Title

Black Women Finding Homeplace: Intrasectional Analysis of Racial Identity Development on the HBCU Campus

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0kz636fs

Author

Devost, Audrey

Publication Date

2023

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Black Women Finding Homeplace: Intrasectional Analysis of Racial Identity Development on

the HBCU Campus

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Audrey Ann Devost

2023

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Black Women Finding Homeplace: Intrasectional Analysis of Racial Identity Development on the HBCU Campus

by

Audrey Ann Devost

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2023

Professor Jessica C. Harris, Co-Chair

Professor Walter R. Allen, Co-Chair

Black women have a unique process in forming their identities, because of the subordinated status of both their racial and gender identity. Black women in America have urged American society at large to understand the complexity and multidimensionality of the Black woman identity, due to issues of inequality being addressed through a single axis lens (Crenshaw, 1989). This research study focuses racial identity development for Black women college students attending an HBCU. Scholarship on Black women's multidimensional experiences in higher education continues to grow, but little is known about Black women's racial identity development in the HBCU environment and their intragroup differences. In building a knowledge project of racial identity development, this study is theorized and guided

by a Black feminist and intersectional conceptual framework to understand the distinct process of identity development in the lives of Black women attending an HBCU. To capture the deeply intersectional nature of the Black woman experience, this research introduces *an intrasectional methodological approach* highlight the intragroup differences among the participant's experiences. The research questions that this study asks include: (1) What are the racialized experiences of Black women college students who are attending an HBCU; (2) How does the HBCU environment (norms, people, expectations, structures) impact the racial identity development of Black women? (3) How does intersectionality help us understand student development for Black women college students attending an HBCU? The findings of this study reveal critical ways that the three dimensions of intersectionality function in student development for Black women at HBCUs.

The dissertation of Audrey Ann Devost is approved.

Jules Harrell

Tyrone C. Howard

Jessica C. Harris, Committee Co-Chair

Walter R. Allen, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2023

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the Black women who have existed beyond the margins. To young Black girls imagining their futures through literature and TV screens. To the Black girls who don't see people who look like them in their daily lives, and finally this dissertation is dedicated to the Black women who left their homes to embark on their own journey to find their homeplace through pursuing the college pathway. May the stories that are inside this dissertation serve as an inspiration to construct your own home place and have your own homecoming.

BLACK WOMEN FINDING HOMEPLACE: INTRASECTIONAL ANALYSIS OF RACIAL

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE HBCU CAMPUS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the participants of this study, thank you for being the co-creators of this knowledge project. I am thankful for the time that we spent talking, laughing, and crying. Thank you for sharing the stories of your existence with me.

To the woman who I have aspired to be in my own womanhood, my mother. Thank you, mom for showing me the power in using my voice. Thank you for supporting me in my entire education journey, and in developing this knowledge project.

To the man who gave me my passion for sports, my dad. Thank you, Dad, for being my biggest champion. Thank you for calling me to let you know how proud you are of what I'm doing. Thank you for coming along on the road trips and taking care of my dogs.

To my brother David. Thank you for being my confidence. You are my inspiration in never letting external forces weigh me down. Thank you for protecting me as a young Black girl and always find ways to be with me when I need you.

To my family and friends. Thank you for supporting me in building this knowledge project. From holding space for me to discuss my research endeavors, exercising, to supporting me while I travel coast to coast for data collection. Thank you for your love and support.

To my right-hand partner at UCLA, Ashton! Thank you for always standing up for me in classroom spaces, and correcting anyone who tries to see my identity for less than what it is. I have been so fortunate to have you as a thought partner at UCLA and I am excited to see all the places you'll go.

To my intersectionality thought partner, Nadeeka Karunaratne. Thank you for going through this journey with me. Thank you for pushing me in my scholarship and showing me the importance of healing in the field of higher education.

To my best friend Gabi Celia Ortiz. Thank you for being a part of my original UCLA cohort. I am forever thankful I get to continue to be your thought partner beyond your time at UCLA. Thank you for the facetime calls that consisted of explaining a theory to you, impromptu zoom writing sessions, and showing me the pride of being a Bruin.

To my lifelong sisters Lailah and Savannah. Thank you for being my homeplace. I cannot express how grateful I am that life has always found a way to bring us back to each other as we have grown older. Thank you for always being proud of me and celebrating who I am, beyond the margins and all.

To my dissertation committee members, Dr. Harrell, and Dr. Howard. Thank you for being an important part of my education journey. I came to life as a young developing scholar in each of your classrooms and I am thankful for the ways your influences have shaped my scholarship.

To my dissertation committee co-chair, Dr. Jessica Harris. I cannot thank you enough for being in community with me chapter by chapter of this knowledge project. Thank you for being my support here at UCLA, holding space for me to be expressive in my passions, and being an inspiration for me to visualize the possibilities of my identity as a Black feminist scholar. I cannot thank you enough for the countless hours that you have put into my scholarship during my time at UCLA.

And finally, to my dissertation committee co-chair and advisor Dr. Walter Allen. I am at a loss for words, thank you for everything. In searching for my pathway beyond my time at Howard University, thank you for illuminating the road I have now traveled. It is the highest honor to now be a part of the long legacy that follows you.

<div align="center">**VITA**</div>

<div align="center">**AUDREY ANN DEVOST**</div>

EDUCATION
M.A. in Education, Higher Education and Organizational Change
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)   June 2019
B.S. in Psychology, Minor in Political Science
Howard University   May 2017

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
Graduate Research Assistant: University of California, Los Angeles   October 2019–Present
Principal Investigator: Dr. Walter Allen
Utilizing large data sets from the Education Diversity Project (longitudinal survey for 8,000 law students at 68 institutions) to analyze Black undergraduate, graduate, and faculty representation and experiences in higher education.
Research Lab Associate: Transracial Adoptee Higher Education, Student Affairs Scholars Research Lab   January 2022–Present
Advancing and promoting research and scholarship on (and by) TRAs in higher education and student affairs.
Summer Undergraduate Researcher:
University of California, Los Angeles   July 2016–August 2016
Principal Investigator: Dr. Sandra Graham
Analyzing data from the UCLA Middle School Diversity Project
Undergraduate Researcher: Howard University   August 2015–May 2017
Principal investigators: Dr. Nere Ayu and Dr. Debra Roberts
Transcribed raw qualitative data and analyzed findings for the Cultural Socialization Laboratory in the Department of Psychology.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
UCLA African American Studies Department: Bunche Fellows Program April 2019–Present
Instructor (yearly appointment)
AFFAM 188A/B/C/ (summer series):
Comparative Black studies research perspectives and methods
UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies
Instructor (Quarterly Appointment)   March 2019–June 2019
C191A: Issues in Education: Intergroup Dialogue

PUBLICATIONS
Devost, A. (2023). Racial identity development on the margins: The narratives of Black women college students with experiences in the foster care system. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 40*, 237–254.
Allen, W., **Devost, A.,** Mack, C. (2020). Hidden in plain sight: Historically Black colleges and universities in America. *Quaderni di Sociologia, 83–LXIV*, 25–46.
      https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.4044

PUBLICATIONS IN PRESS

Devost, A. & Kurland, W M. (in press). (Re) considering racial micro affirmations in higher education for transracial adoptees. In *Blurring boundaries and binaries: Belonging, gender, & mixed heritages in higher education in the United States*. Information Age Publishing.

McLewis, C., **Devost, A.,** & Allen, W. R. (in press). Under the color of law: How race matters in legal training. In A. S. Wells, D. Price-Dennis, & D. Delima (Eds.), *Reconceptualizing "diversity" for socially just education: Research themes from early childhood to higher education*. American Educational Research Association.

PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES
Paper Presentation
Devost, A. & Pemberton, G. **(Accepted). Advancing the Study of Controlling Images in Higher Education.**
American Educational Research Association: 2023 AERA Annual Meeting
Devost, A. & Karunaratne, N. **(2022) Employing Intersectionality in Educational Research: A Duoethnography Unpacking the (Mis)Applications of the Framework**
American Educational Research Association: 2022 AERA Annual Meeting
Devost, A. (2021) Triple Marginalization: Black Women Who are Foster Care Alumni in Higher Education. American Educational Research Association:
2021 Virtual AERA Annual Meeting

Poster Presentation
Devost, A. (Accepted, 2017) Challenging What we Know about Biracialism: An Analysis of Racial Climate and GPA
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD)
Devost, A. (2016) Challenging What we Know about Biracialism: An Analysis of Racial Climate and GPA
University of California, Los Angeles
Summer Programs for Undergraduate Research Symposium
Devost, A., Ayu, N., & Roberts, D. **(2016) Educational Outcomes for Foster Care Children**
Howard University
Leslie Hicks Symposium
Devost, A., Ayu, N., & Roberts, D. **(2016) Educational Outcomes for Foster Care Children**
Howard University
Howard University Research Day Symposium

HONORS AND AWARDS
University of California–Historically Black Colleges and Universities (UC-HBCU) Doctoral Fellowship
October 2019–present
University of California, Los Angeles Summer Training for Excellence in Education Research (STEER)
July 2016–August 2016

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

"Black revolutionaries do not drop from the moon. We are created by our conditions. Shaped by

our oppression". Assata Shakur (1987)

The development of racial identity has distinct features when the process takes place within higher education. In fact, existing research has found distinct ways the process of racial identity development differs for Black students across institutional types such as predominately White institutions (PWI), and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) (Allen, 1985; Hunter et al., 2019). This research study focuses racial identity development for Black women college students attending an HBCU. Black women have a unique process in forming their identities, because of the subordinated status of both their racial and gender identity. Throughout history, Black women in America have urged American society at large to understand the complexity and multidimensionality of the Black woman identity, due to issues of inequality being addressed through a single axis lens (Crenshaw, 1989). In building a knowledge project of racial identity development, this study is theorized and guided by a Black feminist and intersectional conceptual framework to understand the distinct process of identity development in the lives of Black women attending an HBCU. In putting these two frameworks together to center Black women, intersectionality returns to one of its theoretical mother, to construct a more complex way of theorizing identity and oppression. To capture the deeply intersectional nature of the Black woman experience, this research introduces *an intrasectional methodological approach* highlight the intragroup differences among the participant's experiences. The research questions that this study asks include: (1) What are the racialized experiences of Black women college students who are attending an HBCU; (2) How does the HBCU environment (norms, people, expectations, structures) impact the racial identity development of Black women? (3)

How does intersectionality help us understand student development for Black women college students attending an HBCU?

Statement of the Problem

Scholarship on Black women's multidimensional experiences in higher education continues to grow, but little is known about Black women's racial identity development in the HBCU environment and their intragroup differences. Recent higher education research that includes Black women has made progress in this regard by shifting away from examining Black women in comparison to their racial and gendered counterparts and towards examining these experiences without comparison (Patton, 2009; Patton & Simmons, 2008). While there is a growing amount of intersectional research on the college experiences of Black women, gaps remain in this field. Existing research on Black women in higher education primarily centers Black women who attend predominately white institutions (Baber, 2012; Chavous et al., 2018; Lige, 2017; Tovar-Murray, 2012; Williams et al., 2022). The population of Black women attending HBCUs is on a consistent incline. In fact, Black women enrollment at HBCUs has been higher than male enrollment in every year since 1976; the percentage of Black woman enrollment at HBCUs increased from 53 percent in fall 1976, to 62 percent in fall 2018 (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Despite the growing Black woman population at HBCUs, little is known about their intragroup (intrasectional) differences in the process of racial identity. This poses a problem to how we understand the expansiveness of the process of racial identity development because Black women are not a monolith. The collective experiences of Black women are not uniform. This research expands on existing research to examine how Black women's racial identities are shaped through their individual experiences and how they are forming and understanding their racial identities during their time in college. From there, this

2

work goes in-depth to explore commonalities and differences in the development of racial identity for each Black woman in this study, illustrating the importance of studying the intrasectional differences among Black women.

Overview of Conceptual Framework

This work is guided by both Black feminist thought and intersectionality. Black feminist thought is the epistemological standpoint used to create this study and intersectionality is the theory used to articulate the findings of this research. Black feminist thought is a longstanding intellectual tradition that aims to empower Black women within the context of social injustice sustained by intersecting oppressions (Collins, 2000). Under Black feminist epistemology, knowledge is acquired through our various experiences of living, surviving, and thriving within multiple forms of oppression. The knowledge Black women hold is a self-defined, embodied way of knowing (Patterson et al., 2016). As an overarching theory of knowledge to the study of racial identity development, this work is grounded by the core epistemological themes of Black feminist thought such as: the importance of self-definitions, holding lived experiences as a criterion of meaning, and the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims.

This research then applies intersectionality as a theoretical framework to understand and articulate the experiences of the participants. Black women scholars across academic disciplines have expressed that being a Black woman is a multifaceted, dynamic, and distinct experience, when compared to Black men and women of other races (Collins 1989; hooks 1982; Walker 1983). As Black feminist thought's theoretical offspring, intersectionality at its core aims to capture the multiplicative nature of how interconnected oppressions are experienced in the lives of Black women (Harris & Patton, 2018; Settles, 2006). This research utilizes intersectionality as a lens to challenge the nature of homogeneous social categorizations of gender, race, and class in

3

the study of racial identity development. This is done by illuminating the lived experiences of

Black women that have generated the various standpoints of racial identity that are represented in

this study.

Key Terms

Upon embarking on a deep analysis of racial identity development among Black women,

I begin with defining terms that establish the margins of this study. In the table that follows, I list

the terms that are integral to understanding the Black woman experience.

Black Feminist Thought	Multi-faceted intellectual tradition of Black women that aims to find ways to escape from, survive in, and/or oppose prevailing social and economic injustice (Collins, 2000). As a critical social theory, Black feminist thought is grounded in its commitment to justice for both Black women as a collective and for other similarly oppressed groups (Collins, 2000).
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU)	Institutions of higher learning established before 1864 that are products of the enduring Black struggle for freedom and Equality, and whose principal mission is to provide higher education to Black Americans (Allen et al., 2020).
Identity Development	A process of integrating one's past, present, and future into a unified sense of self that begins in adolescence and continues for a lifetime (Thomas et al., 2011; Torres et al., 2009).
Intersectionality	A critical analytic lens used to understand how various axes of difference such as race, gender, and class form mutually constructing features of social organization which shape Black women's experiences (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Harris & Patton, 2018).

Intragroup (intrasectional) Differences	Differences within a particular group, which in this context is Black women.
Race	This study views race as master category, meaning race is a fundamental concept that continues to shape the structure and culture of the United States. Regarding race as a master category does not mean that it stands separately from other axes of difference, rather race has played a unique role in the formation and development of the United States (Omi & Winant, 1994), and different regimes of domination and difference in the United States has consistently pulled from concepts of hierarchy and marginalization based on race (Omi & Winant, 1994).
Racial Identity (Development)	Racial identity is the exploration of the extent to which people of color perceive themselves to share a common racial heritage with their ascribed racial group (Helms, 1990). Racial identity development refers to the process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social meaning of belonging to a particular racial group (Tatum, 2000, 2017)
Social Structure	A social structure is defined as a set of long-lasting social relationships, practices, and institutions. Kang (2012) compares social structures to that of a human skeletal system: The human body is structured by bones; that is to say that the rest of our bodies' organs and vessels are where they are because bones provide the structure upon which these other things can reside. Structures limit possibility, but they are not fundamentally unchangeable. For instance, our bones may deteriorate over time, or be affected by disease, but they never spontaneously change location or disappear into thin air. Such is the way with social structures (p.#31) In this

	regard, understanding the social structure of American society is critical to understanding how identity is established within social institutions (government, work, education, media, etc.) that are the elements of the larger social structure that work to direct possible actions.
Structures of Power	Overlaps with social structures. Structures of power are defined with two conditions, 1) access to and through the various social institutions; 2) processes of privileging, normalizing, and valuing certain identities over others (Kang et al., 2012). Power, in American society is organized along axes of identity-based difference.

This research has three intentions in addition to reimagining intersectionality and how it engages with racial identity development in higher education. First, this project is an ode to Black women who have existed beyond the margins of dominant society. The experience of being a Black woman is a matter of existing inside interlocking oppressions that have been consistently violent (Carruthers, 2018). The second intention of this work is to continue to amplify Black women's stories in efforts to continue the movement towards collective liberation from the oppressive systems Black women have existed within. The third intention of this research is to tell these stories with the understanding that these women will be at different stages in the development of their racial identity. Putting these stories in an intersectional analysis will illustrate the importance of approaching racial identity development within Black womanhood with an intersectional lens.

"An Ode to Black Women": Significance

Various components of this research pose significance considerations to the study of Black women in higher education. First, adjusting to life in college is often a complex process that requires the development of effective strategies for adapting to, and coping with, various demands in the college experiences (Jones et al., 2020). Existing research has primarily documented the process of college matriculation for Black students who attend PWIs (Chavous et al., 2018; Shahid et al., 2018; Solórzano et al., 2000). Stressors of adjusting to PWI environments often include race-related stressors i.e., racial discrimination, prejudice, and culture shock, which have been consistently linked to poorer academic performance, struggles with social adjustment, and psychological well-being (Allen et al., 1991; Shahid et al., 2018). Positioning the study of racial identity within the HBCU context is an opportunity to understand the impact of the HBCU experience on racial identity process for Black women. Second, utilizing a Black feminist intersectional approach to examine racial identity processes for Black women in higher education positions their voices on an intellectual foundation that has been built and sustained for their survival. This knowledge project offers a reconsideration of how intersectionality can help the field of higher education understand student development.

Chapter Overview

Chapter two consists of both the conceptual framework and review of literature, the chapter begins by overviewing how Black Feminist Epistemology and intersectionality as the selected theory, come together to conceptualize the intragroup differences of racial identity development among Black women. Later in chapter two, the review of literature surveys the different research components that this study connects to illustrate the interdisciplinary gap that this research is situated in. Chapter three of this study introduces the construction of an intrasectional

7

methodological approach, that was utilized to interpret the data of this study. Chapter three explains the various methods used to collect data and details about the site that this study is conducted in, and the limitations. Chapter three also includes each of the participant's origin stories as foundational knowledge to the racial identity experiences that are highlighted later in the dissertation. Chapter four is the findings of tracing identity in the HBCU environment. The subthemes of the findings represent critical aspects of the college experience that mark key moments of the development of racial identity for Black women college students attending an HBCU. Chapter five is the discussion component of this study that employs intersectionality to theorize the findings through an intersectional lens to understand how intersectionality helps us understand student development for Black women college students at HBCUs. Chapter six addresses implications for practice, policy, and research based on the study's findings.

This study transcends the single axis boundaries of racial identity by introducing a unique group whose identities are interconnected, with race being the master category. This study departs from examining racial identity development through a single-axis lens and instead, employs a Black feminist intersectional lens to examine racialized identity-based experiences in higher education to explore the multidimensionality of the Black woman experience in the HBCU environment.

CHAPTER II: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with mapping out the conceptual framework that this study is guided by. Black feminist thought is the overarching philosophical stance that has shaped the research process through grounding its logic and criteria. Intersectionality is overseen by Black feminist epistemology to interpret and articulate the data. The purpose of this interconnected theoretical approach is to theorize the experiences of Black women with theories that were built with their liberatory futures in mind. Together, this conceptual framework seeks to reconfigure the complexities of Black woman marginality through an intersectional analysis where race, class, gender, and other social divisions are theorized as multidimensional lived realities. At the end of the conceptual framework, this chapter discusses two pieces of literature that are utilized as influential guides in utilizing intersectionality. The second half of chapter two is dedicated to the literature review, which is structured to survey the various areas of study that this scholarship stitches together to illustrate the interdisciplinary gap that this study is situated in.

Theoretically, this research aims to accomplish a few things. First, the aim is to understand the complexity of Black women's student development in the HBCU environment. Second, uncover new strategies to theorize racial identity development by incorporating multiple theoretical perspectives that have been created by Black feminist scholars for the study of Black women. Third, provide insight on utilizing intersectionality to examine identity development that accounts for intersectionality's area of improvement. This aim is significant as intersectionality has been critiqued for its theoretical, political, and methodological murkiness (Nash, 2008). This conceptual framework returns intersectionality to one of its theoretical roots to validate the strength of this popular theoretical tool.

Black Feminist Epistemology

Black feminist thought is utilized in this study as the overarching theory of knowledge. As a critical social theory, Black feminist thought is a form of specialized knowledge that has been created by and for the advancement of Black women that functions to find ways to escape from, survive in, and/or resist prevailing social injustice (Collins, 2000). As an epistemological disposition, Black feminist thought represents how the researcher sees the world and the production of knowledge. Black feminist thought is interdependent with intersectionality as the theoretical framework to create a Black feminist analytical approach to the data in exploring how Black women HBCU college students make meaning of their racial identities. This work is grounded by the following core epistemological themes of Black feminist thought. First, Black women empower themselves by creating *self-definitions* that enable them to establish positive images to repel negative, controlling representations of Black *womanhood.* Second, Black feminist epistemology holds *lived experiences as a criterion of meaning*, and the final theme is *the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims*.

The first distinguishing theme of Black feminist epistemology discusses empowerment through *self-definitions*, which is the power to name one's own reality (Collins, 2000). In the lives of Black women, the concept of *self* is not defined as the increased autonomy gained by separating oneself from others. Instead, self is situated in the context of family and community (Collins, 2000). Black feminist epistemology holds that the process of defining self is not in opposition to others, rather the connectedness among individuals provides Black women deeper, more meaningful *self-definitions* (Collins, 2000). In examining racial identity development for Black women, *self-definition* serves as an epistemological pillar to recognize that Black women's

identity development is about working to define themselves through the larger identity of the Black woman.

The second theme of Black Feminist epistemology that this work is grounded in is *lived experience as a criterion of meaning*. As members of a subjugated group, survival for Black women requires wisdom of the intersecting oppressions that Black women are subjected to face in their lives. This form of knowledge is distinct and has been key to Black women's survival (Collins, 2000). In this study the lived experiences of Black women are held as credible forms of information in creating knowledge claims of racial identity development for Black women in higher education.

The final theme is the *use of dialogue in knowledge claim*s. This epistemological assumption in Black feminist thought holds that the use of dialogue in building and assessing knowledge claims happens in dialogue (Collins, 2000). Oral traditions have deep roots in African American culture and Black women intellectuals have historically invoked connectedness by the use of dialogue (Collins, 2000). Connectedness in building knowledge is an essential component of the knowledge validation process within Black feminist thought rather than separation. Under this core theme Black women in this study are held as the co-creators of this fresh contribution to the study of racial identity development.

Utilizing Black feminist thought as an epistemological stance enables this work to illustrate Black women's power as agents of knowledge. Together, self-definitions based on lived experience that have been constructed through dialogue shapes how racial identity development is articulated in this study. The priority of this study is to theorize racial identity development with theoretical positions that center Black women, and from the roots of Black feminist epistemology grows intersectionality as the theoretical framework.

The Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality

Similar to Black feminist thought, the history of intersectionality can be traced back as early as the mid 1800's to the work of Black women like Sojourner Truth and Anna J. Cooper (Crenshaw,1991; Taylor, 1998). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) introduced intersectionality as an analytical concept to address the complex power relations that shape the lives of women of color, and Black women in particular (Haynes et al., 2020; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Conceptualized as a three-form framework, Crenshaw's intersectionality includes structural, political, and representational intersectionality.

Broadly, political intersectionality focuses on how the experiences of women of color are erased by competing discourses of resistance, specifically anti-racism, and feminism (Harris & Patton, 2018). Within the higher education context that this work is positioned in, political intersectionality is used in this study to understand the process of racial identity development for Black women. Representational intersectionality focuses on how cultural representations of Black women produce negative controlling images and reproduce violence against them (Harris & Patton, 2018). Images such as Sapphire, Mammy, Jezebel, and Superwoman are commonly highlighted as examples of controlling images that reinforce racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women as loud, angry, violent, hypersexual, and superhuman (Harris, 2015; Haynes et al., 2020; Leath & Mims, 2021). Representational intersectionality is expanded upon in this study to illustrate how the representation of the Black woman identity influences various subprocesses in the development of racial identity. Structural intersectionality is concerned with the absence of the unique experiences of Black women within the structures of U.S. society, such as the U.S. legal system and community resources (Harris & Patton, 2018). Structural intersectionality is

used in this study to highlight the unique intragroup experiences of Black women in higher

education that are not often accounted for within the structures of higher education. Utilizing

these three dimensions of intersectionality to examine racial identity development for Black

women in higher education enables the racialized experiences to be understood as

multidimensional and interconnected with the other dimensions of identity that make up the

Black woman identity. By examining the process of racial identity development through an

intersectional lens, this research emphasizes the experiences of Black women to understand what

kind of racialized experiences occur in the higher education context for Black women, and how

these experiences impact identity development.

      Taken together, this Black feminist intersectional approach is critical in understanding the

voices and experiences of Black women attending an HBCU. Employing ancestral ways of

knowing to illuminate the paths that the participants of this study have traveled demonstrates a

theoretical strategy of resistance to those who seeks to define and control Black women's

identities.

