A MIXED METHODS EXPLORATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ACCELERANTS' COLLEGE CHOICE TO MATRICULATE AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS AND HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

by

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(Under the Direction of Tarek C. Grantham)

ABSTRACT

The manuscript-formatted dissertation represents an exploration of the college choice process of African Americans students who experienced whole-grade academic acceleration during their K-12 education. In the first study (Chapter 3), used binary logistic regression to analyze quantitative data from The Freshman Survey, administered to first-year college students nationwide by the Higher Education Research Institute. By examining the college choice factors of first-year college students under age 18 at predominately White institutions (PWIs) and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), results indicated that Black accelerants at PWIs considered academic reputation of the institution, location, financial assistance, and parent preference, while some of the factors considered by Black accelerants at HBCUs included the ability to make more money, the availability of online classes, religious affiliation, and encouragement from relatives. The second study (Chapter 4) was a qualitative study using critical race theory to examine the experiences of three female African American accelerants from Howard University. Their individual counter-narratives were presented, followed by overall

themes representing participants' K-12 experiences, including parent engagement, social relationships, influential teachers, and additional acceleration. Analysis of participants' college choice processes revealed their focus on the following themes: tradition, tension with parents, kinship networks, resistance to prestigious PWIs, and utilization of merit-based scholarships. Finally, when discussing their transition to college and matriculation through Howard, the use of transfer credits, personal development, and a gift of extra time were salient themes among the participants. The final manuscript, Chapter 5, provided practical guidance regarding the use of transfer credits for accelerated students at HBCUs. Howard University's transfer credit policy was examined using document analysis, and recommendations focused on helping accelerated and high ability students navigate the process.

INDEX WORDS: academic acceleration, college choice, gifted education, gifted Black students, historically black colleges and universities, The Freshman Survey, Howard University, mixed methods

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who have supported me throughout this journey. To my mom and dad, there aren't enough words to express my gratitude. Thank you for raising me to be resilient and persistent and for loving me unconditionally. Dad, thank you for showing me what it means to work hard and still give your family your everything. Mom, thank you for being our family's original gifted education expert. Without each of you, there is no me.

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Note to the Reader: This dissertation uses the terms "Black" and "African American" interchangeably. Both terms are capitalized throughout in adherence with APA guidelines. The

author seeks to acknowledge both terms and respect the diverse ways in which members of the African diaspora in the United States choose to self-identify.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

High ability African American students are positioned at a unique crossroad within the traditional education system. Students who come from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds, especially African American students, have been consistently underrepresented in programs for formally identified gifted students (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Ford, Dickson, Davis, Trotman Scott, & Grantham, 2018; Henfield, Woo, & Bang, 2017) and consequently, they form an important population whose unique needs must be addressed. Educating gifted students requires special efforts on the part of the education system, but through efforts to create equitable means of identifying and creative ways to serve gifted students, educators can work towards helping all students to reach their full potential.

Acceleration, defined as "progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than conventional" (Pressey, 1949, p.2) is one of the most researched practices in gifted education and has been proven to be effective means of serving gifted students (Assouline, Colangelo, & VanTassel-Baska, 2015). However, research on acceleration rarely delves into the experiences of Black or other underrepresented students (Lee, Olszewski-Kulilius, & Peternel, 2010). In addition to their experiences in K-12 education, accelerants continue to feel the effects of acceleration as they matriculate to college and beyond, but research is needed to uncover the experiences of high ability students as they transition from high school to college (Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011). Black accelerants considering colleges often have a variety of appealing options, including Ivy Leagues and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)

(Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Wilson & Adelson, 2012), which may complicate their decision-making process. Gifted students and Black students are both impacted by the policies and practices of the education system at all levels and ensuring that K-16 policies are designed to be inclusionary and attend the unique needs of both groups is essential to the short- and long-term success of gifted Black students.

Statement of the Problem

Despite over one hundred years of research on academic acceleration and its short and long-term effects (Assouline et al., 2015; Wai, 2015) , there is little empirical data on the effectiveness of acceleration for African American students (Lee et al., 2010) and the policies that facilitate or inhibit accelerative practices. Additionally, although there is an abundance of research on college choice, a void exists in the research regarding the process that high ability students go through when choosing an institution (Wilson & Adelson, 2012), especially African American students whose processes include multiple factors, including deciding between attending an HBCU or a predominately white institution (PWI).

Purpose of the Studies

The purpose of this dissertation was to examine the experiences of African American accelerants related to their K-12 education and their college choice factors and processes. Specifically, this dissertation addresses the African American students' choices between attending PWIs and HBCUs. These studies are centered around the following research questions:

1. What factors do African American accelerants consider when choosing a postsecondary institution?
2. Do the factors considered by African American students who attend HBCUs differ from the factors considered by African American students who attend PWIs?

3. How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their K-12 education and acceleration experiences?
4. How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their college choice process and matriculation?
5. What are the university transfer policies used to award advanced standing to students at HBCUs?

Overview of the Studies

Both of the studies expand upon existing research in these areas. Although there has been an abundance of research on acceleration (Assouline et al., 2015), there is a significant void in acceleration research specific to special populations of students (Lee et al., 2010). In addition, although research has begun emerging about students who accelerate into college by leaving high school early through early college programs, research on the college choice and experiences of students who accelerated earlier in their K-12 education is scarce. With the research evidence of accelerated students' long-term success (Gross, 2006; Wai, 2015), it is important to understand the role that postsecondary choice and education plays in the lives of these students.

Study One

In order to further research on college choice and gifted African American students, Study One is a quantitative study examining college freshmen's responses to survey questions about the factors that influenced their choice of postsecondary institution. This study will seek to answer the research questions:

(a) What factors do accelerated African American students consider when choosing a postsecondary institution?

(b) Do the factors considered by African American students who attend HBCUs differ from the factors considered by African American students who attend PWIs?

Study Two

Study Two is a qualitative study that explores the unique considerations of accelerated Black students when it comes to college choice. For the purposes of this study, acceleration is limited to whole grade acceleration that occurred during the elementary school years, including early entrance to kindergarten or first grade. In order to explore the intersection of being African American and an academically accelerated student navigating the college choice process, three research questions will be considered:

(a) How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their K-12 education and acceleration experiences?

