participant. See Appendix A. Data collection was discontinued when data saturation was achieved. According to Merriam (2009), data saturation was achieved when the findings became repetitive.

Positionality Statement

The following statement better explains how my previous experiences have influenced my data collection and analysis. I am an African American female third-generation graduate of an HBCU. My father is an attorney and Baptist minister and my mother, a paralegal. I grew up in a two-parent household and participated in several extra-curricular activities as a child, one of which resulted in a partial scholarship to college supplemented by an academic scholarship to create a fully paid college education. I participated in the Honors College and graduated Magna Cum Laude. My childhood experience affected my thinking about the effects of parenting and economics on an individual. While I did not experience most of the barriers documented in the literature

on African Americans in higher education, I attended high school and witnessed many students who did. My husband, who was born and raised in a middle class family in the same city and also graduated from the same university, professes to have experienced several of the barriers in the literature for African Americans in higher education. After graduating from college and beginning to teach English at a predominantly African American urban high school, the barriers to high school completion for African American males were made more than apparent to me. I taught many impoverished African American male students who were underprepared and lacked ambition to do better. I witnessed several young men whose standardized test results ranked them as *proficient*, struggle with the two-self concept and pretend not to be intelligent for the sake of being accepted by their community and friends. This experience affected my understanding about how the lack of parental support affects the student's attitude towards academics and behavior and how the two-self concept can be a real struggle for African American young men. Finally, I became employed as a Graduate Assistant in the Honors College at a university. The demographic makeup of the university was not the same as my previous employment; instead the university was predominantly Caucasian and the Honors College's demographic makeup was approximately five Caucasian students to one African American student. I immediately saw how African American male students were not well represented. This experience combined with my previous teaching experience affected my perspectives on how the preparation of African American males can affect their admission to a university, and more specifically, an Honors College at a PWI.

Strategy of Analysis

During each interview, the researcher used a steno pad to record notes. Maxwell (2005) recommends that the researcher should take notes during each interview in order to establish ideas about potential categories or themes to group collected data. In qualitative research, the researcher may also break down, or fracture, the data only to put it back together as a theme (Maxwell, 2005). During this research, the researcher reviewed the transcribed interviews thoroughly and performed the fracturing method to form three main categories. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that the researcher should form emic categories from words or phrases from the participants. The researcher made several labels derived from wording and phrases related to each of the main categories.

Data Analysis

The researcher reflected on each interview to form an idea of the overall Honors College experience for each participant. The Elements of the Voice of Color and Centrality of Race were used to illustrate these experiences. The interviews were transcribed following the reflection. The researcher used horizontalization, or syphoning out similar statements from the data, to analyze and determine how the phenomenon of being in the Honors College as an African American male at a Predominantly White Institution was experienced. Horizontalization required specific statements to be pulled from the collected data. First, the researcher began to highlight similar themes or statements found in the participants' responses. The researcher formed a textual description to describe what the participants experienced as an African American male in the Honors College at a PWI in the southeast. The researcher then formed a structural

description of how or if the two components of Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model of Retention affected the participants' will to persist in the Honors College and the institution. Finally, the researcher combined the textual and structural descriptions to present the overall experience and result of the experience for the participants.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In an empirical phenomenological study, questions were posed to African American males, who were enrolled in the Honors College at Predominantly White Institutions in the southeastern region of the United States in order to better understand their lived experience in as a student in the Honors College, to glean their perception of the Honors College contributing to persistence and to learn their opinions, based on their experiences about why more African American male students were not enrolled in the Honors College.

The purpose of this chapter was to relay the findings from the data collection. Before reviewing the results in this chapter, it is important to detail the profiles of the individual participants who are presented. Following the profiles of the participants, the themes that were prevalent during the participant interviews are explained. Finally, both research questions were specifically addressed according to the answers given by the participants.

Participant Profiles

There were 12 participants in the study who were enrolled in an Honors College at a Predominantly White Institution in the southeastern region of the United States. The students' participation was solicited by Honors College administrators from their respective institutions; however, each participant agreed to participate in the interview voluntarily. The following table details the profiles of the 12 participants. Before the interview began, the participants chose to share a pseudonym, age, classification, tenure

as an Honors College Student, and a description of the ethnic makeup of their home community.

Participants were allowed to provide their own pseudonym as a method to protect their identity and encourage honesty. There were two students interviewed from each institution; the data from Table 2 shows that 3 students were freshmen, 2 sophomores, 3 juniors, and 4 seniors. There are various admission points at which a student may enter the Honors College (Cosgrove, 2004); therefore, it is necessary to list the participants' tenure in the Honors College in addition to their classification. Of the 12 students who were interviewed, 10 entered the Honors College at their respective institutions as first semester freshmen; 1 participant entered the Honors College as a second semester sophomore, and 1 entered as a second semester freshman. McWhirter et al., (1995) wrote that students of low income families are more likely to be *at risk* and are therefore less likely to succeed. Tuck (1989) wrote that students from low income families are more likely to drop out than those who are not. Of the 12 participants interviewed, 8 reported to be from middle class families, 3 reported to be from lower class families, and 1 reported to be from an upper class family. Boyce-Rogers and Rose (2001) concluded that two parent households support student persistence. Of the 12 participants, 11 reported the number of parents in their household: 7 two-parent households and 6 one-parent households. Participants reported to have grown up in communities with several different demographic makeups including 8 communities consisting of majority African American residents labeled *Black*, 3 communities consisting of approximately the same number of both African American and Caucasian residents labeled *Mixed*, and 1 community

consisting of majority Caucasian residents labeled *White*. This information is presented in.

