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## Factors that Affect the Decision-Making Process of African American Students

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Factors that affect the decision-making process of African American students  
to participate in higher education

By

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An Alternate Plan Paper Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

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In

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## CHAPTER ONE

At the end of 2009, in comparison to 15,027,000 White students enrolled, there were 2,889,000 African American students enrolled in colleges and universities across the United States. Between the years 2009 and 2010, there were a total of 1,602, 480 bachelor degree holders in the United States. African Americans represented 9 percent (164,844) of the bachelor degree recipients, while Whites represented 72.9 percent (1,167,499), Hispanics 10.3 percent (164,844), Asian/Pacific Islanders 7.3 percent (117, 422), and American Indian/Alaska Natives .07 percent (12,399) (Kim, 2011). Factors such as costs, academic reputation, availability of programs, school location, social acceptance, socioeconomic status, biased recruitment processes, limited academic interests, religious preferences, and insufficient standardized test scores, all play a role in African American students' decision to participate in higher education.

Due to historical discrimination laws and racial barriers, it has been difficult for African Americans to obtain a college education at the same pace as Whites. Although many public policies have been designed and implemented to increase the enrollment rate of African Americans in higher education, these students still lag behind their White counterparts. College admission officers, college recruiters, and policy makers zone in to understand the factors that can increase the enrollment rate of African Americans in higher education institutions. Four factors will be reviewed that impact African Americans' decision to participate in higher education: personal, economic, academic, and social.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Historical Overview of African Americans' Participation in Higher Education*

To truly understand the overall process of African American participation in higher education, it is crucial to first understand the historical journey of acquiring education among African Americans: from slavery to freedom. During the time slavery was legalized in the United States, it was against the law for slaves to read. Jim Crow laws were the overriding norm in America: these laws were also the mode of operating education (Gallien & Peterson, 2005). It wasn't until after the Civil War that education became the primary focus for millions of freed slaves. Historical milestones such as the Freeman Bureau, 1890 Morrill Act, GI Bill, *Brown* decision, Higher Education Act of 1965, Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Affirmative Action), and the *Adams* decision contributed to the increase of Black student enrollment (Gallien & Peterson, 2005).

The Freedmen's Bureau provided schooling throughout the South for millions of freed Blacks. The Bureau was established to help the transition of Blacks and Whites from systematic slavery to independence. The Bureau supervised all relief and educational activities relating to refugees and freedmen, including issuing rations, clothing, and medicine (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010). By 1869, approximately 114, 000 African Americans attended schools established by the Freedmen's Bureau (Gallien & Peterson, 2005, p. 18). In 1862, Congress passed the Morrill Act, which provided grants of land to each state to finance the establishment of colleges to provide agricultural and mechanical training to Whites only. An 1890 amendment to the Morrill Act mandated states to either provide separate educational facilities for Blacks, or admit Blacks to White institutions. Adamant whites eagerly agreed to create separate colleges for Blacks. As a

result, sixteen Black colleges were established to educate Blacks in mechanical arts and agricultural sciences (Gallien & Peterson, 2005; Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2012).

In 1944, President Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill), which expanded access to college and increased student college enrollment rates (Kinzie, Palmer, Hayek, Hossler, Jacob, & Cummings, 2004, p. 4, 8-9). The G.I. Bill rewarded the sacrifices and accomplishments of Black and White veterans in the war with college tuition allowances, allowance for books, and guaranteed loans at low interest rates that allowed the purchase of a home or the launching of a small business (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2010, p. 554). By 1947, veterans represented half of the college student population (Turner & Bound, 2002). While many Black veterans benefited from the G.I. Bill, they never received their fair share of funds and assistance (Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2012 p. 492).

In 2008 the historical institutionalists Katzenelson and Mettler independently analyzed the effects of the G.I. Bill's education, training and loan benefits for African American war veterans. They sifted through tons of material and reached different conclusions. According to her research, Mettler believed the G.I. Bill benefits helped widen the income and wealth gaps between Whites and Blacks, particularly in the South, further marginalizing many African Americans. On the other hand, Katzenelson argues that the G.I. Bill was created and designed by pro-segregationists and racists to "protect Dixie's racial order and to insure that all its provisions conform to Southern racial practices despite its formal universalism and the absence of any specific mention of racial categories" (Katzenelson & Mettler, 2008). Katzenelson writes that:

once we acknowledge how blacks fared poorly in Southern higher education and in the various loan programs of the G.I. Bill, claims to the contrary about how the legislation helped level the playing field between blacks and whites must rest on how African

Americans experienced vocational education and assistance (Katznelson & Mettler, 2008). The G.I. Bill may have provided education opportunities for African Americans to participate in college, but African Americans had inequity in their education experience after enrollment.

Similarly, research shows that African Americans outside of the South, benefited from the G.I. Bill more so than Black servicemen in the South. Nevertheless, Black service men across the country endured their share of racial discrimination whenever they tried to utilize GI benefits (Turner & Bound, 2002). The G.I. Bill contributed to many Blacks enrolling in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), but did little to integrate Blacks enrolling in Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). More needed to be done to dismantle the segregation laws inside the schools and education system at the time.

*Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) declared state laws that were practicing racial discrimination in schools unconstitutional and declared violation of the equal protection clause of the fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution (Garrison-Wade, & Lewis, 2004). The *Brown* decision overturned the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case that legally separated races in private and public institutions. *Brown v. Board* helped create more opportunities for African-Americans, bringing in changes that significantly and permanently altered the demographics of the student body in higher education (Kinzie, 2004, et al., p. 40-41). According to Hine & Harrold (2012), *Brown* eventually lead to the dismantling of the entire structure of Jim Crow laws that controlled all aspects of Black Americans' lives: movement, work, marriage, education, housing even death and burial (p. 21). Between 1950 and 1960, the enrollment of Blacks in college skyrocketed from 50,000 to 200,000. Ninety percent of all Blacks in colleges during 1960 were in enrolled in HBCUs. Sixty-five percent were enrolled in HBCUs (Gallien & Peterson, 2005, p. 21). In spite

of strides made after the *Brown* decision, a number of predominantly White colleges and universities remained segregated, so a more substantial integrated approach needed to be made.

