

An Intersectional Approach to Understanding Black Women's Motivation to Attend a Historically Black College for Women

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Historically, women of African descent had limited entry into U.S. colleges, contributing to the emergence of women's historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Today, little is known about Black students' reasons for attending women's HBCUs. Adopting a Black Feminist Thought framework, the current research examined the relationship between Black women's racial and gender identity centralities and their race- and gender-related reasons for attending a women's HBCU. Survey results from one hundred and thirty-four incoming students demonstrated the interaction between racial and gender identity centrality and intersectional gendered racial identity centrality predicted students' desire to attend a women's HBCU for race-related and gendered race-related reasons. These findings provide important insights into the identity-related factors that motivate Black women's college choice.

Keywords: HBCU, women's college, intersectionality, college choice, Black women

Racism, sexism, and race and gender norms once limited Black people's and women's entry into colleges and universities across the United States (Freeman & Thomas, 2002; Kinzie et al., 2007). Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and women's colleges were created to fill this void and have experienced a renewed increase in enrollment since 2016 (EAB, 2019; Espinosa et al., 2017). Their continued success is not only due to their strong educational mission but also due to the racial and gender societal issues in the U.S. that make these spaces relevant and necessary (e.g., institutional racism; The Black Lives Matter movement; gender-based harassment; #MeToo and #SayHerName movements; Tugend, 2019). Occupying a unique space in the U.S. higher education landscape, women's HBCUs lay at the nexus of HBCUs and women's colleges and were created to educate and provide career development and leadership training to

women of African descent.

Today, there are two private, liberal arts HBCUs for women in the U.S., Bennett College in Greensboro, NC, and Spelman College in Atlanta, GA, and their student outcomes are notable. Women's HBCUs create a culture of traditions (e.g., sisterhood, hooding ceremony, parting ceremony) as tools for socialization to enhance student's sense of belonging and connect the students, faculty, and staff to the history of the institution (Collins & Lewis, 2008). Spelman College, the first women's HBCU, was founded in 1881 as Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, educating Black girls and women, and in 1901 it began granting college degrees (Spelman, 2024). Spelman College, with an average enrollment of 2100 students, offers unique educational opportunities. For example, Spelman College established the first women's research center at an HBCU (Guy-Sheftall, 1982), is the leading producer of Black women who go on to earn doctorates in the sciences (Perna et al., 2009) and is a global leader in educating women of African descent, inspiring a commitment to positive social change through service. Bennett College, with an average enrollment of 465 students, was originally founded as a coeducational school in 1873 and, in 1926, became a college for Black women. Through a transformative liberal arts education, Bennett College aims to prepare women of color to be leaders and provides substantive experiences for students to participate in civic engagement and social justice. Further, Bennett is the first and only women's college in the country to have a Women's Business Center on its campus (Bennett College, 2024). Given the history and racial and gender makeup of Spelman College and Bennett College, such institutions actively fight against stereotypes placed upon Black women and provide their students with an environment where they are not hindered by racist or sexist treatment (Wolf-Wendel, 1998).

Women HBCU graduates are more likely to receive an advanced degree or become a recognized leader in their field, compared to Black women at co-ed HBCUs and predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Watt, 2006; Wolf-Wendell, 1998). Despite these achievements and given the trend in examining White students' college choice (Hossler et al., 1999; Huntington-Klein, 2018), the college choice literature lacks specific attention to Black women's reasons for attending women's HBCUs. Research on Black students' college choice has examined outcomes at the aggregate level (i.e., Black women and men), while research on women's colleges fails to account for Black women's experiences (Ropers-Huilman et al., 2013; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008). Given the documented racial and gender marginalization often experienced at PWIs (Banks, 2009; Jones & Day, 2018), understanding the reasons for Black women's decision to attend a women's HBCU is crucial in supporting their college adjustment, retention, and career goals. Guided by Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) theoretical frameworks, this research investigates the extent to which Black women's interlocking racial and gender identities are critical in understanding their choice to attend a women's HBCU, while highlighting the value and relevance of such institutions in the U.S.