Table 2

Profiles of the Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Class	Honors	# of	Socio	Home
			Tenure	Parents	Eco Stat	Community
Rafael	19	Fr	1 sem	No info	Middle	Mixed
P_1	21	Sn	7 sem	2	Middle	Black
P_2	20	Jr	5 sem	2	Middle	Black
Michael	19	Sn	2 sem	1	Lower	Black
Adam	19	Fr	1 sem	2	Upper	White
Clarence B.	21	Sn	4 sem	2	Lower	Mixed
Nelson	22	Sn	7 sem	1	Middle	Black
#1	20	Sn	7 sem	2	Middle	Mixed
Bobby S.	18	Fr	1 sem	1	Middle	Black
Tony	20	So	2 sem	2	Middle	Black
Greg C.	21	Jr	5 sem	1	Lower	Black
Josh L.	20	Jr	5 sem	2	Middle	Black

Class: Fr=Freshman; So=Sophomore; Jr=Junior; Sn=Senior

The Interview Experience

The process of locating and securing participants to interview was intricate. The researcher encountered several obstacles that made the preliminary process difficult, including unanswered emails to potential participants, protective administrators, non-

cooperating administrators, and inclement weather. The actual interviews yielded useful information; however, there were a few participants who were apprehensive about sharing details for fear of repercussions from the institution.

Most of the Honors College administrators contacted were helpful to the researcher and assisted in the process of securing potential participants; however, there were a few that would not comply or imposed conditions. Most administrators, especially those from larger institutions, only asked to be emailed the IRB approval form before agreeing to assist the researcher. One administrative assistant from a particular institution required the researcher to complete an electronic IRB form specific to the IRB process at that institution before contacting a student at that institution. While never receiving a formal confirmation form from that institution's IRB department, the researcher was later contacted by the Dean of the Honors College and granted permission to collect data at that institution. Upon calling another institution, the researcher was denied the opportunity to collect data by an Honors College administrator because he feared that the data collection would *cause tension and possibly disturb the harmony* in the Honors College at that institution. An administrator at another institution did agree to provide student participants, but he wanted to *control* the interview. The researcher found that this administrator demonstrated several forms of microaggressions. This administrator imposed the pseudonyms chosen for the participants and only allowed them to interview in a location that he chose. This same administrator insisted on reviewing the interview questions to ensure that they were suitable.

Securing participants to interview was somewhat difficult. While administrators contacted the students and informed them of the researcher's intent, several students did not respond, and one declined. Once participants were secured, inclement weather altered interview times and places. Interviews were conducted at locations that were convenient to the participants, often on campus in an Honors College academic facility. During the interview process, there were three participants who shared that they were leery of sharing too much detail for fear of *getting into trouble*. The researcher assured them that their identity would remain confidential and it was completely safe to share detailed information.

Due to past experience as a former Honors College student as an undergraduate and an African American para-professional who worked specifically with minority students in the Honors College at a Predominantly White Institution, the researcher was familiar with the essence of the participants' experiences as well as several components of the various Honors College referred to during the interviews. The similarities between the participant and the researcher provided for several candid interviews. The participants told jokes freely, and frequently said *you know* during the interview. One participant expressed gratitude that the researcher was an African American and not someone who wanted to know how it felt to be an African American and expected the participant to be a representative of the African American population. As a result of the interviews and the participants' lengthy remarks about the two-self concept, the researcher's view of the phenomenon's severity among African American males shifted drastically.

Findings

Participants interviewed for approximately 30 minutes each, sharing their insights on life as an African American male Honors College student. Participant responses were categorized in the following categories in regard to their respective Honors Colleges:

Integration, Perception, Perspectives, and Effects. Bean and Eaton's (2001)