Ten years following the *Brown* decision another measure was taken to dismantle racially segregated institutions: the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was designed to eliminate discrimination and Affirmative Action sought to produce action that had not previously taken place in higher education after the *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) Supreme Court decision. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was designed to end racial segregation in public and private institutions and ban employee discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 fostered continued growth in college attendance in the 1960s. By the end of the decade more than half of all high school graduates were accepted into college. With higher education participation rates increasing and a greater number of students attending two-year or regional colleges, an increasingly competitive environment emerged. Many four-year colleges and universities expanded their marketing efforts in an attempt to attract more students and achieve enrollment goals (Kinzie, et al., 2004).

Legislation such as Affirmative Action was added to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to bring equality to African Americans. Affirmative Action was initiated in response to the concern that executive orders, court rulings and pressure from civil rights organizations were unsatisfactory in ending racial discrimination in the United States (Aiken, Salmon, & Hanges, 2013). President Lyndon Johnson mandated agencies receiving federal contracts to take “affirmative action” to employment and treatment of employees without regard to their race, creed, color or national origin by recruiting, hiring, and promoting minorities. Because institutions of higher education received federal aid, universities and colleges took race into consideration and started recruiting minority students as a part of their education mission



(Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2004). The introduction of “affirmative action” into colleges and universities changed the student population. Until the 1950s, college students were primarily young, White males (Bowen & Bok 1998). Haden (2000), cited in her literature review that

From 1965 to 1994, there were significant gains in the total number of racial minorities enrolled in higher education. The total number of minorities enrolled in college increased from 400,000 to 2.8 million during this 30-year period. African American students increased from 8.5 percent to 10.1 percent of all college students. Hispanic students increased from 3 percent to 7 percent of all students enrolled in higher education institutions (Haden, 2000).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Affirmative Action initiatives served as a catalyst to dismantle segregation in public institutions. However, more resources were needed to strengthen education resources for college and universities and provide financial assistance for students in higher education (“The Higher,” 2007).

The Higher Education Act of 1965 was another legislation signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. According to (Kinzie, et al., 2004), The Higher Education Act of 1965 was the most comprehensive national legislation undertaken designed to increase access to higher education for minority and low income groups (Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965). The Higher Education Act of 1965 was signed into law on November 8, 1965 (“The Higher,” 2007). The HEA created grants, loans and other programs to help students acquire education beyond secondary schooling. Under the act, financial aid such as the College Work Study Program provided grants for students based on economic need. This was followed by the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant Program (1972), which provides grant aid to assist eligible students in attaining a postsecondary education. These programs provided billions of dollars in

aid and were accompanied by state aid (Gallien & Peterson, 2005, p. 20). Under HEA and its amendments, students and institutions saw unprecedented growth in federal student financial aid (Kinzie, et al., 2004). The Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) contributed to the significant increase of Blacks in colleges and universities. However, The *Adams* mandate is described as the most important legal action to affect the educational aspirations and achievements of Black students and other minorities' since the *Brown vs Board of Education* case (Gallien & Peterson, 2005, p. 21).

The *Brown* ruling was directed towards public elementary and secondary schools. Nineteen years later, its implications for higher education were articulated in *Adams v. Richardson* (Gallien & Peterson, 2005). *Adams v. Richardson* (1973) was the outcome of one of the first federal initiatives to ensure cooperation with The Civil Rights Act. This case found ten states in violation of the Civil Rights Act for supporting segregated schools. In 1972, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) sued the federal department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) for allowing states to continue to receive federal funds in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (e.g., "District of Columbia," n.d.). The legal pressure to integrate institutions of higher education resulted in increased funding to historically Black colleges, more financial aid to minority students, and subsequent rises in student enrollments ("The Black/White," 1981). African-American student enrollments increased more than threefold at predominantly White institutions and rose by a third at HBCUs (Hayden, 2000). The states were ordered to work actively to integrate institutions. The *Adams v. Richardson* decision enhanced equity in educational opportunity for students of color by mandating enforcement of desegregation and mandating states to have a

better mix of students, faculty, and staff in public colleges and increase access and retention of minorities in higher education (Thomas & McPartland, 1984).

## CHAPTER THREE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Factors that Affect the Decision-making Process of Students*

The decision-making process can be defined as the process through which students decide whether to go to college or not (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). It is critical for colleges and universities to understand relationships of characteristics possessed by students, parents, and other individuals. It is also necessary to understand how these characteristics influence the college decision-making process of students. In understanding this dynamic, it is important to explore the most influential factors in a student's decision to participate in higher education. Research on college choice indicates that decisions to pursue a degree in higher education are related to 1) student' individual and parental influences, such as student academic performance, socioeconomic status, parental support, and parents education background; 2) institutional influences, such as costs and financial aid, location, availability of programs, and reputation; 3) institutional communication influence, such as recruitment efforts and how well students interact with institutions; and 4) significant others such as peers, counselors, and teachers (Cabrera & LaNasa 2000; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Chapman, 1981). All of these are the major factors that affect the decision making process of students to participate in higher education.

#### *Personal & Parental Effects*

##### *Academic Performance*

Studies show that the student's academic ability (i.e., standardized test scores) and achievement (i.e., grand point average) have a great effect on a student's decision to enroll in college (Hossler & Gallager, 1987; Henry, 2012). Good grades are an indicator of academic success, and success itself encourages continued involvement in school (Hossler, Schmit, &

Vesper, 1999). When a student's academic performance is great, he or she is more likely to apply to or attend a more highly selective institution, a high-cost institution, an institution far from home, a private institution rather than a public institution, and a four year institution (Paulsen, 1990; Henry, 2012).

