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## An Evaluation of the Techniques and Strategies for Recruiting African-Americans by 1862 Land-Grant Universities

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Digital Object Identifier: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2016.204>

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Dr. Patricia Dyk, Director of Graduate Studies

An Evaluation of the Techniques and Strategies for Recruiting African-Americans by  
1862 Land-grant Universities

THESIS

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Stacy Vincent, Professor of Agricultural Education

Lexington, Kentucky

2016

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Master of Science in Community and Leadership Development in the College of  
Agriculture at the University of Kentucky

## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### An Evaluation of the Techniques and Strategies for Recruiting African-Americans by 1862 Land-grant Universities

As post-secondary education becomes more important for the American citizen to generate wealth, universities are struggling to retain and graduate African-Americans, the third-most represented demographic in the country, especially at predominately white colleges and universities. The Colleges of Agriculture at these particular institutions are struggling to even get Black students to apply, let alone graduate. One of the major issues is the disconnect between the African-American community and the idea of post-secondary education in the agricultural field. One way that disconnect can be combatted is new techniques and strategies in recruiting African-Americans. This study identifies three themes based on interviews with recruiters from universities throughout the country, as to why universities are struggling to effectively recruit Black students into programs. The results indicate that there is a lack of resources present and offered in recruiting said student, a perceived misconception of African-American's views of agriculture and a major disconnect with the African-American community and colleges of agriculture. In order to combat and ultimately fix this issues, these three themes must be addressed.

KEYWORDS: Critical Mass, Diversity, Educational Inequality, Minority


Rashawn P. Franklin

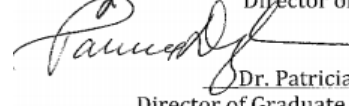
April 21, 2016

An Evaluation of the Techniques and Strategies for Recruiting African-Americans by  
1862 Land-grant Universities

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April 21, 2016

Dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, my Mom, Dad and Grandparents.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have been able to accomplish this amazing feat without the help of a couple of key people:

- Ma – You have always supported all of my decisions and been there when I needed you in every area of my life. Your spirit and hard-working nature (as well as the good looks) are things that embedded in me that makes me strive for everything and feel like I can accomplish anything. You taught me how to love God and became a mother and a father to me when Dad passed away. I am forever grateful to you and hope I have made you proud. I love you so much!
- Dr. Stacy Vincent – Dr. V! Thanks for everything, man. Taking a chance on me, sticking with me when I came back from Connecticut and helping me throughout this process. I wouldn't have been able to do this without you. The way you handle each and every student that passes through your programs is special and I'm grateful to have ever met you.
- Dr. Quentin Tyler – Quentin, man, I probably wouldn't have been at Kentucky (and stayed here), which was the best decision of life so far, without your help and guidance. You told my Mom when I first got down here that you'd take care of me and you definitely did, man. And I greatly appreciate it. I will forever.
- Dr. Kenneth Jones – Thanks for help throughout this process. Your door has always been open whenever I needed to talk to you about anything I thank you for that.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Background and Setting.....	1
Theoretical Framework.....	4
Significance of the Problem.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	9
Research Questions.....	9
Limitations of the Study.....	10
Key Terms .....	11
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Introduction.....	12
Origins of Critical Race Theory in Education.....	13
Model for Applying CRT in Education.....	15
Applying CRT in the institution.....	16
Applying CRT in the classroom.....	18
CRT in Youth Involvement.....	19
Summary.....	23
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
Research Design.....	24
Research Setting.....	25
Research Questions.....	25
Data Collection.....	26
Data Analysis.....	28
Trustworthiness.....	29
Limitations.....	31
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	
Lack of Resources.....	32
Perceived misconception of African-American’s views of Agriculture.....	36
Disconnect with the African-American Community.....	39



## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction.....	42
Lack of Resources.....	42
Perceived misconception of African-American’s views of Agriculture.....	44
Disconnect with the African-American Community.....	47
Discussion.....	49
APPENDIX A: Guiding Research Questions.....	50
REFERENCES.....	51
VITA.....	54

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 3.1 Participants in Research Study.....26

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1 Degrees Earned by African-Americans.....	7
FIGURE 1.2 Wealth Gap increase since the Great Recession.....	8
FIGURE 2.1 Applied Critical Race Theory in Education .....	16

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Background and Setting**

Today, without an education in America, it's hard to escape poverty or generate wealth. This is especially true for African-Americans – a group that is facing a growing wealth gap, compared to its White counterparts (Lee, 2012), and has not always been afforded the opportunity of education by its own country. For African-American families, the economic gap in this country is large and is getting larger. While the economy is improving since a major recession earlier this century, the net worth of a White family is on average 13 times that of an African-American family (Federal Reserve, 2013). Highly-educated households correlate with larger wealth portfolios (Shapiro et al., 2013), so in order to close that seemingly insurmountable gap, education has to be the primary key.

In 1862, in order to support vocational education in America, the United States government passed the Morrill Act, which authorized each state to establish a land-grant university and would focus on teaching and extension. Colleges established at that time were only preparing students for ministry and other similar professions, therefore it was a need to develop two of the great resources in America -- agriculture and industry -- in order to tap into and develop the potential of those businesses (Gordon, 2008). The legislation, however, did nothing for African-Americans in the South, whose citizen statuses were changed from “slave” to “free” just six months after the signing of the Morrill Act, with the implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863.

At that time, legal separation of races in the South prevented minorities from attending the land grant schools. Within the act, though, states were allowed to set up "twin" schools as "separate but equal," for African-Americans -- but only Mississippi in 1871 and Kentucky in 1886 did so -- and only Alcorn State University in Mississippi, was designated a land-grant institution or LGI (Castle, 1992). Several Southern States, between 1866 and 1890, established schools to train black teachers. Unfortunately, officials in the South felt these schools to be too similar to land-grant institutions and would not confer land-grant support (Castle, 1992). Thus, the second Morrill Act, enacted in 1890, allowed black institutions to be incorporated into the land-grant system and many of these schools became land-grant schools. In total, 70 colleges and universities were established with the passing of this act, most of which are the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) of today (Gordon, 2008).

In total, 17 States (in the East, South and Midwest) established black land-grant institutions with having land-grant status. African-Americans attending 1890 LGIs, however, were still not receiving the same education as Whites and it was very hard for them to find jobs as a result (Gordon, 2008). One of the biggest industries for African-Americans, because of the group's history of slave labor, was agriculture, which is partly why the second Morrill Act was so important.

Still, African-Americans saw more funds being allocated to 1862 LGIs than HBCUs and segregation was still legal in America. This was the case until 1954, when the decision of *Brown v. The Board of Education* was passed. The decision declared that segregation of public schools was unconstitutional, allowing African-

Americans to be educated at the institutions that had been off limits for the past 60 years. All states were required to allow minority students to enroll in their schools. However, there was initial resistance of this act, especially by Southern institutions. With the comfort of HBCUs for African-Americans, even with Brown v. Board passed, there continued to be a lack of enrollment of African-Americans at 1862 LGIs (NCES, 2014), which continues even today.

Initially, Blacks felt out of place on 1862 LGIs campuses, because they were all Predominately White Institutions (PWI). Because of Jim Crow laws and overall racial tensions of the 1950s through 70s, it was difficult for Black students to be socially accepted. A study encompassing African-American students on white campuses from the 1960s to the 1980s concluded African-Americans often believe they do not belong on PWI campuses (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1986) and that study was later confirmed again in 2011 (Smith, Hung, & Franklin) with a similar collection of data. In the 2011 study, the researchers explain that because there was a limited number of African-American students and faculty on the campuses, it was tough to establish a critical mass form and made it difficult for African-Americans to desire to assimilate into a PWI, where student relation is limited.

Panofsky (2003), who studied the relations of learning and a student's social class, argues that when examining the matter of social relations, it reveals that social relations are a key mediator of a students' school learning, with this theory being the basis of the study. From this theory, we see that socially there is limited African-American enrollment within Land Grant Institutions; therefore, it is possible that not only are recruiters from these schools overlooking African-American students,

but also the students, who don't see anyone like them at the particular university, are possibly discouraged in attending these predominately White LGIs.