Psychological Model of Retention holds that *integration* involves both academic and social interactions. For this research, the topic of *integration* refers to the participants' academic and social interactions within the Honors College. *Perception* refers to how the participant believed others viewed him. The interview protocol explored the participants' thoughts on how race affected the perceptions that Honors College administrators, staff, and professors had of the participant. Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory holds that racism has a significant effect on the progress of the African American. Mignoaggressions, an auxiliary of Critical Race Theory, explain that racism is to blame for the low expectations instructors have of African Americans in gifted studies (Palmer & Maramba, 2011). The interview protocol also allowed the participants to share how they believed those from their home community viewed them. Bean and Eaton's (2001) Psychological Model of Retention holds that if a student felt supported at home, it would greatly influence his decision to persist. DuBois (1903) posited that African American males struggle because they seek approval from their native community and the academic community. hooks (2004) posited that many African American communities tend to connote intelligence with not being *cool*. As a result, African American males are forced to maintain two different personas: one that does not value education and another that

does (Dubois, 1903). *Perspective* refers to the participants' viewpoints of how race affects African Americans in regard to the Honors College. Delgado and Stefancic's (2001) Critical Race Theory uses the Voice of Color tenet to explain racial prejudices and injustices committed by mainstream society from the perspective of the minority. *Effects* refer to how the participant reported that the Honors College influenced his decision to remain in the Honors College and at the institution. *Effects* also refer to how the participant reported that the Honors College influenced the barriers that affect African American males. Harper et al. (2009) posited that African American males enrolled in Honors Programs are more likely to persist. Cosgrove (2004) explained how the Honors College is structured to encourage retention. The researcher created 38 labels for frequent references that were made by more than one participant in regard to a particular topic to note the frequency of the reference; the frequency of the label is notated in parenthesis after the label. Note that these reference labels are derived from phrasing and direct quotes taken from the participants. The following table explains the categories and their related themes:

Table 3

Categories and Themes of Findings

Integration	Perspectives	Perception	Effects
Academic	Professions	Professors like me	Persistence
Social	Non-Honors	Neighbors don't	Personal Benefits Two-self concept

Integration

Integration has been reduced to two themes, *Academic integration* and *Social integration* in order to better manage the analysis. Participants reported having participated in *Academic integration* in the Honors College by referencing experiences that were categorized using the following labels: *attending orientation* (4), *student cohorts* (3), *advisor communication* (11), *fostering relationships with professors*, (12) and *completing a thesis* (4). Participants reported having participated in *Social integration* in the Honors College by referencing experiences that have been categorized into the following labels: *living in learning community (LLC)*(5), *joining auxiliary groups within the Honors College* (3), and *attending parties hosted by the Honors College* (4).

When asked to speak about academic integration, 11 out of 12 participants referred to a specific professor/administrator that they favored as a result of the professor being cordial or accepting. Four students also spoke about the importance meeting professors outside of the classroom in order to gain references for professional school. For the senior participants, their most favored professor was also their thesis advisor or project supervisor.

The researcher stated, "Tell me about your participation in social events hosted by the Honors College." All of the participants were aware of parties hosted by the Honors College. One participant particularly enjoyed being able to socialize with other Honors College students; he felt that they had more in common with him than non-Honors College students. Another participant, who was an Honors College Student Executive

Board member, went into great detail about a special event that the Honors College at his university hosted. He mentioned descriptions of other small social events and how they incorporate the entire Honors College body. The participant ended the example showing satisfaction with his surroundings by saying, “yeah it’s pretty cool here.” On the contrary, 8 out of 12 participants either did not attend or rarely attended Honors College hosted parties due to schedule conflicts as the participants had obligations such as studying, work, and team practices. Three participants mentioned the Honors College socials were “not their thing,” due to corny party themes or attendees that made them feel uncomfortable.

Recruitment

While participants did mention pre-events such as orientations that took place before school began and campus visits, only one reported that the Honors College recruited him. In fact, he referred to the recruitment as “stalking.” He commented, “They (the Honors College) have people calling you to see if you’re coming to this event and that event. They’re just calling and calling and mailing and emailing.” On the contrary, the other participants either found out about the Honors College through college fairs, teacher referrals, former Honors College students, or personal research. One participant did mention that there were people in place at his university who were currently trying to increase the minority population in the Honors College by increasing recruitment efforts.

Perception

The *perception* category has two themes: *Academia*: “My professors think...” and

Community: "My neighbors think..." as the participants reported how they believed both those in academia and the members of their home community viewed them as Honors College students at a Predominantly White Institution. Participants reported their interpreted perceptions of how those in academia thought about them by listing characteristics that have been categorized under the following labels: *likable* (5), *extraverted* (3), and *intelligent* (3). Participants reported their interpreted perceptions of how those in their home communities view them by referencing experiences that have been categorized by the following labels: *neighbors make fun of me* (6), *close friends support me* (4), and *immediate family supports me* (11).

Ten of out twelve of the participants reported that their professors and administrators in their respective Honors College had positive opinions of them. One of the two participants who did not believe his Honors College administrators had positive opinions of him because he had recently experienced a semester of probation due to grades, and he insisted that the administration and professors lacked confidence in him. He commented, "they'd probably say (that) I didn't have what it took to stay in." The other outlying participant was not sure how the Honors College professors and administrators viewed him as he did not say much to them in any setting. He explained, "I really don't fool with them...I can't really say what they think." This participant was from a small, rural, predominantly African American, town and during the interview, he frequently expressed feeling out of place at his university and in his Honors College.