### ***Socioeconomic status***

The socioeconomic status of an individual's family impacts the type of institution that a potential college student will enroll in (Chapman, 1981). Socioeconomic status (SES) is the foundation that causes a series of other attitudes and behaviors that are in return related to the decision-making process for students to participate in higher education. Students from homes with higher SES are more likely to go to four-year colleges and universities than students from homes with average or below average SES. Family income is an important component of SES because it interacts with institutional cost and financial aid to limit what students believe are their realistic options. (Chapman, 1981). Students from low and middle-income groups are less likely to attend selective and more costly institutions as compared with high-income students (Hoyt & Brown, 2003; Chapman, 1981).

### ***Parental Support***

Parents are the single most influential factor when examining a student's postsecondary education plans and chances of attending college (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000; Henry, 2012). Setting the tone for students to succeed, providing encouragement, and actively supporting the student are three broad concepts that can be used to describe parental involvement in the decision making process to participate in higher education (Henry, 2012). Hossler et al. (1999) define parental encouragement as the "frequency of discussions between parents and students about parent's expectations, hopes, and dreams for their children" (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999, p.

24). Parents' active investment in their child's education future can include saving money for college, taking their child on college tours, attending postsecondary preparation workshops, assisting with college applications and forms, and monitoring their child's secondary education (Henry, 2012). Parents' education background plays the most significant role in shaping their child's attitude to participate in higher education (Chapman, 1981).

### ***Parent's Education Background***

The educational background of parents has been shown to be significant to an individual's decision to participate in higher education and choose a particular institution. Students with parents who have received a bachelor's degree or advanced degrees are more likely to attend an institution of higher education, while students whose parents do not have any postsecondary education are less likely to enroll at a college or university (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2000). Hossler and Stage (1992) found parents' education level was positively related to high parent expectations of the student, high expectations of the student for him or herself, high student GPA, and student involvement in extracurricular activities. Research found that those students whose parents have a college education are more likely to begin the college selection process earlier than those students whose parents had no college education (Shankle, 2009).

### ***Institutional Effects***

#### ***Cost & Financial Aid***

Cost is more of an influence on whether or not a student goes to college than which particular college he or she enrolls in (Paulsen, 1990; Chapman, 1981). The cost of the institution and the amount and type of financial aid a student receives impacts the student's decision to enroll at their top-choice institution (Pope & Fermin, 2003). These characteristics of the institution weigh on the student's mind whether to apply and enroll at a particular college or

university. For instance, when an Iowa family was interviewed about their daughter's decision to enroll in college, the father dived into the conversation to say, "The biggest deal when looking at schools is the financial support the institution might be able to provide my children. The economy has affected our search criteria" (Morelli, 2010).

Tied with cost is an institution's tradition of awarding financial aid (Chapman model). The use of aid to reduce the cost of tuition is quite common, but has been shown to be a self-serving interest by the institution. Depending on a student's background and need for aid, this shapes the personality of the institution (Henry, 2012). Research shows that Black and Hispanic students are more responsive to grants and scholarships and are more cost conscious in their college selection than White students (Hoyt & Brown, 2003). (Kinzie, et al., 2004) points out that low-income students are more sensitive than middle or upper-income students to college costs. For understandable reasons, the financial realities of a college education are influencing a student's choice of where to attend college (Henry, 2012).

### ***Location***

The geographic location of an institution and its proximity to home are factors that influencing student's decision to enroll in college (Chapman, 1981). A study revealed that an important factor in student predisposition stage to attend college is the close proximity of a higher education to home (Kee & Sia, 2013). On the other hand, according to Hoyt and Brown (2003), studies suggest that the current generation of college-bound high school students is much more likely to attend college out-of-state than previous generations were (Chapman, 1981) points out that potential college students in an area with many colleges are less likely to travel far to go to college. Location has been identified as an important characteristic for both students and institutions to consider (Henry, 2012). According to Kezar & Eckel (2007) recent research in

education suggests that academic reputation, location, and distance from home were among the most significant factors influencing student college choice decision. Distance from home and entry requirements were ranked as more important by students who attended institutions (Briggs, 1998). Location and nearness to home were also found to be more significant for disadvantaged students (Kezar & Eckel, 2007, p. 27).

### ***Availability of Programs***

Chapman (1981) states that, “students select colleges in which they believe they can get the courses they need to enter graduate school or to get jobs. The courses availability and the benefits from taking those courses are important to a student’s decision whether they enroll in at a particular institution or not.” According to Kezar & Eckel (2007), availability of programs is among the top factors that influence the college choice. Research suggests that the following factors that are among the most significant in choosing where to go to college are academic reputation, location, distance from home, course suitability, and employment opportunities.

A study conducted in Sarawak, Malaysia even showed that the availability of programs was among the top college choice factor among 463 prospective students. In 2003, Hayden (2000) conducted a study that examined the factors that influence the college choice process for African American students who attended a Historically Black Colleges and University and a Predominately White Institution. Seventy-three respondents (36 from PWI and 37 from HBCU) answered questions related to social, academic, economic, and personal issues being the factors that influence their college choice. Results from the study showed that the availability of programs were among the top 10 reasons why the African American students choose to matriculate at these particular institutions.