Influential Guides

      To learn from the existing literature that has worked to hold scholars accountable in their

usage of intersectionality, this research is guided by theoretical frameworks that have been

created by and for Black women. This research is influenced by a few studies that will serve as

an accountability tool for the utilization of intersectionality and to center Black women in an

honest manner. *Black + lesbian + woman ≠ Black lesbian woman: The methodological*

challenges of qualitative and quantitative intersectionality research (Bowleg, 2008), highlights

key dilemmas for intersectionality researchers in utilizing intersectionality in their

methodological approach. Bowleg (2008) centers three issues that intersectionality researchers

13

must grapple with that includes developing questions to measure intersectionality, analyzing intersectionality data, and interpreting them. This article illustrates common mistakes that researchers make in using intersectionality, and Bowleg (2008) also offers insights to future researchers in avoiding those mistakes.

Un/Doing Intersectionality through Higher Education Research (Harris & Patton, 2018) offers insight on how various academic disciplines including higher education have used intersectionality and this research serves as a guide for intersectionality scholars on how to use intersectionality in a manner that advances a transformative social justice agenda**.** The work of Patton and Njoku (2019), investigated how the intersections of gender, race, policy, and student differences at HBCUs can impact the student experience on Black women by understanding how these Black women students have defined Black womanhood in their own lives. This research intends to expand on the work of Bowleg (2008), Harris & Patton (2018), and Patton & Njoku (2019) by considering the common misuse of intersectionality, and how to use the framework in a way that is transformative. Through the narratives of these HBCU Black women who are centered in this study, the previous works that influence this research, and with the frameworks that were created by and for Black women, the intention of this research is to understand how the participants arrived in higher education and further demonstrate how racial identity development is constructed in the lives of Black women with experiences beyond the margins of dominant society.

Review of Literature

Identity development calls for a process of integrating one's past, present, and future into a unified sense of self that begins in adolescence and continues for a lifetime (Thomas et al., 2011; Torres et al., 2009). According to the continually growing body of literature created by and

for Black women, the identity of being a Black woman is multifaceted, dynamic, and distinct from Black men and women of other races (Collins 1989; hooks 1982; Walker 1983). Beginning with a historical overview of how the development of racial identity has been measured, the literature review stiches together the various areas of study that this study interweaves to illustrate the interdisciplinary gap that this work is situated in. After examining the history of racial identity and racial identity in high education, this study then reviews literature on Black women in higher education. From there, this study reviews the historical legacy of HBCUs and the various approaches to understanding their campus cultures. The final sub-sections of the literature review are historical overviews of both Black feminist thought and intersectionality.

The Development of Racial Identity

Foundational scholarship on racial identity development has been primarily within the field of psychology (Cross, 1971, 1991; Erikson, 1959, 1980; Helms, 1990; Parham, 1989; Scottham et al., 2008; Seaton et al., 2006), yet the study of racial identity development among Black Americans has been grappled with across various disciplines, including higher education (Abes et al., 2007; Chávez & Guido DiBrito, 1999; Harris & BrckaLorenz, 2017; Hurtado et al., 2015; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Tatum, 1992). Theories and models of Black racial identity began to appear in counseling psychology and psychotherapy literature in the early 1970s in response to the civil rights movement of the era (Helms, 1990). In examining the early conceptualizations of Black racial identity Helms (1990) specified two major Black racial identity theoretical strands. The first strand is called the "*Black- client-as-problem perspective*" (CAP), a perspective that attempted to explain intra-and interracial dynamics. Emerging during the 1960's, this conceptualization was situated in a time where much of the counseling and psychotherapy literature played on societal fears that Black Americans would act

out their anger toward society via passivity, mistrustfulness, and overt hostility (Helms, 1990).

CAP models of racial identity suggested that differences in overt behaviors would allow

counselors to decide which Black clients were likely to be most problematic for which race of

counselors (Helms, 1990, p. 10). The goal of CAP models was to diffuse counselor anxiety by

making Black behaviors more predictable.

The second theoretical strand is the Nigrescence racial identity model, defined as the

developmental process by which an individual "Becomes Black" (Cross, 1971; Helms, 1990, p.

17). Within this stage-based model, Black is defined in terms of one's manner of thinking, self-

evaluation, and one's reference groups; rather than in terms of skin color (Helms, 1990). This

model of racial identity development attempted to separate aspects of Black identity

development that occurred primarily in response to racial oppression separate from those aspects

that occurred as a normal part of the human self-actualization process (Helms, 1990; Maslow,

1970). Cross's original work, the Nigrescence model, defined four developmental stages that

each center race, are concerned with self-concept issues, as well as parallel attitudes about Black

and White people as reference groups (Helms, 1990). Cross's model of racial identity

development set the stage for racial identity development models to come. Theorists who came

after Cross often grappled with the four stages in the Nigrescence model to develop more recent

models of racial identity (Sellers et al., 1998).

Black identity development theory was developed separately of the Nigrescence model;

the original work was coined by Dr. Bailey Jackson (1976) in his work titled *The Function of a*

Black Identity Development Theory in Achieving Relevance in Education for Black Students.

Jackson (1976) asserted that to understand the reasons that the United States educational process

does not relate to the Black experience, the nature of the Black experience must be understood

(Jackson, 1976). He further explained that racism in this society significantly shapes the quality

of the life experiences of Black people, specifically the way in which Black people view

themselves, and their place in this society (Jackson, 1976). The stages in the original Black

Identity development theory include passive acceptance, active resistance, redirections, and

internalization (Jackson, 1976). Each of these stages describe the way Black individuals view

themselves and their environment, define their needs, and set and execute goals (Jackson, 1976).

More contemporary measures of Black racial identity such as the Multidimensional

Model of Racial Identity (Sellers et al., 1998) was created in the late 1990's, and this model is

used in the most recent studies of racial identity development (Campbell et al., 2019; Chavous et

al., 2018; Sellers et al, 1998). Qualitative research on African American racial identity

development has been historically characterized as the underground approach to study racial

identity development, as opposed to the mainstream quantitative approach that has focused on

universal properties associated with ethnic and racial identities (Sellers et al.,1998).

Racial identity development has also been linked to ethnic identity development (Chávez

& Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Helms, 1994; Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity development consists of

an individual's movement toward a highly conscious identification with their own cultural

values, behaviors, beliefs, and traditions (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). Theories of ethnic

identity development have been designed as stage-based models just like racial identity

development models, but with ethnicity development scholarship, these models have been used

to focus on what individuals learn about their culture from their family and their immediate

community (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). The distinction between racial and ethnic identity

development scholarship requires a diving deep dive into cultural context. While racial and

ethnic identity are critical parts of the overall framework of both individual and collective

identity, racial identity refers to a sense of group or collective identity, based on one's perception that he/she/they share a common heritage with a particular racial group (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Helms,1993). Ethnic identity is regarded as an individual's identification with a segment of a larger society whose members are thought to have a common origin, share segments of a common culture, participate in shared activities of significance to both the common origin and culture (Yinger, 1976). While racial identity is a surface-level manifestation based on what we look like, racial identity has deep implications on how we are treated in society.

In the social sciences, racial identity development has been studied by multiple academic disciplines to better support the development of college students (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999; Harper et al., 2004; Harris & BrckaLorenz, 2017; Sellers et al.,1998; Torres et al., 2009;). By moving toward sociological perspectives to examine racial identity, scholars have been able to make extraordinary discoveries about how Black college students construct their identities. In her work titled *Racial Identity Development and Relational Theory: The Case of Black Women in White Communities*, Tatum (1993) addressed the work of racial identity theorists doing little to grapple with gender, and relational theory doing little to address issues of race. Through interviewing Black women who grew up in predominantly White communities, Tatum (1993) conceptualized the development of racial identity as movement in a spiral motion rather than a linear stage to stage motion. Tatum (1993) asserts that a person may frequently move from one stage to the next, only to revisit an earlier stage as the result of new experiences, but the experience of the revisiting may be different than it was the first time. Tatum (1993) refers to the concept of non-linear movement through racial identity stages as movement on a spiral staircase. "As a person ascends a spiral staircase, she may stop and look down at a spot below. When she

reaches the next level, she may look down and see the same spot, but the vantage point is not exactly the same" (Tatum, 1993, p. 3).

Racial Identity Development in Higher Education

Going to college is an important time for the development of racial identity, college students who are ages 18 to 25 are in a period of emerging adulthood when they have the opportunity to explore their possible selves (Clayton, 2020). Existing research on racial identity development in higher education has explored multidimensionality within race which has included examining the experiences of multiracial individuals. Students who possess multiple racial heritages including Blackness, are critical to the growing body of research on racial identity development in higher education, because mixed race students may engage differently on different college campuses than their monoracial peers (Harris & BrckaLorenz, 2017; Ozaki & Renn, 2015). In their research titled: *Black, White, and Biracial Students' Engagement at Differing Institutional Types,* Harris and BrckaLorenz (2017) found that biracial students at non-HBCUs report a higher quality of interaction than biracial students at HBCUs (Harris & BrckaLorenz, 2017). These findings raise questions about college students who have multiple racial heritages that consist of Black and another race and their quality of interactions at differing institutional types.

Multidimensional identity research in higher education has also explored sexuality. In a qualitative study titled *Exploring Complexities of Multiple Identities of Lesbians in a Black College Environment*, Patton and Simmons, (2008) examined the experiences of five Black first year HBCU students who self-identified as lesbian. Using a reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) and the Multidimensional Identity Model (MIM), Patton and Simmons (2008) inquired about how the participants perceived themselves, how they

understood the intersection between their various identities, and how they understood their oppressed identities. Through interviews, Patton and Simmons (2008) shed light on how participants made sense of their identity internally, and in relation to external expectations. Their findings also revealed how these students negotiated the complexities of their multiple identities in college (Patton & Simmons, 2008).

All of these studies of racial identity development in higher education have been able to uncover new ways of theorizing identity development, however the studies on identity that were previously cited used different theoretical approaches to understand racial identity development rather than critical theories like Black feminist thought and intersectionality. While existing research that has utilized a Black feminist conceptual framework to study racial identity development among Black women is limited, this area of scholarship has made considerable advancements to how racial identity development processes manifest for Black women in higher education. In Porter et al.'s (2020) work titled: *Black Women's Socialization and Identity Development in College: Advancing Black Feminist Thought* (2020), the authors utilized Porter's (2017) revised model of identity development in Black undergraduate women (MIDBUW) as a framework to analyze Black women's socialization processes. This framework assumes that Black women's identities are inextricably linked and cannot be discussed singularly, social interactions within respective environments influence how and what identities were developed, and Black women must be in process of developing a multiple consciousness through which to engage and interact with others and their environment (Porter et al., 2020). This study found that Black women's experiences are not monolithic and all who serve Black women must acknowledge how they were socialized prior to college and how those processes contribute to their socialization and identity formation during college (Porter et al., 2020). They called for

future research to examine intragroup differences within Black women's experiences and for future research on this subject to be conducted on HBCU campuses for richer diversity (Porter et al., 2020). Incorporating theoretical approaches that have been constructed by Black women is an important advancement to the study of racial identity development in higher education because it works to explain Black woman's development through a multidimensional context where Black women's identities are seen as interconnected. This research expands on the previously cited literature by answering the call in what is needed for future directions.

The Black Woman in Higher Education

While higher education has been characterized as one of the greatest hopes for intellectual and civic progress, higher education has also been part of the struggle towards empowerment for many Black women (Allen, 2000; Robinson et al., 2013). Current literature that centers Black women in academia has overarching themes such as struggling with their sense of belonging (Hunter et al., 2019), isolation (Atlantic-Vital, 1989; Robinson et al., 2013; Winkle-Wagner, 2009), and stress (Moody & Lewis, 2019). Existing literature shows a pattern of institutional and interpersonal oppression where Black women are ever cognizant that "their presence represents a disruptive infiltration into spaces that were never intended for them" (McKay, 1997; Perlow et al., 2018, p. 7). Black women's experiences in academia have often been viewed through the lens of White women or Black men (Patton, 2009), making higher education institutions some of the most oppressive spaces that Black women navigate (Patton & Njoku, 2019). Black women working to establish identity in the larger social structure is a liberatory practice that pushes back on the institution-sanctioned violence that Black women experience in higher education (Atlantic-Vital, 1989; Patton, 2009; Patton & Njoku, 2019).

In questioning why there is a lack of research about African American women in higher education, Michelle Atlantic-Vital (1989) explains that U.S. society does not recognize, and often denies, the importance of African American women's lives and contributions through racial, sexual, and class oppression. Black women have an important perspective on how they negotiate race and gender while navigating the academy (Allen & Joseph, 2018; Harris 2017), because they undergo many challenges that manifest differently across the higher education landscape. Racialized experiences in PWI environments that Black women commonly encounter can be summarized with experiences of gendered racism (Allen & Joseph, 2018; Moody & Lewis, 2019), racism in the classroom (Hunter et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2013), lack of access to mentorship (Campbell, et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2020; Patton, 2009), and an overall fight to belong in academia (Davis et al., 2004). In their work that centers how, race still matters for African American college students; Campbell, et al. (2019) found that majority of PWIs in the United States continue to not facilitate a positive multiracial environment for all their students and this continuous failure has had negative ramifications for minority students. This poses a problem for Black women college students, due to their continuing historically oppressed minority status and the salience of race on these campuses. Existing research focusing on African American women in the academy has increased in recent years; however, there remains a significant amount of work to be done. The previously stated obstacles for Black women in higher education have been heavily documented as occurring in PWIs; research is limited on the unique sociocultural experiences of Black women and the intragroup differences within these experiences that might influence Black women's racial identity development at HBCUs in different ways.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), were established under the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862, which was one of the biggest college access-related policies in history for both public higher education and African Americans (Harper et al., 2009). These institutions of higher learning historically had the principal mission of educating Black Americans, and HBCUs gave African American students the opportunity to attend college during the time of legal segregation and being denied entry to historically White institutions (Allen et al., 2018). The rich history behind HBCUs is one of the reasons why they are regarded as nurturing environments for Black students. Higher education has been the American dream for Black Americans dating back to slavery, when slaves were forbidden to learn to read and write under threat of physical harm or death (Allen & Jewell, 2002). Black men and women have historically fought for and invested in education, seeing it as the hope and salvation for the future (Allen & Jewell, 2002). While HBCUs have been consistently met with resistance and outright opposition since their inception, the efforts of Black Americans to gain and secure educational access through institution building and legislation has been characterized as a social movement (Allen & Jewell, 2002; Anderson, 1988; Webber, 1978). Through these movements, HBCUs have accomplished impressive objectives that were once seen as unimaginable. While HBCUs are approximately two percent of the higher education landscape, they award fourteen percent of baccalaureate degrees to African American students (Allen et al., 2018). HBCUs have helped to liberate and empower Black aspirations for the American dream.

In the present day, HBCUs have their own set of norms and expectations that are unlike any other institution of higher learning in the United States. Scholarship on HBCUs has framed their historical roots around social justice, because HBCUs promote higher education with intent

and as a promising pathway to removing systemic barriers that are especially prevalent in the Black community (Crewe, 2017). Throughout history, HBCUs have indisputably been at the center of socio-political movements and anti-racist activism in the United States (Biondi, 2012; Douglass, 2012; Kendi, 2012). Being a student at an HBCU means that an individual is directly following the ancestral footsteps of a long line of daring Black icons who were once HBCU students such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King Jr., Toni Morrison, Reverend Jesse Jackson and countless others. The culture of HBCUs includes being at the forefront of challenging white supremacist education, producing revolutionary scholarship during the most critical periods of racial, socio- political, and economic transformations in America (Biondi, 2012; Spencer, 2017).

Campus Culture

HBCUs have different racial structures or ''set[s] of social relations and practices based on racial distinctions'' than the structures of predominately White institutions (PWIs) (Clayton, 2020; Bonilla-Silva 1997, p. 474). These institutions also have different approaches to addressing race through the curriculum (Bennett & Xie, 2003; Clayton, 2020). Literature that focuses on HBCU campus climates characterizes HBCU campuses as a direct reflection of the social contract they have been situated in and the history these institutions have existed through; characterizing HBCUs as protective environments that nurture their students and insulate them from the harsh and racist society (Allen et al., 2007; Bennett & Xie, 2003; Brown & Davis, 2001).

As HBCUs have been commonly characterized as protective environments where Black students often have more positive experiences at HBCUs than their counterparts at PWIs (Allen, 1992; Roebuck & Murty, 1993), there is a sufficient amount of literature that takes a

contemporary approach to understanding HBCU campus culture, shedding light on the oppressive forces that constrict Black students who hold social identities that go against the grain of Black respectability and heteronormativity (Patton & Njoku, 2019; Patton & Simmons, 2008). In a 2012 critical autoethnography guided by Black feminist epistemology titled: *The HBCU Experience: Liberating or Not*? Kennedy (2012) explored her own education experience attending an HBCU in relationship to the experiences of other Black women. Kennedy (2012) asserts that HBCU students and educators have confronted the principles of white patriarchal leadership on campus throughout history and because of this resistance, it is important to both Black students and educators to be in command of governing practices on an HBCU campus. HBCU students and educators having control of the governing practices is a direct liberatory practice of education (Kennedy, 2012). Within the HBCU campus, the standards of teaching and learning in higher education are typically limited within the boundaries of both—White and Black patriarchal systems, which makes the Black women become repressed in the HBCU environment due to their gender (Kennedy, 2012). Moreover, Black women educators and students at HBCUs should challenge the patriarchal marginalization of Black women's voices and lived experiences in the classroom. In studying HBCU campus culture, it is imperative to understand the legacy that these institutions continue to uphold for the progress for Black Americans, while simultaneously understanding that the HBCU campus climate continuously evolving to be more inclusive.

Another example of literature that utilizes a critical lens to examine the HBCU experience is the work of Patton and Njoku (2017). In *Reimagining the HBCU Environment* (2017), *Reimagining the HBCU Environment*. Njoku and Patton (2017) found that HBCU sites have two opposing constructed spaces. The HBCU environments used in their research varied

across different levels of being supportive of diverse expressions of Black womanhood (Patton &

Njoku, 2017). In discussing common threads throughout their various studies that centered

HBCU Black women, Patton and Njoku (2017) explained that on the macro level of their HBCU

sites, the environments have conservative undertones that are reinforced by faculty, staff, and

peers. On this level, expressions of Black womanhood promoted a politics of respectability and

appeared to support heteronormative expressions of femininity. Patton and Njoku (2017) also

found that micro-level subcultures that exist within the examined HBCUs such as sororities and

student organizations allow and support Black women to construct their own definitions of Black

womanhood, for these subcultures were created in resistance to the campus environment that

have been attempting to police Black womanhood. Patton and Njoku (2017) ultimately found

that in comparison to the macro-level of the studied HBCU environments, the larger Black

population on these campuses promote a strong sense of self concept and cultural history among

their students.

Understanding identity development for Black women through a Black feminist

intersectional lens will maintain a similar level of criticality that has been employed by

previously cited literature, and in doing so has the sole intention to help strengthen HBCUs as

they continue to serve as grounds for resistance and experimentation with Black womanhood.

Illustrating the differences in racial identity development among Black women attending HBCUs

is needed for the field of higher education to understand how intersectionality functions as a tool

of understanding student development for Black women. Black women attending HBCUs with

identities that do not align with the expectations and discourse of the HBCU campus are subject

to be displaced and further excluded from spaces on campus, it is important to know recognize

that Black women are not monolithic in order to continue to support Black women in higher

education (Patton & Njoku, 2017). Conducting an intersectional analysis among students with multidimensional identities such as Black women, while accounting for their intragroup differences, will contribute to a more complete understanding of the interaction between the status of their racial identity development and the racialized nature of the educational context they are navigating. This research uses Black feminist thought and intersectionality to account for the intersections of identity that comes through in the findings.

Black Feminist Thought

Black feminist thought is a critical social theory that aims to understand how Black women are marginalized through institutional structures and practices, social norms, and ideological elitism (Gist, 2016). The historical evolution of Black feminism in the United States developed out of the need to improve societal conditions on Black women's own terms (Taylor, 1998). *The Historical Evolution of Black Feminist Theory and Praxis* by Ula Taylor (1998), overviews the movement of Black Feminist thought occurring in two waves starting in abolitionist movement to the resurgence of feminism in the 1990s.

In the nineteenth century, the first wave of Black feminism emerged out of the abolitionist movement; Black women abolitionists such as Sojourner Truth contributed to developing a collective feminist consciousness that reflected their particular experiences as Black women (Crenshaw, 1991; Taylor, 1998). In 1851, Sojourner Truth declared "Ain't I a Woman?" and challenged the sexist imagery used by male critics, to justify the disenfranchisement of women (Crenshaw, 1991). Through speaking on her own life, Sojourner Truth revealed the contradiction between the ideological myths of womanhood and the reality of Black women's experience (Crenshaw, 1991). Early Black feminists such as Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Anna J. Cooper challenged both the patriarchy of Black men and the racism of

White feminists (Crenshaw, 1989). Black feminism has consistently been defined by the activism of Black women, and through its disruptive nature, Black feminism serves as a political paradigm.

The second wave of feminism is linked to the modern civil rights movement, which is often dated from the 1954 Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, to the 1970's (Collins, 1989; Crenshaw, 1989; Taylor, 1998). Through stories such as the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) being formed out of frustration with sexism in the Black Power movement and racism in the women's liberation movement in 1973, it is understood how Black feminist thought has emerged and why Black women continue to resist negotiating their concerns that come with having multidimensional identities (Taylor, 1998). The original vision for the NBFO was a multipurpose organization that would address an array of issues, including childcare, employment, sexuality, welfare, media image, addiction, incarceration, and the relation of Black women to one another, and to the women's movement (Taylor, 1998). Overall, the NBFO did not have a far-reaching impact for the reason that Black women had to deal with many variables in their lives at this time, and they were not able to generate a powerful political movement as a result (Taylor,1998). The difficulty within the NBFO did not prevent Black feminists from advancing their paradigm and the third wave of Black feminism occurred in the 1980s and 1990s (Taylor, 1998).

The third wave of Black feminism is marked by the uprising of Black feminist legal theorizing as well as literary scholarship by Black feminist writers (Taylor, 1998) Black feminist legal scholars like Patricia J. Williams, Paulette M. Caldwell, and Kimberlé Crenshaw lead Black feminist legal scholarship today, and the work by Black women writers such as Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Toni Cade Bambara, June Jordan and Audre Lorde are

28

staples to the continuous work of both Black feminist scholarship and it's theoretical offspring: intersectionality. All of these Black women participated in political activism as well as doing the work towards collective liberation in their own careers (Taylor, 1998). The work of these scholars has collectively given Black women multiple voices of inspiration as well as strategies to change their conditions (Taylor, 1998).

Intersectionality

The deep roots of intersectionality have manifested in waves similar to its theoretical origin of Black feminist thought. *The Combahee River Collective* (1977/1995) consisted of a group of Black feminists, who came together and wrote a manifesto that has been cited as a prominent expression of intersectionality (Cole, 2009). The term intersectionality was coined in 1989 by Critical Race scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, and it was originally used as a legal tool to frame the marginalization of Black women in antidiscrimination law (Harris & Patton, 2018). In the 1989 landmark essay *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced intersectionality to address the marginalization of Black women within antidiscrimination law and feminist and antiracist theory and politics (Carbado et al., 2013). Early articulations of intersectionality focused on the experiences of groups experiencing multiple oppressions and within this approach, early work on intersectionality highlighted the ways that existing scholarship examining identities such as race and gender through a single axis framework may be limiting, because individuals experience these identities simultaneously. As intersectionality has traveled across various academic disciplines to be utilized by both anti-racist and feminist scholars, critiques of intersectionality have included: the lack of a defined intersectional methodology, the use of Black women as quintessential intersectional subjects, the

vague definition of intersectionality, and the empirical validity of intersectionality (Nash, 2008).

Intersectionality is used in higher education research to analyze the various ways in which race

and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences in education

(Crenshaw, 1991), as well as provide scholars with a critical analytic lens to interrogate racial,

ethnic, class, ability, age, sexuality and gender disparities (Harris & Patton, 2018). Crenshaw

(1991) names three different forms of intersectionality: structural intersectionality, political

intersectionality, and representational intersectionality. Structural intersectionality describes how

different structures work together to interlock and oppress Black women (Crenshaw, 1989).

Crenshaw used this form of intersectionality to illustrate how systems of race, gender, and class

domination converge in the experiences of women of color who were being housed in a battered

women's shelter in Los Angeles (Crenshaw, 1989). Through these stories of the shelter's

experiences with women of color Crenshaw illustrated that any intervention strategies based

solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds is of

limited help to women of color, for they face different identity-based obstacles (Crenshaw,

1989). Political intersectionality highlights two conflicting systems-race and sex, and how these

constructs divide White women and women of color into subordinate groups (Crenshaw, 1989).