When the researcher asked, "How do you think your friends and family at home perceive you now that you are attending college as an Honors Student at a PWI?" all of

the participants believed their families, particularly immediate families were supportive of their choice; however, 9 out of 12 participants made a point to differentiate between *my friends* and *people from my neighborhood* at home. These participants explained that the people in their neighborhood were not supportive of their choice to leave the community and pursue an education anywhere besides a Historically African American College or University. The participants reported that the people in the neighborhood called them names for showing intelligence such as *sellout* or suggested that the participants thought they were better than those living in the neighborhood. For this reason, these participants did not tell the people in their neighborhood that they were members of the Honors College. Below is a participant's account about how the people in his neighborhood mistreat him as a result of his demonstration of intellect; this further depicts the nature of home community perceptions of African American males in the Honors College:

Participant 1: I don't really keep up with that group of them... But if I did I know they wouldn't be supportive of me coming here to (institution) to be in the Honors College because they would say that I forgot where I came from and I thought I was better than them. If I were to go home right now and speak to them the way that you and I are talking right now they would say 'ay bruh why you talking like that why you talking *all-white*?' I sorta tried to keep... Well my nerdiness or my intelligence on the low low (laughs) when I was growing up... because I didn't want them to make fun of me. Everybody in my neighborhood had to do that if

you didn't want them to reject you or if you wanted to stay friends with the people in our neighborhood you couldn't show that you were really smart.

Perspectives

The *perspectives* category has two themes: *Views from the Honors College professional, who acts (blank) toward me* and *Views from other African American males outside the Honors College, who do not pursue admission*. The participants were asked to give their perspectives about how race serves as a factor that influences the decisions of professional staff members and how race factors into African American male non-members' views of and decisions to/not to join the Honors College. When they were asked to share their *perspectives* about how race factors into the actions of the professional staff in the Honors College, the participants responded with examples categorized by the following labels: *Exclude AA in selection* (3), *Promote/Increase Diversity* (4), *Naturally Occurring Racism* (6), and *Race not a Factor at all* (4). Participants gave their perspectives about how race influences the decisions of non-members of the Honors College and ability to join: *Do not see/know of the benefits* (3), *Fall short of the criteria* (7), *Afraid of Criticism* (2), *Lack Motivation* (9), and *Too Little Representation* (3).

Ten out of twelve participants reported that they had not *personally* experienced racism from the Honors College professional staff; however, seven of those ten prefaced their claim with the following phrase or one very similar "but that doesn't mean it (racism) doesn't happen." After making the claim that he had never *personally* been mistreated because of his race, one participant still stated, "Of course... Yes! That's

(racism) is going to happen probably anywhere you go. Unless you can scrub this (skin) off... You'll [African Americans] most likely face that anywhere." He made the statement with certainty as if racism was an expected part of life. Two participants were adamant that race affected how Honors College professionals treated African American males in the Honors College. One of those participants used his experience with being placed on probation as an example of how Honors College professionals allow race to affect their treatment of African American students. He claimed that if he were white, the administration would most likely decide to be more lenient with their decision. There were three participants who chose to give examples of how the professionals in their Honors College had once made efforts to note the difference in Black students and White students. One participant explained how his professor asked the class "which culture does this music match with?" The music was jazz and the participant stated that the professor looked at him upon asking the question making class *uncomfortable*. The second participant mentioned how his professor attempted to relate specifically to him by rephrasing a word using an urban colloquialism and using hand gestures so that he could understand better. The third participant told of his experience during pre-orientation when an Honor College coordinator made a point to pull him from a pre-selected tour group and pair him and another African American male student so that they could exchange telephone numbers in hopes that the two would choose to be roommates. On the other hand, one participant told of how his English professor and apogee supervisor, whom he loved, never treated him differently because he was African American. The participant was complementary about how his professor handled race as she allowed him

to complete an assignment using lyrics from his favorite rapper's song, and she did not ostracize him.

The participants overwhelmingly agreed that falling short of the criteria was a deterrent to African American males admission into the Honors College. BS went further to explain that grades were not of importance to African American males because they were not expected to be intelligent or Honors Students:

That's just what people expect us to do around here in (city). There's not too many teachers who pushed us to be good smart people. Athletes? Yes. Star football players? Yes. Honor Students? NO. So to fit in with what you're expected to do, we don't put ourselves to be in advanced classes or apply for the Honors College. No one even tells them about the Honors College. I guarantee right now if you asked some of them about the Honors College, they'd be like "What?"

Furthermore, three participants mentioned that African American males were not exposed to the Honors College and did not know it existed; one participant referred to it as "the best kept secret." Another participant further explained the secrecy of the Honors College, "...the counselor normally talks to just the advanced classes...so we're (African Americans) already at a disadvantage because we're not in advanced classes." Nine participants suggested that African American males who were not in the Honors College did not want to apply because they lacked the motivation to complete what was required of an Honors College student. One participant stated, "They want a degree, but just not a degree you have to put in work for." Finally, the participants suggested that African American males who were not in the Honors College most likely saw the low number of

African American males in the Honors College as a negative. P_1 elaborated on this suggestion:

At least in the university you can congregate with each other and you can socialize with other black students... In the Honors College you don't have that luxury because nine times out of 10 you are one of two African-Americans- if that many in a classroom. Other than that I can't think of any other reason why they wouldn't want to be part of the Honors College.