Gendered Race Related Reasons for College Choice

Due to their race and gender identities, Black women enter higher education with unique intersectional experiences that can impact many important life choices (Winkle-Wagner, 2015), including their decision to attend a particular college. Though no research speaks directly to this topic, some research is suggestive of the assertion that Black women's gendered racial identity can influence their academic choices, such as their decision to attend a women's HBCU. For example, Black women are socialized, based on their race and gender identities, that their educational choices should be a priority over romantic relationships (Brown et al., 2017), and their combined race-gender identity enhances their self-confidence with educational opportunities (Settles, 2006). Relatedly, research on Black students' college choice documented that higher racial identity centrality (the extent to which being Black is important to one's overall sense of self; Sellers et al., 1998) was related to an increased likelihood that Black students chose to attend an HBCU for race-related reasons (e.g., race self-development; van Camp et al. 2009a; van Camp et al., 2009b). Integrating and expanding previous research, the current work suggests that Black women's intersectional race and gender identity will likewise influence their decision to attend an HBCU for women.

Gendered Racial Identity Development for Black Women

Black women have unique experiences due to the intersection of their gendered and racialized bodies, which has an influence on their identity development in an HBCU environment (Dickens et al., 2023). Gendered racial identity describes the meaning women attribute to being Black and a woman (Jones & Day, 2018; Thomas et al., 2011). Previous research also shows that gender construction, religious identity, class identity, and sexual identity, to name a few, are integrally related to their identity as a Black woman (Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996). Moreover, given Black women's experiences, they develop their gendered racial identity across four stages: hyperawareness (consciousness of negative perceptions of Black women), reflection (reflection on what it means to be a Black woman), rejection (rejection of negative stereotypical images about Black women), and navigation (shifting aspects of being Black woman to adapt to an oppressive space) (Williams & Lewis, 2021).

Applying an intersectional theoretical perspective, we propose that the identity centrality (e.g., identity importance) of Black women's race and gender identities will influence their decision to attend a women's HBCU. Jones and Day (2018) found there are varying ways Black women may place importance on their race and gender identities by: 1) placing similar importance on race and gender, 2) believing race is more important than gender, 3) having an awareness of double jeopardy of one's gendered racial identity, and/or 4) believing that gender is more important than race. Relatedly, the womanist identity model, which includes women rejecting patriarchal views of women to develop a positive definition of womanhood, suggests that identification as a feminist is one way Black women may define themselves as a gendered being (Ossana et al., 1992).

Taken together, researchers find that Black women considered being Black and a woman to be important components of their overall identity (Fujino & King, 1994; Jones & Day, 2018). Thus, it is possible that Black college women may choose to attend a women's HBCU for race reasons, gender reasons, or the intersection of race and gender reasons.

Emerging Research on Motivations to attend a Women's HBCU

Research suggests that for women attending women's colleges, these institutions provide a supportive learning environment, assist with gender identity development, provide faculty role models, and offer opportunities for students to develop leadership skills (Dasgupta et al., 2015; Kinzie et al., 2007; Miller-Bernal, 1993). College students and alumnae from women's institutions report higher levels of faculty-student interaction, class participation, and active learning compared to those at coeducational institutions (Women's College Coalition, 2012). Though research has explored advantages (and to a lesser degree reasons) for attending a women's institution, it is limited and focuses on majority White women samples (Watt, 2006).

Likewise, given the barriers that Black students may face at PWIs, such as racial insensitivity and isolation (Robinson et al., 2013), attending an HBCU may be an attractive option. Previous research found that Black students choose to attend an HBCU for race-related reasons, such as the racial makeup of the institution and for racial self-development (van Camp et al., 2009a). Also, qualitative work found Black students selected an HBCU because they knew someone who attended an HBCU, desired a deeper understanding of their heritage, and to enhance their cultural awareness (Griffin et al., 2012). At HBCUs, students foster positive relationships with faculty and learn a curriculum that centers Blackness, encouraging academic motivation, self-efficacy, and a sense of belonging (Freeman et al., 2021; Quinlan et al., 2022).

Though there is a history of research on student college choice at women's institutions and HBCUs, these literatures shed little light on whether and how race and gender may influence Black women's decision to attend a women's HBCU. However, some research provides reasons for such decisions among Black women. For example, research suggests that peer relationships (e.g., sisterhood), supportive institutional programs (e.g., career planning and leadership development programs), and *mothering* (mentorship from Black women faculty) enhance Black college women's academic success (Patton, 2009; Winkle-Wagner, 2015), which may contribute to their decision to attend a women's HBCU. Also, given that there are only two historically Black colleges for women in the U.S., there is a lack of research on college choice in this area.