### Theoretical Framework

The guiding theory for this study was Critical Race Theory (CRT), which suggests that inequalities are a logical and predictable result of a radicalized society in which discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized (Billings and Tate, 1995). Led by researchers Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, this research was derived from their distress over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States in the 1970s (Delgado, 1995). Bell and Freeman (1980) stress four points of CRT: First, that racism is normal, permanent fixture in American life, thus the strategy becomes one of unmasking and exposing racism to make citizens aware. Secondly, CRT wants to depart from the notion in mainstream society that Blacks and other minorities are "one-down" or incapable in certain capacities. Third, CRT suggests a critique of liberalism and the idea that civil rights is a slow fight, but that it will eventually lead to an ultimate goal. CRT argues that racism needs sweeping changes, but liberalism has no mechanisms for such change. Finally, CRT suggests that Whites have been the primary benefactors of civil rights legislation and that social benefits such as affirmative action have not come close to providing the benefits that society thinks it has (Delgado, 1995).

American society is based on property rights and that the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool for understanding social and, ultimately, school inequity (Bell & Freeman, 1980). Billings and Tate, authors of "Toward a Critical Race of Education," further explain, saying that "racism, if were merely an

isolated, unrelated act, we would expect to see at least a few examples of educational excellence and equity together in the nation's public schools. (pg. 54)" Instead, they say, "educational successes of African-Americans tend to be outside of the public school." They contend that the cause of African-American poverty in conjunction with the condition of their schools and schooling is institutional and structural racism (Billings and Tate, 1995).

It is the intent of the researcher to analyze this framework in order to evaluate the strategies and techniques of recruiting by Predominantly White LGIs of the African-American student. The study focuses on analyzing the lack of African-American enrollment due to a lack of resources, student availability and, even worse, apathy. To combat this, there needs to be a more concerted effort at each PWI to correct this problem and increase the minority population, both faculty and staff, within these schools. The researcher will speak with different recruiters from land-grant universities all over the country in order to figure out what needs to be done and how the situation is being combatted as of today. The aim is to figure out these factors and create a solution for both the student and institution.

### Significance of the Problem

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly one-fifth of African-Americans aged 25 or older possess a postsecondary degree; whereas a third of Non-Hispanic Whites possess a degree and more than half of Asian Americans (Baumen & Davis, 2013). That number is even lower when referring to African-Americans that have attended LGIs. Still, when it comes to enrollment in colleges and universities, African-Americans have taken an enormous step in enrollment just over the past



decade (Black demographics, 2010). From 1999 to 2010, African-American enrollment has increased in almost every type of degree.

The biggest jump for African-Americans came in master's degrees, which shows that the group is becoming more comfortable achieving a higher education beyond a typical bachelor's. Nevertheless, there is still plenty of work for Blacks to do to close the educational gap, especially with being the 3rd most represented demographic in America.

Figure 1.1 Degrees Earned by African-Americans

<b>Degree</b>	<b>1999-00</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>% Change 1999-00 to 2009-10</b>
Associate's				
<b>Black</b>	<b>60,211</b>	<b>86,402</b>	<b>113,905</b>	<b>89%</b>
White	408,772	475,513	552,863	35%
Hispanic	75,059	101,124	140,316	87%
Asian	77,912	97,209	117,422	51%
Master's				
<b>Black</b>	<b>36,595</b>	<b>55,330</b>	<b>76,458</b>	<b>109%</b>
White	324,981	383,246	445,038	37%
Hispanic	19,384	31,639	43,535	125%
Asian	23,538	33,042	42,702	81%
Doctoral				
<b>Black</b>	<b>7,080</b>	<b>8,527</b>	<b>10,417</b>	<b>47%</b>
White	82,984	89,763	104,426	26%
Hispanic	5,039	6,115	8,085	60%
Asian	10,684	13,176	16,625	56%

Figure 4.1 Reprinted from U.S. Department of Education (2011). Retrived from [www.blackdemographics.com](http://www.blackdemographics.com)

Education is necessary to generate wealth. While the economic gap between African-Americans and Whites is large, it decreased dramatically in the early 2000s. The gap, which has since doubled and continues to become larger, decreased for African-Americans to only 6 times lower than Whites in the early part of the century. During a recession, between 2007 and 2010, that number changed. All racial groups lost large amounts of wealth but the wealth reduction fell disproportionately on Hispanics and Blacks, who saw a 44 percent and 31 percent reduction in wealth, compared to an 11 percent drop for Whites (Federal Reserve, 2013).

This was due to minorities disproportionately receiving subprime loans, both because of outright lending discrimination and housing segregation. A recent research brief by the Institution on Assets and Social Policy (2013) finds that the wealth gap between White families and African-Americans has tripled between 1984 and 2009. The contributing factors are: number of years of homeownership, household income, unemployment, college education and financial support or inheritance. One way to combat this is to continue to have African-Americans not only finish school, but achieve higher education in order to be qualified for better paying jobs.

Figure 1.2 Wealth Gap increase since the Great Recession

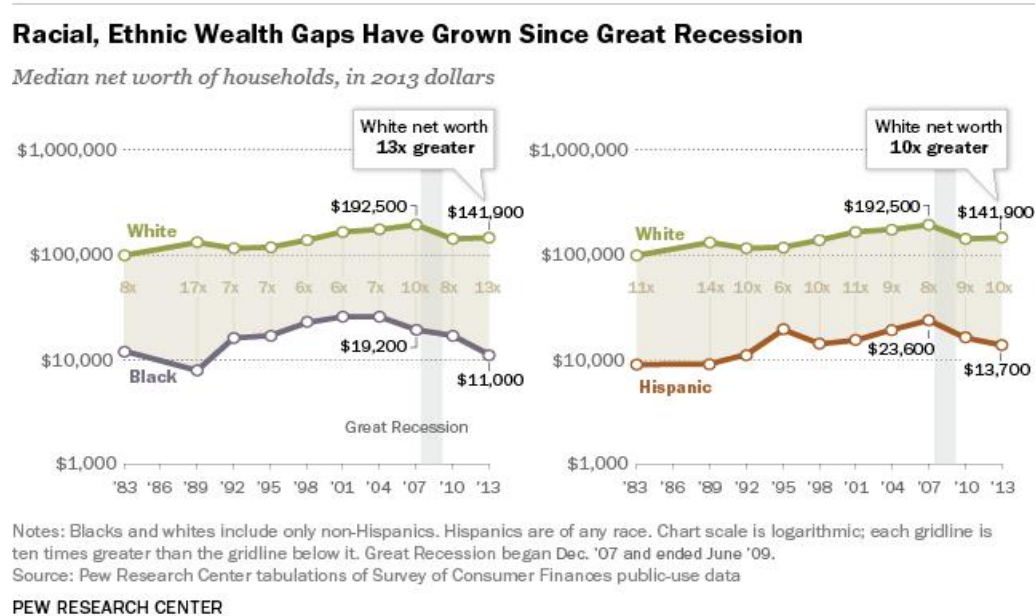


Figure 4.2 Reprinted from the PEW Research Center (2013). Retrived from [www.fivethirtyeight.com](http://www.fivethirtyeight.com)

In an article detailing why it is important for universities to retain African-American students, Wynetta Lee (2012) suggests that higher education represents a “gateway” to “economic empowerment” for students who obtain postsecondary degrees and even more so with those with Master’s and Doctorates degrees. Still, economic empowerment has long been a problem within the African-American community, specifically with maintaining the wealth through generations. Things like recessions and lack of education not only continue to widen the gap; it makes it near impossible for it to ever close.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to evaluate the techniques, methods, strategies and actions taken in the recruitment process of African-Americans by 1862 Land-grant Universities.