The need to split one's political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is the very

nature of political energy as well as a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of

color and White women rarely confront (Crenshaw, 1989). Representational intersectionality is

the last form of intersectionality, and this form criticizes sexist and racist marginalization of

women of color in representation (Crenshaw, 1989). Representational intersectionality

emphasizes that when one discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other, the power

relations that each attempt to challenge, are strengthened (Crenshaw, 1989).

Moving Forward

The literature review highlighted various areas of research that are connected as building blocks of this study. As a collective, the study of racial identity development in higher education, Black women college students attending HBCUs, and intersectionality, form an interdisciplinary gap that this work is situated in. The significant amount of research in higher education that explores the development of racial identity among Black women college students are either primarily focused on Black students who attend PWIs, or they are studies that do not center the examination of intragroup differences, which makes theorizing about the development of racial identity through an *intrasectional analysis* on an HBCU campus, a new ordeal. Black women are not monolithic, and their experiences cannot be analyzed in such a way that their lived experiences are disconnected to understanding how they are forming their racial identities in higher education. The conceptual framework of this study employs Black women's specialized knowledge to allow the co-creators of this knowledge project to name their own reality. Black feminist epistemology asserts that the survival and thriving of Black women in American society requires wisdom of intersecting oppressions that shapes their daily lives. Intersectionality is utilized to understand how the participants have acquired and use this wisdom in their individual experiences in higher education. To address this concern, this research builds and utilizes an *intrasectional methodological approach* to better understand the intergroup differences within the Black woman college experience. This interdisciplinary gap that the literature review established is important to address, because as scholars strive to understand Black women and their identity-specific experiences, researchers must connect subfields of study together in reviewing existing literature to demonstrate the multidimensionality of Black women in scholarship.

CHAPTER III: Intrasectional Methodology

The intrasectional methodological framework of this study employs methods that will together work to understand the intragroup differences within the process of racial identity development among Black women. Data collection methods include a preliminary questionnaire, and two-part interviews. From there, I constructed personal narratives of each participant based on aspects of the interview where they shared their personal background. The purpose of personal narratives in this study is to create an intrasectional analysis to explore how the participants construct their racial identities and what this ongoing process looks like within the HBCU environment.

Through this methodology, viewing discourses on race, gender, and class as separate entities within identity is challenged by centering multidimensional identities to further demonstrate how these three social stratifications intersect to affect the experiences of Black women. Personal stories that belong to marginalized people are a type of counter-story, these narratives offer a counter voice to the master narrative that often relies on stereotypes to describe the lives of marginalized people and to privilege Whiteness, heterosexuals, cisgender men, and middle and upper social classes (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006). This chapter includes information on the sample of participants, recruitment strategies, the site where this study was conducted, methods of inquiry, and limitations.

Site

The site of this research study is a private four-year HBCU located on the east coast of the United States and will be identified using the pseudonym Atlantic University (AU). HBCUs are unique institutions among the United States higher education landscape, they are among the few places where African American culture is highly valued and sustained (Patton, 2016).

Atlantic University is comprised of thirteen schools and colleges (Atlantic University, n.d.) To date, Atlantic University has awarded more than 120,000 degrees in the arts, the sciences, and the humanities, and has more on-campus African American Ph.D. recipients than any other university in the United States (Atlantic University, n.d.). Like other HBCU institutions, Atlantic University has long held a commitment to the study of disadvantaged persons in American society (Atlantic University, n.d.).

Data collection took place from October 2021 to May 2022. Consideration of the sociopolitical context is integral to understanding the findings of this study. When the data collection process took place in 2021, The social structure of American society had reached a boiling point of high racial tensions due to the ongoing killings of Black men and women by police officers. The world was also in a global COVID-19 pandemic that has taken more than one million lives in the United States (CDC, 2023). While external tensions of society were at an all-time high, Atlantic university also underwent a month-long housing protest in the fall 2021 semester of data collection. This protest drew national attention as students were sleeping in tents and air mattresses on campus to protest the poor dorm conditions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the spring 2022 semester, Atlantic University received repetitive bomb threats between January 4th, 2022, and February 1st, 2022. Students were forced to evacuate from buildings so the FBI could do a full investigation. There was a total of eight different bomb threats that had been made against Atlantic university in the spring 2022 semester.

Sample and Recruitment

Persons who identified as Black women, over the age of 18, and were enrolled at Atlantic University during the time of recruitment were eligible to participate in this study. Eligible participants also had to be classified between second semester freshman beginning in the year

33

2021 (class of 2024) and alumna within two years of graduating (class of 2019). These

limitations around recruitment existed due to the global pandemic of COVID-19 that prevented

college students from being on campus for an entire academic year. The sample consists of

thirteen participants. One participant was a second semester freshman who lived on campus, four

participants were sophomores, one participant was a junior, six participants were seniors, and

one participant was enrolled in a graduate program. The sampling strategy of this study consisted

of a blend of both snowball and quota sampling strategies. Quota sampling involved a

predetermined number of cases that are selected to fill important categories of cases in the larger

population, and snowball sampling begins with one or a few information rich interviewees, and

then involves networking strategies to connect with others who would be willing to participate in

the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Blending these two sampling techniques ensured that the quota

of participants was successfully recruited.

Recruitment methods included GroupMe message distribution, emails containing virtual

flyers for distribution to undergraduate and alumni networks, as well as outreach to current

graduate students to communicate with their undergrad student network. The recruitment

materials were printed and displayed in Atlantic University's libraries and nearby cafes.

Preliminary Questionnaire

Before participants officially enrolled in the study, they completed a preliminary

questionnaire that requested demographic information to determine their eligibility. The

following information was collected in the preliminary questionnaire: Name, age, email, home

state, classification in school (rising juniors, seniors, alumni), major, gender identity, and foster

care background (if applicable, see appendix 1D). Once the preliminary questionnaire was

complete, eligible participants were notified of their status and sent a request to set up the first

interview. While the participants had the option of having an in-person interview, all the

participants opted for virtual interviews.

Semi-structured Interviews

Conducting interviews produces rich individualized data, and the goal of interviews is to

gain focused insight into participants lived experiences and understand how these individuals

construct reality in relation to the experience in focus which in this case is coming into Black

womanhood through understanding the respective process of racial identity development

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews are selected as the main method of this research study

because in understanding these Black women and their racial identity development, it is

important to learn how these women interpret their experiences. To achieve that understanding,

this research develops detailed and contextualized descriptions of their life experiences,

integrates multiple individual perspectives, and bridges analyses among their current

perspectives of higher education.

The interview component was structured as a two-part interview for each participant. The

two interviews were held separately on different days. Holding these in-depth interviews

separately allows for an initial analysis of emerging themes linked to their identities as Black

women from the data collected from the first interview. The analysis of the first part of the in-

depth interview consisted of an examination of the interview transcript, relistening of the audio

file, and a review of the research notes taken by the principal investigator. From there, a more

tailored interview protocol was created for these second part of the in-depth interview and

submitted to IRB for approval. In the second interviews, participants were asked to expand and

clarify on any stories that indicate identified emerging themes. The goal of these in-depth

interviews was to understand childhood racialized experiences, their respective college

pathways, and how the HBCU environment, influenced the process of racial identity development for Black women. Participants in this study were given a total of $50 for full participation in this study. They received $25 in the form of an electronic gift card after the first interview, and then they were given the remaining incentive after the second interview was completed.

Trustworthiness

After the interviews were completed, transcribed, and cleaned, the participants received full electronic transcripts of their interviews to participate in the participant validation process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). They were asked to review the transcript for accuracy, revise or adjust their comments as they deem appropriate and then resend the transcript to the principal investigator for analysis. None of the participants requested changes or removal of their transcripts.

Data Analysis

Analyzing intersectional data is met with various methodological challenges such as how to handle intersectionality data that are more implicit than explicit; and the additive assumption in qualitative analytical strategies (Bowleg, 2008). The analytical strategy of this research began with transcribing the data through an online transcription service and following that process by reviewing the material by hand. The entire coding process occurred in three stages: open, axial, and selective coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). During the open coding phase, the passages were broadly coded using multiple and overlapping codes, to see what themes of importance initially emerged from the text. In the axial and selective coding phases, the separate codes were refined into more distinct codes.

Limitations

There are a few limitations in relation to this study. First, studies on racial identity development are like taking a snapshot of a moving picture, concepts of race and racial identity are constantly evolving for individuals and societies in response to significant sociocultural events (Baber, 2012). Understanding of the socio-political climate is integral to understanding the conditions in which the racial identities of the participants are evolving. Second, well the recruitment was open to any participant who identified as a Black woman the participants of this study all identified as cisgendered women. Future research should replicate this research among Black women with a wide array of intersectional gender differences. The final limitation of this study is that the data was collected solely using private interviews. Future research should consider employing focus group methodological approaches in addition to individual in-depth interviews, to facilitate social discussion among the participants about the intrasectional nature of the Black women experience.

Origin Stories

"It dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil." – W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903

The findings of this study begin with presenting the participants' origin stories. These stories are constructed in a chronological based style to guide readers through the participants lives. The purpose of the origin stories is to understand how the participants have developed their identities, and to illustrate an analytical approach for understanding intragroup differences among Black women. The different stories of how these women came into living their current reality is an important starting point in understanding their racial identity development. The

origin stories of these participants consist of their family background and early childhood

racialized experiences. People are naturally prone to composing and telling stories about the

origins of their identities and these stories help make sense of and communicate who we have

"become" over time (Zheng et al., 2021).

The Origin Story of Maya

Maya is 21 years old, from the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, and her family is

from Senegal. At the time of data collection, Maya was living with her family due to the housing

crisis happening at Atlantic University. Maya shared that she has two older sisters and their

mother raised all of them by herself. Her mother always told her and her sisters to do better than

her, which meant going to college, getting good grades, and getting a good job. From the time

she was a child, Maya aspired to be a nurse. She reflected on being asked what she wanted to be

when she grew up, and she expressed that when she was asked that question at a young age, her

answer was always to become a nurse. Since Maya had clear visions to enter the nursing

profession, her mother consistently instilled in her childhood aspirations, expressing that "she

has to go to school, get her BSN, and then go become a nurse."

In asking Maya about any racialized childhood experiences that made her aware of her

racial identity, she expressed that she grew up in a very diverse area, mostly Black, Hispanic, and

Asian. The first racialized experience she ever had was with a Hispanic person when she was

eight years old. In the story that follows, Maya retells a memory of when she was a curious kid

and asked a question that she learned was a sensitive question to ask, after the fact. Maya

explained how this early racialized experience made her aware of the stereotypes about Black

people. She explained:

I was playing outside with some kids, and we went into someone's house to get like water

or juice, and I noticed the bed in the living room. So, me being a kid I'm like, "oh, who

sleeps in the living room?" I remember that we all came outside, and she [the friend]

separated from the group. Another friend came over and was like, "Oh my god, her aunt

just said something so terrible." And I was like, "what happened?" And she said her aunt

said, "I don't know why she's asking about our beds, they're the ones that have like, 50

people living in their houses, and they don't have dads."

Maya recalled being confused by this comment about her racial group at the time. She expressed

that she not only did she not understand why her question offended her friend, she also did not

understand why it resulted in her friend's aunt making a racist statement towards a child. Maya

explained that when she went home that day, she asked her older sister about the comment. Her

sister told her that the woman who made the comment was racist. Maya said that at the time she

didn't know what racism was and why she had experienced it in the context of her friendship.

The Origin Story of Zora

Zora defined herself as a first-generation Ghanaian American from a major city in the

Northeast. a hard worker, and someone who doesn't give up. She expressed that the HBCU

experience is a new and different experience for her. She attended a predominantly Black middle

school and then transferred to a predominantly White high school after a teacher in her middle

school told her that it would be better for her to transfer schools based on her skill level. In

discussing the time in her life when she was preparing to start the college admission process,

Zora said that going to college was inevitable for her, because her parents are immigrants, and

she didn't have a choice of whether she was going to go to college or not.

In discussing realizations of her racial identity, Zora recalled that when she was in the tenth and eleventh grade, she started to understand the intersection between her identity as first generation Ghanaian American and what navigating the college-going process would mean for her. In the quote that follows, Zora retells the talk her parents had with her in high school.

The first time I was made aware of my identity was when my parents explained that I have to do things a little bit differently from my counterparts. "One being, you're Black, and you're not just Black, you're African and a child of immigrants, so, things are going to be harder for you." I noticed that I didn't have privilege like the White kids who had parents that went to school. That was probably one of the first times I noticed my difference.

Zora shared that in high school her assigned guidance counselor gave her documents to fill out and read about the college admission process. She expressed that she did not believe the guidance counselor necessarily helped her, and she felt as if she went through the process of applying to college by herself. Through her family sitting her down to have the first-generation talk, and then going through the college admission process, Zora embarked on a college pathway that was unique to a dimension of her identity as a first-generation Ghanaian American. This story shows us how various dimensions of identity influence racial identity development.

The Origin Story of Shanice

Shanice is an Afro-Latina from a major city in the Northeast region of the United States. From when she was a child, Shanice learned to embrace her Blackness, and she expressed that she would not change it for the world. Shanice's mother was that significant person in her life that always instilled the message that Shanice is a Black queen, and nothing could change that. Her mother's affirmations were included affirmations such as God made her the way he did, and

she should be proud of who she is. Shanice expressed that she owes it all to her mother and she aspires to like her mother in the way that she is a hardworking person and the way she navigates life. Before coming to Atlantic University, Shanice explained that her personality was very different than it was during the time of the interview, specifically naming that she wasn't as outgoing, she was very soft spoken, and she always stayed to herself.

In our conversation of early childhood racialized experiences that made Shanice aware of her identity, she discussed moving to a new state at a young age and learning to navigate elementary school. She reflected on the common struggle of feeling a sense of belonging that young Black girls experience when they are in predominately K-12 spaces.

> When I was about six years old, my family moved to Pennsylvania and the city at the time was predominantly White. There wasn't a lot of Black people over there and as I entered the first grade, I found myself excluded. I wasn't with the other kids and the main reason why was because, I was the only Black girl in the class basically. So, as a child, it wasn't easy to go through that. I felt alone. I felt like I didn't have any friends. I didn't have somebody there in school with me. There were also times when they would call me names like "monkey" or "dirty", just because my skin color was darker than theirs. That's the only reason why it definitely took a toll on me, and it definitely changed the way I knew myself. I found myself wanting to perm my hair. I would always ask my mom to go to Walmart, to get me a "just for me" for my hair. I was just trying to fit in with my classmates. My mom noticed that I was feeling this way, that I was trying to fit in, because I was excluded at school, because I was Black. So, with that being said, my mom would always talk to me and call me [name], which means precious. It's in the Garifuna language that we speak in, and I always kept that in the back of my mind every time I

went through like troubles at school. My mom would always remind me, 'you're beautiful the way you are, you're a Black queen, you're my [name]'. So, over time…I began to build the confidence to be proud of who I am, because my mother instilled that upon me, and she knew that the way that I was created is beautiful as it is, I did not need to be changed.

Shanice's early childhood racialized experiences took place in the K-12 context, and while she struggled with feelings of exclusion, her mother taught her how to navigate and resist these negative encounters by making her aware of the power of her identity. These tools that her mother gave to her influenced Shanice to see herself in a positive light.

The Origin Story of Imani

Imani is a first-generation college student, born and raised in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She majors in supply chain studies in the School of Business at Atlantic University. Imani expressed that the best way to describe her is family. Her parents immigrated from Nigeria to the United States over 25 years ago. Imani and her older sister were both born in America and their family often goes to Nigeria to visit, where they speak Yoruba. She explained that she defines herself as very family oriented, everything she does is for her family, and she defined family as her direct blood, the people around her, the people that impact Imani's life and the people that she wants to see, flourish. The people that she wants to see flourish is her community back home in Nigeria. She explained that there's a lot of unnecessary poverty going on in Nigeria, the area where she's from has been failed by the system and there are limited efforts being made to fix it. She expressed that due to these conditions, she has strong goals around creating communities where people don't have to worry about eating and sleeping. Imani

wants to be an entrepreneur, and she selected supply chain as a major to specifically learn a company starts and begins to understand how she wants her future business to develop.

In discussing early racialized childhood experiences that made her aware of her identity, Imani discussed the experience of having a Nigerian name and how traveling to Nigeria helped her navigate conflicts among her African American peers in America.

So, my name is Imani, but my full name is [name]. Ninety percent of people can't say that name unless I tell them how to say that name. Even though you read it as it sounds, people can't say it…and some people, elementary school, middle school teachers take advantage of that, because they can, it's a child. They can butcher their name, they can make fun of it…and the craziest thing is that I found that when I was younger, I didn't get racist remarks or anything like that from White people. I don't know if it was because I wasn't around a lot of White people, but it was actually from Black people, African Americans that would call me "African booty scratcher, or go back to Africa", and all that other stuff that is very offensive. And I feel as though, it was really just a power trip. It wasn't until I was older, I realized that some people don't really understand what it means to be African, it's really just ignorance and their parents aren't teaching them the right way. So, for me, I never really let it affect me because I knew it wasn't important. Whenever I went home, I enjoyed being African, I never was ashamed of it. In college and in high school, I found communities where I was able to embrace it. African student associations, everything. So, it was okay for me.

Imani's experience with bullying in America highlights a very important aspect of intragroup relations of the Black experience. While Imani faced negative racialized experienced among her

Black peers in elementary and middle school, her trips to Nigeria served as a protective factor to this specific dimension of her identity that was specifically targeted.

The Origin Story of Candace

Candace defined herself as a first-generation Ghanaian American. Her parents were both raised in Ghana, Candace has traveled to Ghana several times, and her parents speak their language at home. In telling her coming of age story, Candace said that she likes to express that despite being born and raised in America, her heart still lies and Ghana. The area where Candace grew up is an African American community that is heavily populated with Ghanaian people, centered in a White neighborhood. Since her ethnic culture was represented in multiple aspects of her life in America, Candace expressed feeling immersed in her Ghanaian community, and there was anything in her upbringing that wasn't influenced and shaped by Ghanaian culture. As a child, Candace was very shy and was raised to not speak until she was spoken to. In our conversation of early childhood racialized experiences, Candace discussed navigating childhood friendships.

Candace grew up having a wide array of friends both Black and White, her experience with understanding her racial identity shifted between both groups. In the quotes that follow, Candance shares her racialized experiences with each friend group. She begins with discussing the sleepovers she had with her White peers.

My friends who weren't of my similar ethnicity, we were good friends and at that age, I didn't see color. It wasn't until I would do sleepovers at their home. I would see how my mom would get a little tense and nervous, but she would still trust me to be there. One day, I had a friend, I was at her house, and all of us were there. I think we were playing with makeup, and she had older siblings as well. I think I was the only African American

44

one there. And she [friend] was just like, "oh, this colors not gonna match, so, you can't play with our makeup." It was petty things. I was just like, "oh, okay, like, I'll just use a different color, it doesn't matter." They were like, "No, we don't have a color for you." I was like, "Oh, okay". I didn't race, I didn't see color, I didn't know it was an issue. Honestly, now that I think about it, I don't think I really saw color or preference until I started getting closer to the people who were in my neighborhood.

Candace then reflected on her experiences within her Black friend group. In the quote that follows, Candace opens up about negotiating her sense of belonging as it pertains to her ethnicity within her same-race friend group.

I transitioned to a new friend group, which was a mix of African American people, and people who are first-generation Africans just like me, from Ghana. I felt like I was always dwindling the fence trying to force myself to feel accepted. They would be like, "oh, your parents have such heavy accents." Or I would be gone for months at a time because my family would go to Ghana, and they would be like "oh, yeah, you came back smelling." I always just felt like maybe I don't belong, maybe there's something that I'm not seeing, or something that I'm not doing. I never understood why I was being judged for having that background when I felt like we were so similar. It was trivial things when we were younger, but they stick with you.

Like Imani, Candace's reflection on her experience with her Black friend group highlights an important aspect of intragroup dynamics within the Black experience. Different from Imani, Candace shared feelings of questioning her belonging within her racial group as a result of the within-group bullying. Together, Candance and Imani expressed how these experiences carry with them in life as they evolve over time and continue to navigate as Black women.

The Origin Story of Jada

Jada is a senior at Atlantic University from the Midwest, and she described her hometown as heavily populated with Black people. Jada is a middle sibling with an older sister and a little brother. Jada reflected on her past experiences that she feels helped shape who she is today, including school experiences and her family. She discussed her experiences around the loss of her brother, and how she carries him and his memory with her every day.

In discussing early childhood racialized experiences, Jada reflected on her family moving cities when she was in the fifth grade, and she described the new region as one of the Whitest and richest cities in all of her home state. In the quote below, Jada explains that moving to the new region was a shock for her, specifically because everyone she was surrounded by in this new community was White.

> I felt like I didn't really notice or maybe I didn't care that I was Black until I transferred to a majority White middle school. That's when I started realizing that I was Black and not just a kid, not like a normal person, I was a specific type of person. It was just a lot. A lot of White people I don't know. I guess it's always been a you versus them type of thing, for me.

Jada went onto explain that while there were a few Black students in her new school, they didn't like her, and she experienced falling out with her same-race peers. She concluded this retelling by expressing that she didn't have Black friends until she came to Atlantic University.

The Origin Story of Ella

Ella is a senior nursing major from a major city in the Midwest. In our conversation of self-definition, she expressed that she is very empathetic and being from the midwestern city is a big part of her identity. She explained that growing up in a city taught her a lot of life skills such

as resiliency and vigilance, and these life skills played a role into her becoming a nurse. In addition to paying close attention to her surroundings, Ella also pays attention to the people around her, which informs her interactions with her patients because she notices the little things about people. When she was younger Ella attended an all-Black Catholic school until she moved neighborhoods after her mother passed away. Ella shared that her mother's passing played a really big role in her identity. The loss of her mother made Ella very independent and being raised by a single father shaped her as well. Her father made sure that Ella had women in her life who were role models and taught her what it means to be a woman and how to carry herself as a woman.

In the quote that follows, Ella describes her new neighborhood as a White suburban neighborhood, and Ella shared that it was different than what she was used to.

Living in suburbs, it was a lot different, but I was still proud to be Black. I never felt like "oh, I wish I was like them", if that makes sense. My dad just really instilled that in me, he was like, "Even though you're around these White girls, you're still Black, and should be proud of being Black." And I feel like they didn't see many Black girls. So, I wouldn't say like, they admired me, but it was like, "oh well she's different." I always carried myself well growing up. My grandmother always told me I was beautiful. So, I had a lot of confidence growing up, and I feel like that came across to the White girls and I feel like that helped. They looked at me differently, because it was like, wow, she's proud to be who she is.

In describing her new environment, Ella credited her family to giving her the tools to maintain confidence as she navigated White spaces. Similar to other participants, these tools directly inform confidence in their racial identity and their self-image.

The Origin Story of Brooke

Brooke is a graduate student at Atlantic University in the school of social work, and she is from a major city in the Midwest. Brooke attended a PWI in her home state for her undergraduate education which she as very small, so being a graduate student at Atlantic University is a lot different for her, in a refreshing sense. In her time at Atlantic University Brooke has enjoyed learning from instructors who look like her, and instructors who share similar experiences. Brooke defines herself as a Christian before any other component of her identity. She shared that she grew up in church surrounded by people who had Christian faith. She was raised by her single mother, and she is very close to her grandparents. Brooke is a creative person, she likes to write, draw, and read.

In the quote below, Brooke reveals that racialized childhood experiences that made her aware of her identity included a mixture of hearing conversations that older adults would have in her presence, and an encounter with non-Black people.

> Well, when I was a kid, I didn't see color. I remember, I got introduced to the differences in race when I was listening to grown people talking. I was sensitive as a kid, I felt everything. I would listen to my mom and my grandparents talk about White people this, White people that. I remember feeling like "why is there a differentiation?" I remember being like "I don't understand the difference, or why there was a difference?"

Brooke then went on to tell a story that resembles this curiosity, specifically involving an interaction with a non-Black child her age and being curious about the child's hair texture.

> I remember being like a young kid in Pizza Hut, and there was this Hispanic girl who was probably my age. I think I touched her hair or something like that, and my mom kind of got mad at me for doing that. That was my first time realizing that she was different. I

48

remember feeling like, "why did you point out that I touched her hair?" Instead of

explaining things to me, she kinda like reprimanded me for that. So that's the first thing

that came to my mind because that's when I realized there are different people.

Brooke is similar to Maya in having early racialized experiences manifest through their own

curiosity and encounters with non-Black people. These reflections show us the different ways

young Black women learn about the difference in their identities through others.

The Origin Story of Bell

Bell is a criminology and Afro American History major on the prelaw track at Atlantic

University. She was born in Cameroon and came to the United States when she was five years

old. Bell grew up in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. She is the middle child

between her older sister and younger brother. Bell described herself as partially introverted, very

blunt, honest, and an advocate. At the time of data collection, Bell was in the foster care system.

Bell was eight years old when she first entered the foster care system. She expressed that starting

at the age of five she communicated with people that she was being abused at home and no one

believed her. Upon their first visit to Bell's home, social services explained to five-year-old Bell

that it was not illegal for a parent to hit their children. Her plea for help was not believed, and her

older sister discouraged Bell from saying or doing things that would compromise her safety in

their home. This mixture of discouragement from both social services and her sister coerced Bell

into silence. The first time Bell was put into foster care system, she went alone without her sister.