### ***Reputation***



Academic reputation is among the most important variables affecting higher education student choice. (Kezar & Eckel, 2007). The relationship between students' preferences and institutional characteristics is significant because it determines where students ultimately decide to go to college (Pope & Fermin, 2003). For instance, Hoyt and Brown (2003) reviewed 22 studies related to college choice in order to identify institutional factors that were most frequently named as important to students. The views of over 30,000 students in 18 states were represented in this comprehensive review. Among the 22 studies examined, nine factors took first place as far as level of importance to students. Those nine factors in order of frequency, included: academic reputation, location, quality of instruction, availability of programs, quality of faculty, costs, reputable program, financial aid, and job outcomes. The academic reputation of a university is a key factor in the recruitment of high achieving students, but it is also the case that recruiting high achieving students is critical for improvement of an institution's academic reputation (Johnson, 2005). Whether the social and academic reputation of the institution fits the student or not, will also affect the student's decision to apply to that particular institution (Bergerson, 2009).

### ***Institutional Communication Effects***

#### ***Recruitment Efforts***

College recruitment efforts are the actions of the institution to communicate with students such as campus visits, brochures, other written materials, telemarketing, and contact with admissions personnel or other representatives (Brown, Hernandez, Mitchell, & Turner, 1999). Institutions of higher education use various means to market their services. Institutions may use ACT information to contact high school students as well as their parents when the student lists the college or university as his or her college choice (Hoyt & Brown, 2003). In addition, college

recruiters may visit high schools. College websites are becoming more influential sources of information to encourage students to apply to their institution (Hoyt & Brown, 2003). Student's visits to campus have shown to be influential as well, especially through the federal funded TRIO programs (Kinzie, et al., 2004). According to Chapman (1981), high school visits are considered the most effective recruiting method. Colleges and universities also inform students about their institution via college guides, brochures, and college catalogues sent in the mail (Brown, et al., 1999; Chapman, 1981). Other recruitment techniques may consist of activities or events on college campuses, advertising literature in the high schools, newspapers, radio and television (Hoyt & Brown, 2003). Chapman (1981) points out that information gathering relates to high school seniors' education aspirations and students who expect to go onto college are more apt to actively seek out college information.

### *Significant Other Effects*

#### *Secondary Education School Officials*

Bergerson (2009) expressed that although family contributes to the decision to participate in college, significant others such as peers, teachers, and counselors also influence students' perception of aspirations for postsecondary education. According to (McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, 2012),

...counselors can contribute substantially to reaching the goal of increased college enrollment and persistence. Counselors are school-based representatives who work to deliver programs and services to support all students via "individual planning" in the school (ASCA, n.d.). They are also in a position to address inequalities that prevent certain students from successfully transitioning through high school and into college (Holcomb-Mc-Coy, 2007).

High school counselors serve as a very important resource in student's decision to matriculate into college.

In the search stage of the college choice process, Cabrera & LaNasa (2000) points out that "more affluent students, compared with their less-well-off peers, tend to rely on several sources of information (including private counselors to guide the process". Cabrera & LaNasa, (2000) found that low-income high school seniors receive guidance from high school counselors regarding postsecondary plans are encouraged to attend college. (Hossler, et al, 1999) found a study in which guidance counselors at private high schools have a much stronger influence on high school student's decision to participate in college.

### ***Friends/Peers***

Peers serve as an influence to one of the many factors that comprise college choice. According to Chapman (1981), the influences of friends and family are important, particularly in a student's choice stage. However, according to Furukawa (2011), research is inconsistent in the area whether peers influence the college choice. For example, (Furukawa, 2011) placed in their literature review that:

Kealy and Rockel (1987) show that "the student's peer group of high school students is highly influential across all dimensions of perceived college quality (p. 689). Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989) indicate just the opposite and say that peers have no reported effects on influencing institutional choice. Perhaps the best way to interpret these two findings is to say that peers have influence on a student's perception of college quality, but do not go as far as having a direct influence on institutional choice. In other words, peers serve as an influence to one of the many factors that comprise college choice.

### *College Decision-Making Process*

The college choice process presumably has always been multifaceted and, in many ways complex (Hossler & Palmer, 2012). The college choice process can be viewed as “a complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university or institution of advanced vocational training” (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989, p. 234). Many studies on college decision-making process use economic and sociologic models to build their theoretical framework to examine factors of college choice (Source). These frameworks have been used to develop a rationale for college choice behaviors: (a) economical models, (b) sociological models, (c) psychological models, and (d) combined models.

First, Economic models were based on the idea that students use a cost benefit analysis by weighing the costs of their college choice against the perceived benefits (Hossler, et al.,1999). In other words, students determine the rate-of-return on a college education before deciding to attend (Baum, n.d.). Second, Sociological models of college choice (also known as “status-attainment” models) relate to individuals’ aspiration to attend college. These models focus primarily on the elements that might influence students’ enrollment decisions. These factors include family socio-economic background, parental educational and support, student academic ability, the influence of significant others, high-school performance, educational aspirations, motivation, and high school characteristics (Pitre, Johnson, Pitre, 2006; Cremonini, Westerheijden & Enders, 2008). Third, Psychological studies examine the influence of others, campus climate, cost, and academic programs on student choices. Many of these studies are longitudinal, focusing on the stages students go through when deciding on a college (Hossler & Palmer, 2012). Combined models incorporate economic, psychological, and sociological models

(Cremonini, et al., 2008). Combined models offer more opportunity for intervention in the process of students' choices and were more useful to the college administrators and the public than the sociological and economic models alone (Hossler et al., 1989). Most combined models divide the student decision-making process into three phases: aspirations development and alternative evaluation, options consideration, and evaluation of the remaining options and final decision (Jackson, 1982). Combined models can be classified as "three-stage models" or "multi-stage models."