(b) How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their college choice process and matriculation?

(c) What are the university transfer policies used to award advanced standing to students at HBCUs?

Significance to the Field of Gifted Education

Study One adds to existing research in the field of gifted education by highlighting the factors that African American students consider when choosing postsecondary institutions. By examining these factors, teachers and counselors of gifted students will be able to better assist African American accelerants with their college choice process and help them to weigh the various options they have. For institutions of higher education, this study can inform them about how to create smooth transition experiences for students who may be entering college at younger

ages and create programs and marketing tools that address the unique needs of accelerated students.

Study Two adds to existing literature in gifted education, by shedding light on important aspects of African American students' K-12 acceleration experiences. Additionally hearing counter-narratives from accelerants who have walked through the college choice process and chosen HBCUs will allow for a more complete picture of these students' educational experiences and how educators, parents, and others can better facilitate these experiences for students. It will also add to the literature on higher education policy by examining the experiences of accelerated students who navigated the process of transferring credits completed before their enrollment in college.

Research Design Outline

Table 1.1

Study One: Research Design Outline

Purpose	To compare the college choice factors of African American students ages 17 and under who chose predominately White institutions versus historically Black colleges and universities
Research Questions	What factors do accelerated African American students consider when choosing a postsecondary institution? Do the factors considered by African American students who attend HBCUs differ from the factors considered by African American students who attend PWIs?
Data Collection Sources	The Freshman Survey 2009-2014
Data Analysis	Binary Logistic Regression
References	McDonough, Antonio, & Trent (1997), Pedhazur (1997), Teranishi & Briscoe (2008)

Table 1.2

Study Two: Research Design Outline

Purpose	To explore the K-12 experiences of accelerated African American students and the impact of those experience on their college choice process
Research Questions	How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their K-12 education and acceleration experiences? How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their college choice process and matriculation? What are the university transfer policies used to award advanced standing to students at HBCUs?
Theoretical Framework/Methodology	Critical race theory, multiple case study
Data Collection Sources	Semi-structured interviews, university transfer credit policy documents
Data Analysis	Constant comparative analysis, document analysis
References	Boeije (2002), Delgado & Stefancic (2017), Freeman (2005), Hossler & Gallagher (1987)

Personal Acceleration Background

My personal and professional experiences are what originally drew me to my research topic and have helped me to maintain my passion for underrepresented students in gifted education and academic acceleration. My maternal grandmother, my mother, my sister, myself, and my daughter all experienced academic acceleration in elementary school, making me the third of four generations of accelerated girls and women in my family. Coming from a home environment where accelerated learning was the norm, I was fortunate to have support through my acceleration journey. I experienced many of the topics that will be described in this

dissertation, including racism in school, but was fortunate to have adults who helped me to develop my racial identity simultaneously with my identity as a gifted student. After graduating from undergrad and graduate school at Howard University, I experienced gifted education from the perspective of an educator as I taught a cluster of gifted students in a general education elementary classroom. Teaching in an environment where acceleration was rarely considered as an option for students, I saw how difficult it is to meet the needs of students whose educational needs are far beyond the grade level standards. Most recently, I experienced acceleration from the parent perspective as I successfully navigated advocating for my daughter's early entrance to kindergarten. That process, like this dissertation, was a labor of love. My hope is that this dissertation and my future work contribute to the scholarship on academic acceleration of African American students and help accelerated students to achieve positive short- and long-term outcomes.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation will consist of three article manuscripts. Because of the manuscript format, some material is repeated in multiple locations. The second chapter provides an overall literature review for the dissertation on topics including gifted Black students, acceleration, and college choice.

The first manuscript, found in Chapter 3, is entitled "A Comparison of the College Choice Factors of First-Year Black Accelerants at PWIs and HBCUs from 2009-2014." This article, based on the results of Study One, compares the college choice factors of students aged 17 and under who completed the Freshman Survey between 2009 and 2014. I plan to submit this manuscript to Gifted Child Quarterly.

The second manuscript, found in Chapter 4, is entitled "'If You're Going to go to an HBCU, You Obviously go to Howard': Three Counter-narratives of Academic Acceleration and Matriculation Through an HBCU." This article, based on the results of Study Two, examines the experiences of three women who experienced whole grade acceleration and later attended Howard University. This manuscript will be submitted to Roeper Review.

The third manuscript, found in Chapter 5, is entitled "Navigating the Transition to College with Accelerated Black Students Attending HBCUs: Recommendations for Educators and Higher Education Professionals." This practical manuscript give advice to various stakeholders in the college choice process to help them better assist accelerated students in navigating their unique circumstances. This manuscript will be submitted to the Journal of Advanced Academics.

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CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON ACCELERATION OF HIGH ABILITY AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS AND COLLEGE CHOICE

Gifted Black Students

Throughout history, African American students have been systematically prevented from accessing the best educational opportunities. From prohibiting slaves from reading and writing, to creating segregated schools (Ford & King, 2014), to using bias measures for entrance into advanced programs (Cumings Mansfield, 2016; Henfield, Woo, & Bang, 2017; Torrance 1974), Black students have had numerous obstacles to overcome when seeking to optimize their academic abilities (Bonner, 2000).

Early Research on Black Children and Giftedness

Some of the earliest research on intelligence and giftedness argued that African Americans and other minority groups were inferior in intelligence to Whites (Cumings Mansfield, 2016). Lewis Terman and Leta Hollingworth were two significant researchers who studied intelligence in the early 20th century (Cumings Mansfield, 2016; Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 2008) and published numerous articles and studies that argued that racial differences in test scores were due to biological differences between members of different races (Hollingworth, 1926; Terman, 1916; Terman, 1925).

Other researchers, including Paul Witty and Martin Jenkins, sought to dispel myths of inferior intelligence by pointing out the flawed data and analysis that was being used to support the arguments that African Americans and other minority groups were inferior in intelligence to Whites (Witty & Jenkins, 1935). Although researchers who studied gifted Black students found that Black students were not inferior in intellect to their White counterparts (Jenkins, 1948; Witty & Jenkins, 1935), they also found that Black children experience racism in school that can affect their ability to achieve up to their potential.