Effects

Effects is divided into three themes: *Persistence*, which refers to the effects that the Honors College has on the participants' persistence in college and in the Honors College, *Personal Benefits* which refers to benefits incurred by participants as a result of being in the Honors College, and the *Two-self concept*, which holds that African American males are torn between two worlds: academia and their native community. When asked whether engaging in the components of the Honors College affected their persistence in the Honors College, participants reported that engagement affected Honors College persistence (3) but not persistence in college. Participants made reference to being *self-motivated* (9) in regard to college persistence. Participants reported that the Honors College personally benefitted them by providing: *networks* (3), *friendships* (2), *travel opportunities* (4), *new explorations* (6), *graduate school prep* (3), *financial aid* (5) and *motivation* (5).

The participants overwhelmingly asserted that being in the Honors College was not a factor for their decision to remain in school. Nine of twelve participants claimed

that that their decision to remain in school was due to their own desire to finish school.

For example, BS indicated:

Like, I've always had internal motivation, and it comes from when I was little.

See, when I was in the first grade, I brought home a report card with a *C* on it and my mama, she... well she whooped me. Yeah, like, it wasn't pretty.

She whooped me pretty bad so I haven't made a *C* since. I've made all A's and so that's my motivation to do good.

While most participants reported strong internal motivation, one participant reported that participating in the Honors College influenced his decision to persist in college and in the Honors College. When asked, "Would you be willing to say that one of the previous types of interactions (social or academic) influenced your decision to remain in school? The Honors College?" He responded, "Probably so...making friends here in the Honors College...having that community that embraced you...makes you want to stay. I'm graduating but I'll miss these guys."

All of the twelve participants reported that participating in the Honors College was personally benefitting to them in some form. Half of the participants reported that they were given an opportunity to experience something as a result of being in the Honors College that they would not otherwise have experienced. During the interview, the researcher explained the barriers that the literature reported as hindrance for African American male persistence; afterwards, the researcher asked whether the Honors College aided in addressing the barrier. While two participants made references to Mentoring as a personal benefit, another participant spoke of how his Honors College could benefit

from having more mentors for African American males. The participant stated, “We lack here at [university] on providing mentors for African American males like myself. There’s no one here that I can go to that I can relate to.” Five of twelve participants reported that the Honors College provided them with Financial Aid, and without it, paying for school would be difficult. On the other hand, one participant took the liberty to report that he did not need financial aid at all because his parents’ income was substantial enough to pay for his college expenses without assistance from the Honors College.

Two-self concept

DuBois (1903) explained that African American males often live in two different worlds: they must demonstrate a different self for mainstream society and their native community. Bell (2010a) extends DuBois’s theory of Double Consciousness to the two-self concept, which explains the double consciousness African Americans must maintain both in academia and in the African American community. The researcher explained this concept as a barrier and asked the participants to respond about if and how the Honors College addressed it. Only one of the 12 participants responded saying that the Honors College addressed this barrier; all but two stated that participating in the Honors College made their struggle of balancing two selves more difficult. The majority of the participants chose to go into great detail about the two-self concept. They used phrases such as “two different people for two different audiences,” and “I can’t be me here.” One participant explained that the two-self concept was his reason for not talking much at all in the Honors College. This participant was self-conscious about how people in the

Honors College, administrators, and students viewed him. He also confirmed that he made an effort not to demonstrate any characteristics of an Honors College student when he returned home to his home community. According to the participants who spoke to the two-self concept, people from their neighborhoods ostracized them for being smart. When describing how he felt in his neighborhood at home, one participant said, “Do I feel alienated sometimes? Do I feel like I stick out like a sore thumb? YES!” The participants report how cumbersome it is to change the way they talk and act when they transition from home to school and in the Honors College or vice versa. One participant goes into great detail about how being in the Honors College causes him to juggle his two selves.

CB: I would say the Honors College adds more pressure to me having to be two different people because you know we're already an institution that has a small amount of African-American students. The Honors College has even less so when I walk into an Honors College classroom with maybe 15 people, I'm the only African-American there. That's a really... that's really... a quite... that's really quite a taxing environment. There's a subtle pressure that I feel to represent all African-American men into the best of my ability, so I can't succumb to acting like I normally act or how I feel comfortable acting. Sometimes the only black individuals that my fellow students in the Honors College see is myself or a few more African-Americans who are in the Honors College here so we have to act you know in a manner that is uplifting to the black community. It's hard you know? Because the weight of the entire race... all of my actions, all of everything

that I say is going to affect how those in the Honors College look at my race. So if anything the Honors College doesn't block that barrier they heighten that barrier!