Black Feminist Thought: Implications for Black Women's College Choice

We argue that a Black Feminist Thought (BFT) perspective is critical in understanding Black women's college choices. The BFT framework, developed by Patricia Hill Collins, is a system of thought that empowers Black women to clarify the standpoint of Black women in the culture (Collins, 2022). Moreover, this framework foregrounds Black women's multiple identities,

which are inextricably linked and expressed through intersections (i.e., intersectionality), and attempts to allow Black women to redefine (i.e., self-definition) Black women's culture (Collins, 2022). From a BFT perspective, Black women's social identities (i.e., race and gender) may lead them to experience life in distinct ways, thereby impacting their college choice.

Expanding on BFT, intersectionality theoretical framework, by Kimberly Crenshaw, is used to understand the interlocking oppressions of race and gender to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). This model suggests that multiple social categories (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, income) intersect at an individual level and reflect various interconnected systems of oppression at the structural level (Bowleg, 2012; cf. Crenshaw, 1989). Previous research using an intersectional approach has shown that many Black women place equal importance on their racial and gender identities (Jones & Day, 2018; Settles, 2006). Watt (2006) assessed racial identity and womanist attitudes among Black women attending HBCUs, finding that those who held positive attitudes about being Black also felt positive about being a woman. These findings highlight that race and gender are interconnecting and important components of the self for many Black women and suggest they can influence important life decisions, such as Black women's educational choices (Chavous et al., 2004; Jones & Day, 2018).

The Current Research

This preliminary study adopted an intersectional BFT approach to study college choice among incoming Black women attending a women's HBCU by examining the extent to which race- and gender-related reasons predict motivation to attend a particular college. We proposed two primary hypotheses. First, we expected racial centrality, as well as the interaction between racial centrality and gender centrality, would predict greater race-related (but not gender-related) reasons for college choice. Second, given prior intersectionality research (Settles, 2006), we hypothesized that greater gendered racial centrality (i.e., intersectional Black woman identity) would be related to greater gendered race-related reasons for attending a women's HBCU.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Data were collected in the Summer of 2018 as part of a larger study on factors influencing incoming students' identity and motivations for attending college. The sample included 134 incoming students from a women's HBCU in the southeastern U.S. Of the 125 who provided demographics (9 did not report), 124 self-identified as African American/Black women ($M_{\text{age}} = 18.03$; $SD_{\text{age}} = .31$; one did not report race/ethnicity). Participants included 115 incoming first-years, 6 transfers, and 4 who did not report their classification. Regarding family income, 17 reported "below \$25,000", 23 reported "\$25,001 to \$50,000", 27 reported "\$50,001 to \$75,000", 22 reported "\$75,001 to \$100,000", and 36 reported "above \$100,000," illustrating a wide range in income level.

Incoming students were contacted via email the summer before their campus arrival and during student orientation to participate in a survey of their “thoughts and beliefs on personal and school-related topics.” Eligible students (incoming first years or transfers at a women’s HBCU, and 18+ years old), were directed to an online survey via Qualtrics and entered a drawing for a chance at receiving four \$25 payments. Following consent, participants completed the online survey.

Measures

Unless noted, items were assessed from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Racial centrality. The 8-item racial centrality subscale from the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI; Sellers et al., 1998) assessed how central, defining, and important one’s racial group membership is to the self (e.g., “In general, being Black is an important part of my self-image”; $\alpha = .77$) and the scores were averaged.

Gender centrality. Items were adapted from the 8-item MIBI racial centrality subscale to assess the centrality and importance of one’s gender identity to the self (Sellers et al., 1998). This adaptation for gender identity allowed for continuity across measures and comparisons across social groups that are each grounded in unique historical experiences (see Settles, 2004 for similar adaptations). The terms “Black” and “Black people” were replaced with “woman” and “women”; otherwise, item wording was identical to the original 8-item measure ($\alpha = .67$) and the scores were averaged.

Gendered racial identity centrality. Items were adapted from the 8-item MIBI racial centrality subscale to assess the centrality and importance of the intersection of one’s racial identity and gender identity in tandem (Sellers et al., 1998). The terms “Black” and “Black people” were replaced with “Black woman” and “Black women”; otherwise, item wording was identical to the original 8-item measure (e.g., “In general, being a Black woman is an important part of my self-image”; $\alpha = .77$). Response options to items were averaged.