Barriers to Gifted Identification and Services

For African American students, IQ tests have continued to be a hurdle in the gifted identification process. Using achievement and intelligence tests to identify students for gifted programming has consistently yielded lower scores and contributed to the underrepresentation of Black students (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008b; Grantham, 2013). Additionally, teachers are less likely to refer African American students for gifted programs than White or Asian students (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Ford et al., 2008b; McBee, 2006) due to a deficit thinking perspective of the academic abilities of students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Ford et al., 2008b). Even if Black students are able to overcome barriers to gifted identification, they can still be consistently being subjected to racism in school in the form of microaggressions (Ford, Trotman Scott, Moore, & Amos, 2013), stereotype threat (Ford, Moore, & Trotman Scott, 2011; Ford, Wright, Washington, & Henfield, 2016), and being accused of "acting White" (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008a; Grantham & Biddle, 2014).

Microaggressions. Microaggressions, which are "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al.,

2007, p.271), often emerge in gifted education when African American student have their academic performance questioned (Ford et al., 2013). For students, this questioning of their abilities and the overall stress of consistent exposure to microaggressions (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009) can lead to underachievement and lack of retention of Black students in gifted and advanced programs.

Stereotype Threat Theory. In environments where Black students are subjected to microaggressions, they can begin to experience problems with stereotype threat as well. Stereotype threat refers to a student's belief that their performance will be judged based on existing negative stereotypes (Wasserberg, 2017). In schools where educators have low expectations for Black students and their academic performance, this can lead students to underachieve. And when students have high stakes testing, the stereotype that Black students don't scores as well as White students can cause their performance to be negatively impacted (Ford et al., 2016). Students who are experiencing stereotype threats are more stressed, more likely to select incorrect answers, and change their test responses more often. Over time, this has contributed to the existing achievement gap between Black students versus White and Asian students (Borman & Pyne, 2016; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Wasserberg, 2014). High ability Black students are especially negatively impacted by stereotype threat because of their potential for excelling and achieving high scores. When stereotype threat impacts their test-taking abilities, the result is a larger discrepancy between their potential and actual achievement (Ford et al., 2011; Wasserberg, 2017)

"Acting White". Another way Black students experience racism in school is through the "acting White" phenomenon. This is a form of bullying rooted in racism (Grantham & Biddle, 2014) and consists of categorizing positive school-related behaviors such as following rules,

getting good grade, and speaking standard English as "acting White" (Ford, et al., 2008a; Ford et al., 2011; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Grantham & Biddle, 2014; Grantham & Ford, 2003). When students don't want to be accused of "acting White," they may avoid participating in gifted programs, advanced courses, or academic-related extracurricular activities. The lack of participation in these types of opportunities can have long-term impacts, as these opportunities can help students gain entrance to college (Ford et al., 2008). In addition to the negative long-term academic impacts, being accused of "acting White" and other forms of racism in school can impact Black gifted students' racial identity formation (Grantham & Ford, 2003; Stambaugh & Ford, 2015). These forms of racism make school an unwelcoming environment for high ability Black students, and because of these issues, it remains difficult to recruit and retain Black students in gifted and advanced programs (Ford et al., 2008b)

Culturally Responsive Approaches to Recognizing High Ability African American Students

To help educators understand how to identify and serve gifted Black students, researchers have detailed multiple ways in which to look at the unique characteristics of high ability Black students. For example, the traits, aptitudes, and behaviors (TABs) instrument highlights ten areas in which educators and others can look for evidence of exceptional abilities. The ten TABs are: (a) motivation, (b) communication, (c) interest, (d) problem-solving ability, (e) creativity, (f) memory, (g) inquiry, (h) insight, (i) reasoning, and (j) humor (Frasier et al., 1995). By looking at these ten traits and their positive and negative manifestations, teachers can better consider how student behaviors can be signs of giftedness (Besnoy, Dantzler, Besnoy, & Byrne, 2016).

Another researcher who looked at the traits of gifted Black students was E. Paul Torrance. By examining gifted traits of Black children through the lens of creativity, he came up with eighteen "creative positives" (Baldwin, 2001; Grantham, 2013; Torrance, 1973):

- ability to express feelings and emotions,
- ability to improvise with commonplace materials,
- articulateness in roleplaying and storytelling,
- enjoyment of and ability in visual art,
- enjoyment of and ability in creative movement, dance, and dramatics,
- enjoyment of and ability in music, rhythm,
- expressive speech,
- fluency and flexibility in nonverbal media
- enjoyment and skills in small group activities, problem-solving,
- responsiveness to the concrete,
- responsiveness to the kinesthetics,
- expressiveness of gestures and body language,
- humor,
- richness of imagery in informal language,
- originality of ideas in problem-solving,
- problem-centeredness,
- emotional responsiveness, and
- quickness of warm-up

Looking at these traits helped to offer a new perspective to educators working with Black children. When educators are informed about multiple ways to identify high ability Black students, they can then begin to think about ways that these students can be best served. Although there are many gifted service models, including pull out classes, cluster grouping, enrichment classes, and specialized schools (Rimm, Siegle, & Davis, 2018), this dissertation

focuses on academic acceleration. Academic acceleration does not require formal gifted identification, while still allowing students to "progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than conventional" (Pressey, 1949, p.2). When implemented effectively, acceleration can be part of the answer to addressing gifted Black students' exceptional needs.

Acceleration

Early Forms of Acceleration

Before grouping children based on age in school, one-room schoolhouses, where children of all ages were able to move at their own pace through the curriculum, were commonplace. However, as the country's population grew, and there was a need for more schools and teachers, students began being grouped by age (Colangelo et al., 2004). This was due to both logistical concerns as well as knowledge of child development (Southern & Jones, 1991). Because of this more formalized grade system, acceleration became more noticeable.