### *College Choice Models*

Over the years, many college choice models have been created to demonstrate the decision making process when choosing a college and the factors that influence college choice: Chapman Model (1981), Hanson and Litten Model (1982), Jackson Model (1982) and Hossler and Gallagher Model (1987) (Hossler, et al., 1999). College choice models paints a picture of the decisions and interactions made by potential college students over time and provide researchers with numerous information for implications and future research (Cabrer & LaNasa 2000; Bergerson, 2009). The use of multiple college choice models can provide a comprehensive overview that will track a student's decision-making process and the factors that influence the process to participate in higher education. However, the integration of all college choice models can be overwhelming. Therefore, for the sake of this research paper, Hossler and Gallagher and Chapman models will be used as models to demonstrate the college choice processes of traditional college students and the factors that influence their decision to participate in college.

The Chapman Model is longitudinal and suggests that, to understand a student's choice on which to attend, it is necessary to take into account both background and current characteristics of the student, the student's family, and the characteristics of the college. The

model suggests that student college choice is influenced by a set of student characteristics in combination with a series of external influences (Chapman, 1981). Hossler and Gallagher's College Choice Model is comprised of three phases through which students' progress as they move from educational aspirations to college enrollment. High school students develop predispositions to attend college, search for general information about college, and make choices leading them to enroll at a given institution of higher education (Cabrera. & LaNasa, 2000).

### ***The Chapman Model***

Chapman developed a college choice model that focused on traditional aged students. The Chapman (1981) model consists of both an individual perspective and institutional perspective and suggest that the student characteristics and external influences interact to form a student's general expectation of college life. The student characteristics include socioeconomic status, aptitude, educational aspirations, and high school performance. The external influences were grouped into three general categories: 1) the influences of significant persons such as guidance counselors, teachers, parents or peers, 2) the fixed characteristics of the institution, such as cost, financial aid, location, program availability, campus environment, and 3) the institution's own efforts to communicate with prospective students by phone, email, school, visits, campus invites (Chapman, 1981). This model could best be characterized as a theoretical model because it describes the interactions and influences of the college selection process. The model identifies the major factors that influence the college choice process but does not consider all possibilities (Hossler, et al., 1999).

### ***Hossler and Gallagher Model***

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) created a college choice model that looked at the process in three phases: predisposition, search, and choice. Hossler, Braxton, and Coopersmith (1989)

actually refine the terminology of the model's three stages to describe: decision to participate in postsecondary education, the investigation of institutions, and the process of applying and enrolling. Hossler and Gallagher's model gave the first comprehensive model for traditional students. The model is considered comprehensive because it includes in the influential factors both individual factors of the students as well as organizational factors of the institutions. The individual factors include student characteristics, significant others, educational activities, student preliminary college values, student search activities, and the student choice set. The organizational factors include school characteristics, college and university search activities, and college and university courtship activities. The model also looks at the expected outcomes in each of the phases. Each phase contains student outcomes as well, noting that at each of the stages, there is a factor of other options that plays into the decisions that are made by students in the choice process (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

In this model, the first stage of the student college choice process is called the predisposition stage, which consists of characteristics of the students and whether they have the academic ability to pursue higher education. This phase also includes influences from significant others. The organizational factors include the characteristics of the institution. Upon leaving this phase, the student will have searched for college options as well as alternative options to attending college (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Once a decision has been made to consider postsecondary education, the student moves to the second phase, called the search stage. The second phase in the model involves the search process and the way that students and institutions seek out each other. The research stage has been characterized by Hossler and Gallagher (1987, p. 9) as a period when increased "interaction between potential matriculates and institutions occurs." The search phase is when students narrow down the number of institutions they are

interested in attending (Gallagher, 1987). The student moves into the third stage of the process when he or she selects a set of institutions for consideration.

In the choice stage of the Hossler and Gallagher model, students examine the list of institutions nominated for consideration. The students take the information they gathered from the search phase and evaluate the institutions to make a decision on which school they will apply. During this phase, Hossler and Gallagher (1987) identify the courtship activities that colleges and universities utilize to influence students' decision to choose their institution. These activities include offering financial aid and communicating with the students. Hossler and Gallagher suggest that the net price, as opposed to the list price. Net prices refer to the cost of attending after financial aid rewards are taken into consideration. The net price will encourage the student's decision to enroll to a specific institution.

Together Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and Chapman (1981) models provide a comprehensive overview of the college choice process and the factors that influence the college choice for traditional college students. In essence, Chapman and Gallagher & Hossler models can be summed up into four categories that affect students' decision to participate in higher education and choose a particular college to attend: Personal & Parental affects, Institutional effects, Significant Others' effects, and Institution Communication effects. However, both models failed to include cultural capital in their model.

Although extensive research has been conducted using sociological and economic models, research has failed to include systematically students from all ethnic (and cultural) backgrounds (Cremonini, et al., 2008). Chapman failed to include race as an influence in the student characteristic category. Chapman model is believed to be one of the earliest models developed on college-choice that provided a framework for continued research on college-choice



(Cremonini, et al., 2008). According to researchers McDonough, Antonio, and Trent, concluded that traditional college choice models must be altered for African American habitus, their race-based set of subjective views and perceptions (Perna, 2000, p. 74). Perna (2000) adds that proxies for social and cultural capital to the traditional econometric model improves the fit of the model for African Americans and Hispanics. Research suggests that “including measures of social and cultural capital as proxies for differences in expectations, preferences, tastes, and uncertainty in the traditional econometric framework is especially important for understanding the college enrollment decisions of African Americans and Hispanics” (p. 75). Cabrera and LaNasa (2001) questioned whether Hossler and Gallagher’s model fit disadvantaged students. Furthermore, a study was conducted that focused on urban high school students of color whose families did not have a traditional college attendance. These types of research conclude that college choice models must include attention to the specific choice processes for students of color and disadvantaged (Bergerson, 2009).