Bell shared that she lost confidence in the help of social services after she was placed back into

the home. In our interview, Bell disclosed that she "struggles with HIV". She re-entered the

system at the age of fifteen, because she got severely sick. Bell explained that her father holds

cultural and religious beliefs that "HIV is voodoo and could be healed by prayer". Bell had

gotten so sick to the point of hospitalization. Social services then permanently removed her from her home "for the last and final time". She remained in the system at the age of fifteen and during the time of data collection, Bell was actively in the system.

In our discussion of early childhood racialized experiences Bell discussed her experiences as a young Cameroonian, attending elementary school in the United States. In the quote that follows, Bell reflects on her identity-based experiences as a first-generation young girl from Cameroon attending a predominately White school.

I think I've always been conscious about my standing socially as a Black person, as well as being a Black woman. When I moved to the United States, I went to predominantly White schools. So, I was always aware of the differences, but it wasn't until I really started going to elementary school, that I could see that. For example, I would have my hair in Senegalese twists or braids. While I thought that was so exciting, for a lot of like my White peers, it didn't look… I didn't have Lindsey and Becky's blonde, white hair. I'm very dark skinned, and so I never felt beautiful and pretty, because I was surrounded by Whiteness all the time. Whiteness was the default, and I never fit into that category. I remember being called the N word. The first time it happened I was in elementary school. It was really hard because I never heard that word before. In Cameroon, the concept of race was not so normalized, as it is here. I spoke French too, so it didn't help that I didn't always understand English that well. Terms like African booty scratcher, and dark as night came about. So that's when I started to realize that I was Black in America, it was difficult, and because it was so hard, I decided to assimilate. I kind of gave up my African roots. I stopped speaking French at home like I usually did, and I only spoke English. I

50

watched English TV shows to improve on my English. I think I got my hair relaxed, so it can be straighter.

Bell was born outside of the United States, making her experience with bullying different from the other first-generation participants in this study. While her experience of understanding her racial identity in the K-12 is common among the participants in this study, Bell didn't have the family influence over her racial identity in the ways the other participants expressed having. Bell was stripped of her culture in different ways than the participants in this study, while she questioned the texture of her hair, and the shade of her skin like the others, Bell stopped speaking her first language and she actively made the effort to assimilate to the White space she was in.

The Origin Story of Nia

Nia is an international affairs major with French and music double minor at Atlantic University. She described herself as someone "who doesn't take things too seriously, but at the same time, knows when to take things seriously." Such a balance is important to Nia as it serves as a form of emotional and mental protection. She expressed that once one learns how to take things for what they are, then an individual can know how to react to things or process matters in a healthy manner. Nia grew up in a major city in the south with four brothers and two sisters. She described her upbringing as "pretty cool." Nia grew up in the Black part of her state. She described the diversity of her region having "two White people, zero Asians, and zero Latinos." Even in participating in sport and cheer events, Nia expressed that she was surrounded by all Black people. Her predominately Black environment made Nia feel comfortable. Around middle school Nia moved to the suburbs and that environment was less comfortable. Nia described her new environment as "all different types of groups that would integrate with each other and segregate at the same time."

When discussing early childhood racialized experiences that made Nia aware of her identity, she explained that she did not have a sense of Blackness before she had moved in middle school, because she was seen as a person. In her new environment she explained that everybody including children "adopted Black culture or what they thought Black Culture was, based off of TV."

> Once I moved to the suburbs, there was a Black girl who found out that I was from the
> hood, and she was like, "but you're not ghetto." The Black girls who grew up in the
> suburbs with all the rest of the Black kids, Latino kids and White kids, she was one of the
> ones that portrayed Blackness based off of what she seen on TV, and it was very obvious.
> So, in my head, in that moment, I realized, being Black meant being ghetto to these
> people. I didn't think much more than "oh, being Black just means being ghetto, okay."

Nia offers a new perspective on early racialized experiences by explaining how she understood how she was seen by others. Her racialized experience occurred on the intersections of socioeconomic class as she adjusted to her new surroundings. Nia recognized that the way her new peers perceived her as a young Black girl was through a limited racialized lens, based on what they saw on TV. While she concluded her story by expressing, she didn't think much of her peers' comments beyond the initial recognition that her peer was limited in their understanding, Nia having the capability to understand how others view her as a young Black woman is an important stage in identity development for Black women.

The Origin Story of Misty

Misty is a second-year biology major from [California]. When she first came to Atlantic University, Misty was majoring in computer engineering. Misty explained that she had been trying to become an engineer since she was in middle school and all extracurriculars she

participated in before college were geared toward engineering. She expressed that switching her major was a scary thought, because she felt as though she was "going to throw all of it away." In discussing this time in her life, Misty explained that when she recognized that the only part of herself that was holding her back from studying medicine was in fact fear, she made the switch. In these moments of decision-making, she told herself "The only thing stopping me from doing it is the fact that I'm scared. I'm still going to be scared of it tomorrow, I'm still going to be scared of it five years from now. So honestly, I just have to do it." Misty's long term career goals includes continuing her education to become a physician assistant. In discussing aspects of identity Misty reflected upon her experience of learning the importance of kindness and love during her time in college. Misty expressed that while she is aware how everything around her helps to shape who she is, she also knows that she has "a little bit of control over who she is, and how she treats people." Expressing love, showing others that she cares, and diminishing hatred are important values that Misty holds in maintaining her relationships.

Misty's racialized childhood experiences that made her aware of her identity as a young Black girl occurred in her school environment. In the quote that follows, Misty retells the questions she asked herself when she was younger.

> I think the first time that I remember telling myself, "I don't want to be Black, or who would want to be Black?" is probably in elementary school, when it came to my hair, and when it came to the boys. All the boys liked the White girls, and all the White girls didn't have to do anything with their hair, and I noticed. My dad actually told me that I told him when I was in kindergarten, "Dad, why don't I have straight hair?" I didn't know that I asked that, I didn't remember it. I guess being in an environment for the first time where I was around a lot of people who weren't like me. I went to a preschool with mostly Black

people, and I've always lived in primarily Black neighborhoods as well. School was my first introduction to people who weren't Black. I'm sure I met some others, but that was where I was the one, or one of two, or one of three, Black girls. When you're a kid, the kids aren't really trying to try their hardest to include you. They're not really thinking about anybody else. So, people sort of automatically other you, or you feel othered.

Misty's story raises an important aspect of identity development for Black women, understanding and acknowledging the uniqueness of their hair. Multiple participants in this study have expressed that they once had the desire to change the texture of their hair in their early childhood racialized experiences, to make their lives in White spaces easier. This theme in racialized experiences touches upon a widely debated political topic in which Black women have been objectified.

The Origin Story Ida

Ida is a sophomore at Atlantic University from the southern region of the United States. She is the youngest of five children on her father's side. Ida described herself as bubbly, fun to be around, an oddball, and very energetic. She considers herself ambitious, strong-headed in her beliefs, very opinionated, career-oriented, and outspoken. Ida "believes in the importance of self-care and having a good sense of self and self-worth." In describing herself, Ida shared that she recently realized that her life has come together in alignment, and this recognition was a full-circle moment for her. She explained further that in terms of where she is "with her life, her mentality, how she defines herself, and how that is connected to how she was raised and the circumstances she grew up in, her identity makes sense." Ida was primarily raised by her mother; her father was in and out of the household. She is of Ivorian ethnicity, and both of her parents influenced her love for Ivorian culture and music. She expressed that her relationship with her

54

parents shaped how she feels about both genders. She appreciates her mother for her strength, but she also expressed that her mother being an example of a strong Black woman was detrimental and nearly cost her life, and that anger for her mother's experience carries with her in the way that she recognizes the importance of knowing her own worth. She expressed that she can't let anyone step on her, intimidate her in any shape, or form, get into her head or coerce her into anything.

In discussing Ida's racialized childhood experiences that made her aware of her identity, she shared stories around her racialization experiences in the K-12 context. In the story that follows, Ida discusses her encounter with a White teacher in the eleventh grade.

> I've been around Black people all my life. I hardly have had interactions with White people. I lived…all throughout kindergarten to 12th grade, all Black schools. So, I've basically had all Black teachers I had like, White teachers when I was in preschool, my kindergarten teacher, my third-grade teacher. Then in middle school, all Black teachers. Eleventh grade, my US history teacher, even though I don't think she was necessarily racist, maybe that's just all how White people are, they always have a certain amount of racism, but I guess her racism pushed me to go even further. So, she's basically she saw what I couldn't see within myself. She saw my potential, and then she like said, "you need to do better, and you could do better." So, then I guess that's about it, and honestly, I didn't have I don't really have that many interactions with White people like people ask me, "you hate White people?", because of that, and I'm like, "no, I just went to all Black school." That's it.

Throughout the stories in her origin story and her racialized experience story, Ida connects the way she presently thinks to her racialized experiences as a Black woman. Whether it is about

how she sees her parents, or how her education experiences have influenced how she sees White people, Ida makes the connections between her experiences and her identity development.

The Origin Story of Kyra

Kyra is a transfer student, classified as a sophomore psychology major, afro studies minor, and she is originally from the west coast of the United States. Kyra is a triplet with two sisters, one of them who also attends Atlantic University. In our conversation of getting to know Kyra, she explained that she had recently been diagnosed with ADHD and she expressed that she doesn't like to refer to mental health problems as problems, she likes to reframe them and consider them sparks, as they add to her character. She spends time working with children and teaching gymnastics. Working with children is something she enjoys, and her experience also informs her love for the study of psychology. When Kyra was eight years old, she wrote herself a letter that said, "Dear Kyra, I'm so excited for you to go to Atlantic University, and major in psychology." Kyra's pathway to Atlantic University has been long dreamed of and in closing her reflection of who she is she expressed that she has always wanted to study psychology because of her personal journey with mental health.

When Kyra was in the third grade, her family moved to a southern state of the United States. In discussing racialized childhood experiences that made her aware of her identity she describes her experience in adjusting to her new surroundings in the south.

> There was really never any overt racism until I moved over to [southern state]. I was in
> third grade when I moved over here and oh my goodness, I was identified for being
> Black. They'd be like, "oh, you're a Black girl," and they the way that they said it, it was
> more in a mean way. Rather than like growing up in [west coast], it was more like "okay,
> you're Black" and then someone else be like, "okay, I'm Asian." So, it's like that type of

difference. There's just like different phrases in the sense of like people would say like,

"Oh, I didn't expect you to be smart." My freshman year, I was definitely more angry

about being Black if that makes sense, because I was taught from third grade, when that

messaging started and then obviously with like the education, we are not taught Black

history and/or we were taught Black history is very condensed, very small, like very…it

equates to nothing pretty much.

Kyra draws comparisons between her two environments growing up in our conversation of

childhood racialized experiences. Her story of understanding her racial identity sheds light on the

importance of racial identity being represented in K-12 curriculums. Due to the absence of Black

history in her education experiences before college, Kyra expressed being angry about her racial

identity.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Tracing Identity Development in the HBCU Environment

The themes that follow represent critical aspects of the college experience that mark key moments of the development of racial identity for Black women college students attending an HBCU. The findings begin with three themes that represent the process of college choice, including understanding college-going cultures, college matriculation, and college adjustment. These three themes represent the early stages of the participants entering and adjusting to the HBCU environment, which marks the beginning of understanding the process of racial identity development within the HBCU context. The findings then depart from reflecting on early college experiences to explore the different ways the participants currently articulate their racial identities in the HBCU environment. From there, the data illustrates the Black woman experience on campus. At the end of the findings chapter, the themes turned towards understanding sense of belonging in the HBCU environment and how the identity of the Black woman has grown within the HBCU environment.

College-Going Cultures

This study examines college choice by understanding the different college-going cultures that the participants came from. To do this, I first asked participants to reflect on a time in their lives when they knew going to college was an option for their future and what factors made them select an HBCU. College-going culture is a set of values, norms, beliefs, experiences, expectations, and structural supports within an individual's context that socializes students toward attending college (Jayakumar et al., 2013). Examining stories around college choice is an important part of identity development for Black women in higher education because Black Americans have a unique relationship with the higher education landscape (Allen et al., 2018).

Although Black Americans have historically been denied access to education, and their educational opportunities continue to be limited by systematic, political, and social barriers, higher education has historically been viewed as a powerful tool for economic mobility (Jayakumar et al., 2013).

The findings that follow illustrate an intersectional analysis of the different manifestations of college-going cultures among young Black women who went on to attend the same HBCU institution. Although many participants are from different regions of the U.S., with various family structures, the participants commonly expressed that in envisioning their lives outside of high school, attending college was the only option. It was the decided pathway that they along with their families, expected them to pursue.

Misty credited her parents for how she first understood that going to college was the non-negotiable expectation for her future after high school. She expressed that her mother is an alumna of Stanford University and as a result, Stanford was her dream school growing up.

> For me, college was never really an option, it was mandatory. I don't remember exactly
>
> when I learned what college was, but I have a good feeling that the second that I figured
>
> out what Stanford was, that was the first time I knew what college was, and I'm sure that
>
> that's the first time my parents or my mom specifically made it clear that college was not
>
> an option. I'm glad that I knew that I could go. I know a lot of people who didn't know
>
> they could go or didn't know that they were good enough to go. So, I'm very fortunate to
>
> have been encouraged and to have parents who believed in me and believed in my
>
> abilities. And to have been in school environments where they talked about college as
>
> well. I'll say that some people seemed more encouraging about me and other Black

students going to college, than others. I was always in environments where college was a thing.

From being in a school environment that encouraged her to attend college, to her parents serving as a significant influence, Misty's socialization was focused on her selecting the college pathway. In her origin story, Misty also expressed that her extracurricular activities in both middle school and high school prepared her to be an engineer major, which she then went onto change once she was in college. Misty said that she was thankful that her parents believed in her ability to pursue the college pathway, because she had seen other Black students who did not have that level of support in their aspirations for college. This reflection of seeing how others of the same racial identity lacking the same level of support in their college aspirations signifies a recognition of privilege within Misty's Black experience. This kind of awareness is important to Misty's development of identity because it is the beginning of understanding the historical ramifications that her racial group has been subjected to.

Maya shared similar sentiments as Misty regarding her family's influence over her college aspirations. In the quote that follows, Maya reflects on the messaging she received from her mother in thinking about college.

> I have two older sisters, and both of them went to college. So, college was always a must for me, especially from my mom. You know, like I said, she's from Senegal, she was a single mom, she raised all three of us by herself. She always told us just to do better than her. So, in her mind doing better than her was going to college, getting good grades and getting a good job. I always said I wanted to be a nurse. So, for her, she was always instilling "you have to go to school, and get your BSN, and then go become a nurse" in me. So, I think for me, I always knew that college was an option.

The quote from Maya represents an in-depth look into the conversations families might have that influence the decision to attend college. In this case, Maya's mother used her own identity experiences as a Black single mother as a source of inspiration for her daughter's motivation in choosing to pursue the college pathway.

Ella reflects on how her childhood experiences influenced her aspirations to attend college. In her origin story Ella shared that her mother passed away during her childhood, and her father raised her by himself. In discussing her college-going culture, Ella connects her motivation to attend college to her family experiences.

> I was always going to college. I will say for me, a lot of my family members didn't go to college. I will probably be the first family member in a while to graduate from college in my immediate family. I feel like it really hit after my dad lost his job. He had a really good-paying job, and his job was outsourced. We lost a lot, and it became too much for him to bear. So, we ended up moving back to the inner city and we lived with my dad's family. That was a lot for me. I went from having everything on my own to living with my cousins and sharing. That just made me feel like "I don't want to have to do this, like, I see my dad struggle, and I don't want to have to worry about where money is coming from, I just want to have it." I knew that I needed to do something that was gonna set me up for a healthy, fruitful future for myself and my future children. So that was when I realized I'm going to college, and I'm going to make sure I can make a better life for myself.

The passing of Ella's mother shaped her identity specifically through the way Ella thought about her long-term educational and career goals. In her origin story Ella expressed that the loss of her mother made her become very independent. Ella wanted a future where she didn't see her father

61

struggle or worry about finances, and she understood that going to college was the way to make a better life for herself beyond the conditions she grew up in. This movement of identity informed the self-motivation that fueled Ella's college-going culture.

Shanice discussed her college-going culture by reflecting on her high school environment. She explained that she attended a high school that was focused on launching their students into attending college and this environment sparked her interest and motivations in attending an HBCU. In the quote that follows, Shanice describes how opportunities to learn about college within her school context motivated her to attend an HBCU.

> It was never really an option for me. The high school that I went to was geared towards college, so they would always provide us with college fairs and stuff like that. Sophomore year, I remember they sent out an email for an HBCU fair, so I signed up for it. When the day came, there was an Atlantic University representative there, and I took it upon myself to go up there, because I had always heard about Atlantic University. They told me about Atlantic University, and its history, and I found it very interesting. So, after the HBCU fair, I did some further research to get the logistics of what each school offers, how they benefit their students, and how they provide different opportunities for students. I saw that a lot of the HBCUs that I had applied to offered what I wanted. So, after that, I became really obsessed with the thought of going to an HBCU. I was looking up YouTube videos of HBCU homecoming, dorm room tours, I was really obsessed with the thought of going to HBCU. When the time came, I was ready to go. I had already set my goals to raise my GPA, get involved in more extracurriculars to make sure that my application was top tier. So, when the time when the time came, I just went for it, and now I'm here!

While Shanice is similar to Maya and Misty in being steered towards the college pathway by their school environments, Shanice specifically discussed the structural support that her school provided to her in learning about HBCUs. Existing research has found that college fairs, college tours, the media, and interactions with university staff plays a significant role into Black student's college choice process (Clayton et al., 2022), and Shanice's reflection expands on existing research by highlighting the impact of the college fair on her navigational strategies of the college choice process. From this, we see how Shanice's discovery of HBCUs, an educational environment that centers her racial identity, fueled her motivations to select an HBCU in her college choice process.

The findings from college-going contexts shows a mixture of ways that college-cultures operate in the lives of young Black women. While Misty and Shanice's stories highlight the role of school-contexts in influencing their decisions to pursue the college pathway, their college cultures were qualitatively different in how they manifested in the lives of both participants. Shanice's school offered her opportunities such as college fairs to learn more about the college experience, while Misty's college-going culture consisted of extracurricular activities that exposed her to the field of study that she was encouraged to pursue. It's important to note that the HBCU college fair strongly influenced Shanice's decision to pursue an HBCU earlier in the college choice process than her peers in the study. Despite these different forms of support for college choice in the school context, both college fairs and extracurricular activities served as successful influences for Misty and Shanice choosing to pursue college.

The findings also illustrated the intersectional experiences of the influence of family on college-going experiences. Although Misty, Maya, and Ella commonly shared stories around their family's influence that fueled the college-going culture that they grew up in, the reasoning

behind each family influence is vastly different. Misty credited her mother being an alumna at Stanford as her motivation for going to college, while Maya expressed that her mother's lived experience of being a single Black mother served as rationale to pursue a life that was worth her mother's sacrifices, and going to college was that pathway of honoring her. Ella experienced the loss of her mother during her childhood and her father raised her on his own. Ella also understood the sacrifices that her father made for her livelihood, and her experience with loss shaped Ella's rationale around understanding that college was mandatory. These findings of family influences in college going cultures illustrates the intersectional experiences of family influence on college-going cultures. In closing, the findings support existing research that emphasize the importance of support structures within college going cultures (Jayakumar et al., 2015), they expand upon the existing research by illustrating the intragroup differences of family and school influences, and together the findings demonstrate how support structures within college going cultures fuel the confidence of young Black women in their college futures.

Choosing an HBCU

After spending time discussing the college admission process at large, the participants were then asked to explain how they ended up selecting Atlantic University in their college choice process. The findings in this section feature stories of the participant's rationale in selecting their HBCU upon being admitted. College choice is an important step to understand racial identity development in higher education because the factors that go into selecting an institution directly inform the aspirations that students have for their future identity (Freeman & Thomas, 2002). Existing research has found that Black students experiencing isolation from their cultural heritage in their lives before college, informs their longing for a deeper understanding of their racial identity in their college life (Freeman, 1999; Freeman & Thomas, 2002). This study

expands on the established correlation by exploring the different ways Black women in this study rationalized their interests of attending an HBCU based on the needs of their racial identity during the college selection process.

Zora is a first-generation Ghanian from a major city in the northeast region of the United States. In her origin story, Zora explained that she first understood the complexity of her racial identity during the college-going process. In discussing her selection of an HBCU, Zora explained that she chose an HBCU to experience what she had seen on TV and to experience her racial identity in a different context beyond White spaces.

> I decided to go to an HBCU because I wanted to experience what I saw on TV. The band, dancers, everything like that. I also wanted to go to an HBCU because I was tired of just being Black, being Black was the only thing that was different about me, and I think that I wanted to go to an HBCU, because there was more than *just* "okay, I'm a Black girl at a White high school." There's more to our personalities and our characters. So, I wanted to just destigmatize that for myself, which is why I decided to go to Atlantic University. Atlantic University was not my number one choice one month into the college process, I wanted to go to temple university. I don't know why, I just wanted to go out of state. But then Atlantic University just kept like coming back to me. The whole idea of like, the HBCU experience just kept coming back to me.

Even though Atlantic University was not Zora's first choice during her college choice process, she knew that the HBCU could offer her a different experience of her racial identity. This acknowledgement ultimately led to her final decision of choosing to attend Atlantic University, where she could explore the de-stigmatization of her racial identity.

Imani described herself as very family oriented in her origin story. In discussing her

college selection process, Imani initially wanted to attend the school where her sister is currently

enrolled. However, the importance of racial demographics served as a significant factor in

Imani's college decision. Imani explained:

> My sister went to University of Maryland, College Park. That's another reason why I
>
> really wanted to go there, because I like the freedom aspect, and I feel like everything
>
> you do is just like not as monitored as HBCUs. But then I've always been around Black
>
> people, and I have always enjoyed being around Black people. I knew when coming to
>
> the open house that this specific group of Black people was not your average Black
>
> people. Everyone here is literally a scholar, everyone was the president of their
>
> organization, the president of their class, valedictorian. I know that if you want to better
>
> yourself, you need to surround yourself with people that are better than you. I wanted to
>
> challenge myself, and I also wanted to be around Black people. So that's why I chose
>
> Atlantic University. I wanted to be around Black people, I don't want to be a minority
>
> right now, when I know I'm going to be one for the rest of my life. So that's why I really
>
> chose Atlantic University.

Ultimately, Imani wanted to attend an HBCU where she would have the opportunity to escape

the everyday feeling of the subordinated status that comes with being a Black woman in

America. Although she expressed concern over the HBCU culture, she knew that attending an

HBCU would give her the opportunity to be surrounded by high achieving Black people, which

may have had an impact on her racial, as well as professional, identity.

Jada grew up in the Midwest and attended middle school and high school in what she

described as one the Whitest and richest cities in the state. When it came to her college decision,

Jada wanted to experience a new environment that was different than the proximity to Whiteness

she experienced before coming to an HBCU. In the quote that follows, Jada discusses her college application process and her aspirations she had for the development of her racial identity.

> I'm glad I ended up here, because this school is way better than all those other schools. I ended up choosing an HBCU, because after my junior year, that's when I was starting to see that I was in close proximity with White people. I think I wanted something new, because remember how I said that I didn't really have any Black friends? I feel like I've been looking for that my entire life, like being connected with Black people in some type of way. I was trying to be as "Blackity Black" as I could be, because like, I feel like we don't get appreciated enough, and like, I love being Black, and I wouldn't want to be anything else. So, it's like, why not go to HBCU?

Jada's reflection represents how early racialized experiences can influence college choice. In Jada's origin story she shared her experience with feelings of isolation from her peers who shared the same racial identity during middle school. The experience of not having close Black friends stayed with Jada and influenced her aspirations for her life in college. She enrolled at an HBCU with the possibility of embracing and developing her Blackness.

Kyra grew up in the south where she experienced racism in her K-12 schooling. Kyra had high hopes of attending Atlantic University, but in the quote that follows she shares how she was initially denied admission to Atlantic University, and then transferred into Atlantic University.

> I knew that I wanted to go to Atlantic University. I'm talking Atlantic University, and then I didn't get into Atlantic University. I applied to Spelman, Hampton, a lot of Virginia schools and then just Spelman just because my dad wanted me to. Atlantic University was the only school that I did not get into, and I was crushed. I was so sad; I was waiting for that e-mail, and I got it at 5:00 AM and I literally just bawled, crying. I was so sad

and like it is what it is. So, my plan was like "Okay I'm gonna transfer." So, I already

knew that I wanted to transfer to be in a place where I feel like I can belong.

In her origin story Kyra shared that from the age of eight, she had big dreams to attend Atlantic

University, and despite being denied initial admission to Atlantic University, Kyra persisted to

include Atlantic University in the larger plans for her life by transferring from a PWI in her first

year of college. She explained that her feelings of determination to attend Atlantic University

came from wanting to be in a place that she would experience a sense of belonging, specifically

as it related to her racial identity. Kyra's determination illustrates the importance of HBCUs for

young Black students hoping to grow their identities in places of learning that foster sense of

belonging for Black students.