Race-related reasons for college choice. The race-related reasons for college choice scale assessed racial identity-related factors contributing to Black students’ decision to attend an HBCU (van Camp et al., 2009a; 2009b). This measurement was used to assess the extent to which two race-related factors contributed to students’ college decisions: opportunities for “racial self-development” (4-items) and the “race focus of the institution” (4-items) (8-items; $\alpha = .91$; all eight items are from van Camp et al., 2009b). Response options to items were averaged. Sample items include, “The college will assist in developing your own personal racial identity” (race self-development) and “The student body is predominantly Black” (race focus of the institution), assessed from 1 (*not very much*) to 10 (*very much*).

Gender-related reasons for college choice. Gender-related reasons for college choice were assessed by adapting the two race-related reasons (van Camp et al., 2009b) into one gender-focused scale (8-item; $\alpha = .92$). Terms were replaced with gendered terms; otherwise, item wording was identical to the original measure. Scores were averaged for use in analyses. Sample items include,

“The college will assist in developing your own personal gender identity” (gender self-development) and “The student body is predominantly women” (gender focus of the institution).

Gendered race (G-R) related reasons for college choice. To explore the intersectional gendered race-related reasons for college choice, a subscale was created by modifying the race-related reasons scale for college choice subscales (all items were adapted from van Camp and colleagues; 2009b; 8-items; $\alpha = .91$). Items were adapted to refer to racial identity (i.e., Black/s) and gender identity (i.e., women). Scores were averaged for use in analyses. Sample items include, “The college will assist in developing my own personal racial and gender identity” (race and gender self-development) and “The student body is predominantly Black and woman” (race and gender focus of the institution).

Results

Analyses were conducted for each key outcome variable: race-related, gender-related, and gendered race-related reasons for college choice. We conducted correlational analyses for each outcome to examine their relationship to racial centrality, gender centrality, and gendered racial centrality. Next, multiple regression analyses tested whether racial, gender, and gendered racial centrality predicted race-related, gender-related, and gendered race-related reasons for college choice. To test for the moderating effects of racial and gender centrality, SPSS PROCESS v.3.0 Model 1 v.24 (Hayes, 2017) was used. See Table 1 for correlations.

Table 1

Bivariate Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Racial centrality		.47***	.78***	.58***	.36***	.54***
2 Gender centrality	--		.57***	.31***	.41***	.31***
3 Gendered racial centrality	--	--		.49***	.37***	.47***
<i>Reasons for college choice</i>						
4 Race-related	--	--	--		.58***	.79***
5 Gender-related	--	--	--	--		.67***
6 G×R-related: Race and gender-related	--	--	--	--	--	--

Note. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$

Race-Related Reasons for College Choice

Replicating work by van Camp and colleagues (2009a), correlational analyses showed a strong and positive relationship between racial centrality (RC) and race-related reasons, $r(129) = .58$, $p < .001$, such that higher levels of racial centrality were associated with higher levels of race-related reasons for choosing a college. Gender centrality (GC) was also positively related to race-related reasons for college choice, $r(130) = .31$, $p < .001$, and the strength of the relationship was moderate. Finally, gendered racial centrality was positively related to race-related reasons for college choice, $r(128) = .49$, $p < .001$.¹

A multiple regression analysis was then conducted to assess whether racial centrality, gender centrality, and gendered racial centrality predicted race-related reasons for college choice. As expected, the variables significantly predicted race-related reasons, $F(3,125) = 21.03$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.34$, with racial centrality providing the most predictive value, $b = .48$, $t(125) = 4.15$, $p < .001$ (gender centrality and gendered racial centrality were not significant, $ts < 1$).

Next, regression analyses assessing interactive effects indicated that the model including racial centrality (RC), gender centrality (GC), and RC \times GC interaction explained 36% of the variance in participants' race-related reasons for college choice, $F(3, 126) = 23.16$, $p < .001$, with the RC \times GC interaction emerging significant, $b = -0.33$, $SE = .15$, $p = .032$, 95% CI [-0.63, -0.03]. To better understand the nature of this interaction, we first explored the conditional effects of racial centrality (focal predictor) at low and high levels of gender centrality for race-related reasons for college choice. Results indicated that racial centrality differs significantly at each level of gender centrality, such that when gender centrality is low, the racial centrality effect for race-related reasons for college choice is stronger, than when gender centrality is high (low GC: $b = 1.26$, $SE = .18$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.90, 1.62]; high GC: $b = .70$, $SE = .22$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [.26, 1.13]). See Figure 1. There were no significant conditional effects of gender centrality (focal predictor) on race-related reasons at both low and high levels of racial centrality.

¹ Throughout *df* vary and are slightly reduced as a few participants failed to complete all items in each scale.