### ***Minority Recruitment Efforts***

Personal, environmental, and institutional experiences are barriers that historically have resulted in limited college enrollment by students of color. Factors such as cost, lack of financial aid, the need to work full-time, lack of family support, lack of information about the college preparation and application process, low scores on traditional college admission tests, and often, an absence of role models who have gone to college discourage students from participating in higher education (Minority Student, n.d.). However, there are many colleges and universities making strides to recruit and enroll minority students at their institutions (“Minority Student,” n.d.).

Shirley M. Collado, dean of the College at Middlebury co-founded a national organization for strategic planning and institutional diversity at Williams College. Undergraduates from underrepresented minority groups at member colleges go to Berkeley or Columbia to participate in summer research internships and work with faculty mentors who have similar backgrounds. This program also allows graduate students at Berkeley and Columbia to apply for two-year post-docs at Middlebury College, University of Connecticut, and Williams College. The organization's goal is for students to have personal experiences of teaching and doing scholarship at liberal-arts colleges. This way, they'll be encouraged to apply for faculty positions at all the LADO colleges. The organization hopes the three colleges will provide a model that will create a wave of new thinking about diversity, inclusion, and the professoriate in higher education (Williams, 2013). Research has found that minority students are attracted to schools with a racially diverse campus and appreciate seeing a representation of themselves. Colleges that want to increase their minority enrollment need to evaluate their campus climate to determine the extent in which their campus is culturally inclusive ("Minority Student," n.d.). Such is the case with Bowdoin College.

Bowdoin College, located in Brunswick, Maine, is one college that is trying to woo minority students and succeeding. Naiima Horsley-Fauntleroy, a 21 year African American senior, said that "Latino and African-American students wonder whether they will feel welcome in a state like Maine, which is 98 percent white" (Marcus, 2000). Naiima said students who were considering Bowdoin College have concerns about where they could get their hair done, where they could get soul food, and where they could go to church. Bowdoin sends faculty and students to recruit students at urban high schools. Bowdoin flies dozens of minority students in for visits. In addition, they advertise alumni such as Kenneth Chenault, class of 1973, the American

Express president who was named executive of the year by Black Enterprise magazine (Marcus, 2000). Recruitment of minority students must be a comprehensive process with a long-term institution-wide commitment to racial diversity both on campus and with the surrounding business community. Commitment to diversity at every level of the institution, on a philosophical as well as a financial basis, must form the basis of all admission and recruitment efforts (“Minority Student,” n.d.). Morehead State University serves as an example for this model.

Morehead State University’s minority student recruitment goal is to recruit a diverse student body, enhancing access to education opportunities and providing a more well-rounded educational experience for all students. Therefore, Morehead’s objectives for recruiting minorities include to 1) redirect scholarships to high potential minority prospects, 2) target recruitment and marketing activities in areas with significant minority population, 3) seek grant funding for minority recruitment, research study, 4) compile campus diversity resources into a comprehensive website for recruitment and marketing purposes, 5) conduct and compile research data from current minority students, and lost prospects, as a basis for planning minority recruitment activities, 6) coordinate efforts between Academic Affairs, Student Life, and the Affirmative Action Office to recruit minority students, and 7) utilize the “Black Gospel Ensemble to assist in the recruitment of minority students from local, regional, and metropolitan/rural public schools (“Morehead,” n.d.)

The Student Affairs staff of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNSCU) came together and reviewed thousands of college and universities’ web pages effective recruitment and retention of minority students. Among the many success strategies of colleges MNSCU identified, one statement expressed that “recruitment activities that go beyond the traditional

college fairs and high school visits. Successful institutions recruit students of color in community centers, churches, and other nontraditional settings. Current minority students and alumni are involved in the recruitment effort. Recruiters engage the parents and other family members rather than focusing exclusively on the prospective student” (“A Summary,” n.d.) MNSCU identified the University of Delaware as an institution that practices this activity. The University of Delaware has established the Academic Support Program Inspiring Renaissance Educators (ASPIRE) which is a multifaceted recruitment and retention program aimed at attracting students to the teaching profession. Delaware recruitment is organized at neighborhood community centers, churches and church youth groups, and is a year-round endeavor. Early awareness is part of the program and retention efforts that include well-rounded academic advising, study skills training, tutoring, and social development activities (“A Summary,” n.d.). South Carolina technical colleges are part of a system that immerses themselves in diversity recruitment.

South Carolina’s technical colleges are conducting minority student recruitment efforts through Tech Prep, JTPA programs, high school career centers, adult education programs, and Job Service Centers. They are also using College Career Days to target minority students, establishing contacts with community organizations, and using minority students in their recruitment activities (“A Summary,” n.d.). Colleges and universities that are trying to recruit minority students must make their schools visible through advertising that promotes diversity, such as the case with Bridgewater State University (BSU) (“Minority Student,” n.d.). BSU shows two African Americans and a Caucasian person in their graduation caps and gowns on the university’s homepage. Under the picture it states, “Bridgewater State University (BSU) is deeply committed to issues of diversity, inclusion and social justice. In fact, BSU is emerging as

a leader in higher education by providing comprehensive and effective diversity-oriented policies and practices” (Tucker, 2014).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Factors that Affect the Decision-making Process of African American Students to Participate in Higher education*

#### *Personal Effects*

##### *Self-motivation*

In her study, Freeman (2005) discovered that African American students are their own motivators. “student’s indication of themselves as the influence on their perception of the value of higher education could be considered internal to the home” (p. 18). Students who consider themselves as their own motivators to attend college felt there were no family members they could rely on for assistance. Although this concept maybe perceived as negative, Freeman felt that this was another example of how family impacts African American students’ decisions to participate in higher education. Self-motivated students are students whose parents or family members did not attend college. That is to say, these students used the negative home environment influences as motivators, even more than those who were surrounded by positive influences (Shankle, 2009).