The findings of this section support existing scholarship on students choosing HBCUs in

hopes of gaining a deeper connection to their racial heritage (Freeman, 1999; Freeman &

Thomas, 2002). While the highlighted participants expressed the desire to be in a college

environment with their same-race peers, their personal sentiments that centered their racialized

experiences, differed within the same rationale. Zora, for instance, felt seen as a Black Girl in a

White school before she went to college, and she knew that there was more to the personalities of

Black people than what she was able to understand in her high school environment. She came to

Atlantic University to destigmatize what she had understood about Black people for herself.

Imani initially wanted to attend the University of Maryland, because of the comfortability it

offered in her sister being enrolled there. While the University of Maryland had her older sister

as a student, Atlantic University offered her the comfortability of being surrounded by her same-

race peers, which Imani expressed as an important factor of her college decision. From growing

up in the Midwest, Jada expressed that her Black experience was so different than Black people

who are closer in proximity to Blackness, and the desire to connect and make same-race Black friends heavily informed Jada's decision to attend Atlantic University. Kyra had a different experience than the other participants being that she was denied admission in her first attempt to attend Atlantic University. Despite being denied admission she recognized the importance of experiencing a sense of belonging for herself and she matriculated to Atlantic University as a transfer student during her first year of college. The takeaway of these stories is that Atlantic University's culture and image reflected important aspects of the participants identity development. In what they knew about Atlantic University during the college decision process, the institution reflected how the participants see currently saw themselves, and who they want to be. They all recognized that an HBCU was the place for them to fulfill their goals for their identity as Black women.

College Matriculation

The findings in this section illustrate the beginning moments of the participant's arrival to Atlantic University. College matriculation stands as a theme in this study because it represents a key moment within the process of identity development in the higher education context. The racialized experience of matriculating to an HBCU is different than matriculating to a predominately White institution, because PWIs and HBCUs operate different as racialized organizations. Colleges and universities are meso-level racial structures that reproduce and challenge racialization processes; they have the capacity to limit the personal agency and collective efficacy of subordinated racial groups while magnifying the agency of the dominant group (Ray, 2019). HBCUs operate differently than PWIs in this respect because they consist of different set(s) of social relations and practices based on racial distinctions (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Clayton, 2020). One of the many ways individual agency is magnified for Black students

attending HBCUs, is immersion within an environment with like-minded same race-peers. To understand the significance of this immersion for Black women's racial identity development, I asked participants how they felt when they first arrived at Atlantic University.

Jada described her matriculation experience as a culture shock. In the quote that follows, Jada describes the thoughts that ran through her mind upon matriculating to Atlantic University.

Coming to Atlantic University was a good culture shock for me, because I went to high school and middle school in a predominantly White school, in a predominantly White city. So, coming here was really about me experiencing my Black side. Coming here gave me perspective of not generalizing everybody, because there's so much diversity here. It made me feel a part of something that I didn't feel like I was a part of. It's different having Black peers amongst you in class when you're learning, than it is with White peers. That was something that I did not expect in coming here. I don't know if it's the coursework, or if it's just the fact that I'm surrounded by Black people all day long. I have to remind myself that we're not all family here, but it has a family feeling. I can really just talk to anybody and be like, we connect because we're Black. That established connection is already building upon something, and I didn't have that back home. So, I felt like that's where the shock came in.

Jada previously expressed the desire to connect with same race peers in her college life, due to her racialized experiences growing up. Her matriculation experience demonstrates how racial identity representation in the college environment influences a sense of connection within racial identity. Such a feeling of connection within racial identity fosters further positive racial identity development for Jada.

Bell reflected on feeling intimidated upon her matriculation to Atlantic University, and

70

her adjustment to being in a predominately Black space. She explained:

> I felt like I was a child because everyone looked older. It's definitely a bit intimidating because there are people that dress up every now and again, and then there are those who dress down, and I'm one who's dressed down. It's a bit intimidating because I was so used to being the smart Black person, whether the smartest Black woman or the smartest…I was always just the smartest one, as far as being a minority. There are so many other smart Black women, so many smart Black people. So, you know it was definitely like a big blow to my ego a bit, I think that was like the hardest part, but I loved that.

Bell expressed feelings of intimidation around her new racial surroundings crediting those feelings to being accustomed to being the smartest Black person in her White environments. Her matriculation experience influenced Bell to understand the difference between how she experienced her racial identity as a minority, and how she is experiencing her racial identity within the HBCU environment, no longer being a racial minority. This kind of movement in her racial identity development is an important experience because navigating the HBCU environment is broadening the way Bell understands her racial identity across different racial contexts.

Different from the previous highlighted participants, Imani knew current Atlantic University students prior to her matriculation to Atlantic University. In reflecting upon her matriculation experience, Imani relayed the importance of having support in this process and the different dynamics within interpersonal communication in the HBCU environment.

> I actually knew three people coming into Atlantic University. So, they were able to show me around Atlantic University before classes even started, and that really helped me, because matriculation is everything. If you don't know how to properly get yourself into a

71

system, then it can like foundations are everything, if you don't do it correctly, it's gonna

be bad for people who don't know that. So, I was fortunate to have people that knew how

it kind of went, and they helped me with that process. When I came here, it was definitely

a culture shock. Here at Atlantic University, people think before they speak, they make

sure that what they say is not offensive, it's more put together. I feel like it prepares you

for the real world because, we're Black. You can't be around can't be acting crazy in

corporate thinking that things are gonna go well for you. Where I come from, it's kind of

like "Nah, I don't like the way you look at me." It's different vibes, and I feel as though

it's much needed, because I see the reality of things.

Imani relayed how the HBCU environment prepares their students for the racialized world

beyond college. She expressed that this new form of interpersonal communication helps with her

racial identity development, particularly as it relates to navigating U.S. society as a Black person.

The participants that physically arrived at campus commonly expressed feelings of shock,

but for different reasons. These participants entered a higher education environment that has

been a platform for the training and emergence of Black visionary leaders. Jada described

experiencing a good culture shock in her college matriculation process that helped her disconnect

from what she understood about Black people before coming to Atlantic University. Similarly,

Bell's matriculation experience consisted of her departing from her conditioned comfortability

around her status as a minority by being in a new environment of same-race peers. Upon her

arrival to Atlantic University, Bell entered an environment where her minority status did not hold

the weight she was used to before coming to Atlantic University, and she was shocked by her

feelings of intimidation. Despite Imani having friends who were enrolled at Atlantic University

to guide her matriculation process, she still expressed feelings of shock to her new college

environment, because she was surround by same-race peers who acted differently than the same-race peers she was used to back in her home city in the Midwest. Taken together, the participant's stories demonstrate that arriving to the HBCU environment initiates a process of evaluation around an individual's understanding of their racial group.

College Adjustment

Following their reflections on their matriculation to campus, I asked participants to identify aspects of the HBCU environment that required an adjustment period for them. College adjustment is a complex process that varies according to the student's social and family background; personality; educational aspirations; the nature and mission of the institution being attended; the kinds of peers, faculty, and staff members encountered; and the interactions of all these variables (Terenzini et al., 1994). I included college adjustment in this research, because existing research has highlighted the importance of racial identity processes in the college context to the academic and psychological adjustment of Black students (Chavous et al., 2018). In the stories that follow, each participant reflects on aspects of the HBCU culture that they had to adjust to as first year students and how this adjustment relates to their identity development.

Jada reflected on how her new classroom environments changed her perspective on Black people as a community. She stated:

> I think this school changed my perspective on Black people, honestly, and I hate to say that because I felt like back home it was segregated in a way that you thought Black people were dumb or not high achieving people. But here, they are really smart Black people, and I feel like that was never showcased back home. So, I feel like getting used to being comfortable being a smart Black person here. I like it, but that was really new.

Prior to attending an HBCU, Jada's schooling did not display the Blackness in such a way where

she could envision Black intelligence. This changed for Jada in her college life, because the HBCU environment holds her racial identity up to a higher standard than her previous school environment. This finding demonstrates one of the many ways the HBCU environment operates to influence positive identity development for Black students. The HBCU environment serves as a space for Jada to develop her racial and academic identities and becoming more comfortable and confident in both.

Ella's experiences expanded on Jada's reflection on the expectations around being an HBCU student, by sharing how being in an HBCU environment influenced her self-reflection. In the quote that follows, Ella explains the version of herself before she came to Atlantic University and how the HBCU environment has influenced her personal practice of self-reflection.

Everybody's great, like not being the only standout. When I graduated, I was in the top 15 in my class. So, I was a standout student, but now it's like everybody here is great. Everybody stands out, everybody has great assets, what else do you bring to the table? Everybody here is stylish, everybody is smart, and it's like, so what else? Atlantic University brings out the best in a lot of its students because you're surrounded by so much excellence. You want to make sure that you leave your mark, and it was just like, okay, how can I make myself better? And that's always something that I'm constantly thinking about as an Atlantic University student.

Ella explained that being surrounded with high achieving same race peers influenced her to internally reflect on other qualities of her identity that she brings to the table, in order to leave her mark during her time at Atlantic University. Ella's description of the HBCU environment serves as an example of how the HBCU environment (norms, people, expectations, structures) impacts the racial identity development of Black women. By being surrounded by same race

74

peers, the HBCU environment encourages them to deeply reflect on their racial identity to

challenge themselves to grow their identities.

Bell offered a different sentiment on being surrounded by like-minded HBCU students,

explaining the competitive nature of the HBCU environment and how that can impact a student's

mental health.

> I think there's an underlying layer of competitiveness, especially if you want to get into
>
> the fraternities and sororities. I'm not a big like for fraternity or sorority person, but I am
>
> interested in law. There's a law group chat, and they have a meet and greets with Harvard
>
> and Yale Law Black students. There's like this "you didn't attend it? Oh, why didn't you
>
> attend it?", little passive aggressive undertones of "you should have been on your game."
>
> So many people are doing so many things that you feel like, oh, I should be doing this,
>
> and I should be on top of it. I mean it's good…it helps push you to be more competitive,
>
> it helps push you to go for what you want and don't settle for anything less, but it can be
>
> also kind of draining, because you're always pushing and you're never giving yourself
>
> time to relax.

Bell's reflection of the campus climate at Atlantic University highlights an important

consideration of the process of adjusting to the HBCU campus climate as a first-year student.

Although she said that the Atlantic University climate is good in the way that it guides students

to be on top of their game, she expressed that this environment can be draining. Bell's reflection

of the challenging nature of the HBCU environment is significantly different than Ella's

sentiments, but Bell offers an important perspective of how the HBCU environment (norms,

people, expectations, structures) impact the racial identity development of Black women. If

students feel negatively challenged in the HBCU environment, the process of identity

75

development can be riddled with feelings of stress. This aspect of the HBCU climate is important in understanding college adjustment for students at HBCUs.

The findings of this section support the current research on college adjustment for Black HBCU college students that have found students to have better experiences of college adjustment, because incoming HBCU students are coming to an environment where they are more likely to foster positive images of their race and embrace culture awareness (Campbell et al., 2018). The findings in this section dive deeper to support the understandings of positive college adjust by offering a deeper analysis into the connection between college adjustment and the fostering of positive images of racial identity. Jada has consistently expressed how she has disconnected from her perception of Black people before her arrival to Atlantic University. She credited her new classroom environments to developing a positive image of her racial identity. Similar to Jada, Ella experienced feelings of adjustment to the new environment where Black people are the majority and she articulated that this adjustment influenced the way she thinks about her identity as a Black woman, specifically reflecting on ways she can make herself better. Although Bell recognized that the HBCU environment serves as a positive influence on motivation, she also expressed concern for the impact the HBCU environment can have on a student's mental health, which can have a negative impact on racial identity development. Taken together, the HBCU environment is unlike other institution types in the higher education landscape, and all of these reflections are not only important to understanding college adjustment for Black students attending an HBCU; these reflections offer important considerations for how the various ways that HBCU environment can impact the process of identity development for Black women college students.

The Identity of the Black Woman

After spending time understanding their experiences matriculating and adjusting to college, the participants in this study were asked to reflect on how they currently feel about their racial identity. I asked them to reflect on their Blackness to further understand the dimensions of their identities and how they experience the HBCU environment. Black women's experiences and identities are inextricably linked; their socialization must be understood through the system(s) in which they are situated (Porter et al., 2020).

When asked how she felt about her racial identity, Ida reflected on the multidimensional essence of Black people as a collective group. In the quote that follows, Ida expresses the intragroup differences as Blackness as a point of appreciation.

> That's what makes me great. All the ethnicities as Black people, we're so diverse, we're so different. There's just so many layers to us, despite the dysfunctional aspects that we have. There are just so many great things to us. It's the way we're so different, the way our cultures are all around the world, how we look, the way our hair defies gravity, the way our skin glows in the sun. The way we're different. And then specifically for us Black woman. White supremacy has made it an effort to make us feel inferior, they want to call us masculine, yet their women don't have it, but I digress.

Ida expressed that the greatness that she inhibits is defined by her racial identity. She feels a sense of pride through the many layers of Blackness. Ida highlighted a specific component of the Black woman experience, the larger systems of oppression that work to construct Black women as inferior.

Bell took an intersectional approach to describe how she feels about her identity. In the quote that follows, Bell explains how her identity operates to motivate her to become a better version of herself.

> My Blackness is also my womanist, so those two things about me, I can't describe one without the other. I'd say that my Blackness is beautiful, that's the number one thing. Sometimes I'm like looking at myself, I'm like, wow, wow, wow. [laughter], you just can't go wrong. The second thing I'd say is that my Blackness pushes me to work harder than anyone around me. And that's like, outside of foster care outside of anything, it just pushes me to be the best version of myself and then on top of that being a woman, it pushes me even harder.

Bell's articulation of her identity addresses how intersectionality can help the field of higher education understand student development for Black women at HBCUs. Black women make meaning of their identities in various ways (Porter et al., 2020) and in the life of Bell, her identity as a Black woman stands apart from her identity as foster youth in the way that is fuels her motivation to work harder than anyone around her. Bell's explanation of the current standpoint of her racial identity is in the language of intersectionality, expressing that her womanist identity is interconnected with her Blackness, and cannot be understood without each respective dimension of her identity.

Misty reflected on her past development as a Black woman and learning to love who she is through her experiences within the Black collective.

> I love it, I genuinely do. I love saying that I love it, because when I was younger, I didn't understand how anybody could enjoy being Black with all of the negative things that come with it, but I really, really love it. We are a special group of people. We have such

similar experiences with everything in life, and specifically, being a Black woman, we

all have very similar experiences, but at the same time we're very different people. I like

it here, I do.

Misty expressed feeling a sense of love for the intragroup identities of Blackness. The reflection

demonstrates how Misty's ability to connect with others in her racial group directly influenced

the development of her identity as a Black woman.

Brooke offered a reflection of her racial identity and situated her identity in the broader

dynamics of racial counterparts. In the quote that follows, Brooke shares insight on her

friendship with a White woman.

I like being Black. Being a Black woman, it's like being a part of this elite club that

everybody wants to be a part of, but nobody wants to pay the dues. This is a lifestyle, this

isn't an outfit you put on, this is real…. I'm proud to be Black, and I love being Black,

but being Black also means understanding perceptions of other people while maintaining

who you are, which is a hard thing to juggle, and most people haven't even mastered that.

So, I don't know, it's cool. I'm definitely embracing my Blackness.

In conversations around the quote above, Brooke shared a story about her best friend to further

illustrate the uniqueness of the Black woman identity, and how other gendered counterparts such

as White women cannot understand the meaning of the Black woman experience. She concluded

her sentiment in expressing that in understanding her Black woman identity, she also understands

the perceptions of other people.

The participants commonly offered positive feelings of their identity as Black women,

and shared stories of what their identities has influenced their consciousness of the world around

them. Both Bell and Misty expressed their appreciation for the intragroup differences within their

racial identity, while Ida and Brooke reflected on the oppressive forces that Black women encounter. These reflections represent the multidimensional nature within articulations of the Black woman identity. While the participants allow themselves space to love their identities, they also have a level of critical consciousness of the oppressive forces that target the identity of being a Black woman.

Black Woman Experience on Campus

Taking in the current context of Atlantic University, the participants were asked if they feel supported as Black women at Atlantic University. Understanding how each of the participants are experiencing the HBCU environment through an intragroup lens is an important step in understanding the articulation of their identities. The findings that follow highlight aspects of the Black woman experience on campus. Participants offer mindful considerations for their identities as Black women in the HBCU environment.

Jada expressed that she feels more supported by being Black, not necessarily as a Black woman. In the quote that follows, Jada dives deep into her identity to explain her feelings of support on campus.

> Sometimes I feel supported being Black, but I can't say that I feel support being a Black woman. I feel like there are a lot of men and women who have a lot of misogyny that they need to unpack. Maybe this is just me talking because I'm a person who's really against sex crimes and sexual harassment, and that kind of stuff; but I feel like there's a lot of that in this area, whether it's at Atlantic University or whether it's in the city around Atlantic. Black women are constantly being kicked under the bucket for it, Black women never get what they deserve, and I feel like people at Atlantic University, they fight for

Black people to fight for Black women, of course. There are people who do, but I feel like as a collective, that's not on everybody's mind, that's just on some people's mind.

Although Jada feels support in her identity as a Black person, she expressed that she could not say that she feels supported as a Black woman at Atlantic University. Jada's statement on her experience as a Black woman at Atlantic University highlights the impact of the racial dynamics within the HBCU culture on multidimensional identities such as the Black woman.

Zora expanded on this topic of what it means to be a Black woman in the HBCU environment by sharing her experience as a dark-skinned woman and the representation of her identity on campus. In the story that follows, Zora uses the royal court as an example of the colorism dynamics at Atlantic University.

Being a dark-skinned woman is tough. In terms of like desirability, and how desirability plays into things. The roles that you'll get on campus or noticing that certain people get certain things because they don't look like you. I'll use an example of our royal court right now. Miss Atlantic University is currently [student] who is a dark-skinned girl, who's also African. Even though we're not that close, I'm so proud of her because Atlantic University has this culture of like, Miss Atlantic University is a light skinned woman, and it's not something that's talked about. Everyone's like, *"okay, we're all Black"*, but we all need to also consider colorism and how it plays a role into us going to an HBCU, how it plays a role in who wins what and who gets what position, and who has a say on campus. So, her having this position is kind of like a 180. In a sense, well, for me personally, because that's what I've seen when I've stepped on Atlantic University's campus. I want to say it does give me hope. We're kind of progressing from the face of a Black woman being a light skinned Black woman. So, someone who is closer to our counterparts than

what the rest of us are, I think is progression. Because we're moving past this idea of you

need to have a certain look, in order to be the face of an HBCU. So, I really do think it's

good.

Zora's story illustrates how the relationship between colorism and internal/external perceptions

of self can influence a Black woman's navigational experiences, and identity, in the HBCU

environment. Zora expressed feelings of pride that the miss Atlantic University role was being

fulfilled by a Black woman whose identity went against longstanding traditions in the HBCU

culture. Miss Atlantic University being dark-skinned and African influenced how Zora felt about

her own racial identity on campus and she expressed that this representation gave her hope in the

HBCU's culture that she described as operating along the colorism axes of difference.

Candace credited her feelings of support to the school's demographics of being

predominately female. In the story that follows, Candace explains the impact of predominately

female demographics on her sense of support on Atlantic University's campus.

I feel like, the only reason why I feel supported as a Black woman on this campus is

because it's predominantly female. There's a lot of individuals who are going through the

same turning points in their lives or they recently just went through it, and they can

support you. So, I feel like it was almost a cohort that was developed, an environment

that was developed inadvertently. I wouldn't say it's anything based off of the institution

itself, or administration, teachers or African American women being placed at the

forefront. Again, for me, and my major is predominantly female. So, I feel like that also

plays a big influence as to why I feel like I'm being considered and appreciated as a Black

woman on this campus.

Although Candace expresses feeling appreciated on campus, she credits these feelings to being surrounded by like-minded Black women who that support each other in navigating the milestones that happen during their time at Atlantic University. While demographics positively influence Candace's identity, it is important to take the other parts of her statement into account, specifically her statement that her positive feelings are not necessarily influenced by institutional efforts of situating African American women at the forefront. Taken together with Candace's reflection on representation, these expressions offer an opportunity for higher education scholarship to understand the potential impact of institution's efforts of supporting representation on Black women's success.

Ella also credited her feelings of support to the presence of Black women. In the quote that follows, Ella describes how Black women in the HBCU environment support each other.

Atlantic University women are top tier. Always have been, always will be. We support each other, anytime something goes wrong, we're there for each other. We'll be here about a girl who has sexual abuse, sexual assault, we're there for each other to help. I feel very supported. We have so many organizations that are centered around like Black women and being a Black woman. So, I feel like Atlantic University does a really good job of supporting our Black women. Women empowerment in general is very, very strong on campus.

Ella describes a high level of collectivity among the Black women that attend Atlantic University, and she credits this sense of support being sustained through institutional practices and the presence of organizations that center Black women. The institutional practices of Atlantic University, such as racial representation in the school's student population, on campus programming focused on supporting Black women, and racially enriched classes illustrates how

the HBCU environment impacts the racial identity development of Black women, through programming that centers Black women.

The participants in this section offered sentiments of their feelings of support that reflect their differences in identity as Black women. Zora reflected on the challenges of being dark-skinned on campus, due to the colorism dynamics in Atlantic University's climate. Jada expressed feeling supported as a Black person, but not necessarily as a Black woman on campus due in part to the misogyny upheld by some part of the Atlantic University population. Different from their counterparts both Candace and Ella expressed feeling supported on campus in which they credited that to the strong presence of Black women on campus. Ella expressed pride in being an Atlantic University woman and expressing how they support one another even in the face of obstacles around sexual abuse. She also highlighted the impact of institutional practices on fostering a positive identity. There is a lot for researchers to gain from understanding these complex findings. These stories illustrate that strong demographics are not enough for Black women to feel fully supported in their identities in the HBCU environment. Campus programming and resources around sexual violence are critical in continuing to support Black women in higher education.

Sense of Belonging

Towards the end of the second interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences at Atlantic University to explain whether they feel a sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is at the very core of racial identity development; in developing one's racial identity, individuals embark on the process of defining what it means to belong to their ascribed racial group (Tatum, 2003). Within the literature on racial identity development in higher education,

84

developing a sense of belonging on campus is crucial to all students' academic and social success (Ford & Malaney, 2012; Hunter et al., 2019).

Ella relayed that her peers expressed that she fits into the identity of an Atlantic University girl. In the quote that follows, Ella describes what the identity of being an Atlantic University has meant for her personal growth.

> Everybody literally says, "you're such an Atlantic girl." I do have a sense of belonging. I feel like Atlantic University gave me a different confidence about myself, and I feel like people who are from Atlantic University just get it…My Atlantic University community is so strong. I've gained so many connections, friends, people. I have a friend in almost every state. That was a goal that I had going into college. That is something I really wanted to do, and I did it.

Ella expressed having a newfound confidence about herself as an Atlantic University woman and she expressed that others being able to understand this form of confidence is unique to experiencing the HBCU culture. Regarding herself as an Atlantic girl is important for Ella's development as a Black woman, because the newfound dimension of her identity works to instill confidence in her overall identity as a Black woman, which has shown to be directly related to Ella feeling a sense of belonging at Atlantic University. She further attributed her sense of belonging to the community she built in the HBCU environment and in describing the intentionality she had in curating her own community, she expressed the intragroup differences based on her friend's home origin background that shaped her community. Ella built her community through an intersectional lens, and her explanation highlights another way that intersectionality helps us understand Black woman experiences at HBCUs.

In our conversation of sense of belonging, Bell explained that prior to selecting Atlantic University, she spent time thinking about what it would mean to be in a predominately Black college environment. Her sentiments that follow were in response to being asked if she felt like she belonged at Atlantic University.

> I think so. Now looking back at it, at first, I was nervous. I was like, "do I want to go to an HBCU?" I actually wasn't going to apply to Atlantic University for a second there, because I was like, "I don't know…Black people all the time?" I had to, like get out of this mindset. It's not just Black people, but within that big category, you have Cameroonians, Nigerians, Haitians, you have people who are from Spain, people who are from Latin America, like there's Blackness all over, there's this kid who lives in the Netherlands or something. So, there are all of these Black people from all over the world who just don't fit into one category. So, I really do love it.

Bell's thoughts on her sense of belonging addresses the kind of racialized experiences that Black women college students are subjected to while attending an HBCU. Although she was hesitant to attend Atlantic University in her college choice process, Bell has come to appreciate the HBCU culture for the display of intragroup differences it offers, and because of this, Bell loves attending Atlantic University. Having the opportunity to connect with Black students from all over the world influenced Bell to expand her understanding of the Black experience beyond her racialized lived experience. By understanding that Blackness doesn't fit into one category, Bell expressed that she believes she belongs at Atlantic University.