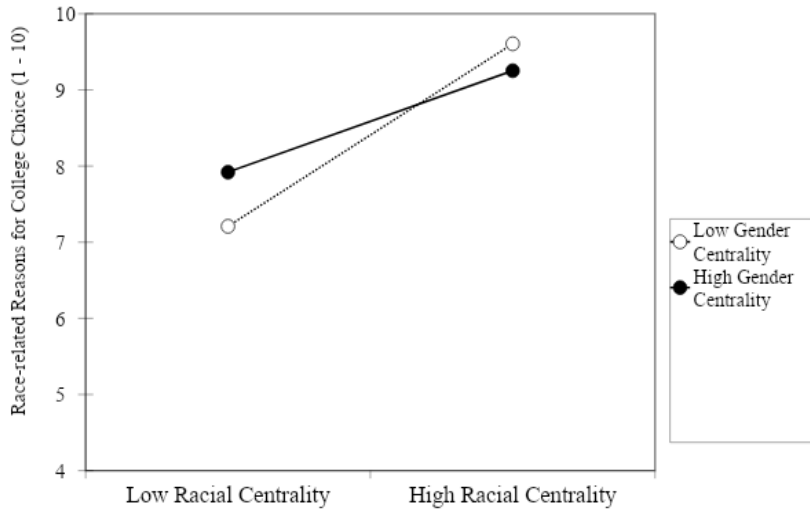
Figure 1*Panel A*

Figure 1. Panel A. The relation between racial centrality and gender centrality on race-related reasons for college choice ($N = 130$).

Gender-Related Reasons for College Choice

Racial centrality, gender centrality, and gendered racial centrality were moderately positively related to gender-related college choice reasons, r s: .36 - .41, p s < .001. Next, multiple regression analyses showed that the variables significantly predicted gender-related reasons, $F(3,126) = 10.78$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.20$, with gender centrality, $b = .28$, $t(126) = 2.93$, $p = .004$, providing the most predictive value (racial and gendered racial centrality were not significant, t s < 1.42, p s > .15). Finally, in a regression model including RC, GC, and RC \times GC as predictors of gender-related reasons for college choice, the RC \times GC interaction was not significant, $p > .18$.

Gendered Race-Related Reasons for College Choice

Racial centrality was positively and strongly associated with gendered race-related reasons for college choice, $r(128) = .54$, $p < .001$, and gender centrality and gendered racial centrality were both positively and moderately associated with gendered race-related reasons, $r(128) = .31$, $p < .001$ and $r(127) = .47$, $p < .001$, respectively. Multiple regression analyses then showed that taken together, the centrality variables significantly predicted gendered race-related reasons, $F(3,124) = 17.58$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.30$, with racial centrality providing the most predictive value, $b = .44$, $t(124) = 3.70$, $p < .001$ (gender and gendered racial centrality were not significant, t s < 1).

Lastly, in a regression model including RC, GC, and RC \times GC, the RC \times GC interaction was not significant, $p > .25$.

Discussion

To our knowledge, the current research is among the first to assess how the intersection of racial and gender identity is associated with Black women's race-related, gender-related, and gendered race-related reasons for attending a women's HBCU. Accordingly, BFT provides an ideological framework for understanding the influence of Black women's identity development and identity formation within higher education institutions (Collins, 2022). Informed by this framework, we found general support for our hypotheses. First, the study replicated similar research (van Camp et al., 2009a; 2009b), finding that racial centrality predicted race-related reasons for attending a women's HBCU. Secondly, we extended this work, finding that Black women's racial centrality and gender centrality, together, predicted race-related reasons for choosing a women's HBCU. Third, only gender centrality predicted gender-related reasons for Black women's college choice. Finally, following multiple regression analyses, only racial identity centrality predicted the intersectional gendered race-related reasons for college choice. Together, these findings align with the intersectionality perspective of BFT (Collins, 2022), highlighting the centrality of race and gender identity in influencing Black women's college choice.