#### Research Questions

In an effort to improve African-American enrollment at 1862 LGIs, my purpose is to explore the techniques, methods, and actions taken in the recruitment process of African-American. In order to meet the needs of my purpose, I pose the following inquiry:

- Does colorblindness exist for the recruiter in the recruitment process? And if so, should it?
- Is the recruitment process restricted due to existing barriers within the university system?
- Do preconceived thoughts of the recruiter and student create barriers and disconnections?

## Limitations

1. The researcher is an African-American graduate of an 1862 Land-grant university, who recognizes biasness when researching racial issues.
2. The study cannot account for the recruiting technique and strategies of every 1862 land-grant university.
3. Due to accessibility of information, the study will only examine a handful of universities and communication will be limited to a specific employee of that specific university.
4. The results and conclusions are limited to the findings and cannot be inferred as cause and effect.

## Key Terms

Each of the following terms are used operationally throughout this document and are subsequently defined to provide clarity:

**Critical Mass:** A sufficient number of adopters of an innovation in a social system so that the rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining and creates further growth (Rogers, 2003).

**Diversity:** A structure that includes the tangible presence of individuals representing a variety of different attributes and characteristics, including culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other physical and social variables (Talbert, 2006).

Educational inequality: The persistent problem of segregation in schools, inequitable funding of schools in poor neighborhoods and gaps in academic achievement. One measure to gauge the persistent and pervasive problem of racial inequality (Zamudio et al., 2011).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): The second Morrill Act, enacted in 1890, allowed black institutions to be incorporated into the land-grant system and many of these schools became land-grant schools. (Gordon, 2008).

Minority: An individual, organization, or society that is not representative of the most populous culture.

Land-Grant Institutions (LGIs): Also, Land-Grant Universities. The first Morrill Act, enacted in 1862, supporting vocational education and satisfying the need to grow agriculture and industry in America. (Gordon, 2008).

Predominately White Institution (PWI): Schools of higher learning in which whites account for at least 50% enrollment.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### Introduction

According to Billings and Tate (1995), the discussion of social and school inequity in America is based on three significant factors: race, property rights and the intersection of race and property that creates an analytic tool for us to understand social inequity. Race, the study says, continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States. Secondly, property rights, which American society is solely based on, and can be directly correlated with African-American poverty and the inability to close a large wealth gap. Lastly, the intersection of the first two ideas creates an understanding of why certain factors occur in the African-American community, including the condition of their schools and that education in America is institutional and structural racism. Critical Race Theory suggests that inequalities are a logical and predictable result of a radicalized society (Billings and Tate, 1995) and that lack of education is one major factor of that inequality.

### Origins of Critical Race Theory in Education

Led by researchers Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman, Critical Race Theory was derived from their distress over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States in the 1970s (Delgado, 1995). Bell and Freeman (1980) stress four points of CRT: First, that racism is normal, permanent fixture in American life, thus the strategy becomes one of unmasking and exposing racism to make citizens aware. Second, CRT wants to depart from the notion in mainstream society that Blacks and other minorities are “one-down” or incapable in certain capacities. Third, CRT suggests a

critique of liberalism and the idea that civil rights is a slow fight, but that it will eventually lead to an ultimate goal. CRT argues that racism needs sweeping changes, but liberalism has no mechanisms for such change. Finally, CRT advocates that Whites have been the primary benefactors of civil rights legislation and that social benefits such as affirmative action have not come close providing the benefits that society thinks it has (Delgado, 1995).

American society is based on property rights and that the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool for understanding social and, ultimately, school inequity, according to the theory. Billings and Tate, authors of "Toward a Critical Race of Education," further explain, saying that "racism, if were merely an isolated, unrelated act, we would expect to see at least a few examples of educational excellence and equity together in the nation's public schools." Instead, they say, educational successes of African-Americans tend to be outside of the public school.

Problems such as the academic achievement gap between Whites and children of color can be traced back to the idea that non-white access to education has never been a de facto legal or social right, the Constitution and courts have always been the gate-keeper (Ladson-Billings et al., 2009). Avoiding discussions of the historic reasons why Whites and people of color have had separate and unequal educations, rather than living with the expected outcomes, inhibits the formation of new strategies to attack this issue (Ladson-Billings et al., 2009). During the Jim Crow era (1880s-1950s) laws were explicitly being made to assure racial oppression in society, which included lack of education. McIntosh (2001) outlines a list of 29 acts,



laws and decisions implemented during the Jim Crow era that perpetrated racial oppression. While all the laws were damning to people of color, the following apply specifically to education:

4. Segregated education for students of color created substandard schools, lack of resources and inferior education (Spring, 2000). Even after the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision in Topeka, KS, ruling that “separate is inherently unequal” second generation segregation still mars the educational experience of many students of color in the United States (Kozol, 1991).
19. Jim Crow laws create American apartheid whereby Blacks and Whites are treated unequally under the auspices of the judicial system (Morris, 1984).

The constitution was often used to keep Blacks away from quality education as well. In the landmark ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, racial segregation was deemed constitutional and consistent with the Fourteenth Amendment as long as separate facilities were equal (Zamudio et al., 2011). While American citizens of today are horrified by the acts in history, there are still plenty effects evident today. After more than 50 years since *Brown v. Board*, children of color continue to lag behind their White counterparts on just about every measure of school achievement (Zamudio et al., 2011). From higher suspension rates to gifted program placements to graduation rates, there continues to be discrepancies in every aspect. Critical Race Theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step in understanding the complexities of racism and beginning a process of judicial and societal redress (Ladson-Billings et al., 2009).

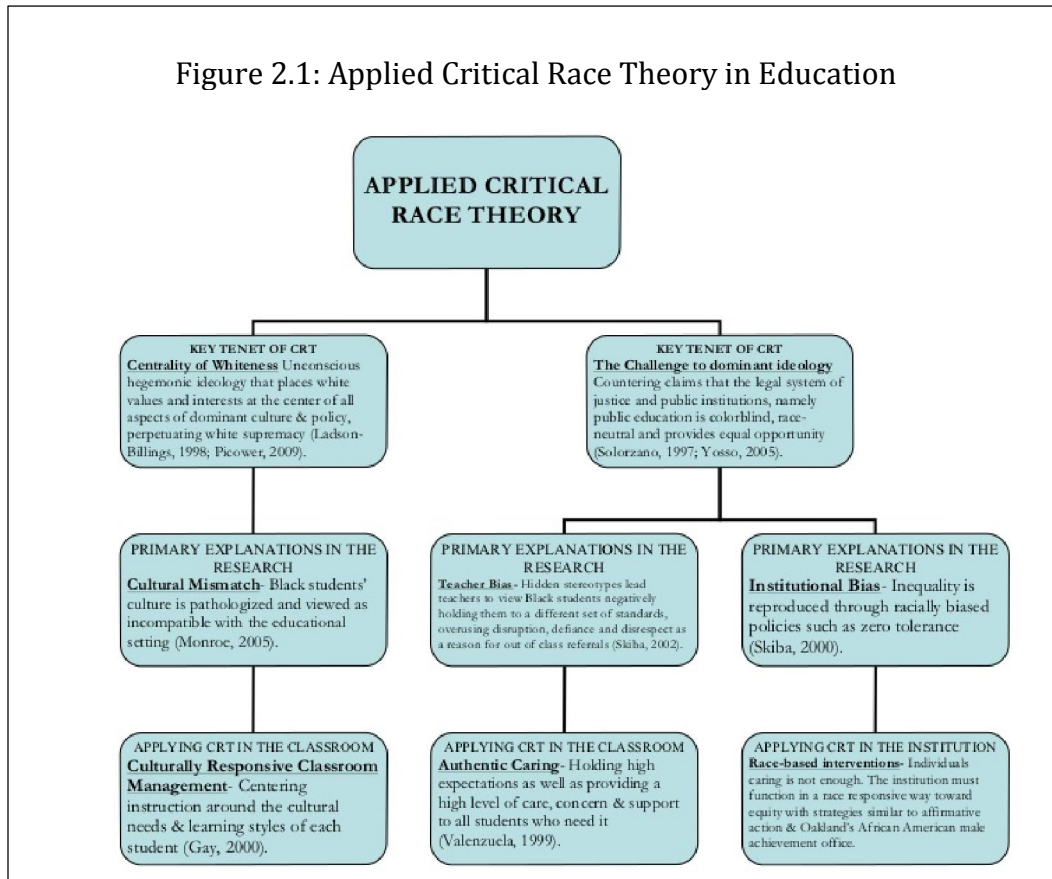
Even today there are rulings by court that further limit African-Americans, specifically those that come from poor neighborhoods and often substandard public schools, from acquiring more education. In 2013, a Supreme Court decision in Michigan that sought to amend Michigan's constitution that prohibits state universities from considering race as part of its admissions process was upheld. The case, *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, was passed, on the basis that it does not violate the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause. One of the major reasons argued to amend the constitution was that it was not only needed for racial diversity within these schools, but it was also harder to be considered on the same level as white students for some of these students because of their socioeconomic statuses and prior education. Another argument was that 82% of high-income students enroll in college, while only 52% of those from low-income families do – and even less actually graduate, with most of those low-income students being minorities.