##### *Parental*

According to Walker & Satterwhite (2002), “to parent involvement leads to an increase in academic achievement, cognitive development, and improved student behavior resulting in higher grades, better critical thinking skills, and less discipline problems.” Researchers that analyze the factors that influence college choice have concluded points out that among the factors predicting students’ early educational plans, parental encouragement is the strongest. First, parental encouragement is motivational, because parents have high education expectations for their children and second, proactive, because parents are involved in school matters and discuss college plans with their students. To support this claim Lucia & Baumann (2009),

examined differences in the college enrollment among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. The researchers found that the mother's education is positively related to college enrollment for Blacks. Black children whose mothers had at least a high school diploma are more likely to attend college compared to Black children whose mothers dropped out of high school. The researchers concluded that a parent's educational attainments are far more important to Black enrollment than changes in tuition (Lucia & Baumann, 2009).

### ***Extended Family***

In addition to parental influence, family members affect a student's decision to participate to enroll in college. After interviewing African American high school students throughout the country, Freeman (2005) found that a majority of African American students' family members encouraged them to attend college. Even family members that did not have a college education still encouraged their children to go further than their own level of education. The majority of African Americans are still first-generation college students, so the value of higher education is often instilled in students even when family members have not participated in higher education. Some African American students reported that their parents or extended family encouraged them to go beyond their own level of schooling.

### ***Church***

The church has always been involved in the education of African American children (Freeman, 2005, p. 13, 16-17). The African American church has always been pivotal in providing a sense of community that provides strength, support, encouragement and belonging for African American people and a resource for those that are struggling to live a better life. African American churches often establish college preparatory programs and conduct college

workshops for high school students in the surrounding community. The Black church has an effect on African American students' decisions to continue their postsecondary education plans.

### ***School Counselors***

It is important that school counselors play an integral role in student's academic success, in addition to preparation for college. In analyzing African American students' college choice, results confirm that counselors play a supportive role in African American's beginning stage of the college search (Muhammand, 2008; Freeman, 2005). It's been recorded that African American students that come from low-income families who lack college experience are more likely to rely on high school counselors for advice (Freeman, 2005, p. 86). Similarly, Freeman (2005) contends that school counselors are effective in influencing student academic aspirations to persist in higher education when a student's parent education experiences are limited. Muhammand (2008) states that "a supportive school counselor supplements parental understandings of the how's, why's costs, and benefits of college" (2008, p. 90). Furthermore, Cabrera & LaNasa (2000) reported that low-income high school seniors who constantly communicated with a high school counselor regarding postsecondary plans were more likely to be ready to enroll in college.

### ***Economic Affects***

#### ***Tuition Cost***

The cost of higher education is a common factor in many students' decisions about whether to enroll into college or not and is significantly important to African Americans' decision to participate in higher education. It is considerably important to African Americans whether or not college is worth the investment. In addition, students' perceptions of their earnings post-college are critical to their college decision process (Freeman, 2005). Studies have



concluded that African Americans fear not having enough money to enroll in college or not getting a job that pays commensurate with their level of education after completing college (Carter, 2006; Freeman 2005; Perna, 2000). When African Americans perceive they will receive a more favorable return on their investment in higher education, there will be an increase in the number of African Americans choosing to go to college. To support this claim, William & Charles (1996) investigated reasons for professional career choice among African American education majors and non-education majors. The study revealed, “the hope of financial reward was ranked highest in importance to increase underrepresented groups in education by all subjects regardless of their major” (William & Charles, 1996). Financial aid is a benefit to attending college and is pivotal to African Americans’ decisions to enroll in postsecondary institutions.

### ***Financial Aid***

Studies found that minorities are more price sensitive when it comes to college cost because they tend to have lower family income (Bauman & Lucia, 2009; Perna, 2000). As a result, financial aid rewards are key to African Americans enrollment in higher education (Carter, 2006). To support this claim, Perna (2000) examined the differences in the decision to attend college among African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites. Perna found that African Americans and Hispanics have lower incomes than Whites and that they are more likely to receive financial aid. African American and Hispanic college applicants that received financial aid had a stronger positive effect on the probability of enrolling in college than for their White colleagues. Similarly, St John, Paulsen, & Carter (2005) conducted a study that examined the ways African Americans and Whites respond to college costs and amount of financial aid received. The researchers’ findings revealed that large percentages of African Americans choose

to go to college because of financial aid offers, such as grants and loans, and low tuition. Whites attended colleges that were more expensive. Institution cost and financial aid is critical to the decision-making process of African Americans students' decisions to enroll in college. When satisfactory financial aid is provided, tuition cost is less of a barrier that affects African Americans' decision to matriculate in college.

### *Academic Effects*

The quality of education African American students receives in elementary or secondary schools are directly related to their aspirations to continue college enrollment. Freeman (1997) interviewed African American high school students across five cities to receive their opinions on the factors that deter them from participating in higher education and suggestions for solutions. Five themes emerged from the study, the need for 1) better school conditions, 2) increase interested teachers and counselors, 3) instill possibilities at an early age, and 4) expand cultural awareness was important to African Americans academic success.

The need to improve conditions was frequently found in Freeman's group sessions with high school students, the physical condition as well as the content of the building. Low-income students that reside in high poverty tend to go to dilapidated school buildings. The quality of the school, whether it's the building, lack of computers, chairs, or desk, has a huge effect on African American students' academic performance.