On the contrary, the one student that claimed that the Honors College addressed the two-self concept barrier explained that the Honors College gave him a refuge away from the judgment of the people in his neighborhood. He explained that while he was growing up, he did not go outside to play with the other children in his neighborhood because they made fun of him for being smart. They would call him “oreo” insisting that he was black on the outside and white on the inside. This participant explained how the Honors College is now what considers home:

...the Honors College has given me a place that accepts the fact that I want to do something with myself. I don't go home except in the Summer and at Christmas, because I have to...because I don't want to be around people who don't understand me. Here (The Honors College) they do.

The participants' interview excerpts added vivid illustrations about the experiences of African American males in the Honors College. The researcher's positionality was greatly influenced by the participant responses. Implications for the findings will be discussed at great length in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter describes the purpose of the study as well as discusses the importance of the findings as it relates to promoting African American male persistence in Higher Education and the Honors College. The research began with the intent to find the answer to the following two questions: 1) In the African American male student's opinion, how does enrollment the Honors College influence his decision to persist in college? and 2) Considering that Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana have higher percentages of African American than many other states, why are there not more African American males in the Honors College? This chapter also discusses limitations for the study and suggested recommendations for future research.

Findings and Interpretations

Category I: Integration

The literature suggested that Honors College enrollment could motivate individuals to persist (Porter, 1990). On the contrary, this research proves that the experience is different for African American males. Participants reported being self-motivated and desiring to persist with or without the Honors College. According to Tinto (1993), integration occurs when a student makes an effort to acquaint themselves with their professors/staff and maintain a healthy social life within the academic environment. Bean and Eaton (2001) claim that the previous behaviors are the main constructs of retention. Partially consistent with these findings, participants in this study who did not socially integrate have been retained. Also, the majority of participants in this research

profess to have healthy relationships with no more than two of their professors; however, these participants assert that their decision to remain in school results from internal motivation and not integration. Tinto (1993) maintained that a student must engage in academic integration to excel. The participants in the research substantiated this literature as all with the exception of two have integrated, and all are excelling. Participants in the research also confirmed the benefits of building relationships with professors:

I definitely believe in networking. I think that networking and making good impression on professors at the University is necessary because when I go to grad school I'm going to be representing them and I want to be able to get recommendations from them some of them, and them speaking highly of me and thinking well of me it makes me feel pretty good it makes me feel confident about what I can do in the future with their help.

On the other hand, one of the participants who did not socially integrate in the Honors College due to overscheduling with work and pledging a fraternity, was placed on probation for poor academic performance. Participants in this research substantiated Tinto's (1993) claim that the best practices for encouraging social integration were avenues such as living on campus within a community of peers. Participants expressed satisfaction when responding about Living and Learning Communities being a part of the Honors College. Researchers (Bean & Eaton, 2001; Tinto, 1986) posit that students who interact with their peers outside of the classroom are more likely to be retained. However, several participants in this research indicated that they were either too busy or

not interested in socially integrating, yet they still decided to persist in school and in the Honors College.

Category II: Perception

Perception explains how the participant feels that others view him in regard to his participation in the Honors College. Bean and Eaton (2001) suggested that a student who does not feel supported at home or from those from his home environment is less likely to persist in an academic environment. Ford (1999) contended that the majority of African American parents of males do not support their sons' quest of excellence in education. This lack of motivation, in turn, causes African American males to strive less to achieve academic excellence. However, the findings in this research are different. Participants claimed that families supported and encouraged their persistence. The findings in this research were congruent with Fries-Britt and Turner (2001) regarding lack of support from the African American home community. Non-family members were often critical of the participants' involvement in the Honors College or academics as whole. The participants in this research denied the need for support from non-family in their home environment. In fact, several participants in this research distanced themselves from those in their home environment who were not members of their family so as not to receive criticism from them during the pursuit of an education.

The participants in this research reported positive perceptions from Honors College professionals. The findings in this research are congruent with Nogera (2012) as the participants indicated satisfaction when speaking of the positive perceptions that the Honors College professionals had of them.

Category III: Perspectives

Perspectives are the participants view on how race affects the treatment from the professionals in the Honors as well as how African American males who are non-Honors College students view the Honors College experience. Pittman (2001) suggested that African Americans' fear the unknown about the Honors College and therefore do not join. The participants supported this claim as they referred to African American males staying away from what they did not understand. Ford et al. (2013) suggest that microaggressions, or passive forms of racist treatment of other races, can explain the feelings of mistreatment among African American males in gifted education. Support for this claim varied as two participants professed to have never been treated differently due to race; however, three participants referenced examples of how professionals were guilty of microaggressions.

The literature does not address why African American males who were not in the Honors College chose not to pursue admission into the Honors College. Suggestions for future research on this phenomenon will follow in a later section.

Category IV: Effects

Effects refer to how participating in the Honors College influenced the participant. According to Porter (1990), students' persistence could be motivated by their involvement in programs such as the Honors College. When asked if participation in the Honors College components influenced their decision to stay in school or the Honors College, the participants overwhelmingly denied that their motivation to persist in college was akin to their participation in the Honors College; however, few participants did state

that their persistence in the Honors College was due to their participating in Honors College components. One participant explained, “I really never thought about leaving school, getting a degree has just been an internal goal for me but I definitely think it has made me want to stay in the program because I just fit, you know, I found my niche so to speak.”