#### Model for Applying CRT in Education

Critical Race Theory scholars believe that racial analysis can be used to deepen the understanding of the educational barriers for people of color, as well as exploring how these barriers are resisted and overcome (Ladson-Billings et al., 2009). In 2013, Macheo Payne developed the Applied Critical Race Theory Model, used specifically within the field of education. Based on the ideological and institutional basis of CRT and the use of the narrative in CRT, Payne lists two ways to apply CRT effectively in the classroom: culturally responsive classroom management and authentic caring, and race-based intervention in order to apply

CRT in within an entire institution. Each suggestion provides a unique way to combat inequalities for people of color within education.

Figure 2.1: Applied Critical Race Theory in Education



### Applying CRT in the institution

Payne’s major solution for implementing CRT in institutions is race-based intervention. He believes that caring is not enough and that the institution must function in a race responsive way toward equality with strategies similar to affirmative action. Citing institutional bias, inequality reproduced through racially-based policies (Skiba, 2000). Payne’s purpose of this study is to survey the entire landscape of why African-Americans are less likely to achieve admittance, retention and graduation within the American education system and combat those issues. He

issues a challenge to dominant ideology and wants to offer a counterclaim to the idea that legal system, particularly public education, is a race-neutral field, colorblind and provides equal opportunities to all. From the Supreme Court ruling in Michigan, we see courts can claim colorblindness with their decision but fail to provide equal and fair opportunities to all Americans. Likewise, if colorblindness exists in African-African recruitment by LGIs is that hindering the process and enrollment of these students.

At the institutional level, colorblind policies have left a profound effect on the maintenance of equality. Given the blatantly racist history that shaped race relations at the individual level, social institutions need to initiate policies intended to curb the influence of racially motivated individual decision-makers (Zamudio et al., 2011). Also, the state need not engage in race-based decision making or adopt race-based remedies, and that civil society should eschew race as a central organizing principle of social action (Cho, 2009).

Now, that blatant anti-discrimination policies have been in effect for over a half a century, the myth of meritocracy and the concept of colorblindness suggest that continued educational inequality has more to do with individual educational choices rather than discriminations in schools, which continues to place whites at the top and people of color at the bottom of the educational hierarchy (Zamudio et al., 2011).

## Applying CRT in the classroom

Payne (2013) identifies cultural mismatches and teacher bias as reasons for racial problems within the classroom. Monroe (2005) says that Black students' culture is viewed as incompatible with the education setting, which obviously could cause problems when a teacher feels as if they are losing control of their classroom. There is also teacher bias in the classroom, Payne says, in which a teacher has hidden stereotypes that lead them to view Black students negatively and therefore hold them to a different set of standards, overusing defiance as a reason for out of class referrals (Skiba, 2002). When students feel as if their identity and integrity are being violated by their teachers, they tend to put up a resistance. Student resistance is an important form of feedback, a potential opportunity of growth for teachers (Zamudio et al., 2011).

Classroom management focuses on how students' behavior is managed and often the most assertive approaches to discipline are reserved for students of color, while permissive approaches are used with white students (Zamudio et al., 2011). This ultimately places students of color at a disadvantage in the classroom setting because they are being misunderstood in their quest for education.

Culturally-responsive classroom management is yet another solution Payne lists in applying CRT to the classroom, which would center instruction around the cultural needs and learning style of each student (Gay, 2000). Payne also names authentic caring as a way to help CRT in the classroom, which holds high expectations on providing a high level of care, concern and support to all students who need it (Valenzuela, 1999).

## CRT in Youth Involvement

### Education

Adjustment to college is a huge for young students and does not always prove to be easy. Vincent Tinto's (1993) argument that college students engage in three stages of passage (separation, transition, and incorporation) when starting at a university and for students to ultimately be successful, the final stage of incorporation is essential. Research has shown students of color at PWIs often never feel incorporated into the fabric of their university and because of that, universities have trouble with retaining these students, most of them never finish earning a degree. In 1996, about 58 percent of whites and 69 percent of Asians who entered four-year colleges had a bachelor's degree six years later, compared to 39 percent of Blacks and 46 percent of Hispanics (NCES,2014). For Black students, many of them are more likely to attend a two-year college, go to school part-time, and take remedial classes than their white counterparts and studies show that the longer it takes for a student to move through college, the less likely they are to complete the degree (Complete College America, 2014). Campus climate is critical because it affects the academic performance and the overall quality of a student's educational experience (Feagin, 1992).

Because there are a limited number of African-Americans on the PWI campuses, it is tough to establish a critical mass forms and makes it difficult for African-Americans to desire to assimilate into a PWI, where student relation is limited. Social relations are a key mediator of a students' school learning (Panofsky, 2003).

In a study conducted by Williamson (1999), African-American students at PWIs reported feeling as though they were “being drowned in a sea of whiteness.” In addition, the students stated that they “did not feel welcome to participate in student life and organizations such as fraternities and sororities, student government, or academic associations.” As a result, this caused increased emotional distress and isolation of the African-American students. Societal aspects of these universities, along with financial hardships of obtaining education, with many of these students coming from low-income homes, prove to be major hindrances.

### Perception

With racism so prevalent throughout this country’s history, there are often extreme difficulties in certain situations. One in particular is adaptation of students of color to PWIs. Acts of racism and discrimination against African-American students have occurred through the years at these institutions and they tend to heighten African-American students’ perceptions of not belonging to the university (Feagin, 1992). That perception is further tainted when these students face certain microaggressions on campuses. Pierce (1969) first introduced microaggressions in referring to incessant “offensive mechanisms” aimed at Blacks on a daily basis “so that the black must hear is that he is insignificant and irrelevant (pg. 27).”

In campus racial climate research, various verbal and nonverbal microaggressions that African-Americans encountered in the social and academic spaces of their predominately White universities were identified. Over time, the mundane but extreme stress caused by these assaults can lead to mental, emotional,

and physical strain (Yosso, et al., 2009). Smith (2004) has termed "racial battle fatigue" and found that some Black students changed majors, dropped classes, and even left campus to avoid racial microaggressions. As a result of chronic racial microaggressions, many students of color perceive their campus environment as an extremely stressful, exhausting place that diminishes their sense of control, comfort, and confidence while eliciting feelings of loss, ambiguity, strain, frustration, and injustice (Yosso, et al., 2009).

### Recruitment

These factors make it undoubtedly difficult to recruit African-American students to PWIs. A study performed by Yosso, et al. (2000) determined that when a campus racial climate is positive four elements are present: inclusion of African-American students and faculty into the academic and social components of the institution, curriculum that is reflective of the historical and contemporary experiences of African-Americans, a mission that reinforces the institution's commitment to diversity and programs to support the recruitment, retention and graduation of African-American students.