Types of Acceleration

With expanded learning options and programs, the types of acceleration available to students have also expanded over time. Currently, researchers have identified twenty different types of acceleration (Assouline, Colangelo, VanTassel-Baska, 2015; Southern & Jones, 2015; see Table 2.1)

Table 2.1
Types of Academic Acceleration

Acceleration Type	The Student…
Early Admission to Kindergarten	Enters kindergarten before achieving the minimum age for school entry (per the district or state policy).
Early Admission to First Grade	Skips kindergarten or is accelerated from kindergarten in the student's first year of school.
Grade-Skipping	Is placed a grade-level ahead of chronological-age peers. Can be done at the beginning of or during the school year.
Continuous Progress	Is given progressive content as prior content is completed and mastered. The student's progress exceeds the performance of chronological peers at the rate and level.
Self-Paced Instruction	Proceeds through learning and instructional activities at a pace they set for themselves in consultation with educators. Student has control over all pacing decisions.
Subject-Matter Acceleration/Partial Acceleration	Is placed with older peers for a part of the day (or with materials from higher grade placement) in one or more content areas.
Combined Classes	Interacts academically and socially with older peers. It may or may not result in advanced grade placement later.
Curriculum Compacting	Has reduced amounts of introductory activities, drill, and practice. Time gained is used for advanced content instruction or participation in enrichment activities.
Telescoping Curriculum	Is provided instruction that entails less time than is normal. This differs from curriculum compacting in that time saved from telescoping often results in advanced grade placement.

Mentoring	Is paired with a mentor or expert tutor who provides advanced or more rapid pacing of instruction.
Extracurricular Programs	Enrolls in coursework or after school or summer programs that confer advanced instruction and/or credit.
Distance or online learning	Enrolls in coursework delivered outside of normal school instruction. May be delivered by mail, internet, or televised courses.
Early Graduation	Graduates from high school or college in 3 1/2 years or less. May be accomplished by increasing coursework, through dual/concurrent enrollment, or correspondence coursework.
Concurrent/Dual Enrollment	Takes a course at one level and receives credit for a parallel course at a higher level.
Advanced Placement	Takes a course that will confer college credit upon successful completion of a standardized assessment.
International Baccalaureate	Completes requirements for an IB diploma and may receive college credit for performance on IB exams (offered at IBO-authorized schools).
Accelerated/Honors High school or residential high school on a college campus	Attends a selective high school specifically for gifted students. Students often complete high school graduation requirements in tandem with college coursework.
Credit by Examination	Is awarded advanced standing credit by successfully completing some form of mastery test or activity.
Acceleration in College	Is awarded an advanced level of instruction at least one year ahead of normal, achieved through dual enrollment and credit by examination or as determined by the college.
Early Entrance into Middle School, High School, or College	Completes two or more majors in a total of four years and/or earns an advanced degree along with or in lieu of a bachelor's degree.

Note. From "Acceleration 101," by J.D. Luckey & T.C. Grantham, 2017, *Parenting for High Potential, 6*, 14-16. Copyright 2017 by the National Association for Gifted Children.

Broadly, these types of acceleration are usually divided into two subgroups, grade-based and content-based. Grade-based forms of acceleration usually result in students reaching academic milestones such as graduation at younger ages, while content-based types of acceleration help students who have advanced abilities in one or more subject areas to be appropriately challenged (Lupkowski-Shoplik, Behrens, & Assouline, 2018).

These types of acceleration differ in five dimensions: (a) access, (b) timing, (c) pacing, (d) salience, and (e) peers (Southern & Jones, 2015; Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016). Access refers to the types of programs that are available to students based on where they are attending school. Accelerated courses may only be available at specific locations due to school resources, family financial resources, or geographic areas. Types of acceleration also differ widely in terms of timing, from early entrance to kindergarten or first grade to acceleration at the postsecondary level. These differences in timing can result in different experiences and outcomes for students. While some research has indicated that grade-skipping is less disruptive for students when it occurs earlier in schooling (Feldhusen, Proctor, & Black, 1986), there is little research differentiating between types and timing of acceleration and differences in long-term outcomes. The pacing of acceleration changes based on the readiness of the students academically and socially and is often determined at an individual or small group level. The salience of acceleration refers to the noticeability of acceleration to others, less salient forms of acceleration are usually found in older grades, such as AP, IB, and distance-learning courses, while more salient types of acceleration include grade-skipping and subject acceleration. Finally, peer and social interaction vary based on the amount of the school day that children are separated from their age peers (Southern & Jones, 2015; Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016).

Effects of Acceleration

Since early acceleration research began in the 1920s, much has been discovered about both the academic and social impacts of acceleration (McClarty, 2015). Some of the earliest studies concluded that accelerated students achieve at high levels in school and are most often socially well-adjusted and healthy. These students go on to have successful professional and personal lives (Pressey, 1943; Pressey, 1944; Pressey, 1962; Pressey & Combs, 1943). Later studies have echoed these early findings; that academically accelerated students consistently surpass their age and grade peers in academic achievement (Colangelo et al., 2004; Kulik & Kulik, 1984; Steenbergen-Hu et al., 2016). Meta-analyses of acceleration have shown that long-term outcomes of acceleration include higher degree attainment, more scholarly works, and higher incomes (Lubinski, 2004; Kulik, 2004; Kulik & Kulik, 1984; Warne & Liu, 2017).

Acceleration Policy

With such high praise, it is surprising that acceleration is often perceived negatively by parents and educators or is not considered at all. Although several reasons have been cited for this resistance to acceleration, the main concern is usually social and emotional concerns about children's maturity, especially for early entrance (Siegle, Wilson, & Little, 2013). While some resistance stems from the fact that many educators are wary of the social impact of acceleration for students, others resist acceleration because of the ambiguity surrounding its implementation. Many states offer local education agencies (LEAs) little or no formal guidance through laws and policies on how to properly approach the acceleration process (Assouline et al., 2015; Colangelo et al., 2010; Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018). Gifted students, in general, have not been at the forefront of the education policy agenda at the federal or state level (Zirkel, 2016), and even where gifted education is highlighted, acceleration is often underemphasized. For example,

although the Marland Report mentions acceleration as beneficial for gifted students, opposition to acceleration has grown. In 1972, 50% of teachers were opposed to acceleration (Marland, 1972), while in 2008, 63% of teachers were opposed to acceleration (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2008).