The barriers identified in the literature that hinder African American male persistence are lack of financial aid, lack of college preparation, lack of mentoring, lack of family support, and struggles with the two-self concept. The participants in this research indicated that the Honors College was responsible for lessening the financial aid barrier as well as providing motivation. Participants in the research did support the literature claims that African American males suffer from the two-self- concept (Dubois 1903; 2003). Participants mention feeling *alienated* as Bell (2010a) suggested occurs as part of the two-self concept.

Recommendations

Integration. Overall, the 12 African American males interviewed did integrate, but academically more so than socially. The participants beyond freshman year had either stopped going to social events altogether or slowed their attendance because of schedule conflicts. The participants also indicated that the social event themes were not appealing to them. Honors College staff should use this data to ensure that Honor College functions are inclusive rather than exclusive when considering themes. Honors College staff should be diligent to follow-up with African American male upper-classmen in order to encourage social integration past freshman year in the Honors College.

Perceptions. The literature suggested that African Americans achieve less when they perceive their community does not support them (Fries-Britt & Turner 2001). The participants in this research indicated that family support was a strong suit; however, support from non-family members in their native community was not. The majority of the participants reported that non-family community members were insulting and often caused the participants to want to hide their intellect so not to be made fun of. This data is useful to the parents of African American males in the Honors College who would be responsible for combatting the negativity that plagues the community with a support system.

Perspectives. Participants indicated that African American male non-Honors College students would be less likely to seek admission into the Honors College because they did not understand the benefits or other components of the Honors College. High school counselors should introduce the Honors College to rising African American high school male freshmen and their parents and iterate the entry criteria throughout high school. Participants also spoke about how race influenced treatment from professors in the Honors College. Honors College professionals can use this information during diversity sensitivity training to educate their faculty and staff about the perspectives of Honor College students.

Effects. The majority of the participants indicated that participating in the Honors College resulted in the barrier of financial aid being lessened; however, other barriers peculiar to African American male persistence were not lessened. Honors College

administrators and college administrators can benefit from this data when structuring components within the Honors College such as mentor/mentee programs.

Suggestions for Further Research

This research identified the two-self concept as a barrier that African American males in the Honors College struggle with as they pursue academics and maintain membership in their home communities. Participants were briefly questioned about the two-self concept, and they gave lengthy responses. The timeframe of this study was not conducive to further exploration of this phenomenon. A future study with a longitudinal design would provide a more detailed analysis of what takes place during this experience.

African American males of different socio-economic statuses should be considered differently. Langram (1997) posited that impoverished African Americans have high rates of depression and suffer feelings like alienation; therefore, they are less likely to succeed in academics. Poverty in the African American community can cause African American students to feel less valued, and frequently these feelings of self-defeat that will lead to the student leaving the academic sector prior to degree completion (Garibaldi, 1984). A study linking poverty to African American males in the Honors College could seek to determine whether that factor has an impact on persistence.

There is little or no research on why qualified African American non-Honors College males do not seek admission into the Honors College. The participants in this research gave several speculated reasons; however, a study examining the current demographic outside of the Honors College would discover African American male perspectives from outside of the Honors College.

Summary

This dissertation sought to gather information from African American males enrolled in the Honors College about whether or not enrollment in the Honors College affected their decision to remain in school from one year to the next. Both Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model of Retention and Delgado and Stefancic's Critical Race Theory guided the information collection process. Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model of Retention was used to determine if the social and academic interactions in the Honors College led to higher levels of persistence. Delgado and Stephanie's Critical Race Theory's Voice of Color tenet was used as the African American males explained their perspectives of being Honors College Students. The results will benefit college administrators when evaluating college retention programs for minorities. Admission and recruitment personnel will benefit from the study as recruitment efforts for African American males could be tailored towards the collected data. Honors College administrators and staff could benefit greatly from the results of this study. Plunker et al., (2010) contended that learning about a student's motivation is critical when designing an educational plan. Honors College administrators and staff are responsible for designing the curriculum in the College; therefore, knowledge about African American male students' motivation could aid Honors College administrators in the design of an educational plan best suited to encourage persistence in African American males. Oterro and Spurrier (2005) contended that by gaining information from students regarding their performances and outcomes, Honors College administrators learn knowledge about the efficacy of the College. Components of the Honors College that participants identify as

helpful towards motivation can be strengthened and targeted more towards African American males in order to ensure completion; likewise, components that participants identify as hindrances can either be altered or eliminated. This study also rendered suggestions based on data collection about possible services for African American males that could be implemented in Honors Colleges in the future. This study will assist high school guidance counselors as they assist students in pursuing a college plan that is best suited for them. The data from this study can assist counselors in their efforts of showing African American males which paths at each university prove to yield the most success for the African American male demographic. This dissertation could also aid parents of prospective students during their attempt to assist their child in selecting an educational path that will yield college completion. Finally, this research can aid prospective African American male students. The data collected showed the motivational factors of fellow African American male students who have completed a large portion of the Honors College curriculum. As a result of this study, potential African American male Honors College students can gain an idea of: a) which Honors College components to request information about and b) if the Honors College should be an avenue to consider for college.