These four elements can lead to positive academic outcomes and increased social integration of African-American students to PWI, which is necessary for the students to succeed. Because the perception by African-Americans of the social climate of PWIs, there needs to not only be a change in the climate but a more concerted effort to recruit these students to these universities. While colleges and



universities implementing programs are paramount, the way these students are being recruited are just as important.

A study on the “best practices” for recruitment and retention of students of color describes a myriad of effective ways to approach young students of color when recruiting them to universities (Guenter, 2009). Six similarities appeared when describing successful programs:

- Expressed support for improvements in minority student recruitment and retention at the highest administrative levels and inclusion of recruitment and retention goals in strategic plans and annual work plans, along with accountability mechanisms for achievement of the goals.
- Early outreach activities designed to increase college awareness in students at the elementary, junior high and high school levels and enlarge the pool of college-bound minority students.
- 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. Also, involving current minority students and alumni are involved in the recruitment effort.
- Summer bridge programs to help students make the transition from high school to college. Some programs are discipline-based, especially in math and the sciences.
- Academic and cultural support services programs to provide the help that students may need in dealing with the demands of their academic programs or in dealing with an unfamiliar cultural milieu.
- Diversity awareness or multicultural sensitivity programs to address the needs of the larger campus community and the community at large. This may include programs to engage on-campus students of color with the larger community.

When recruiting minorities to colleges of agriculture at 1862 LGI, these factors are especially important. Wardlow, Graham, and Scott (1995) note that there is little doubt that minorities are underrepresented in academic departments at LGIs, professional roles in agricultural industries, and in governmental agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This is no fluke, as

minorities just aren't viewing the agriculture field as something a viable option for them to achieve education in. There are many factors that contribute, but the major one is just that minorities as a whole tend to have more negative attitudes toward agriculture and agricultural occupations (Talbert & Larke, 1992).

It's not just minorities, either, most Americans know very little about agriculture and its social and economic importance and significance in colleges of agriculture design and facilitate recruitment strategies to introduce the opportunities available to students (Rawls, 1995). Universities and their recruiters have to do a better job of making those opportunities known to students when speaking with them.

Donnermeyer and Kreps (1994) found that students already exposed to agriculture tended to enroll in agricultural majors more often than students without exposure, further cementing the one of the best tools in recruitment is early outreach. Also, minorities within high school agriculture programs need to be targeted because they are more likely to continue their education at the post-secondary level.

### Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the origins of Critical Race Theory and its application to education. Within that, the history of minorities in America, the importance of education and role of minorities within PWI and colleges of Agriculture were discussed.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore each participating school's methods, actions, and techniques in African-American student recruitment. Decisive information was uncovered through both structured and unstructured emerging interviewing techniques and the exploration of document data. Qualitative analysis, often used as a method for exploratory research, was chosen for this case study. Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995). This type of case study is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (Yin, 2003).

Case study methodology allows the researcher to explore individuals or organizations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, communities or programs (Yin, 2003). The design of the research included the researcher collecting data, shaping the data to interpret and then develop themes and descriptions (Creswell, 2012). The researcher's observations and interviews determined the purpose and effectiveness of the exploratory study (Patton, 2002); therefore, it was appropriate to create this methodology utilizing qualitative research design. Qualitative design allowed the researcher to gather rich data on the topic of interest and the research questions were designed to explore this topic.

Individual interviews were conducted to answer the research questions and gain a deeper understanding of the recruitment techniques of 1862 LGIs for African-American students. Data was collected in a university-assigned recruiter's natural

setting at a major recruitment event for students of color. The researcher selected interviewees based on school (1862 LGI) and availability. In this qualitative study, the researcher is identified as the primary data collection instrument. The researcher collected data based on interviews and observations. Research questions were developed in consult with faculty experts from the University of Kentucky, Community and Leadership Development Department and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

It is important that researchers inform their readers about the philosophical assumption and worldview that they approach their studies. Within this scholarship the researcher maintains a social constructivism worldview and keeps an epistemological philosophical assumption when engaged in data collection.

#### Research Setting

The Minorities in Natural Resources and Related Science (MANRRS) National Convention served as the location for this collected case study because it hosts 1862 LGIs from across the nation who are recruiting ethnic minorities youth to their institution. Nine participants from eight LGIs agreed to contribute interviews. In addition to the interview, documents and materials were collected for data analysis.

#### Research Questions

Understanding the individual university's purpose for recruiting African-Americans to its college of agriculture was crucial for this study. To further explore the techniques, methods, and actions taken in the recruitment process of African-Americans, I was guided by these research questions:

- Does colorblindness exist for the recruiter in the recruitment process? And if so, should it?

- Is the recruitment process restricted due to existing barriers within the university system?
- Do preconceived thoughts of the recruiter and student create barriers and disconnections?

### Data Collection

All participants were identified through their employer, position and gender. For confidentiality purposes, the interviewees names will not be identified and they will be referred to as the following:

Table 3.1 Participants in research study

Participant #	Race	Position	Male or Female	University's conference
1	Black	Associate Professor	Male	Big 12
2	Black	Outreach Director	Female	SEC
3	Black	Assistant Director	Male	SEC
4	Black	Post-doctorate Associate	Male	Big 12
5	Black	Assistant Director	Female	Big Ten
6	Black	Professor	Female	Big Ten
7	Latino	Director of Recruitment	Female	Big Ten
8	Black	Program Manager	Male	Big Ten
9	Black	Professor	Male	ACC

The interviewees were interviewed before a MANRRS recruitment event, that was designed specifically to target students of color to begin or continue their post-secondary education. The interviewees were selected by the researcher based on their university (1862 LGIs), their position and time spent at the university. The

recruiters were selected by each university to attend this conference for different reasons, but most because of their race. Some were selected because they have experience in recruitment and others have a job directly related to recruitment. The interviewees were then asked a series of questions by the researcher which allowed them to share their experiences and thoughts on the African-American student recruitment process at their university. The structured interview questions were used to ensure consistent inquiry between interviews, while allowing the participants the latitude to add supplementary insight on the topic and related subjects (Patton, 2002).

The guiding questions for the interviews were:

Q1: When recruiting minorities, does your university provide race-specific promotional materials?

Q2: How much has your African-American enrollment in your college of agriculture changed within the past 5 years?

Q3: Has there been any training provided by the university to help you, as an individual, recruit minorities?

Q4: Ok. And what do you think are the barriers of recruitment when recruiting African-Americans to your university?

Q5: Are you comfortable with the funding that the university is providing you in recruiting African-Americans?

The established interview questions were designed to support the research questions. All of the questions were used to gain individual perspective of the university's role and impacts in the process African-American recruitment. The researcher diverted only from the guiding questions to acquire additional information about a specific subject discussed or if the interviewee needed to expound. All interviews were conducted individually and in-person and lasted between 40-45 minutes depending on the interviewee's desire to share more of their personal feelings and experiences. The audio of the interviews was recorded,

with the permission of all the interviewees and the researcher transcribed all audio recordings.

### Data Analysis

The researcher, an African-American graduate of an 1862 LGI, was identified to be the best person for this study due to their personal and professional interest in the topic. The researcher then immersed themselves in the available literature regarding African-American history and history of American education. After conducting interviews with eight schools and nine participants, the researcher gathered data that brought new perspectives to African-American recruitment at LGIs and PWIs. From there, the data was transcribed and each interview evaluated. Most of the answers gave insight on why African-American enrollment does not reflect that of society's demographics within these particular universities from a faculty and recruiter view. That data as a whole produced plenty of underlying themes and consistencies.

The process of transcribing allows the researcher to become well acquainted with the data (Reissman, 1993). All nine interviews were transcribed and then color coded by interviewee. Responses from each person were listed under each interview question. From the transcriptions, the researcher was able to identify patterns and themes in the data using open coding. The data are not coded sentence by sentence or paragraph by paragraph, but coded for meaning. Themes were identified based on answers to the research questions by the participants. Categorizing analysis begins with the identification of units or segments of data that seem important or meaningful in some way, based on your prior idea of what is

important (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher then created data files for the interviews, observations, documents, journal entries and field notes.