Importantly, the current research shows that Black women who's intersectional (Black woman) identity is important to their overall sense of self chose to attend a woman's HBCU for race-related reasons. While significant, it is not surprising that Black women's combined identity would appear to be a significant factor impacting race-related reasons for college choice. For example, previous research has found the importance of gendered racial identity on Black women's persistence in STEM education (Charleston et al., 2014). These findings extend work showing that race-related reasons are important factors in deciding to choose a particular institution for Black students, more generally (Cho et al., 2008; Freeman, 1999; Perna, 2006; van Camp et al., 2009a, 2009b). Relatedly, Hurtado and Carter (1997) suggest that perceived campus climate plays a critical role in the types of institutions that Black students apply to and ultimately choose to attend. As such, it is possible that while Black women may not see their race and gender identity as inseparable, their intersectional identity may lead them to first view their college as an HBCU rather than a women's college. Consistent with Fujino and King (1994)'s theoretical model of womanist identity, Black women may begin to first focus predominantly on their racial identity, due to the history of U.S. race relations, next become aware of their experiences as women, and then focus on both racial and gender identities (Jones & Day, 2018). Furthermore, Black women attending HBCUs may be more likely to interpret their college experiences in terms of the intersection of race and gender (e.g., being consciously aware of discrimination faced by Black women) (Bowman et al., 1999; Chavous et al., 2004). In addition, perhaps Black women find that attending a women's HBCU allows them to develop authentic images of Black womanhood, which aligns with the self-definition tenant of BFT. This tenant consists of Black women challenging

political thoughts and practices (such as media images) that have stereotyped Black women and replacing these images with authentic images of Black women (Collins, 2022). Thus, given the influence of their intersectional identity, the current research suggests that Black women who are racially gendered conscious are attracted to women's HBCUs for race-related and gendered-race-related reasons. Accordingly, women's HBCUs center the experiences of Black women while fostering their academic, personal, and social development.

Limitations and Future Directions

Though this research aligns well with the intersectional approach in examining Black women's college choices, we note a few limitations. Firstly, there are likely other reasons for attending an HBCU for women that were not examined in the current studies. As a first step in studying college choice, we focused on the outcomes associated with Black women's salient identities—race-related, gender-related, and gendered-race-related. Future research should explore the differential outcomes associated with Black women's identity-related reasons for attending a women's HBCU, such as sexuality, parental and peer influences (e.g., Bergerson, 2009), history and traditions, and career development opportunities. Additionally, given the cross-sectional nature of the current research, longitudinal studies exploring the influence of racial centrality, gender centrality, and gendered racial centrality on one's decision to attend and matriculate through a women's HBCU are needed.

We also note challenges with social desirability and/or self-selection processes could have played a role in the findings, where students may have felt pressure to hold their racial and gender identities in high regard due to the women's HBCU context. Despite these considerations, work examining the influence of the intersection of racial and gender identities on Black women's college choice is particularly important, considering the increase in student enrollment among various HBCUs as of late and the significant success of its students (Perna et al., 2009).

Implications

The current research applies important theories of identity and intersectionality to Black women's significant life choices. The findings suggest that women's HBCUs may attract Black women who are racially gendered conscious. As such, counselors and parents can instill in Black women the importance of developing positive racial and gender identities, which may increase interest in attending a women's HBCU and heightened their level of professional success. Consistent with Brown et al. (2017), parents can socialize their Black daughters by instilling messages of gendered racial pride and empowerment (e.g., Black Girl Magic!). It is also important for school counselors to become educated about all institutions, including Black women's HBCUs, and share the different college opportunities available to Black women. Likewise, these data may be especially useful to college admissions concerning the recruitment and retention of Black college women. HBCU student affairs and academic administrators should develop pre-college

programs and recruitment programs that include multiple aspects of identity and identity-development components to attract and support Black women (Strayhorn et al., 2012; Watt, 2006). Pre-college programs at HBCUs could also provide spaces for pre-college Black women to discuss their feelings and experiences regarding what it means to be a Black woman navigating Black and White America (Watt, 2006), in addition to other intersecting identities (e.g., age, sexual orientation, religion, class). Finally, these findings inform theory on college choice among Black women as many theories are based on White undergraduate student samples. Scholars have argued that Black women desire supportive experiences with women of the same race (e.g., Shorter-Gooden, 2004). As such, this research suggests the need for theoretical models that consider the needs of students at Black women's HBCUs.

Conclusion

This preliminary research is among the first to apply an intersectional Black Feminist framework to the study of how racial and gender centrality influence Black women's college choice. This research has implications for HBCUs, pointing to the significance of one's racial and gender identity development in one's decision to attend a women's HBCU in particular. Specifically, this work suggests that Black women, whose race and gender are central to their core self-definition and identity, desire to attend a women's HBCU to engage in racial and gender identity development, and for professional development opportunities. Thus, even though PWIs are no longer legally closed to Black women, women's HBCUs remain a vital part of the college landscape as institutions that attract, educate, and support Black women.

Author Note

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