In reflecting on her sense of belonging, Nia expressed that she made the right choice in attending Atlantic University through her experience of meeting people at Atlantic University. In

the story that follows, Nia reflects on what life could have been if she didn't attend Atlantic University.

> I definitely feel like I made the right choice. If it wasn't for Atlantic University, I probably wouldn't have run into the people that I needed to run into. In order to develop me, as a woman, a Black woman, I probably wouldn't have read the books that have been suggested to me, that I've always like…everywhere you go, somebody's suggesting you read W. E. B. Du Bois, or how you developed Africa. So, at some point, you just give in, and you read it, and you're like, this is this is enlightening, so I feel like I belong here, I made the right choice.

Nia's account of her sense of belonging illustrates the impact of the HBCU environment on the development of racial identity for Black women. By Nia recognizing the power of the scholarship she has read during her time at Atlantic University and what this knowledge has meant for her sense of belonging, Nia draws attention to the intellectual influence that the HBCU environment offers to their students in understanding their racial identity through scholarship.

In discussing her decision to attend Atlantic University, Misty shared a story of how she sacrificed a huge part of her identity to come to Atlantic University, but in the quote that follows, she explains that she got that part of herself back upon her decision to attend Atlantic University. This story is how she knew she belonged at Atlantic University.

> I absolutely made the right decision. I guess I kind of knew I made the right decision when I decided to give up volleyball to be here, because that meant so much to me. I always told myself, I was never gonna give up volleyball until after college, because I worked so hard. I made so many sacrifices for volleyball that I just didn't want to throw all that away. I was about to do all that to be here, but for the first time, I said, "I know

this is where I meant to be," was the first semester and I was like "I'm at Atlantic University, the school that had everything that I wanted, everything on my list and more, and that one thing that it didn't have, volleyball, now I have it." It just it just felt too perfect. There's something for me in every aspect, on every corner, and there's something that I don't know is for me on every corner, and that's a beautiful thing. I've discovered so much about myself here, and about my people here that I didn't have the opportunity to discover. So, I absolutely believe that I belong here. Yes, I know every school isn't for every person, but even if you don't fit in, there's always someplace where you might feel welcomed, which is an amazing thing, and it's being welcomed by your people as is. One of the best ways to be welcomed.

Misty traced her college journey in expressing how she developed her positive sense of belonging. While she was willing to sacrifice a significant part of her identity being a student athlete, she ended up joining the Atlantic University college team. Misty expressed that within the HBCU environment there is something for her in all places, even if those places are yet to be discovered. This strong level of confidence in her HBCU environment is important to her growth as a Black woman.

Similar to the previous themes, the participants in these findings expressed a strong connection between Atlantic University prioritizing their racial identities and their positive development. Ella credited her strong sense of belonging to her Atlantic University community, while Bell expressed that the exposure to other ethnic cultures at Atlantic University influenced her feelings of belonging. Nia explained that attending Atlantic University and being surrounded by people who influenced her to read books that influenced her development as a Black woman. Misty was willing to give up her identity as an athlete in order to come to Atlantic University,

but it had worked in her favor that she was able to join the team of her sport which fostered a strong sense of belonging. While all of these rationales are vastly different from one another, they demonstrate the multiple ways that the HBCU environment works to uplift their students in their racial identities.

Continuing to Grow

Identity development is a continuous process, as these Black women continue to navigate their higher education experiences, their identities will evolve. This section features conversations of learned values within a Black woman's journey in the HBCU environment. In the second part of the in-depth interviews, the participants were asked to look back on former versions of themselves to reflect on their growth process as Black women attending an HBCU. The notion of learning about their identities in the process of developing their identities is important to understand how the variety of influences and interactions that these Black women experience, influence how they are continuing to develop their identities.

Nia shared her perception of who she was before she came to Atlantic University and how her growth during her time at Atlantic University has influenced her to appreciate her Black womanhood.

The version of myself before Atlantic University was playful and secretly angry all the time. She wasn't really immature, but she could stand to grow up a little bit more. The version of myself now as an Atlantic University woman, is calm, intelligent, full of grit and perseverance, and is ready to take on her career. Atlantic University has influenced me…first of all, Atlantic University makes me feel beautiful. It's influenced me to look into the mirror more and take more pictures. Atlantic University has influenced me to use my voice more, and participate in studies, participate in different movements that are

happening like Roe v. Wade right now, protecting abortions, doing things like that. It's

influenced me to reach out to other Black woman and ensure that they know their worth

as well, so that we can all just come together and grow together as a society.

Nia illustrates the various ways that the Atlantic University experience has influenced the

development of her identity. She appreciates herself more in the way she looks, the way she

carries herself has been influenced by the HBCU environment, and Nia feels ready to enter her

workforce. She also expressed how the Atlantic University environment has illuminated the

importance of participating in research, social justice efforts, and supporting other Black women

in understanding their worth.

In our conversations, Zora expressed feelings of imposter syndrome that was influenced

by her identity of being a first-generation college student. Through discussing the growth of her

identity during her time at Atlantic University, Zora explained that the pause that was brought on

by the COVID-19 pandemic influenced her self-reflection process in understanding her growth

as a Black woman.

I think it was a lot of self-reflection and realizing that I too, deserve to be here.

Oftentimes, I try to downplay my achievements, and what I've done, what I haven't done,

I used to compare myself to people a lot. In terms of like, "Oh, this person is like, in 5000

organizations, they came from a good home, a good background, they're not first

generation, their parents helped them, so, they deserve to be here, because they've had the

perfect lifestyle, and they've worked hard." Without realizing that I've worked hard too, it

might have not been the same way, we might not have had the same pathway, but I also

worked hard, and realizing that two different life experiences can lead us to the same

place. So, realizing that we both deserve to be in the room, and one person is not greater

than another, based off of what they had or what they didn't have. I think that kind of fed

into me realizing that imposter syndrome doesn't have anything on me. I definitely feel

like I broke out of like a shell, I don't know what it was about the pandemic, and being

home and self-reflection that made me realize that I was sitting on a lot of potential.

Mindset, physically, emotionally, mentally, I was sitting on a lot of potential and the

pandemic wasn't good, but I think being still, and having that ability to be alone and self-

reflect helped me a lot and that has helped me to grow to realize that I have grown.

The COVID-19 pandemic allotted Zora an opportunity to pause and reflect, an opportunity that

Black women are not often afforded in our experiences. In understanding how to navigate the

HBCU culture as a first-generation college student, Zora came to the realization that despite the

experiences she carries, she deserves to be at Atlantic University. This recognition became a tool

of identity development in the way that she resists feelings of imposter syndrome.

Brooke shared her process of coming to understand the Black woman experience of

working hard through her pathway of coming to Atlantic University for graduate school. In the

quote that follows, Brooke shares her process in rising to the occasion to achieve academic

success in graduate school.

I'm noticing that Black women have to work half the time to get twice of what White

people have. You have no choice but to accept the challenge, you don't have a choice. So

just seeing someone work hard and do so graciously with intent, I think that empowered

me, because I saw what it takes. Like, you just have to do what you have to do.

Especially with a target on your back. Not to sound like a Debbie downer, but no one's

really rooting for you. So, if you want something like me, I wanted to go to grad school.

If I didn't apply, like, I would just be at the deli. Like, that's just the facts, so I think being

part of being a Black woman and being empowered means, like, doing what you have to do.

Brooke putting the reality of Black women into her own words highlights the common feeling of Black women navigating society, the notion that Black women have to work twice as hard to get half of what other racial counterparts have. While Brooke highlights the independent nature of Black women's navigational strategies, she expressed that witnessing others work hard with intention inspired her own navigational strategies.

Upon reflecting on her growth process, Maya similarly reflected on who she was before coming to Atlantic University, and how she has developed since being a HBCU college student.

I think I can channel my emotions better. Before, I would lash out if I was angry sad or mad, but now I can take time to process my emotions and then react appropriately. I'm able to take a minute and process. I know that going into college was a different experience for me. I know we talked about me not having any friends and being like I hate it here, but I think that I've established a group of friends like off campus too, just like just my regular friends like now that we're all growing into ourselves as women. I'm more sure of myself and I don't second guess myself as much anymore. I'm still working on becoming more vocal. I'm very like reserved. So, I think now I'm working on coming out of that.

Maya recognized changes in how she was able to navigate her emotions during her time at Atlantic University. She connects this growth to how she has developed her friendships, and her friends are going through a similar process of identity development. While Maya expressed that she is continuing to work on using her voice, she doesn't second guess herself as much as she did before she came to Atlantic University.

The experience of attending an HBCU has influenced the participants of this study to grow their identities of being Black women in various ways and directions. Nia shared that throughout time and learning about her identity as a Black woman she has understood the importance of participating in activism for Black women as a group. Zora came to Atlantic University with feelings of imposter syndrome, comparing herself to others. Through her development, Zora has learned that there is room for more than one Black woman to be great in the HBCU environment and recognition has helped her not only shake the imposter syndrome off but also recognize that she was sitting on a lot of potential that she is going to tap into. Maya reflected on her emotions by expressing that she is in more control. She also expressed that her friendships at Atlantic University have influenced her to depart from being reserved and use her voice.

The themes of this chapter revealed critical aspects of the college experience that mark key moments of the development of racial identity for Black women college students attending an HBCU. The findings from the themes that examined the process of college choice illustrated a mixture of ways that schools and families fuel college-going decisions in the lives of young Black women. While the participants discussed college fairs, extracurricular activities, and family background as elements within their college-going cultures, the origin stories revealed how racialized experiences that occurred in the early part of their lives served as a foundation to the participants choosing to attend an HBCU during their college choice decision. Once the participants matriculated to Atlantic university, the findings revealed how their past racialized experiences from the origin stories shifted during the matriculation process to Atlantic. Jada expressed that her new classroom environments influenced her development of a positive outlook on her racial group. Ella expressed how being in the HBCU environment removes the

minority status of her racial identity. Ella shared that the experience of being surrounded by people with a shared racial identity influenced her practice of self-reflection to explore strategies to make herself better. This specific self-reflection process among participants occurred at different points within the development of racial identity during college. While discussing sense of belonging, Bell highlighted that being a student at Atlantic University gave her a new way of experiencing her racial identity, which has been through intrasectional differences. From Misty's origin story we learned that Stanford was her childhood dream school, and when she was denied admission to Stanford, she went through a process of self-reflection and deliberation to find her way to Atlantic University. At the end of the findings, Misty traced her own college journey to illustrate how the opportunity that Atlantic university has to offer its students directly fostered her strong sense of belonging. The last theme of the findings demonstrated that identity development is a continuous process that Black women are going to continue to engage in beyond their time and higher education. The participants were asked to look back on former versions of themselves to illustrate their growth process during their time at Atlantic university. The participants shared how their experiences as students at Atlantic university made them feel beautiful, and how the Atlantic environment influences them to understand how their identities are situated in the larger context of their racial group. In the discussion that follows, intersectionality is used as an analytical tool to interpret the findings.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In using an intersectional approach to explore racial identity development among Black women college students attending an HBCU, this study demonstrated a significant amount of new information on the racialized experiences that occur within one HBCU. From tracing identity development in the higher education context, we learned that the participant's identity development happened at different paces and took different tones to eventually lead them to find their own sense of belonging in the HBCU environment. Beginning with examining college going cultures, the findings expanded upon existing college choice research by examining how support structures fuel decisions to pursue the college pathway for young Black women through illustrating the intragroup differences within family and school influences. The findings also offered a fresh perspective on college choice by understanding the matriculation experiences to a higher education environment that has been a platform for the training and emergence of Black visionary leaders. The participants' matriculation experiences revealed common feelings of shock for different reasons, and arriving to an HBCU initiates a process of evaluation around an individual's understanding of their racial group. The findings also explored how the HBCU environment (norms, people, expectations, structures) impacts the racial identity development process. The stories of college adjustment expanded on the process of understanding one's racial group by elaborating on how aspects of the HBCU environment such as classroom environments influence their motivation to think about ways to grow their identities. During the time of data collection, the participants expressed positive feelings and appreciation of their racial identities, to which they credited learning about the intragroup differences of Black women for their positive outlook on their identities. While the participants expressed how the HBCU environment has served their development as Black women, they also used their critical

95

consciousness to share the experiences as Black women on campus. At the core of racial identity is sense of belonging, and the participants had very different rationales that justified their positive sense of belonging in the HBCU environment. At the end of the findings the participants shared that their identities have grown in many ways and directions during their time at Atlantic University. They have acquired tools to grow and protect their identities as Black women and all of the ways they have learned to define what it means to be a Black woman has strengthened their identities. Together, the way the participants articulated their respective journeys of racial identity development was in the language of intersectionality by commonly highlighting the importance of intragroup differences in understanding how their own racial identity development fits into Blackness as a racial group. In the discussion that follows, the intersectional strategies that emerged from these stories demonstrate the importance of understanding how intersectionality helps us understand student development for Black women HBCU, because the HBCU environment influences them to see their identities through in intersectional lens.

<div align="center">**Political Intersectionality**</div>

In Crenshaw's (1991) original articulation, political intersectionality is concerned with the position of Black women being situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. The dilemma of political agendas (e.g., antiracism and feminist discourses) splitting energies is how one group's agenda implicitly denies the validity of the other group's political interests, leaving the Black woman identity disempowered (Crenshaw, 1991). The political form of intersectionality is also concerned with resisting systemic forces (the structures) that shape the differential life chances of Black women to reshape modes of resistance beyond single-axis approaches (Haynes et al., 2020).

"Being a Black woman is like part of this elite club that everybody wants to be a part of, but
nobody wants to pay the dues". Political Intersectional as a tool of Racial Identity.

Throughout the tracing of identity development, political intersectionality operated as a *lens*
and as a *tool of language* to how the participants understood and articulated their identity.
Brooke's reflection serves as an example of how political intersectionality operates on an
individual level of racial identity development for Black women. In the sub-finding titled: *The*
identity of the Black woman, Brooke reflected on identity politics with gendered counterparts,
specifically challenges in engaging with White women about racialized experiences. Here,
Brooke is illustrating that identity development for Black women includes maintaining one's
self-identification while understanding the others' perceptions of the identity of the Black
woman. In doing this, Brooke is envisioning her multidimensional identity through a political
lens. Political intersectionality operates as a lens for Black women to understand the dynamics of
their racial identity.

"I wanted to transfer to be in a place where I feel like I can belong" Political intersectionality
as a lens of racial identity.

Kyra's story of how she transferred to Atlantic University from a PWI is an example of how
Black women in higher education use political intersectionality as a lens to understand their
racial identity. Throughout getting to know and understand Kyra, she established how her
experience with racism in K-12 schooling influenced her aspirations to find a place where she
felt a sense of belonging within her racial identity. Although Kyra describes the feeling of being
denied admission to Atlantic University as "crushed," she persisted with determination to find
her pathway to Atlantic University because she recognized the difference in how her identity as a
Black woman would be experienced across institutional contexts. Kyra being able to recognize

97

the difference between the identity politics at her PWI and Atlantic University is another example of how political intersectionality operates as a lens to identity for Black women. Kyra had a level of consciousness that understood the needs of her racial identity, and which institutional type would best serve her identity.

"Here at Atlantic university, people think before they speak. They make sure that what they say is not offensive, it's more put together". Political intersectionality as a tool of language.

Political intersectionality also served as a tool of language. Imani shared that the HBCU environment taught her not to generalize people through experiencing the intragroup differences of racial identity that is present on campus. She also expressed learning to communicate in the language of college environment upon matriculating to Atlantic University. She expressed that this specific form of communication that is present at Atlantic University is different than the interpersonal communication in her hometown and adjusting to this style of communication is a necessary step for student preparation for the racialized world beyond the HBCU environment. This is one of the many ways that the HBCU environment influences racial identity development for its students. Intersectionality aspires to provide a vocabulary to navigate the politics of identity (Nash, 2008), and this study highlights how examining the linguistic experiences of student development at HBCUs can advance intersectionality's aspiration to demonstrate the racial variation(s) within gender and the gendered variation(s) within race through its attention to *intrasectional* differences of racial identity development.

"My Blackness is also my womanist so those two things about me I can't describe one without the other" Political intersectionality as a tool of language.

Bell's articulation of her identity is another example of how political intersectionality serves as a tool of language. Political intersectionality illuminates how Black women operate

within two minoritized identities that are forced to compete in politicized contexts, and as a result they remain disempowered and voiceless in ways not experienced by White women or Black men (Haynes et al., 2020). Bell explains that her Blackness is also her womanist identity, and she can't describe one without the other. In defining herself, Bell is speaking in the language of political intersectionality. This self-definition demonstrates how political intersectionality as a tool of language works to resist any invisibility of the multidimensional nature of her identity as a Black woman. In articulating her identity in such a way, Bell is resisting disempowerment by letting others understand her identity through a single axis lens. This story highlights how intersectionality can support the field of higher education in understanding identity development for Black women.

The findings of political intersectionality support the review the literature that illustrated the complexity of the Black woman identity. Porter (2017) created a model of identity development based on her research with Black undergraduate women. The study found that the experiences of Black women are not monolithic, calling for intragroup differences to be focused on within future research. This study answered that call by utilizing intersectionality as an analytical approach to uncover how Black women college students utilize political intersectionality in various ways to navigate the HBCU environment and articulate their identities.

Representational Intersectionality

Representational intersectionality refers to how Black women's lives are situated in public discourses, oftentimes in ways that are detrimental and stereotypical (Haynes et al., 2020; Crenshaw, 1991). This dimension of intersectionality questions representation of Black women and exposes how controlling images such as Mammy and the Jezebel reinforce racist and sexist

stereotypes of Black women as loud, angry, violent, and hypersexual (Crenshaw, 1991; Haynes et al., 2020). The findings revealed representational intersectionality to manifest in different ways in the HBCU environment other than stereotypical images.

"I'm surrounded by Black people all day long." Representational intersectionality influencing consciousness.

In sharing her college matriculation experience, Jada described her arrival to Atlantic University as a good culture shock. Jada explains that the representation of her racial identity on Atlantic's campus influenced her outlook on her racial group to not generalize everybody, and she credits this newfound perspective to the diversity of people represented on campus. Jada's reflection of representation is an example of the kinds of racialized experiences that occur for Black women HBCU college students such as the development of racial consciousness through intragroup experiences. Furthermore, representation of the intersectional nature of Blackness on campus addresses how the HBCU environment (norms, people, structures) impact the racial identity development of Black women.

Ella discussed how representation of high achieving Black students on campus influenced her self-reflection practices. In discussing aspects of the HBCU environment that Ella had to adjust to, she explains that the representation of her racial identity influenced how she was thinking about ways to improve herself. She explained that the significant representation of her racial identity on campus influenced her to understand that she needed to find other ways to stand out other than being academically successful, stylish, and smart. In this moment, Ella is characterizing the representation that is present on campus and how being surrounded by this kind of representation works to bring out the best in students at Atlantic University.

"We all need to consider colorism and how it plays a role into us going to an HBCU, how it plays a role in who wins what and who gets what position, and who has a say on campus." *Representational Intersectionality as a Tool of Critical Consciousness*

Representational intersectionality also manifested as a tool of critical consciousness that participants utilized in articulated the deeper aspects of their Black woman identity. When discussing what it means to be an Atlantic woman, Zora shared her experience as a dark-skinned woman in the HBCU environment. She expressed that being dark-skinned as an Atlantic student is about understanding how desirability plays into opportunities on campus and the awareness that certain people are granted opportunities get because they are not dark-skinned.

"Being a Black woman, we all have very similar experiences, but at the same time we're very different people." Representational Intersectionality as a Tool of Connection

Representational intersectionality also manifested as a tool of connection. While numerous participants expressed appreciation for the intersectional representation of Blackness on campus, Misty demonstrated how representational intersectionality serves as a tool of connection in the development of racial identity. Misty shared her appreciation for the sense of connection within Black womanhood, and she credited this to the intrasectional differences of the Black woman experience. The way that Misty is experiencing representation of Black women is very important to the growth of her racial identity, because when she was younger, she expressed not understanding how anybody could enjoy being Black. During her time in college Misty has come to understand the positive nature of being a Black woman. This recognition influenced how Misty is able to connect to her identity. Misty's expression of love for her racial identity is one of the ways that representation of Black women in the HBCU environment influences racial identity development among its students.

While representational intersectionality traditionally works to understand how images and historical depictions can materialize in real-life consequences for Black women (Haynes et al., 2020), Ella's identity development provides a different outcome of representational intersectionality. In her reflection of the Black woman experience on campus, Ella expressed that Atlantic University women are top tier, they always have been, and always will be. This reflection signifies Ella's awareness of the history of Black women at Atlantic University, and as a result, this long legacy has not only influenced her self-definition, but the legacy of Atlantic University alumna has also shaped her expectations for future college students at Atlantic University. This finding demonstrates a different outcome of representational intersectionality and the long reach of the impact that the representation of Black women is capable of.

Taken together, the various ways that representational intersectionality functions within the individual lives of Black women in this study supports the reviewed literature on how Black college students construct their identities. The literature that surveyed racial identity development in higher education described the process of racial identity development as capable of moving from one stage to the next, but also including the revisiting of an earlier stage as the result of new experiences, and the outcomes would be different than the first time (Tatum, 1993). This concept of nonlinear movement can be seen in the findings of representational intersectionality functioning as an identity tool for Black women to understand the expansiveness of their identities. Whether representational intersectionality functioned as a lens, as a tool of language, or as a tool of connection the participants commonly expressed how their racialized experiences from their origin stories and their perceptions about their racial group shifted in Atlantic university environment through the experience of representation within their racial group. The findings of representational intersectionality also expanded on what is known about

how intersectionality understands student development for Black women college students. Representational intersectionality influenced consciousness for the participants to be critical about their own implicit assumptions and the importance of Atlantic University examining how power and opportunity is distributed along intrasectional differences. All of these findings of representational intersectionality pose important considerations to the process of racial identity development Black women college students in the HBCU environment.

Atlantic University as Homeplace: Structural Intersectionality

Structural intersectionality is concerned with the absence of acknowledgement of Black women's experiences within the structures of U.S. society, such as the U.S. legal system, the higher education landscape, and community resources (Harris & Patton, 2018). Structural intersectionality highlights the hidden forms of domination that operate in specific contexts to enforce structural power on Black women (Haynes et al., 2020). Through a structural intersectional lens, Atlantic University has served as a homeplace for the participants to understand, grow, and protect their identities. The idea of homeplace is theorized by bell hooks (1990) in her writing titled: *Homeplace (A Sight of Resistance)*. Within this work, hooks explains that African American people in history believed that the construction of a homeplace whether it be the slave hut, or a wooden shack had a radical political dimension (hooks, 1990). Despite the brutal reality of systems of domination, homeplace is a site where Black women can freely strive to be subjects, rather than objects (hooks, 1990). Homeplace is a site of resistance where Black women can be affirmed in their minds and restore themselves the dignity that is denied by interlocking oppressions that have consistently been violent (hooks, 1990).

The objective of this study was to situate Black women in the study of racial identity, a longstanding interdisciplinary area of research that is beginning to understand the importance of

understanding the multidimensionality of identities within a racialized analysis of identity. While the findings of this study illustrated the HBCU environment as homeplace for the development of racial identity for Black women college students, the reflections from the participants of this study reflected race as a master category in articulating their identities. While intersectionality illustrates how categories of identity interconnect, race has significantly shaped the participants multidimensional lived experiences. The participants leaning more on articulating the racialized aspects of the multidimensional identities demonstrates how structural intersectionality influences how participants envision their identities in the Atlantic University environment. In the subsections that follow, the participants paid it forward to homeplace by reflecting on the structural aspects of the HBCU environment that influenced their racial identity development.
"If it wasn't for Atlantic University, I probably wouldn't have run into the people that I needed to run into in order to develop me, as a Black woman." Structural Intersectionality as the architecture of Homeplace.

The HBCU environment (norms, people, and expectations) has been a site for Black students to find the necessary resources they need to grow and development as Black scholars, thus serving as a site of resistance (Albritton, 2012; Allen et al., 2020). For Black women in this study, structural intersectionality serves as the architecture of their personal homeplace within Atlantic University. Upon reflecting on sense of belonging, Nia expressed that she made the right choice in attending Atlantic University. She explains that being at Atlantic influenced her to read literature that has been important to Nia's development as a Black woman. A key academic mission of HBCUs is their commitment to racial uplift and Nia's reflection demonstrates how the HBCU environment applies that commitment to practice. One of many elements of Du Bois's legacy is his advocacy for more expansive curriculums in the HBCU environment that would

104

lead Black Americans down the road of self-determination (Albritton, 2012). Atlantic University upholding such values contributed to Nia feeling enlightened within her sense of belonging. This finding expands the concept of structural intersectionality through demonstrating the effects of Black women's racialized experiences being acknowledged within higher education structures. Nia's reflection is an example of how culturally relevant curriculums influence racial identity processes for Black women college students.