### Trustworthiness

In order to assure validity of the subjects, creditability and trustworthiness has to be established (Maxwell, 2013). Trustworthiness is enhanced by a combination of the strategies of creditability and dependability (Creswell, 2012). Trustworthiness has to be established by the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the participants and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher and established through the implementation of member checking (Creswell, 2012). The researcher was able to confirm the identities of each of the interviewees by contacting each university. Dependability of the interviewees can be determined based on the research design and execution and the evaluating the process of inquiry through the replicable methods the research developed so that other can obtain similar results.

Triangulation is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives is to arrive at consistency across data sources or approaches. Patton (2002), believed that inconsistencies will exist and should not be seen as weakening the evidence, but should be viewed as an opportunity to uncover deeper meaning in the data. In this study, the researcher conducted methodological triangulation (Patton, 2002). The methodological triangulation involves the use of multiple



qualitative methods to study the program. In this study, the researcher engaged in multiple interviews, examined each school's website, and visited a recruitment booth by the participants.

In order to determine an accurate depiction of what was occurring, the researcher must temporarily set aside their assumptions and beliefs (Creswell, 2012). This method is called bracketing. In order to accurately bracket, the researcher had to engage in reflexivity. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), reflexivity is important for identifying bias and preconceptions so that the researcher doesn't end up making biased interpretations. The researcher identified that they were an African-American who was recruited to attend an 1862 LGI at the undergraduate and graduate level. He received a degree within a college of agriculture where he took many classes as the only minority. In addition, the researcher was a member of a variety of minority organizations that promoted the recruitment and retention of minority youth at LGI's.

To successfully bracket all assumptions and beliefs, the researcher engaged in three specific techniques to assist with the epoche as defined by Creswell (2012). First, the researcher engaged in dialogue with his committee members prior to the research study began and wrote down all previous experiences and biases. Second, the researcher maintained a bracketing journal to note any senses of bias or preconceived notions that arose during the research process. Finally, the researcher provided a list of bias and preconceived assumptions that arose throughout the research process. For this researcher, he found himself having to bracket how he was recruited throughout the data collection process.

## Limitations

The perspective of the participants does not reflect all the feelings and progress, or lack thereof, at every 1862 LGI. Some schools are doing more and others less and it can be seen as a potential unevenness in representation. Researcher interpretation based on the researcher's views on some of the issues creates researcher bias associated with this study. Observable data can be misinterpreted based on setting or general misconceptions collected by the researcher. The researcher did not use the University of Kentucky, an 1862 LGI, where this study was performed, in this study because of fear of personal bias. The researcher has personal relationships with students and faculty at the University of Kentucky and did not want to cloud the judgement of data collected.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The participants of the study and their individual perceptions of the situation tried to answer the questions posed by the researcher (Williams, 2007). From the nine verbatim transcripts, the different findings were extracted for the beginning of data analysis. The data were then clustered by codes and further refined into three themes that best answer the research questions posed. Within the themes, descriptions, subthemes and accounts were developed in order to further understand this experience.

### **Theme 1: Lack of Resources**

Critical race theory in education suggests that aspects of society, institutions, schools and classrooms tell the story of the functions, meaning, causes and consequences of racial educational inequality (Zamudio et al., 2011). As such, participants described similar experiences within their particular universities: people of color are facing not only an initial battle of lack of societal resources, but a lack of resources from PWIs when recruiting said student. It was apparent when interviewing the participants that most felt as if not enough time or resources were allotted when recruiting African-American students; and even when there was, a quick result was expected from a student who more than likely never considered or were exposed to a career in agriculture.

Two recruiters from a LGI in the Big Ten echoed those sentiments by saying, “we have a lot of work to do. And we don't put very much resources or time into it overall and when we do, we expect instant results.” This aligned with the idea that schools have played a powerful role in creating racial inequality by not allocating

the time nor the resources in order to seek out African-American students. Critical race theorists view mainstream education as one of the many institutions that both historically and contemporarily serve to reproduce unequal power relations and academic outcomes (Zamudio et al., 2011). African-American students, in order to consider a PWI, especially within a field like agriculture, need a concerted effort of time and resources in order for them to actually feel comfortable enough to consider that particular school. From what was said by the participants, some of these students aren't given that much of a chance to do so.

The recruiter continued, saying, "Probably there are still stereotypes, there is still some connection with slavery. And up North, all you see are Caucasians, for the most part, so you don't see people like you. In the North, the farming community is a very Conservative, Republican community. So I think all those factors play into it." What the recruiter described is not just the agricultural field, but also the entire landscape of America and PWIs. There are inherent biases in obtaining a higher education and it tends to favor already privileged upper class, white males (Zamudio et al., 2011).

To combat this misconception, one recruiter believes that allowing African-American students who are apprehensive to the idea of post-secondary education or specifically becoming an agricultural major to actually live on and explore a campus would do wonders for those students. One major event this recruiter has helped implement is a summer camp for multicultural students that last anywhere from 1 week to 6 weeks, aiming to expose the students to the opportunities available. These students aren't necessarily forced to look at just agriculture majors, either. They can

come to explore the various opportunities at their university and are shown what opportunities are available in agriculture and natural resources as well. The recruiter hopes to spark an interest early in education and agriculture to invite more African-American students to apply and ultimately come to their university, but have yet to see a growth in the universities African-American population.

In addition to programs such as the one described above, some schools have implemented race-specific programs that encourage African-American students to continue their education, in order to increase diversity within specific programs and colleges. Many recruiters described an incentive-based program that offers funding for students for color as well as other perks. Most schools that were interviewed have a program like this, but they all echoed a similar problem: making students aware of these opportunities.

But even making students aware, a recruiter believed, doesn't always mean that you will be able to land a particular student. First, a student has to be interested in the program offered and the university as well. Because some universities are in small, rural towns where there isn't a large population of African-American students or residents, there is some apprehension by Black students to live in these places, according to one recruiter. They described that aspect as "one of the biggest barriers" the school faces in recruiting and that the "misconception and the perception that students have" about rural areas and schools makes it extremely difficult.

Next, the student has to have the qualifications to be accepted into the program. And while more African-American students are pursuing Master's degrees

now more than ever (Lee, 2012), the demand of these students greatly exceeds the supply. And while that supply is limited, a handful of recruiters note that their universities rarely travels to urban high schools where a high concentration of African-American students are. One said “I think it really starts going out as early as maybe the high school or even before that in terms of starting to draw students (into my area).”

To reach those urban areas and have a presence in those high schools, there must be funding allocated to do so. Funding and also manpower were huge issues when speaking with each recruiter. No recruiter that was interviewed was satisfied with both funding and manpower; they either had one and not the other. Only 3 out of 8 schools interviewed trained recruiters to entice students to attend their university, but most who I talked to that didn’t have that training for their schools thought it would be a great idea and would make them feel more prepared to recruit the students.

A recruiter who had been in their position for more than five years was able to figure out how to attract African-American students to their specific program, but felt as funding was going elsewhere because the university just didn’t deem the cause important enough. The recruiters expressed that the manpower is increased, by training the African-American students previously recruited into the program to attract other students but that limited funding didn’t allow the process to be maximized. Through this particular recruiter’s efforts, roughly about 120 African-American students were accepted into a program within the college, but only half were actually enrolling. Following up with those students, the recruiter found that

lack of funding was the biggest reason that those students decided to attend college elsewhere.

While there are schools that lack funding, another recruiter described his program as being “flushed” with funding. Still, while money is being allocated to combat the issue, there is a deficit in amount of African-American enrollment within the program. The recruiter did describe a “spike” of 130-175% in African-American enrollment coming in some programs, but stressed that those are programs that went from zero to four students or two to six students. Either way, the recruiter wasn’t satisfied with the numbers, but feels as if there is a concerted effort by the university to introduce funding, which provides scholarships for students and positions to focus on increasing diversity.