The 12 participants interviewed for this research gave responses about persistence in the Honors College that were fairly consistent with the literature about general persistence in the Honors College. The participants' perspectives on African American male participation in the Honors College also substantiated prior findings. However, the

previous findings regarding Honors College enrollment and persistence were not consistent with the findings in this research.

When considering the 12 participants' interview responses, it is important for high school guidance counselors, Honors College administrators, as well as college administrators to juxtapose the findings in this research to the actual literature as several differences are apparent. As a whole, the participants' responses did not support Bean and Eaton's (2001) contention that academic and social integration promoted persistence in the Honors College or in college; instead, the participants contended that their motivation to persist was an internal factor. The participants' decisions to socially and academically integrate were unrelated to their desire to persist.

According to Fergus and Noguera (2010), African American academic performances often hinder them from pursuing elevated curriculums such as the Honors College. The participants in this research agreed with the literature as the majority held the opinion that African American male non-Honors college students could not pursue the Honors College due to their academic performance. The participants also agreed with Pittman's (2001) Honors College study that suggested that African Americans were less likely to pursue admission in the Honors College because of the fear of the unknown. The participants demonstrated a need for Honors College administrators to examine and address barriers faced by African American males as well as monitor African American male upper-class integration.

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board 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: **13121202**

PROJECT TITLE: **Persistence Among African American Males in the Honors College**

PROJECT TYPE: **New Project**

RESEARCHER(S): **Johnell Anderson-Goins**

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

DEPARTMENT: **Educational Studies and Research** FUNDING

AGENCY/SPONSOR: **N/A**

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Exempt Review Approval**

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **01/16/2014 to 01/15/2015**

Lawrence A. Hosman,

Ph.D. Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Persistence of African American males in the Honors College

1. Give me a description of your time here in the Honors College from pre-admission to now and try to relate it to each of the following:
 - a. Recruitment
 - b. Advisement/cohort
 - c. Follow-ups
 - d. Academic Success (on track to graduate with Latin Designation fulfilling requirements)
2. Some people would say that race has an effect on how students are treated by administrators, staff and teachers at a school. What would you say to them?
3. How would you describe your interactions with your Honors College professors?
4. Tell me about your participation in social events hosted by Honors College.
5. Would you be willing to say that one of the previous types of interactions (academic or social) influenced your decision to remain in school? What about in the honors college? If so, which and why?
6. What do you believe is the perception that teachers and staff in the Honors College have of you?
7. Tell me how that perception makes you feel.

8. How would you describe your background? (ex: parenting, socio economic status)
9. How do you think your friends and family at home perceive you now that you are attending college as an Honors Student at a PWI.
10. Tell me how this perception makes you feel.
11. How would you say that being in the Honors College has affected you during your journey in college?
12. Considering the demographic makeup of your school is _____(based on university) and the percentage of African Americans in the state is _____(based on state), do believe the demographic makeup of the Honors College here reflects that of the school? Why or why not?
13. Do you know of more African American males who've expressed interest participating as a student in the Honors College?
14. What would discourage an African American male from being a part of the Honors College?
15. In your opinion, what do you believe would hinder most African American males from participating in the Honors College here at _____?
16. *Barriers* are challenges that can block student success; I will name barriers that are said to block the success of the African American male and I would like you to tell me, if applicable, how each barrier affected you and if being in the Honors College made the barrier less of a challenge.
 - a. Lack of Financial aid

- b. Lack of College Preparation
- c. Lack of Mentoring
- d. Lack of Motivation
- e. Lack of Family support
- f. Suffering from the two-self concept, meaning you lack a sense of belonging to academic society or home.

APPENDIX C

PILOT STUDY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction: The purpose of this interview is gain a better understanding of the African American male's experience in the Honors College at The University of Southern Mississippi. I would like to examine how your tendencies have been influences as a result of your enrollment and participation in the Honors College.

1. Describe your experience as a student in the Honors College.
2. Describe your relationship with your Honors College professors vs. your relationship with professors in the regular curriculum.
3. How has the Honors College curriculum affected your academic experience as a college student?
4. Describe your attendance at the social opportunities presented within the Honors College vs. the social opportunities in the University.
5. How has the social aspect of the Honors College impacted your social experience as a college student?
6. Describe the types of effective efforts that have been made to assist you in the acclimation process of the Honors College?
7. Describe the types of effort efforts that have been made by the Honors College to assist you in the acclimation process of the University.
8. Describe how the Honors College addresses barriers in order to encourage the success of African American males.

9. Based on your college career experience thus far, what single change would you make within The Honors College if given the opportunity?
10. Describe the significance of the Honors College during your journey as an African American male in college.

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