Federal and State Guidance on Acceleration. Acceleration in general, as well as early entrance, curriculum compacting, and dual or concurrent enrollment, are listed as permissible activities for which districts can provide training to teachers and services to students using grant funding in the Javits Act of 1988 (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015; National Association for Gifted Children [NAGC], 2015). All other policy related to acceleration comes from the state level, where there is a wide range in states' degrees of attention to acceleration. Some states have no policy at all, while others have fully comprehensive policies that require individual districts to have a policy that includes accelerative options. Recent reports indicate that only thirteen states have comprehensive acceleration policies that permit acceleration. Policies that dealt explicitly with early entrance were even more sparse, with seven states reporting policies that allowed for early entrance, and thirteen states that prohibited early entrance (NAGC & The Council of State Directors of the Gifted, 2015). Most of the policies come from the state departments of education, but a few, such as Colorado, Illinois, and Ohio are statutorily mandated (Gallagher, 2005; Illinois Association for Gifted Children, 2017; Lupkowski-Shoplik, Assouline, & Colangelo, 2015).

Important Elements of Acceleration Policies. Despite the lack of formal acceleration policies, research has sought to advise educators on how acceleration should occur. Acceleration should be considered only after examining multiple factors, including test scores, social maturity, physical abilities, and the child's general academic abilities (Pressey, 1943). The factors

considered should lead to equitable opportunities for high ability students from all backgrounds to be accelerated. For acceleration to be successful, academics cannot be the only considerations. Feldhusen et al. (1986) gave 12 guidelines for academic acceleration, which emphasized high academic ability, the parent and teacher involvement, and support for accelerated students (Culross, Jolly, & Winkler, 2013). The most recent guidance on acceleration policy give recommended elements for both grade-based and content-based acceleration (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018). Overall, policies should (a) be characterized by accessibility, equity, and openness, (b) provide guidelines for implementing whole-grade acceleration, subject acceleration, and early entrance, (c) provide guidelines on administrative matters, (d) provide guidelines for preventing non-academic barriers, (e) include features that prevent unintended consequences, and (f) address both short- and long-term needs (Lupkowski-Shoplik et al., 2018). For underrepresented students, especially, finding educators who are informed about acceleration and familiar with acceleration policies and can advocate and provide support is important to the acceleration process. Considering the potential long-term benefits of acceleration, it is important to study these underrepresented students and learn more about how to facilitate positive acceleration experiences.

Accelerated Black Students

Despite the enormous amount of research in support of acceleration, a significant void exists in research on the use of acceleration with underrepresented groups (Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Peternel, 2010; Wells, Lohman, & Marron, 2009). “B,” the gifted African American girl who was the subject of Witty and Jenkins’ (1935) study, is one of the few examples of accelerated Black students. She was accelerated from second to third grade and was offered more

opportunities for acceleration, which were turned down because her mother did not want her to be too young to participate socially with her classmates (Witty & Jenkins, 1935).

Beyond "B," there is little research on the experiences of accelerated Black students. The existing research; however, points to the fact that acceleration can be a positive experience for students from underrepresented populations. Minority students who were accelerated in mathematics found their courses challenging and felt their participation in the courses gave them an advantage over other students (Lee et al., 2010). There were also positive effects on the students' self-image; they expressed that they felt smart, were more confident in their abilities, and did not experience discomfort with being a minority in an accelerated class.

Wells et al. (2009) took a comprehensive look at factors that were associated with acceleration, including race. Using data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study and the Educational Longitudinal Study, they found that although on the surface it appeared that African American and Hispanic children are accelerated at similar rates as White and Asian students, the data may have been misleading. Because gifted programs may be less accessible in schools with high populations of minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, it may be that acceleration is one of the only options for serving high ability students (Wells et al., 2009). Other literature has addressed issues of acceleration and economically vulnerable children (Plucker & Harris, 2015). In general, children who are accelerated tend to come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, and White female students from high socioeconomic households are most likely to be accelerated in elementary school (Plucker & Harris, 2015).

Ultimately, the results of these studies indicate that more research is necessary to explore how African American students access and experience acceleration. Gaining access to acceleration early in one's academic career can undoubtedly have implications for students later,

as accelerated students may eventually participate in advanced academic courses and programs to be prepared for postsecondary education. For high ability students, having access to these opportunities can open doors to a variety of types of institutions. With a multitude of postsecondary options, there are many factors for African American accelerants to consider during the college choice process.

College Choice

During the 1980s, several college choice models were developed as researchers began looking at how high school students weighed their postsecondary options (Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982). The higher education community highly regarded this research as it helped to inform their marketing practices and best use their resources to attract suitable candidates in a time where information was readily available to students (Litten, 1982).

College Choice Models

Much of the research on college choice, whether related to high ability students or African American students, has been explained through one of the various college choice models (Anderson, 1976; Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982). Each model follows the same basic premise; students experience a cycle of gleaning information, followed by narrowing the choices and submitting applications, and ultimately deciding which institution to which they will enroll. Throughout this process, many factors are considered, and various sources of information are consulted. Chapman (1981) theorized that college choice is occurs based on a combination of student characteristics and external influence. Student characteristics included factors such as (a) socioeconomic status, (b) aptitude, (c) level of educational aspiration, and (d) high school performance. External

influences included (a) significant people such as parents and friends, (b) the characteristics of the college, and (c) the college's efforts to communicate with prospective students. Chapman and Jackson's (1987) model discusses the interrelatedness of perception judgment, preference judgment, and choice behavior.