## **Theme 2: Perceived misconception of African-American’s views of Agriculture**

Speaking with recruiters at a conference where Agriculture majors and jobs are pushed to African-American students, there is always the elephant in the room regarding slavery. In order to correctly exploit the United States’ natural resources for profit, enslavement of the African-American was perfected in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Ladson-Billings et al., 2009). It wasn’t until 1862, some 200-plus years later, that African-Americans saw their citizen status change from “slave” to “free” with the implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation. Just six months after that, legislation was passed by the United States government to support vocational education called the Morrill Act in 1862 (Castle, 1992) that funded and created the recruiting schools.

Even then, segregation still existed and Blacks faced more barriers. In 1896, Plessy v. Ferguson was passed by the United States Supreme Court, declaring segregation legal (Zamudio et al., 2011). African-American citizens would have to wait until 1954 when the decision of Brown v. The Board of Education was passed, which declared that segregation of public schools was unconstitutional, in order to attend most of the schools that are recruiting them at this conference. There obviously had to be some time for African-Americans to not only adjust to being “free” in America, but then spurned and eventually tolerated at 1862 LGIs amid racial tension. And still, even today, the expected benefits of desegregation were little to none, causing community groups to push for better quality education rather than racial composition (Zamudio et al., 2011). The idea that integration would automatically produce educational equality has to be reconsidered (Bell, 2004).

U.S. Census figures around the time Brown v. The Board of Education was passed indicated that three-quarters of African-Americans lived in the South or the “Black Belt” (Ladson-Billings et al., 2009). Most of these citizens in the South made a living the best way they knew how, through agriculture, as their ancestors, previously slaves of the land, passed down useful tools. Most Black Belt citizens worked as small tenant-farmers, share-croppers and hired hands. Students of today are the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those workers. Even while working this land for hundreds of years, Blacks were denied economic rights due to the way the legal system protected the interests of the landowners upon whose property share-croppers and tenant farmer labored (Ladson-Billings et al., 2009).



Blacks likely see Agriculture as a tool they had to use to survive in previous years and not a subject where there is a need for higher education.

Recruiters echo these same sentiments. Many said they have a hard time explaining how agriculture is a field where there are so many possibilities for any student, not just African-American students. A natural solution would be for Black students to see those of similar background in positions of power within agriculture or students succeeding in these particular programs. Race-specific promotional materials when recruiting African-American students is one way to address this issue. Pamphlets, brochures and other things that address some of the issues that Black students have, regarding admissions, scholarship, diversity programs, etc.

Only 2 out of the 8 schools interviewed actually had race-specific promotional materials from their schools, with most using the generic promotional materials used by the school to recruit any student and that could be where some of the disconnect is coming from. Likewise, one recruiter acknowledged that it has been discussed at their university but their school decided to take another approach. "Actually we provide staff and faculty that mirror the kind of students that we are trying to recruit," they said. The recruiter also said that those minority recruiters they are bringing are trained to provide knowledge on the minority programs that diverse students want to hear. "We want to be able to connect them with the type of individual they feel comfortable enough to work with to get them to our university."

While this school and other schools are ahead of the curve with making African-American students feel comfortable when recruiting them to their

universities, most aren't and there is an undeniable disconnect with the African-American community and PWIs across the nation.

### **Theme 3: Disconnect with the African-American Recruitment**

To understand the disconnect between the African-American community and 1862 LGIs, all of which are PWIs, look no further than enrollment. In order for Blacks to close the wealth gap in America, education is a necessity. While graduation and retention are the most important things, enrollment is the first step of this process. Asking recruiters about enrollment numbers did not provide great answers throughout the interview process, because most really didn't know. No recruiter could give me specific numbers but knew that a lot needed to be done in order to have their university and college reflect the nation's demographics (Blacks are the third-most represented demographic).

Most admit that since they have started their job, enrollment of African-Americans has been flat or actually decreased, with little bumps of enrollment here and there. Only one recruiter brought up the important idea of retention when talking about enrollment and stressed that that number is just as important. Another recruiter brought up that their university has added a "multiracial" category and because of that, while it looks as if they are losing Black enrollees, they are just classifying themselves differently.

Regardless, when it comes to enrollment in colleges and universities, African-Americans have taken an enormous step in enrollment just over the past two decades. From 1999 to 2010, African-American enrollment has increased in almost every type of degree (Black demographics, 2010). The biggest jump for African-

Americans came in Master's degrees, which shows that the group is becoming more comfortable achieving even more education after a typical bachelor's and that bodes well for the future of the group.

While the enrollment gap has closed, the graduation gap is still large and getting larger. In 2013, graduation rates, which only account for full-time students (minorities are more likely to attend school part-time), revealed that only 20 percent of Blacks aged 25-29 had a bachelor's degree, compared to 40 percent of Whites (NCES, 2014). Wealth is directly tied to a history of racial exploitation and because of that White communities have directly enjoyed it and accumulated it across generations (Zamudio et al., 2011). Because of the African-American's history, education is the only clear way to accrue wealth, making graduating that much more important.

For the Black students actually admitted to these schools, there still is the process of overcoming the classroom setting. In a 2011 study (Smith, Hung, & Franklin), the authors cite that because there was a limited number of African-Americans on the campuses, it was tough to establish a critical mass forms and made it difficult for African-Americans to desire to assimilate into a predominately White LGIs, where student relation is limited (Cox, 2010).

Before classroom instruction, though, there is a disconnect between Black students and the people encouraging them to attend a PWI. One recruiter admitted that some of the recruiters they previously tabbed to recruit these students had no idea how to connect with them. "The previous recruiter was a 40 to 50-year old white male, and he had a hard time recruiting. And now, we have a maybe 60-

something year old white female and she's only been there for 2 weeks. I'm not sure how she's going to work out, you know.”

Since these particular recruiters have had trouble connecting with students, I asked if there was any training provided by the university. “I know for a fact, they have not had any training,” they said. “(One recruiter) came to us and asked ‘What can I do? What can you help me with? What is it that I’m not doing?’ So, do they need training? Probably so. How would they get that training? I don't know how they would get that training. They just need to be themselves and just know that there are differences between the races and that you need to say different things.”

For more African-American students to succeed at and decide to attend 1862 LGIs, those within the jobs designed to help them get there have to have a legitimate passion to combat the lack of diversity within agriculture. Apathy cannot exist within these employees, because it is the only way to combat this issue.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Introduction**

The results indicated that all three themes: lack of resources, perceived misconception of African-American's views of agriculture and disconnect with the African-American recruitment, all play an equal and unique part in the deficit of the African-American student in PWIs and colleges of agriculture throughout the country. The participants, all with different experiences within their particular career or job, expressed similar barriers when recruiting African-American students and all felt like more could be done to help attract said students to their particular university and college. Both the African-American community and PWIs would benefit greatly with putting this issue on the forefront.

### **Theme 1: Lack of Resources**

Critical race theorists view mainstream education as one of the many institutions that both historically and contemporarily serve to reproduce unequal power relations and academic outcomes (Zamudio et al., 2011). Throughout American history, we have seen an uneven distribution of resources among citizens in education. From the establishment of PWI 1862 LGIs vs HBCU 1890 LGIs, which were initially less funded than its counterpart, to the 1896 United States Supreme Court ruling, Plessy v. Ferguson, declaring segregation legal in schools; people of color have always been an afterthought concerning American education and that is no different when it comes to the recruitment process of African-Americans at today's LGIs and colleges of agriculture.

The researcher examined all nine transcripts and concluded that lack of resources were one of the major issues in African-American student recruitment within colleges of agriculture at different 1862 LGIs. The resource that was said to be lacking the most is time to recruit said student. At an event such as the MANRRS conference, there is not nearly enough time to properly recruit a student to a university, especially to a field like an agriculture. Morgan (2000) says that we are fighting an uphill battle when recruiting Blacks to agriculture programs because when many minority students hear the word “agriculture,” they associate it with slavery. While the researcher believes that the further we get away from the slavery era, Black students will be more open to a career in agriculture there is still the challenge of bypassing the stigma of agriculture in comparison to slavery and likely always will. The belief among many students is that agricultural programs are only designed to train individuals for farming and production agriculture, causing potential students to stray away from the field (Lynch, 2001).