Interested teachers and active counselors were also repeated as suggestive ways to motivate students to enroll in college. Freeman (1997) noted that "having teachers who instill passion in students, who believe in African American students' ability to learn, and who push students to maximize their potential" contributes greatly to African American students' self-esteem and academic achievement (p.541). To support this claim, a study conducted by Ledge

(2012) noted that African American grade school students are influenced by the support given from teachers, which influences their self-esteem and aspirations for success. The study found that low-income African American high school students in urban schools had academic aspirations was related to teacher expectations: “when teachers’ expectations were high, the students’ education expectations were also raised” (Ledge, 2012). This concludes that teachers input affect students’ academic success. Carter (2006) supports the idea that there is “the need to identify earlier and properly support college-bound African American students.” In other words, it is important that African American students receive the resources they need to increase their chances in enrolling college early on in their academic career. Longitudinal educational studies find that minority students who demonstrate less academic success throughout elementary and secondary education were far more likely than Whites to leave college without a degree (Carter, 2006; Perna, 2007).

Out of very passionate discussions about their culture, the African American high school students Freeman (1997) interviewed voiced the need to increase cultural awareness as a way to motivate more African Americans to participate in higher education. Also included in this discussion was the increase of more role models (p. 544). Freeman (2005) argued that “the lack of a culturally relevant or culturally centered knowledge curriculum, the exclusion of cultural history from the curriculum or a balanced historical perspective, and the curriculum as contested terrain can impact student’s academic achievement and thereby influence their postsecondary plans” (p. 53). Repeatedly and systematically, people of color have been written out of schools’ history books. The failure to acknowledge and appreciate non-whites, in this case, African Americans’ contributions to America, creates a lack of self-identity and self-development. It is difficult for African American students to connect themselves to content related to their culture,

create positive images, and have pride for their race. Not knowing who they are and what their purpose in life is can discourage anyone from succeeding. From preschool to college, what children learn and gravitate to in the learning process plays a role in whether they will participate in college or not. Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) often promote hidden agendas about curriculum regarding minority students, which lead to, (a) internal and external environmental factors of alienation, (b) anxiety driven behaviors, such as test anxiety, (c) social adjustment problems, and (d) overall acceptance (Love, 2008).

### *Social Effects*

The African American high school students Freeman interviewed said that whenever they visited college campuses, they often felt isolated or alienated because of the cultural differences. Freeman (1997) stated that in some cases, “the college visit can do more to discourage minority students from attending a college than it does to encourage them to attend the institution” (p. 538).

Sims (2008) conducted a study that examined the social experiences of African American female students at a predominantly white institution. The focus of the study centered on the social experiences of traditional aged undergraduate African American female students who lived in campus housing. The findings reveal several areas where participants experienced a social construct called irrelation, “Irrelation refers to unconscious parallel existence with others who occupy the same or similar environment without having any significant interaction” (Sims, 2008). However, the female students persisted to graduation without necessarily establishing informal social connections within the university community. The African American females in this study expressed belief that other groups do not share the same experiences as they do and therefore can understand why relationships do not form.

Carter (2006) stated in her literature that minority students do not feel comfortable in college environments that lack diversity. An inclusive and welcoming institutional environment has been linked to persistence (Carter, 2006). Institutions that are successful in retaining students are those that are responsive to the academic, social, and cultural needs of their students.

According to Carter (2006), African American students experience exclusion, racial discrimination, and alienation on predominately white campuses. In addition, African American students felt that white faculty, students, and staff did not view them as “full human beings with distinctive talents, virtues, interests, and problems” (p. 39). Substantially

Social support is a concern for student’s life experiences. Social support provides student with feelings of belong, being loved and cared for (Sledge, 2012). Allen, Epps, and Hannif (1991) agrees that social bonds and supportive interactions are important to a person’s health and well-being (p. 143). Strayhorn & Terrell (2010) reported findings consistent with the view that:

social support matters for psychological well-being independent of the level of adversity or stress[...]social support is positively related to health and well-being. The more social support an individual receives in the form of close relationships with family members, kin, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and the larger community, the better his or health and well-being (p. 144).

It is important for African American students to feel welcomed and comfortable on predominately white campuses. Simultaneously, social support is pivotal to African Americans’ student academic success and directly related to college persistence.

Research has shown that HBCUs provide environments that are more welcoming to and supportive of African American collegians than PWIs: “HBCUs tend to operate on a family model, where faculty and staff act as surrogate ‘parents’ to nurture and support their students,

many whom they perceive as their own kids” (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010). Due to mass supportive networks and services, Black students attending HBCUs tend to do better in higher education. For example, some Black HBCU graduates perform in highly prestigious occupations, and other evidence suggests that African American students graduate at rates higher than their same-race peers at PWIs (Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010, p. 2). The racial environment affects African American students’ academic and social experiences in college.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Conclusion*

Whites are enrolled in colleges and universities in larger percentages than African Americans. Whites also obtain far more college degrees than any other minority groups in America. There are many reasons that affect African Americans student's decisions to participate in higher education. Reasons such as students' academic performance, socioeconomic status, social acceptance, parental and family support, institution costs, and financial aid are just a few of them. Blacks continue to suffer from social, cultural, and economic discrimination that prevents them from choosing higher education.

Legislation and court cases have sought to dismantle or eliminate racial discrimination and segregation in public and private sectors, particularly with education institutions. Mandates have called for integration of educational institutions or establishing institutions specifically for Blacks. However, African Americans still are not afforded the same educational opportunities as Whites.

Theorists have examined the college choice process to identify the factors that influence students' decisions to enroll in college. Models have been created to examine economic, social, psychological perspectives. Combined, these models are used to better understand students' decision to further their education beyond secondary education. However, these models help us understand White students academic journeys more so than with minorities. Traditional college choice models fail to include minority college decision making process experiences. Traditional college choice models do not encompass some of the factors involved in the decision making process experiences of African Americans. However, colleges have established ways to better recruit minority students to their institutions.

Understanding the factors that affect the college-decision making process for African Americans is important as institutions attempt to successfully recruit this particular population. Personal, economic, academic, and social factors were examined to understand African Americans reasons for enrolling or not enrolling in post-secondary education institutions.



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