Misty's reflection on the sacrifices she was willing to make to attend Atlantic University highlights how the opportunities she has earned in her time at Atlantic influenced her sense of homeplace within the HBCU environment. Although Atlantic University was not Misty's initial dream school in her college choice process, she came to acknowledge that Atlantic was the University that had everything that she wanted and more. In discussing her sense of belonging Misty expressed that there is something for her in every aspect at Atlantic, and there are opportunities for her that she has yet to discover. Similar to hook's (1990) original articulation of homeplace, Misty expresses joy in her feelings of arrival to her homeplace. Being a student at Atlantic University gave Misty the opportunity to discover herself as well as the opportunity to learn about her people. This finding represents a sense of homecoming to Misty's homeplace within Atlantic University. Misty's homecoming is another example of how the HBCU environment influences student development for Black women. Misty described the dimensions of her identity that were important in her college experience such as being an athlete and her long-term career goals, and the structure of Atlantic university was able to support those dimensions.

"I feel supported being Black, but I can't say that I feel support being a Black woman."

Paying it forward to Homeplace: Structural Intersectionality as Institutional Accountability

Jada expressed that she feels more supported being Black, rather than feeling supported as a Black woman at Atlantic University. While discussing her experience on campus, Jada expressed that a lot of men and women in the Atlantic environment have a lot of misogyny that they need to unpack. She explained further that as a collective, fighting for the needs of Black women is not on everybody's mind at Atlantic University. The failure to account for Black women's unique experiences because they share the same race as Black men, highlights the impact of power within the racial dynamics of the HBCU environment. Jada's reflection highlights an important way that structural intersectionality can function as a form of accountability to strengthen the HBCU environment for its Black women college students. In this respect Jada is articulating the need for accountability in the language of structural intersectionality thus, paying it forward to homeplace.

Utilizing structural intersectionality as institutional accountability, Bell explained that the competitive nature of the HBCU environment can impact a student's mental health. Although she expressed that the competitive nature pushes its students not to settle for anything less than what they want, Bell expressed that the competition can be draining, because students are never giving themselves enough time to relax. This element of the findings expands on the function of structural intersectionality. By articulating her needs to succeed in the HBCU environment, Bell is highlighting ways that the culture of Atlantic can better serve her in her navigation of the Atlantic environment.

While the findings of structural intersectionality support the reviewed literature that calls for institutional accountability for how HBCUs support and protect Black women (Kennedy, 2012; Njoku & Patton, 2017), the findings present a balance in the way structural intersectionality is utilized in the HBCU context. Despite structural intersectionality highlighting

the ways that demographics are not enough for Black women to feel supported in the HBCU environment, how the culture of Atlantic can be taxing on a student's mental health, and how colorism is prominent on campus; the participants of this study commonly expressed a strong sense of pride in Atlantic university, illustrating the communities they have and opportunities they have earned as architecture of their individual homeplaces. These findings of structural intersectionality are forms of care that the participants put back into their institution in order to strengthen the culture for future Black women college students.

The purpose of this study was to capture the deeply intersectional nature of the Black woman experience in the higher education context by exploring racialized experiences among Black women college students attending an HBCU to further understand how HBCU culture impacts the process of racial identity development. By developing and applying an intrasectional approach to interpreting the data, I found the participants to utilize the various dimensions of intersectionality in different ways. Political intersectionality was found to operate as both a lens and a tool of language for the participants to visualize and articulate their identities. In using political intersectionality as a lens, the participants applied the lens for different reasons and at different times of their racial identity development. A similar intrasectional pattern occurred when political intersectionality was employed as a tool of language, the findings revealed that Atlantic university has its own form of interpersonal communication that helps students navigate different identities that they come across on campus, and the participants articulated their own identities in the language of political intersectionality. Representational intersectionality served as a tool of critical consciousness and as a tool of connection for the participants to understand the Black woman identity at large, as well as critically understanding their own identities and how to take care of their identities. The final dimension of intersectionality served as the

architectural structure of the participants homeplace that they built during their time in college. Structural intersectionality traditionally draws attention to the hidden forms of domination that fail to account for a Black woman's unique experiences. The findings of this study offered a powerful alternative to how structural intersectionality operates when Black women are accounted for in the structures that create the HBCU environment. In this same notion, structural intersectionality was used as a tool of accountability for the participants to articulate their concerns in where the HBCU culture falls short for their identities. Taken together, utilizing an intrasectional analytical approach uncovers fresh adaptations of the various functions of intersectionality. These findings underscore the importance of considering intragroup differences in understanding how intersectionality can help the field of higher education understand student development for Black women college students.

CHAPTER VI: IMPLICATIONS

In addition to advancing literature focused on the study of racial identity in higher education, the current study's findings have important implications for research, practice, and policy. Examining the development of racial identity among college students who have multilayered marginalized identities allows for a deep understanding of the complexity within the process of building a unified sense of self. Thus, the following discussion on implications provides direction for future research and practice.

Understanding the sociopolitical context is critical in capturing an in-depth understanding of racial identity development. The methods chapter discussed the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic global pandemic in which the data of this dissertation was collected. The societal restrictions that were imposed by the safety risk of the pandemic posed implications on the execution of this study that future research should consider moving forward. First, the recruitment method of hanging up flyers occurred only in places that were open to the public, such as nearby cafes and an on-campus library. Second, interviews were confined to being conducted on virtual platforms. Such restrictions constrained possibilities for this study to produce a more extensive pool of participants, and these restrictions impeded on the possible opportunities to facilitate connections among the participants through focus groups. Major findings of this study highlighted racial identity as a tool of connection and the power of representation in Black women's racial identity development. Research on racial identity development should aim to incorporate methods that will facilitate connections among participants.

Implications for Research

This study took a qualitative approach to examine the development of racial identity among individuals with multidimensional identities and in doing so, this study displayed a wide array of identities and experiences among the larger identity of the Black woman college student. The findings were then able to go more in-depth to draw connections, commonalties, and differences across the sample of participants. The results of this in-depth analysis uncovered ways that intersectionality manifests as an array of tools for Black women college students to navigate their college experiences. Future research that selects a quantitative methodological approach should strategize ways to generate a similar level of richness within the findings. One strategy could focus on creating a more defined pool of participants to examine. For example, quantitative studies on racial identity development could focus on Black women with experiences in the foster care system to understand the differences in their specific identity-based experiences to understand how those experiences influence higher education outcomes using survey measures.

Existing research that examines the development of racial identity has called for future research to examine intragroup differences within groups of identity (Graham-Bailey et al., 2018; Porter & Dean, 2015; Thomas et al., 2011). Future research should continue to explore utilizing intersectionality to explore intragroup differences within identity. One of the theoretical purposes for both feminist and anti-racist scholarship that intersectionality aims to address is exposing differences within the broad categories of race and gender women (Nash, 2008). This research embarked upon this task by focusing on *intrasectional differences* within the identities and experiences of Black women. Future research that wants to continue to support this theoretical aim of intersectionality needs to incorporate intrasectional approaches in their methodology.

Whether that be the inclusion of origin stories and/or illuminating the various ways that the dimensions of intersectionality manifest in the data. Utilizing both of these strategies uncovered a wide array of intrasectional differences within the findings of this study. Using this strategy can be used to further understand how intersectionality helps the academy understand the development of any given identity-based group.

Throughout the findings, the participants utilized their critical consciousness to express their concerns of both Atlantic University and HBCU institutions at large. In describing the Black woman experience on campus, Jada's reflection demonstrates that favorable demographics are not enough for Black women to feel fully supported as HBCU college students. Future research should pursue an in-depth examination of campus safety for Black women on the HBCU campus. Njoku and Patton (2017, 2019) have been expanding on this area of study by theorizing Black women's experiences with institution-sanctioned violence. In their examination of misogynoir in the HBCU environment, Njoku and Patton (2019) analyzed cases of Black women in higher education that drew media attention to illustrate how these forms of misogynoir are revealed through various types of violence. Future research that goes in-depth to understand misogynoir within HBCUs should utilize a Black feminist intersectional approach to carry out the stories of Black women with the ethic of care and responsibility.

My analysis uncovered various ways that the dimensions of intersectionality are utilized on an individual level in the lives of Black women. Future research should expand on the conceptualization of these tools to inform institutions on ways to incorporate these tools in policy and practice that are aimed to empower Black women. For example, representational intersectionality was utilized as a tool of critical consciousness. Future research can explore how other Black women across various academic contexts might use representational intersectionality

111

as a tool of critical consciousness. This may take the shape of an inter-institutional research project where Black women college students come together via focus groups to discuss their respective college environments and their experiences as Black women on these campuses.

Implications for Practice

In discussing aspects of the HBCU culture that the participants had to adjust to various participants articulated that the expectations that the institution holds them to required adjustment. When the participants reflected on various elements that supported their development of racial identity in the HBCU environment, the participants emphasized the importance of self-care and mental health. In discussing Zora's feelings of imposter syndrome that was influenced by her being a first-generation college student, she expressed that her practice of self-reflection was brought on by the pause of the COVID-19 pandemic, which ultimately guided her to understand her growth as a Black woman. Pauses in time brought on by the global pandemic was an unpredictable occasion that gave Zora the opportunity to reflect on her potential and future aspirations. Faculty, staff, and student affairs professionals should strategize ways to make space for pauses within the culture of higher education institutions. Beginning steps in this practice should include a campus-wide evaluation of the effectiveness of existing mental health resources to further strengthen any existing resources. A campus wide mixed-methods evaluation should be structured to develop a holistic understanding of the mental health experiences in the higher education environment along identity-based demographics to provide direction of how to incorporate the practice of self-care that serve the intrasectional needs of the student body.

The findings of this study illustrated the importance of racial identity processes in the lives of Black women. Participants expressed that representational experiences in both classrooms and curriculums fostered positive racial identity development standpoints. Academic departments should evaluate how they are representing Black women within their programs, courses, and culturally relevant strategies that are used to increase student engagement, to better attract and support Black women students in their development as scholars. Continuous efforts are being made at Atlantic University to generate strong student learning outcomes. Atlantic University holds an assessment activity on an annual basis as part of their efforts toward continuous improvement. All academic programs at Atlantic have a plan based on assessing student learning outcomes. Plans differ across programs, but they rely on direct measures such as faculty assessing students' ability to meet learning outcomes. Plans can also include indirect measures, which includes students assessing their own ability to meet an outcome. Incorporating experiences with racial identity representation within the different academic programs in this assessment as an indirect measure would support what the findings of this study highlighted. Intrasectional representations of both Black womanhood and Blackness at large promotes a strong sense of self for the Black women college students represented in this study.

Implications for Policy

Bell's experience of struggling with HIV posed a few important considerations for policymakers. Throughout the findings Bell shared how the HBCU environment can be taxing on her mental health, and she expressed the need of support. Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is a crisis in the United States and existing research on this topic has called for campus health practitioners, student affairs educators, and equity-focused professionals to help mitigate the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Williams

& Thompson, 2022). Understanding HIV/AIDS in college context is important because existing research has documented that the experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS experience similar struggles that are discussed around student status as an identity epidemic (Williams & Thompson, 2022). Higher education institutions need to enact policies on campus that will support the livelihood of students who live with HIV/AIDS. Bell also shared that she was experiencing the foster care system during the time of data collection. HBCUs and higher education institutions alike need to evaluate how they are supporting their students that have experiences with the foster care system. Policies around housing, food resources, and healthcare need to be assessed to evaluate if they are serving the needs of students who have experiences with the foster care system.

When reflecting on finding her place within Atlantic, Bell credited her strong sense of belonging to being in a higher education space where her Blackness doesn't fit into one category. She explained that her racial identity pushes her to work harder than her experiences in the foster care system. This finding raises the importance of additional research being conducted to further understand the impact of HBCUs on foster youth's racial identity development. This research suggests that it may be beneficial for key stakeholders to forge partnerships with HBCUs to promote the overall well-being of foster youth college students that persist to college. Currently, Atlantic University does not have foster youth services in place for their students. Building a comprehensive program with the goal of supporting former and current foster youth with financial assistance, year-round housing, and food resources would complement what Atlantic University already offers their students in building their holistic sense of self.

      Throughout this study, the participants shared stories of the predominantly white spaces they navigated before coming to Atlantic University. The participant's stories of their

experiences in predominantly white spaces differed from early childhood racialized experiences, experiencing racism in the K-12 context, and intrasectional racialized experiences. These stories support the existing research that asserts that the experience of racial isolation informs Black students' aspirations to understand their racial identities in their college life (Freeman, 1999; Freeman & Thomas, 2022). Policymakers in higher education should strategize ways to understand the environments that prospective Black women college students are emerging from before they arrive on campus to better support their racial identity processes in college. One strategy could involve how the field of higher education utilizes school profiles in the college admission process. School profiles are sometimes used by college admission officers to understand general information about the high schools that prospective students come from. According to their institutional data on admissions criteria, Atlantic University does not currently consider geographic locations in the admissions process. The origin stories along with the findings of this study demonstrated the importance of expanding school profiles to include sociopolitical information on hometown communities. The participants of this study commonly expressed that the rationale behind selecting to attend an HBCU involved previous experiences of racism, racial identity-based isolation, and wanting to experience wholeness of their identities. Expanding school profiles has the potential to provide a deeper contextualization of the environments that they are departing from. Once the student profiles are more racially nuanced, college admission officers should employ an intersectional lens to the student profiles to understand the experiences of prospective students and build a holistic approach to creating a diverse student body. The information gained from expansive school profiles and an intersectional analytical approach could additionally inform larger-scale efforts of providing matriculation support to first-year Black women college students once on campus.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1A: Interview #1 Protocol

Prompt
Hello_____, Thank you for being here with me today and participating in this interview. Before we begin the interview, I just want to introduce myself and what this research is about. My name is Audrey Devost, I am a third-year graduate student in the school of education and information studies at UCLA. The purpose of this interview is to hear about your life experiences as a Black woman and how you have come to define what it means to you to be a Black woman. We are interested in understanding your journey to [INSTITUTION], your experiences in higher education, how you currently see yourself as a Black woman, and what the future version of you might look like in your mind. Do you have any questions so far?

I want you to know that at any time, you can excuse yourself without any consequences. Here is a consent form that is asking for your permission to participate in this study. I will give you a few minutes to review the information on the form and confirm that you are interested in participating. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the form and I can answer them. I also ask for your permission to audio record the interview and to take notes during our dialogue. In order to protect your real name and identification, I will transcribe the dialogue by inserting a pseudonym. Before we begin, I want to emphasize this: Please feel free to share whatever you wish during this interview, and if you would rather not respond to a particular question, simply say "pass". We are now ready to begin the interview process.

Introduction: The development of identity calls for the integration of one's past, present, and how you see yourself in the future to construct a sense of self. The questions I am going to ask you are structured in a chronological order starting with your childhood and spanning all the way to your future self.

1. **How is school going? Are you enjoying your experience so far? How is the HBCU experience for you?**
2. **I want to start out by giving you space to tell me who [participant] is. What makes [participant], [participant]?**

Thank you for sharing. As you know, I am looking to get a holistic sense of the development of your identity as a Black woman. The next questions are structured in a chronological way, starting with your childhood.

3. **Can you tell me about any racialized childhood experiences that made you aware of your identity?**
4. **Reflecting on the time that you first started thinking about college, when did you recognize that going to college was an option for you? /Something you wanted to pursue?**
   a. Did anyone help you with the college admission process? How did they help you?

       b.   What made you select an HBCU?

       c.   How did it feel to be accepted into college?

       d.   Did you attend any college before this one? If so, how was your experience there?

             i.   Did you have a relationship with any faculty/staff there?

            ii.   Did you feel supported there?

5. **How did it feel when you first arrived at this University? What were some things about the HBCU college life you had to adjust to?**

       a.   The past two years considered, how does being a student at this University feel now?

       b.   Are you a member of any campus organizations? What kinds of extracurricular activities do you partake in? This can be on and off campus.

       c.   Do you have a relationship with any faculty/staff here? Have these relationships shifted given the pandemic?

6. **All experiences considered; how do you currently feel about your Blackness?**

             i.   Who in your life has empowered you as a Black woman? Can you tell me about this person and the influence they have had on your life?

            ii.   Do you feel supported as a Black woman on this campus?

       b.   Do you consider yourself a "good student?"

       c.   What are some things you like and dislike about college?

       d.   What are some spaces on and off campus that make you feel safe?

       e.   Do you feel like you belong here at this University?

             i.   If not, why?

7. **How do you envision your future self? In other words, what are some short- and long-term goals you have, and what does the future version of you look like?**

8. **What advice would you give your younger self?**

9. **What can the University do, to support your success during your time here?**

10. **How can I support you in your success here at this University?**

11. **Before we finish, is there anything else you want to share or expand on?**

That concludes our interview. Thank you so much for participating in this session. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX 1B: Interview #2 Protocol

Hello_____, Welcome back and thank you again for being here with me today and participating in this interview series. As you know, my name is Audrey Devost, I'm graduate student in the school of education and information studies at UCLA. The purpose of this interview is to hear about your life experiences as a Black woman and how you have come to define what it means to you to be a Black woman. We are interested in understanding your journey to [INSTITUTION], your experiences in higher education, how you currently see yourself as a Black woman, and what the future version of you might look like in your mind. Do you have any questions so far?

I want you to know that at any time, you can excuse yourself without any consequences. Here is a consent form that is asking for your permission to participate in this study. I will give you a few minutes to review the information on the form and confirm that you are interested in participating. Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the form and I can answer them. I also ask for your permission to audio record the interview and to take notes during our dialogue. In order to protect your real name and identification, I will transcribe the dialogue by inserting a pseudonym. Before we begin, I want to emphasize this: Please feel free to share whatever you wish during this interview, and if you would rather not respond to a particular question, simply say "pass". We are now ready to begin the interview process.

Introduction: The questions that I have for you consist of follow up questions from our first interview, and questions around how you are reflecting on your college journey.

General second interview questions
Introduction: I want to start out with asking how your spring semester is going? How are classes and how are you?
1. I would like to spend some time talking about your family, can you tell me about your family dynamics and the impact your family has had on your life?
2. In the first interview you told me about your family and how they have encouraged your racial identity. You described your mom and dad as "affirmation people", **can you tell me about the affirmations they would instill upon you, and the impact those messages have had on you and the way you see yourself?**
3. Shifting to your experience at Atlantic, what kind of experiences have you had at Atlantic that has influenced your consciousness as a Black woman?
4. What are some things you have noticed regarding your growth process as a Black woman at Atlantic?
5. **Do you feel like your African culture is well represented/ supported at [site]? How important has it been to you that your culture is represented at [site]?**
6. In discussing your racialized experiences that influenced your identity, you brought up your experience of being first generation, and how throughout your childhood, your parents had conversations with you about how you would have to do things differently from your counterparts.

     a. **3A. How do you think these conversations that you had growing up influence your identity/ how you see yourself?**

     b. **3B. How has being first generation influenced how you navigate throughout life?**

7. During your time here, do you believe you have gone through a process of defining/ redefining yourself?

8. Can you explain the difference between the version of yourself before Atlantic and the Atlantic woman you are now?

9. How does your group of friends support each other?

10. How do you think your friendships contribute to your self-definition?

11. When we discussed why you chose an HBCU you explained that you wanted the experience we see on TV. You discussed how you felt about Blackness before college, and parting of choosing to go to Atlantic was wanting to destigmatize the feeling of "just being Black" for yourself. **Do you feel as if you have accomplished that?**

12. In a discussion around preparing for college you talked about how excited you were to attend an HBCU. **Looking back at your last four years, has your experience at Atlantic lived up to those expectations that you had before you came to Atlantic?**

13. We spent time talking about your identity as an Afro Latina and you gave me a look into your history your music and all-around culture. My question for you is **(A) How did you come to learn about your heritage, and (B) what are some things you do to stay connected to your culture, and (C) How has your ethnic culture influenced how you carry yourself?**

14. In the first interview you talked about how your mother instilled lessons in you that your appearance is beautiful the way you are essentially. **How important have these messages been to your self-image/the way you see yourself?**

15. Shifting to your experience at Atlantic, what kind of experiences have you had at Atlantic that has influenced your consciousness as a Black woman?

16. You have had a lot of leadership positions at Atlantic can you talk about these responsibilities and what you might have learned from these experiences how did these experiences contribute to how you see yourself?

17. You're a senior this year. Could you reflect on some things you have noticed regarding your growth process as a Black woman at Atlantic? In other words, can you explain the difference (is there a difference?) between the version of yourself before Atlantic and the Atlantic woman you are now?

18. Do you feel like your African culture is well represented/ supported at [site]? How important has it been to you that your culture is represented at [site]?

19. In the first interview, you described the version of you before Atlantic as soft spoken and a Caterpillar quote still in my shell do you think you have come out of your shell? During your time here, do you believe you have gone through a process of defining/ redefining yourself?

20. I want to shift to discussing your friends at Atlantic. Could you start be describing your friend group? How does your group of friends support each other?
   6A. How do you think your friendships contribute to your self-definition?
21.
22. How are you feeling as we steadily approach your graduation date May 2022?
23. How will you be celebrating yourself/ how would you like to celebrate yourself once you graduate?
24. What are some hopes you have for life after college?
25. Any fears you might have around graduating/ life after college?
26. What are some things you might miss about [site]?
27. Are there any conflicts among the student community you wish would improve for the students who come in behind you? What are some ways the Atlantic community could improve for new students coming in?
28. You have grown so much! What do you think it takes to support Black women loving/ learning to love themselves? (What has been your experience with this?)
29. What advice do you have for incoming Black women college students in navigating their Atlantic experience?
30. That is the end of the interview! Do you have questions?

APPENDIX 1C: CONSENT FORM
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Atlantic University Black Women Study

Audrey Devost, M.A., and Dr. Jessica Harris, from the Department of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles are conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a Black woman attending an HBCU. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT A RESEARCH STUDY?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH BEING DONE?

This research study examines intragroup differences of the development of racial identity among Black women attending an HBCU. Through a qualitative approach, this research aims to understand how the HBCU environment influences racial identity formation, and how might the construction of racial identity may be different for Black women who have experienced life in the foster care system.

HOW LONG WILL THE RESEARCH LAST AND WHAT WILL I NEED TO DO?

Participation will take a total of about two interviews, taking up to three hours. If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:
- Meet with the researcher for a sit-down interview answering questions around the following:
  - ➢ How you define yourself/ Black womanhood.
  - ➢ Your racialized experiences.
  - ➢ How your past and present experiences has shaped who you are.
  - ➢ Your experience in the foster care system and the transition into higher education (if applicable).

ARE THERE ANY RISKS IF I PARTICIPATE?
- Possible discomfort in sharing past experiences.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS IF I PARTICIPATE?
- You will not directly benefit from your participation in the research.

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH MAY

- Inform policies around Black women college students on how to improve and support experiences in higher education.

WHAT OTHER CHOICES DO I HAVE IF I CHOOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE?
- Your alternative to participating in this research study is to not participate.

HOW WILL INFORMATION ABOUT ME AND MY PARTICIPATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The researchers will do their best to make sure that your private information is kept confidential. Information about you will be handled as confidentially as possible, but participating in research may involve a loss of privacy and the potential for a breach in confidentiality. Study data will be physically and electronically secured. As with any use of electronic means to store data, there is a risk of breach of data security.

Use of personal information that can identify you:
- Name, classification, major, race, gender.
  - The names will be coded into pseudonyms during the transcribing process.

How information about you will be stored: After the study is complete all emails and phone messages will be deleted; names will be coded with pseudonyms once the interviews are transcribed. The transcribed interviews will be stored by the researcher on their personal private electronic devices (laptop and USB).

People and agencies that will have access to your information:
The faculty and staff of the UCLA Department of Education and information studies may have access to the transcribed information upon request. Authorized UCLA personnel may have access to study data and records to monitor the study. Research records provided to authorized, non-UCLA personnel will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name. University employees are bound by strict rules of confidentiality.

How long information from the study will be kept:
The contact information will be kept until after the study is completed, and the audio recordings of the interviews will be kept for an exact year from the date recorded.

USE OF DATA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
The data that is to be collected will be used to write articles for higher education journals and inform future policies for students who are Black women in higher education. Your de-identified data may be kept for use in future research.

WILL I BE PAID FOR MY PARTICIPATION?
Participants will be compensated with two $25 amazon gift cards upon completion of each interview.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

The research team:
If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact: Audrey Devost (Principal Investigator) at 310-405-2655 email: Devosta32@ucla.edu and Dr. Jessica Harris (Faculty Sponsor) Email: jharris@gseis.ucla.edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone: (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS IF I TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

HOW DO I INDICATE MY AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE?

If you want to participate in this study, you should sign and date below.

SIGNATURE OF THE PARTICIPANT

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

_____   _____
Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Contact Number

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX 1D: Preliminary Questionnaire

1. What is your name?

2. Gender identity and Preferred Pronouns?

3. What is your email address?

4. What is your phone number?

5. Amazing! What is the best way to contact you?

6. Where are you from?

7. Do you have experience in the foster care system? If yes, please share the age you were involved with the system and when you exited.