Because 1862 LGI have found it difficult to recruit and retain minority students within their agricultural programs (Lynch, 2001), there has to be more of an initial allotment of time before those students reach post-secondary education. Therefore, the researcher suggests that colleges of agriculture at LGIs not only create positions that recruit African-American students year-round but incorporate more than just recruiting events every couple of months. There should be summer programs that allow students to stay on campus and research to understand what type of degrees and jobs will be available with an agriculture degree. These workers should not just visit the best schools in urban and rural communities but attend

church services and events in those communities to really reach every possible student interested.

Likewise, colleges of agricultures at LGIs should form committees of professors and faculty focused on increasing diversity. These committees should not only take an active role in increasing diversity on campus, but work with African-American organizations, locally and nationally, to create scholarships, funding and events for students. This group should be able to work with the rest of the college and university in order to allocate more funds to recruitment. Critical race theorists want to depart from the notion in mainstream society that Blacks and other minorities are “one-down” or incapable in certain capacities, meaning that putting organizations in the forefront of this issue could work wonders. Universities ought to lean on those who know the African-American community the best.

## **Theme 2: Perceived misconception of African-American’s views of Agriculture**

Perceived misconceptions of African-American’s and their views on agriculture stems from the group’s history of enslavement. However, education has been a primary goal in the African-American community for many years dating back to slavery (Lynch, 2001), regardless of what type. African-Americans just want similar platforms and resources as their white counterparts. While the history of enslavement of African-Americans involved agricultural practices and is very much a part of the history and culture of Blacks, the researcher doesn’t believe it effects the current generation as much as previous ones and will continue to impact each generation’s thought process less and less.

Interviewees expressed that they do believe that the impact of slavery has some effect on student's perceptions and that it is difficult to disprove those assumptions at a recruiting event in a quick conversation. One way recruiters attempt to knock down those perceptions, whether they are real or not, is to make the student more comfortable. They expressed the willingness to bring students and recruiters that reflect the demographic they are trying to recruit to their specific college or university. Besides that, some incorporate race-specific promotional materials in order to show students that there are students that look similar to them in the student body and they also try to incorporate any scholarships or grants that are available specific to minority students. Most interviewees think these methods are the first step in making the student comfortable enough to consider continue their education at that university.

There are misconceptions on both the university's side and from the African-American community. First, the university has to tailor their recruitment techniques towards the Black student and cannot recruit them similar to how they recruit any other student, especially within colleges of agriculture at LGIs. One way is to increase funding to recruit these students, by not only making them feel wanted by inviting them to campus for visits to learn more about the programs offered but being able to offer scholarships and grants that separate your particular university from the others. There cannot be the same methods of recruitment for Blacks and Whites, it has to be a different technique in order for African-Americans to be serious about a major in agriculture. Furthermore, training needs to be done for



each recruiter, regardless if they are a minority or not. Training recruiters can make for a more effective recruiting pitch, method and technique.

For the African-American student, I think that an open mind can change everything when thinking about an education in agriculture. The researcher, an African-American, who graduated from an 1862 LGI with an agricultural degree, had a great college experience. As they were recruited they saw other African-Americans in the college of agriculture, who explained how many different ways an agricultural degree could be used and what the different majors were within the college. It not only made them feel as if they could do anything, but that the people recruiting the researcher were going to make sure that the researcher succeeded.

Another way of conveying how useful an agricultural degree is by highlighting successful Black alumni in not only the school but the agricultural field. Many African-Americans have made incredible strides in the agricultural industry. And with colleges of agricultures across America noticing a decline in the past years (Donnermeyer and Kreps, 1994) there is a demand for agricultural workers, greatly outweighing the supply making for landing a job that much easier.

There needs to be effort from both entities in making this work. An open mind from the student to really understand the paths available within the college and a better, all-out effort in terms of funding allocation, training and an all-around better recruitment process, similar to one the researcher was privileged to have.

### **Theme 3: Disconnect with the African-American Recruitment**

One of the issues colleges of agriculture has to combat is that it's a direct reflection of rural America and the idea of racism that comes with it. Most African-American students are coming from urban areas and have never lived in a place as rural as some of the towns of 1862 LGIs, and for an 18-year old that can bring apprehension and fear of the unknown. When the campus racial climate of an institution is negative, African-American students struggle with feelings of self-doubt, frustration, and isolation both academically and socially (Yosso et al., 2000) and that can be damning to the obtaining of an education.

Disconnect between the African-American community and colleges of agriculture start with the idea that sometimes both the student and administrators comes from places where they don't see an opposite race and that lack of previous communication can make it difficult to assimilate to each other. In order to better establish communication between the two parties, an organization that serves in the African-American community in some capacity could act as a buffer. Organizations with community organizers, such as DART or civil right organizations such as the NAACP would be great organizations to start with. Administration, though, has more of a responsibility to make things work. In recruiting these students, there should be someone, faculty or professor, that directly reflects the African-American community involved with the decisions on how to get students to enroll in the college. Without that, it is impossible to figure out how to relate to African-American students in their state and community.

There also needs to be a way to teach African-Americans about the agriculture industry and jobs attainable through an agricultural education. This seems like a perfect job for extension agents in different counties or maybe even a program in school that provides information to students. Many of the wrong recruiters are being sent to these events. Just because someone is an African-American doesn't mean they will be able to recruit African-Americans at a high level. Throughout my interviews, I could tell if a recruiter I talked to had a passion for what they were doing. If they didn't have that passion it was immediately noticeable and I personally wouldn't have attended the university they represented. Nevertheless, both short and long-term goals by the administration to combat this disconnect would be the first steps in reversing the lack of communication with African-American students.

Short term, the administrations at LGIs need to immediately hire someone with cultural competence with an understanding of diverse audiences. Whether that be a recruiter or faculty that will assist in recruiting. This goal will get the ball rolling in order to identify where the college needs to go in order to seek and actually enroll students. The insight would be tremendous and could help techniques that aren't working and improve on those that are. In the long term, implementing a school-to-campus pipeline that identifies urban schools with excellent students and allow those students to visit the university's campus to participate in a summer program or academy. For students, it would make them feel wanted by the university and even if there were only a couple that decided to come to the school, there will still be an increase in the diversity of the college.

## **Discussion**

Universities have the opportunities to change the direction of the lack of African-American enrollment in all facets, but especially in their colleges of agriculture where there continues to be a severe lack of Black students. The researcher is proud of his education and experience at 1862 LGI college of agriculture and feels many other students would enjoy a similar experience. There are many opportunities for Black students within agriculture and because of the lack of minorities within the field, it is easier to stand out in a pool of applicants, making employment that much easier.

Recruitment, however, is the key. Making students feel comfortable, providing funding for summer programs, scholarships and grant and making students aware of the opportunities and different degrees will go a long way in increasing diversity. There are many talented Black students that have no idea what career path they want to take, and agriculture could be exactly what they are looking for. In order to perfect it, much more research can and should be done on the recruitment techniques and issues concern lack of diversity with different universities. It is clear to the researcher that it will only take one 1862 LGI college of agriculture to create an exceptional model to change these issues, implement it, experience success and many others universities will subsequently do the same.

## APPENDIX A

### Guiding Research Questions

The guiding research questions for the interviews were:

Q1: When recruiting minorities, does your university provide race-specific promotional materials?

Q2: How much has your African-American enrollment in your college of agriculture changed within the past 5 years?

Q3: Has there been any training provided by the university to help you, as an individual, recruit minorities?

Q4: Ok. And what do you think are the barriers of recruitment when recruiting African-Americans to your university?

Q5: Are you comfortable with the funding that the university is providing you in recruiting African-Americans?

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