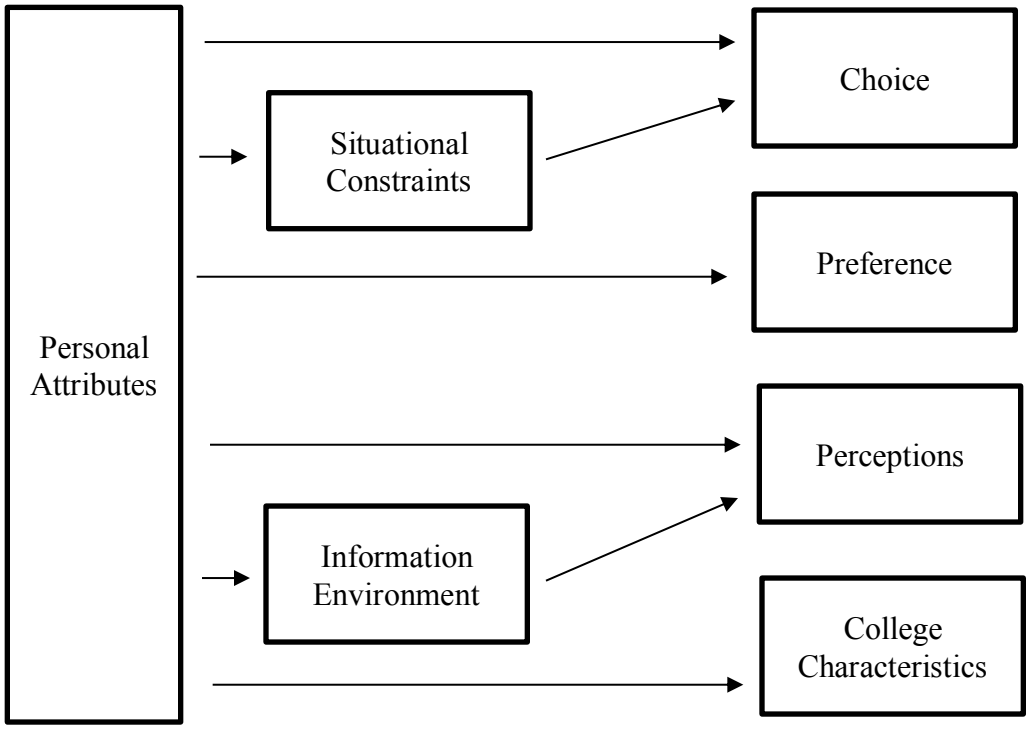

Figure 2.1. Chapman and Jackson's (1987) Model of College Choice Behavior. Adapted from "College choices of academically able students: The influence of no-need financial aid and other factors," by R. Chapman & R. Jackson, 1987. Copyright 1987 by the College Entrance Examination Board.

Although these models show the general process, each student's experience is very individualized as they integrate their backgrounds, socioeconomic factors, and future desires into the equation. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) introduced one of the most utilized models of college choice, which drew from previous models (Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Litten,

1982) and divided the college choice process into three phases: (a) predisposition, (b) search, and (c) choice (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2
A Three Phase Model of College Choice

Phases	Influential Factors		Student Outcomes
	Individual Factors	Organizational Factors	
1. Predisposition	• Student characteristics • Significant others • Educational activities	• School characteristics	Search for: (a) college options (b) other options
2. Search	• Student preliminary college values • Student search activities		Search for: (a) choice set (b) other options
3. Choice	• Choice set	• College and university courtship activities	Choice

Note. Adapted from "Studying college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policy makers," by D. Hossler & K. S. Gallagher, 1987, *College and University, 62*, 207-221. Copyright 1987 by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

During the predisposition phase, students decide whether or not they are interested in attending college. If they choose to pursue higher education, they move on to the search phase. This phase includes the time a student takes to learn about different colleges and decide on a "choice set" of school to which they apply. The final stage, choice, is where the student makes a final decision about which college they will attend. This decision is made based on the appeal of the institution and whether or not the student has been accepted (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Hossler and Gallagher's model has become a popular model for use in research; with some

researchers making minor modifications. One such modification was done to integrate cultural factors into the model. Freeman (2005) kept the final two phases while changing the first phase from predisposition to predetermination. The predetermination phase includes factors such as family and school characteristics, as well as the students' cultural characteristics (see Figure 2.2).

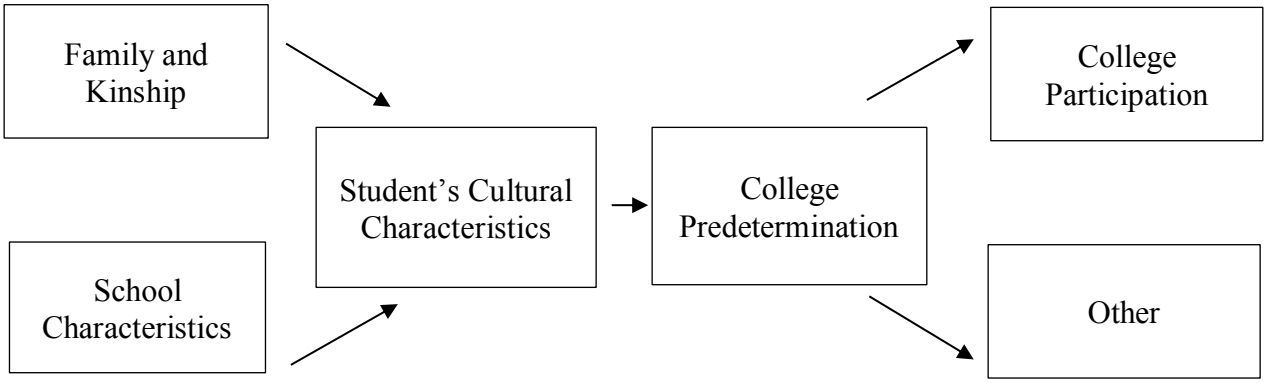

Figure 2.2. Freeman's Model of Predetermination. Adapted from "African Americans and college choice: The influences of family and school." By K. Freeman, 2005. Copyright 2005 by the State University of New York Press.

Although Freeman integrated cultural influences into the first phase, when looking comprehensively at college choice, it is essential to understand that cultural influences affect the entire process. A proposed model that integrates Freeman's predetermination phase, Hossler and Gallagher's search and choice phases, and all-encompassing cultural influences can be found in Figure 2.3.