8. Last question: What is your school classification (Junior, AU 17'/ alumna)

REFERENCES

Albritton, T. J. (2012). Educating our own: the historical legacy of HBCUs and their relevance

> for educating a new generation of leaders. *The Urban Review, 44*, 311–331.

Abes, E. S. (2009). Theoretical borderlands: Using multiple theoretical perspectives to challenge

> inequitable power structures in student development theory. *Journal of College Student*

> *Development, 50*(2), 141–156.

Abes, E. S. (2016). Situating paradigms in student development theory. *New Directions for*

> *Student Services, 2016*(154), 9–16. Wiley Online Library.

> https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20171

Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the model of multiple

> dimensions of identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of

> multiple identities. *Journal of College Student Development, 48*, 1–22.

Allen, B. J. (2000). Learning the ropes: A Black feminist standpoint analysis. In P. M. Buzzanell

> (Ed.), *Rethinking organizational and managerial communication from feminist*

> *perspectives* (pp. 177–208). Sage Publications.

Allen, E. L. & Joseph, N. M. (2018). The sistah network: Enhancing the educational and social

> experiences of Black women in the academy, *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher*

> *Education, 11*(2), 151–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2017.1409638

Allen, W. R. (1985). Black student, White campus: Structural, interpersonal, and psychological

> correlates of success. *Journal of Negro Students, 54*, 134–137.

Allen, W. R. (1992). The color of success: African American college student outcomes at

> predominantly White and historically Black public colleges and universities. *Harvard*

> *Educational Review, 62*(1), 26–45.

Allen, W. R., Devost, A., & Mack, C. (2020). Hidden in plain sight: Historically Black colleges and universities in America. *Quaderni di Sociologia, 83–LXIV*, 25–46. https://doi.org/10.4000/qds.4044

Allen, W. R., Epps, E. G., & Haniff, N. Z. (1991). College in Black and White: African American students in predominantly White and historically Black public universities. State University of New York Press.

Allen, W. R., & Jewell, J. O. (2002). A backward glance forward: Past, present, and future perspectives on historically Black colleges and universities. *Review of Higher Education*, *25*(3), 241–261. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2002.0007

Allen, W. R., Jewell, J. O., Griffin, K. A., & Wolf, D. S. (2007). Historically Black colleges and universities: Honoring the past, engaging the present, touching the future. *Journal of Negro Education*, *76*(3), 263–280.

Allen, W. R., McLewis, C., Jones, C., & Harris, D. (2018). From Bakke to Fisher: African American students in U.S. Higher education over forty years. *Rsf*, *4*(6), 41–72. https://doi.org/10.7758/RSF.2018.4.6.03

Amechi, M. H. (2016). "There's no autonomy": Narratives of self-authorship from Black male foster care alumni in higher education. *Journal of African American Males in Education, 7*(2), 18–35.

Amechi, M. H. (2017). *Our stories (un)told: A critical qualitative study of high-achieving foster youth college-going experiences* (Publication No. 10690123) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin Madison]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Anderson, J. D. (1988). *Education of Blacks in the South, 1865–1930*. University of North Carolina.

Anzaldúa, G. (1987). Borderlands, la Frontera: The new mestiza. *Aunt Lute Books.*

Baber, L. D. (2012). A qualitative inquiry on the multidimensional racial development among

    first-year African American college students attending a predominately White institution.

    The Journal of Negro Education, 81(1), 67–81.

    https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.81.1.0067

Batsche, C., Hart, S., Ort, R., Armstrong, M., Strozier, A., & Hummer, V. (2014). Post-

    secondary transitions of youth emancipated from foster care. Child and Family Social

    Work, 19, 174–184. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2012. 00891.x

Bakari, S. (1997). *African American racial identity development in predominantly White*

    institutions: Challenges for student development professionals. Different Perspectives on

    Majority Rules.

Barrat, V. X., & Berliner, B. (2013). The invisible achievement gap, part 1: Education. outcomes

    of students in foster care in California's public schools. WestEd.

    https://www.wested.org/wp-

    content/uploads/2016/11/1400283692Invisible_Achievement_Gap_Full_Report-3.pdf

Bennett, P. R., & Xie, Y. (2003). Revisiting racial differences in college attendance: The role of

    historically Black colleges and universities. *American Sociological Association*, *68*(4),

    567–580.

Biondi, M. (2012). *The Black revolution on campus* (1st ed.). University of California Press.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American*

    Sociological Review 62(3), 465–80.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial

    inequality in the United States. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Bonilla-Silva, E., & Dietrich, D. (2011). The sweet enchantment of color-blind racism in

    Obamerica. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 634*(1),

    190–206. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716210389702

Bowleg, L. (2008). When Black + lesbian + woman ≠ Black lesbian woman: The methodological

    challenges of qualitative and quantitative intersectionality research. *Sex Roles, 59*, 312–

    325. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9400-z

Brown, M. C., & Davis, J. E. (2001). The historically Black college as social contract, social

    capital, and social equalizer. *Peabody Journal of Education, 76*, 31–49.

Burns, B. J., Phillips, S. D., Wagner, H. R., Barth, R. P., Kolko, D. J., & Campbell, Y. (2004).

    Mental health need and access to mental health services by youths involved with child

    welfare: a national survey. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent*

    Psychiatry, 43, 960–970.

Campbell, S. D., Carter-Sowell, A. R., & Battle, J. S. (2019). Campus climate comparisons in

    academic pursuits: How race still matters for African American college students. *Group*

    Processes and Intergroup Relations, *22*(3), 390–402.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218823065

Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw, K. W., Mays, V. M., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality:

    Mapping the movements of a theory. *Du Bois Review, 10*(2), 303–312.

Carruthers, C. A. (2018). Unapologetic: A Black, queer, and feminist mandate for radical

    movements. Beacon Press.

Chávez, A., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1999). Racial and ethnic identity. *New Directions for Adult*

    and Continuing Education, 1999, 39-47. https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.8405

Chavous, T. M., Richardson, B. L., Webb, F. R., Fonseca-Bolorin, G., & Leath, S. (2018). Shifting contexts and shifting identities: Campus race-related experiences, racial identity, and academic motivation among Black students during the transition to college. *Race and Social Problems*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12552-017-9218-9

Chen, P. D., Ingram, T. N., & Davis, L. K. (2014). Bridging student engagement and satisfaction: A comparison between historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions. *Journal of Negro Education*, *83*(4), 565–579. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.4.0565

Clayton, K. A. (2020). Biracial identity development at historically White and historically Black colleges and universities. *Sociology of Education*, *93*(3), 238–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040720926163

Clayton, A. B., McClay, L. P., Davis, R. D., & Tevis, T. L. (2022). Considering both HBCU and PWI options: Exploring the college choice process of first-year Black students. *The Journal of Higher Education, 94*(1), 34–59.

Cohn, S., & Kelly, R. (2015). *Information packet: Foster youth attending college*. National Center for Child Welfare Excellence, Silberman School of Social Work.

Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *The American psychologist, 64*(3), 170–80.

Collins, P. H. (1989). The social construction of Black feminist thought. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 14*(4), 745–773. https://doi.org/10.1086/494543.

Collins, P. H. (2000). Gender, Black feminism, and Black political economy. *Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science. 568*(1), 41–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/000271620056800105

Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Unwin Hyman.

Courtney, M. E., & Dworsky, A. (2005). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 19. University of Chicago, *Chapin Hall Center for Children.*

Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Brown, A., Cary, C., Love, K., & Vorhies, V. (2011). Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.*

Courtney, M., Dworsky, A., Lee, J., & Raap, M. (2010). Mid- west evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at ages 23 and 24. *Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.*

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine. *The University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989*(1), 139–167.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (Eds.). (1995). Critical race theory: The key writings that informed the movement. The New Press.

Crewe, S. E. (2017). Education with intent—The HBCU experience. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, *27*(5), 360–366. https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2017.1318622

Cross, W. E. (1971). The Negro-to-Black conversion experience. *Black World, 20*(9), 13–27.

Cross, W. E. (1991). Shades of Black: Diversity in African American identity. *Temple University Press.*

Cross, W. E., Jr., Parham, T. A., & Helms, J. E. (1998). The stages of Black identity development: Nigrescence models. In R. L. Jones (Ed.), *Black psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 319–338). Cobb & Henry Publishers.

Cross, W. E., & Fhagen-Smith, P. (2001). Patterns of African American identity development: A life span perspective. In B. Jackson & C. Wijeyesinghe (Eds.), *New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology* (pp. 243–270). New York University Press.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage.

Davis, M., Dias-Bowie, Y., Greenberg, K., Klukken, G., Pollio, H. R., Thomas, S. P., & Thompson, C. L. (2004). "A fly in the buttermilk": Descriptions of university life by successful Black undergraduate students at a predominately White southeastern university. *The Journal of Higher Education, 75*(4), 420–445. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2004.11772266

Delgado, B. D. (1998). *Using a Chicana Feminist Epistemology in Educational Research*. Harvard Educational Review.

Delgado, R. S., & Stefancic, J. J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York University Press.

Douglass, T. (2012). HBCUs as sights of resistance: The malignity of materialism, western masculinity, and spiritual malefaction. *Urban Review, 44*(3), 378–400.

Erikson, E. H. (1959). Identity and the life cycle: Selected papers. *Psychological Issues, 1*, 1–171.

Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle.* W. W. Norton & Co.

Ford, K. A., & Malaney, V. K. (2012). "I now harbor more pride in my race": The educational benefits of inter-and intraracial dialogues on the experiences of students of color and multiracial students. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(1), 14–35.

Freeman, K. (1999). HBCUs or PWIs? African American high school students' consideration of higher education institution types. *Review of Higher Education, 23*(1), 91–106.

Freeman, K. & Thomas, G. E. (2002). Black colleges and college choice: Characteristics of students who choose HBCUs. *The Review of Higher Education, 25*(3), 349–358. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2002.0011

Gist, C. D. (2016). A Black feminist interpretation: Reading life, pedagogy, and Emilie. *Meridians*, *15*(1), 245–268. https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.15.1.13

Graham-Bailey, M., Richardson Cheeks, B. L., Blankenship, B. T., Stewart, A. J., & Chavous, T. M. (2019). Examining college students' multiple social identities of gender, race, and socioeconomic status: Implications for intergroup and social justice attitudes. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 12*(4), 377–389. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000098

Harper, S. R., Carini, R. M., Bridges, B. K. & Hayek, J. C. (2004). Gender differences in student engagement among African American undergraduates at historically Black colleges and universities. *GSE Publications*.

Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *80*(4), 389–414. https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.0.0052

Harris, J. C. (2015). "Intrinsically interesting": The racialized experiences of multiracial women

    students at a predominately White institution (Publication No. 3700266) [Doctoral

    dissertation, Indiana University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Harris, J. C. (2017). Multiracial women students and racial stereotypes on the college campus.

    Journal of College Student Development, *58*(4), 475–491.

    https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0038

Harris, J. C., & BrckaLorenz, A. (2017). Black, White, and Biracial students' engagement at

    differing institutional types. *Journal of College Student Development*, *58*(5), 783–789.

    https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0061

Harris, J. C., & Patton, L. D. (2018). Un/Doing intersectionality through higher education

    research. *Journal of Higher Education, 90*(3), 347–372.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1536936

Haynes, H., Joseph, N. M., Patton, L. D., Stewart, S., & Allen, E. L. (2020). Toward an

    understanding of intersectionality methodology: A 30-year literature synthesis of Black

    women's experiences in higher education. *Review of Educational Research, 90*(6), 751–

    787.

Hazen, A. L., Hough, R. L., Landsverk, J. A., & Wood, P. A. (2004). Use of mental health

    services by youths in public sectors of care. *Mental Health Services Research*, 6(4),

    213−226.

Helms, J. E. (1990). Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice. Greenwood.

Helms, J. (1993). Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice. In W. R. Allen,

    E. G. Epps, & N. Z. Haniff (Eds.), *College in Black and White: African American*

students in predominately White and historically Black public universities. State University of New York Press.

Helms, J. E. (1994) The conceptualization of racial identity and other "racial" constructs. In E. J. Thicket, R. J. Watts, and D. Birman (Eds.), Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context (pp. 285–311). Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

Hill, R. B. (2001). The role of race in foster care placement. Paper presented at the Race Matters Forum, Chevy Chase, MD.

Hill, R. B. (2007). An analysis of racial/ethnic disproportionality and disparity at the national, state, and county levels. Seattle, WA: Casey-CSSP Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare.

hooks, b. (1982). Ain't I am woman: Black women and feminism. In D. Bourget & D. Chalmer (Eds.), *Black women and feminism* (pp. 159–196). Pluto Press.

hooks, b. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. South End Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. Routledge. Hull.

Atlantic-Vital, M. R. (1989). African American women in higher education: Struggling to gain identity. *Journal of Black Studies*, *20*(2), 180–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/002193478902000205

Hunter, C. D., Case, A. D., & Harvey, I. S. (2019). Black college students' sense of belonging and racial identity. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *23*(9), 950–966. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1602363.

Hurtado, S., Alvarado, A. R., & Guillermo-Wann, C. (2015). Thinking about race: The salience of Racial identity at two-and four-year colleges and the climate for diversity. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *86*(1), 127–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2015.11777359

Jackson, B. W., III (1976). *The function of a Black identity development theory in achieving relevance in education for Black students* (Publication No. 7706381) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Jayakumar, U. M., Vue, R., & Allen, W. R. (2013). Pathways to college for young Black scholars: A community cultural wealth perspective. *Harvard Educational Review, 83*(4), 551–579.

Jones, L. P. (2010). The educational experiences of former foster youth three years after discharge. Child Welfare, 89,7–22.

Jones, L. V., Ahn, S., Quezada, N. M., & Chakravarty, S. (2020). Enhancing counseling services for Black college women attending HBCUs. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, *29*(4). https://doi.org/10.1080/15313204.2018.1449689

Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development, 41*, 405–414.

Kang, M., Lessard, D., Heston, L., & Nordmarken, S. (2012). Introduction to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies. University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Kendi, I. X. (2012). The Black campus movement: Black students and the racial reconstitution of higher education 1965–1972 (1st ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Kennedy, J. L. (2012). The HBCU experience: Liberating or not? *Urban Review*, *44*(3), 358–377. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-012-0200-y

Lane, T. Y. (2017). Tribulations and achievements: The lived experiences of African American college students formerly in foster care, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 27*(3), 141–150.

Lane, T. Y. (2020). Persistence: A qualitative study of the experiences of African American

    foster care youths who aged out and made the transition to college. *Journal of Ethnic &*

    Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 29(4), 305–324.

Leath, S., & Chavous, T. (2018). Black women's experiences of campus racial climate and

    stigma at predominantly White institutions: Insights from a comparative and within-

    group approach for STEM and non-STEM majors. *Journal of Negro Education*, *87*(2),

    125–139. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.87.2.0125

Leath, S., & Mims, L. (2021). A qualitative exploration of Black women's familial socialization

    on controlling images of Black womanhood and the internalization of respectability

    politics. *Journal of Family Studies, 29*(2), 774–791.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/13229400.2021.1987294

Lenz-rashid, S. (2018). Urban university campus support program for students from foster care:

    Services and outcomes, (September).

Lige, Q. M., Peteet, B. J., & Brown, C. M. (2017). Racial identity, self-esteem, and the impostor

    phenomenon among African American college students. *Journal of Black Psychology*,

    43(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798416648787

Lockhart, Z. (2019). Mutual vulnerability and intergenerational healing: Black women HBCU

    students writing memoir. *Journal of Poetry Therapy, 32*(3), 169–180.

Maslow, A. H. (1961). Peak-experience as acute identity-experiences. *American Journal of*

    Psychoanalysis, 21, 254–260.

Maslow, A. H. (1970). Motivation and personality (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.

McKay, N. Y. (1997). A troubled peace: Black women in the halls of the White academy. In L.

Benjamin (Ed.), *Black women in the academy: Promises and perils* (pp. 11–22).

University Press of Florida.

Moody, A. T., & Lewis, J. A. (2019). Gendered racial microaggressions and traumatic stress

symptoms among Black women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 43*(2), 201–214.

Nash, J. C. (2008). Re-thinking intersectionality. *Feminist Review*, *89*(1), 1–15.

https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2008.4

Nash, J. C. (2019). Feeling Black feminism. In *Black Feminism Reimagined: After*

Intersectionality (pp. 1–32). Duke University Press.

https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv111jhd0.4%0AJSTOR

Njoku, N., Butler, M., & Beatty, C. C. (2017). Reimagining the historically Black college and

university (HBCU) environment: Exposing race secrets and the binding chains of

respectability and othermothering. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in*

Education, *30*(8), 783–799. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2017.1350297

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the

1990s (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Ozaki, C. C., & Renn, K. A. (2015). Engaging multiracial college students. In S. J. Quaye & S.

R. Harper (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and*

practical approaches for diverse populations (2nd ed., pp. 94–104). Routledge.

Parham, T. A. (1989). Cycles of psychological Nigrescence. *The Counseling Psychologist 17*(2),

187–226. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000089172001

Patterson, A., Kinloch, V., Burkhard, T., Randall, R., & Atlantic, A. (2016). Black feminist

    thought as methodology: Examining intergenerational lived experiences of Black women.

    Departures in Critical Qualitative Research, 5(3), 55–76.

Patton, L. D. (2009). My sister's keeper: A qualitative examination of mentoring experiences

    among African American women in graduate and professional schools Contact. *The*

    Journal of Higher Education, *80*(5), 510–537.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2009.11779030

Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose: Toward a critical race theory of higher

    education. *Urban Education, 51*(3), 315–342. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915602542

Patton, L. D., & Njoku, N. R. (2019). Theorizing Black women's experiences with institution-

    sanctioned violence: A #BlackLivesMatter imperative toward Black liberation on

    campus. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 32*(9), 1162–1182.

Patton, L. D., & Simmons, S. L. (2008). Exploring Complexities of Multiple Identities of

    Lesbians in a Black College Environment. *Negro Educational Review*, *59*(January), 197–

    215. http://works.bepress.com/loripattondavis/2/

Patton, L. D., Harper, S. R., & Harris, J. C. (2015). Using critical race theory to (re) interpret

    widely studied topics in U.S. higher education. In A. M. Martinez- Aleman, E. M.

    Bensimon, & B. Pusser (Eds.), *Critical approaches to the study of higher education* (pp.

    193–219). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Perlow, O. N., Bethea, S., & Wheeler, D. (2014). Dismantling the masters house: Black women

    faculty challenging White privilege/supremacy in the classroom. *Understanding and*

    Dismantling Privilege, 4(2), 242–253. *Pittman*.

Perlow, O. N., Wheeler, D. I., Bethea, S. L. & Scott, B. M. (2018). Introduction. In O. N. Perlow, D. I. Wheeler, S. L. Bethea, & B. M. Scott (Eds.), *Black women's liberatory pedagogies: Resistance, transformation, and healing within and beyond the academy* (pp.1–19). *Palgrave Macmillan*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-65789-9

Peters, M. L., Zuniga, X., Hackman, H. W. (2000). Readings for diversity and social justice. *Routledge.*

Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of the research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 499–514.

Porter, C. J. (2017). Articulation of identity in Black undergraduate women: Influences, interactions, and intersections. In L. D. Patton & N. N. Croom (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on Black women and college success* (pp. 88–100). Routledge.

Porter, C. J. & Dean, L. A. (2015). Making meaning: Identity development of Black undergraduate women, *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education, 8*(2), 125–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2015.1057164

Porter, C. J., Green, Q., Daniels, M., & Smola, M. (2020). Black women's socialization and identity development in college: Advancing Black feminist thought. Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 57(3), 253–265. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2019.1683021

Porter, C. J., & Maddox, C. (2014). Using critical race theory and intersectionality to explore a Black lesbian's life in college: An analysis of skye's narrative. *NASPA Journal*, *15*(2).

Pryce, J., Napolitano, L., & Samuels, G. M. (2017). Transition to adulthood of former foster youth: Multilevel challenges to the help-seeking process. *Emerging Adulthood, 5*(5), 311-321. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696816685231

Quinlivan, K., & Town, S. (1999). Queer pedagogy, educational practice, and lesbian and gay youth. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 12*, 509524.

Ravitch, S., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. Sage Publications.

Ray, V. (2019). A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review, 84*(1), 26–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335

Robinson, S. J., Esquibel, E., & Rich, M. D. (2013). "I'm still here:" Black female undergraduates' self-definition narratives. *World Journal of Education*, *3*(5), 57–71. https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v3n5p57

Roebuck, J. B., & Murty, K. S. (1993). Historically Black colleges and universities: Their place in American higher education. *Praeger.*

Salazar, A. M. (2012). Supporting College Success in Foster Care Alumni: Salient Factors Related to Postsecondary Retention. *Child Welfare*, 91(5), 139–167.

Scott, L. D., Jr., Munson, M. R., McMillen, J. C., & Snowden, L. R. (2007). Predisposition to seek mental health care among Black males transitioning from foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *29*, 870882.

Scottham, K. M., Sellers, R. M., & Nguyên, X. (2008). A measure of racial identity in African American adolescents: The development of the multidimensional inventory of Black identity–Teen. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 14*(4), 297–306. https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.14.4.297

Seaton, E., Scottham, K., & Sellers, R. (2006). The status model of racial identity development in African American adolescents: Evidence of structure, trajectories, and well-being. *Child Development, 77*(5), 1416–1426.

Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *2*(1), 18–39.

Settles, I. (2006). Use of an intersectional framework to understand Black women's racial and gender identities. *Sex Roles, 54*, 589–601.

Shahid, N. N., Nelson, T., & Cardemil, E. V. (2018). Lift every voice: Exploring the stressors and coping mechanisms of Black college women attending predominately White institutions. *Journal of Black Psychology, 44*(3), 3–24.

Shakur, A., Davis, A. Y., & Hinds, L. S. (1987). *Assata: An autobiography*. Lawrence Hill.

Solórzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education, 69*(1/2), 60.

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 23–44.

Spencer, Z. (2018). Black skin, White masks: Negotiating institutional resistance to revolutionary pedagogy and praxis in the HBCU. In O. Perlow, D. Wheeler, S. Bethea, & B. Scott (Eds.), *Black women's liberatory pedagogies* (pp. 45–63). Palgrave Macmillan.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research. *Sage.*

Tatum, B. D. (1992). Talking about race, learning about racism. *Harvard Educational Review, 62*(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429495670-37

Tatum, B. D. (1993). Racial identity development and relational theory: The case of Black women in White communities. *Stone Center Working Paper Series.*

Tatum, B. D. (2000). The complexity of identity: "Who am I?". In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, H. W. Hackman, X. Zuniga, & M. L. Peters (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, sexism, anti-semitism, heterosexism, classism, and ableism* (pp. 9–14). Routledge.

Tatum, B. D. (2017). Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?: And other conversations about race. Basic Books.

Taylor, U. (1998). The historical evolution of Black feminist theory and praxis. *Journal of Black Studies, 29*(2), 234–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/002193479802900206

Terenzini, P. T., Rendon, L. I, Lee Upcraft, M. Millar, S. B., Allison, K. W., Gregg, P. L., & Jalomo, R. (1994). The transition to college: Diverse students, diverse stories. *Research in Higher Education, 35*, 57–73. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02496662

Thomas, A. J., Hacker, J. D., & Hoxha, D. (2011). Gendered racial identity of Black young women. *Sex Roles, 64*, 530–542.

Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Renn, K. A. (2009). Identity development theories in student affairs: Origins, current status, and new approaches. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 577–596. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.0.0102

Tovar-Murray, D., Jenifer, E. S., Andrusyk, J., D'Angelo, R., & King, T. (2012). Racism-related stress and ethnic identity as determinants of African American college students' career aspirations. *Career Development Quarterly*, *60*(3), 254–262. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2012.00021.x

U.S. Department of Education (2021). *Historically Black colleges and universities*. Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. https://www.google.com/url?q=https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id%3D667&sa=

D&source=docs&ust=1684716246236954&usg=AOvVaw2n_UcW0wugdJ14kjPPOkuI

Williams-Butler, A., Golden, K. E., Mendez, A. (2021). Intersectionality and child welfare policy: Implications for Black women, children, and families. *Child Welfare, 98*(4), 7595.

Williams, B. M., & Thompson, D. J. (2022, February 14). HIV/AIDS-related research in U.S. higher education journals: A content analysis. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education.* Advance online publication. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000389

Williams, Q., Williams, B. M., & Brown, L. C. (2022). Exploring Black girl magic: Identity development of Black first-gen college women. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 15*(4), 466479. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000294

Wijeyesinghe, C. L., & Jackson, B. W. (2001). New perspectives on racial identity development: A theoretical and practical anthology. New York University Press.

Winkle-Wagner, R. (2009). *The unchosen me: Race, gender, and identity among Black women in college*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Yinger, J. M. (1985). Ethnicity. *Annual Review of Sociology, 11*, 151–180.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, ethnicity, and education, 8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Zheng, W., Meister, A., & Caza, B. (2021). The stories that make us: Leaders' origin stories and temporal identity work. *Human Relations, 74*(8), 1178–1210. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720909864