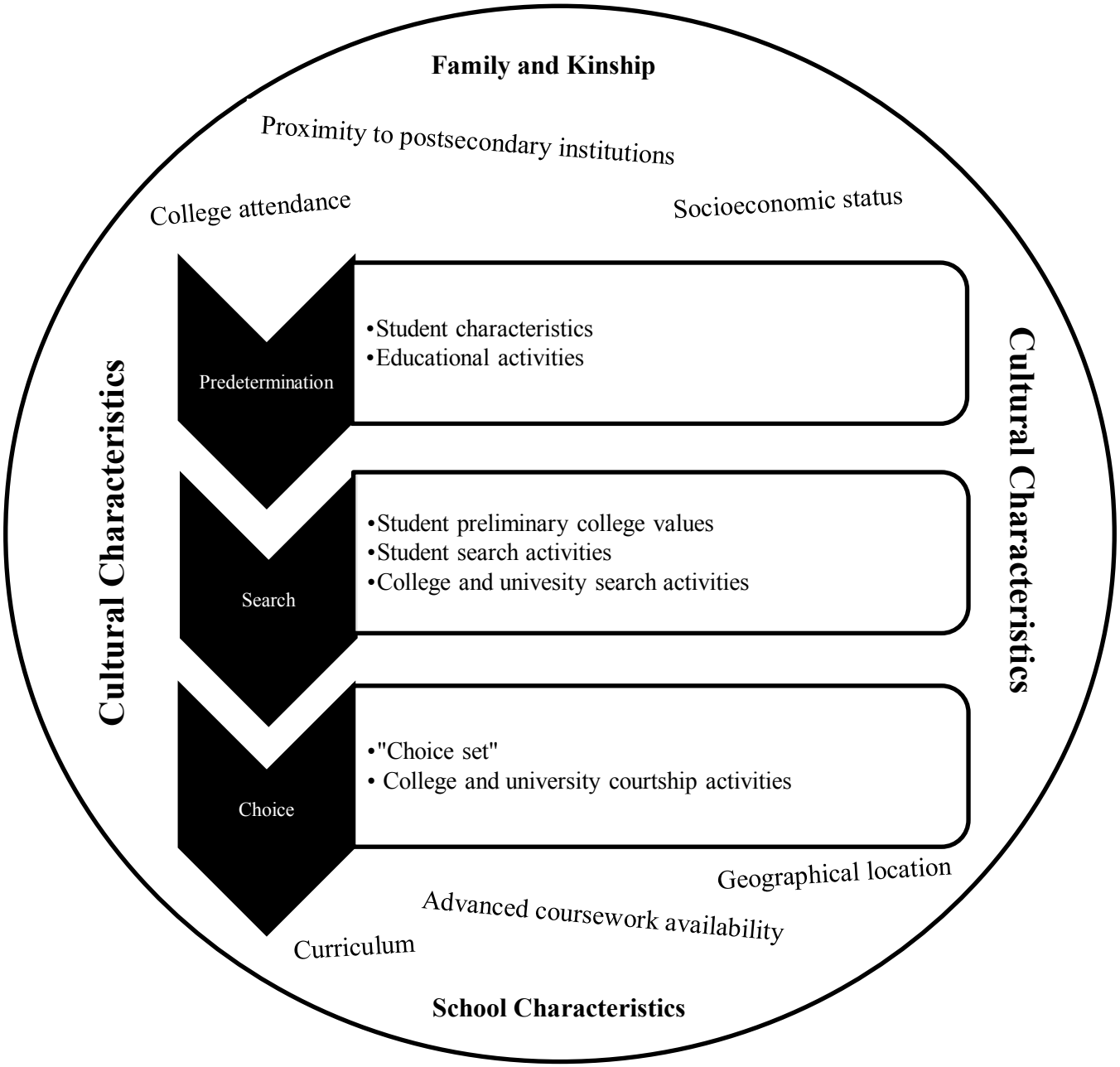

Figure 2.3. A Cultural-Responsive College Choice Model. This proposed model combines Freeman's (2005) first phase of predetermination with the final two phases of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model: search and choice. This model expands the impact of cultural influences, emphasizing them as an all-encompassing aspect of the college choice process impacting all three phases of college choice.

A previous study examining the differences between Black and White students in the college choice process indicated that Black students start the selection process later, take longer, consider more schools, and finish later than White students (Litten, 1982). At various stages, African American students and their families are making culturally based decisions that impact their final choice (Chapman, Contreras, & Martinez, 2018). One cultural factor for African American students to consider is desirability of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) versus predominately White institutions (PWIs). The availability of these institutions provides an added layer to the college choice process for Blacks students who are already weighing other institutional factors (Freeman, 1999a; Freeman, 1999b, Freeman & Thomas, 2002).

HBCUs v. PWIs

History of HBCUs. The first HBCUs were founded before the Civil War to support the education of free Blacks in the North. These universities, Lincoln University of Pennsylvania, Cheyney University, and Wilberforce University, served as the first models of higher education for African Americans in the United States (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010). The Freedman's Bureau or church missionaries founded the majority of HBCUs in the years following the end of the Civil War. The schools were often first established as normal schools, which educated teachers, or seminaries, which educated clergymen (Cantey, Bland, Mack, & Joy-Davis, 2013). The number of HBCUs eventually grew to a list of 100 federally recognized institutions (Abdull-Alim, 2016). As the needs of society changed, new HBCUs with broader missions were established, and many institutions that already existed added new degree programs to accommodate these changes. HBCUs remained the only options for Black students until 1954 when the Brown v. Board of Education decision was handed down, declaring

"separate but equal" education unconstitutional. However, even after this, many PWIs were resistant to accepting students of color. From the time when the first HBCUs were established until now, the mission of HBCUs has in many ways remained the same; however, these institutions have had to face a lot of adversity in their efforts to maintain their relevance and sustainability.

Role of HBCUs in the 21st Century. Much of the discussion around HBCUs in the recent past has dealt with the question of whether HBCUs have continued importance now that African American students have greater access to PWIs. The percentages of Black students who attend HBCUs had dropped from 18 percent in 1976 to 8 percent in 2014 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Despite this, HBCUs are still viewed as necessary institutions for educating Black students, producing disproportionately large numbers of African Americans in STEM fields in comparison with PWIs. They have also been touted as providing Black students with better educational experiences and more intimate settings than PWIs (Abdull-Alim, 2016). Allen et al. (1991) indicated that HBCUs have six primary goals:

1. Maintaining the Black American historical and cultural tradition;
2. Providing key leadership for the Black American community;
3. Providing Black American role models for social, political, and economic purposes in the Black community;
4. Assuring economic function in the Black American community;
5. Providing Black American role models for social political and economic purposes in the Black community to address issues between minority and majority population; and

6. Producing Black agents for research, institutional training, and information dissemination in the Black and other minority communities.

These goals remain as relevant today as they did when HBCUs were first created. These goals represent, in part, what HBCUs consider to be markers of achievement. Since HBCUs have historically been influential in the education of some of the most revered African Americans, it is important to look at the goals and values that HBCUs strive to maintain and instill in their graduates when considering achievement and intelligence in the Black community.

Achievement and Intelligence at HBCUs. In a time when it was exceedingly difficult for African Americans to progress in society because of individual and institutional racism, HBCUs provided their students with the education necessary to navigate this problematic societal reality. Many graduates of HBCUs were able to go on to achieve at high levels in many fields, giving themselves and their families opportunities for socioeconomic advancement that had not previously been available. As stated in Cantey et al. (2013), "the graduates of the nation's Black colleges and universities continued to give shape to an increasing Black middle class and give shape to Black intellectual life during the postwar period." (p.144). Other studies have shown that African American students who graduate from HBCUs have significantly higher academic aspirations than those who attend PWIs (Allen, Jayakumar, Griffin, Korn, & Hurtado, 2005). The culture of HBCUs is such that it encourages students to give focused efforts to their studies, while also providing mentoring and support that guides students along the way. HBCUs are institutions that don't just educate, they nurture. Attendance at the same HBCU can be multigenerational in many families, through imparting values early in children's lives on the importance and expectation of attaining high academic achievement.

Both before and after Brown v. Board of Education, many of the most influential African Americans were educated at HBCUs. Thurgood Marshall attended Howard University School of Law after being denied admission to the University of Maryland. Martin Luther King, Jr. entered Morehouse College at the age of 15 (Nobel Foundation, 1964, *Thurgood Marshall Biography*, 2015). These and many others pursued higher education so that they would be able to better support and advance themselves, their families, and the Black community as a whole through their careers.

The decision to attend an HBCU or PWI comes with a multitude of implications for students. Students who attend HBCUs have reported race, social, and academic-related factors that contribute to their attendance at HBCUs (Van Camp, Barden, Sloan, & Clarke, 2009). The factors related to race; however, were considered separately from other factors. Black students chose HBCUs, in part, because HBCUs provided them the opportunity to be in a predominately Black environment, which aided the development of their racial identity (Van Camp et al., 2009). Higher parental education level (Astin & Cross, 1981), religious affiliation (McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997), personal relationships, and perception of the academic environment also influence students' decisions to attend HBCUs (Astin & Cross, 1981; McDonough et al., 1997). Factors students have indicated that regardless of the type of institution selected include financial resources and proximity to the student's home (Freeman & Thomas, 2002).

Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) college choice model has been used to examine the college choice process of African American high school students in California. The research questions addressed through this study were: (a) How did African American high school juniors and seniors, their counselors, and parents get information on HBCUs? Based on this information, what were their perceptions of these out-of-state institutions? (b) What barriers and obstacles do

these parents and students perceive in terms of their college choice process and what role do HBCUs play in the students' college choice process in light of these obstacles? and (c) Does California's post-affirmative action climate impact the students' perceptions of their college opportunities? This study indicated that at the predisposition phase, family ties to an HBCU were especially important. Access to information caused difficulty during the search phase of college choice, but campus visits and speaking with alumni often had a positive impact (Tobolowsky, Outcalt, & McDonough, 2005). For gifted African Americans who often have a variety of options when considering colleges, the decision is not just about whether to attend an HBCU or PWI, but also about the selectivity and academic opportunities available. High ability students have considerations as well, which can further complicate matters for gifted African American students.

High Ability Students and College Choice

High ability students approach the college choice process differently than other students (Litten, 1982). They tend to begin the process of looking at and applying to schools earlier but finish at about the same time as their average ability counterparts. This makes the college search process for high ability students overall longer than for lower ability students. High ability students also tend to apply to more colleges and rely more heavily on their high school counselors (Litten, 1991). Students who go on to attend highly selective institutions have reported being highly influenced by the institution’s academic reputation, perceived post-graduation job prospects (Litten, 1991), and availability of special programs and scholarships (Wilson & Adelson, 2012).

Dual Credit Opportunities. In high school, these high ability students are often served through dual credit opportunities such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International

Baccalaureate (IB) programs and dual enrollment (Brody & Muratori, 2015; Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, & Kyburg, 2006; Rogers, 2004). AP and IB both include end of course examinations for which students can potentially receive college credit (Hertberg-Davis et al., 2006). The AP program has been around since 1955, and in that time has grown as students seeking to enhance their high school learning experiences and earn college credit have increasingly taken part in AP courses (Hertberg-Davis et al., 2006). There are 38 AP courses that high schools can offer (College Board, 2018), and over 90% of colleges and universities have policies that allow students to receive credit for AP test scores (Rogers, 2004).

IB is an international organization founded in 1968 that authorizes schools to offer programs at four levels of schooling. The IB diploma program usually comprises a student's last two years of high school. During this time, students have access to various IB courses at two levels, standard and higher level, and take end of course exams (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018). Depending on the score, which can range from 1-7, and the level of the course, universities can award credit for courses. University policies that govern credit for these tests usually contain information on which AP and IB tests can be used for credit, minimum scores necessary to obtain credit, and what university courses the student can receive credit for (College Board, 2018).

Dual enrollment, also known as concurrent enrollment, occurs when students are still enrolled in high school but can take college courses, usually at a local two or four-year institution. Dual enrollment opportunities increased in the 1980s due to state legislation that increased opportunities for students who were ready for college-level coursework (Brody & Muratori, 2015). Students who participate in dual enrollment programs receive grades and

college transcripts for these courses, which can count towards a degree at that institution or can be transferred to another institution.

Transfer Credit Policies. Most four-year colleges and universities have transfer credit policies that are used primarily to help students transition from community colleges while maintaining the most credits possible. However, the same policies also exist to assist first-time college students who have participated in dual credit opportunities while in high school. High ability and accelerated students are likely to have participated in these programs (Brody & Muratori, 2015; Hertberg-Davis et al., 2006; Rogers, 2004), so understanding and being able to navigate these policies is important for gifted students. University transfer credit policies include guidelines on which tests are accepted and minimum scores (College Board, 2018). Some universities also have articulation agreements, which are established relationships with community colleges that allow certain courses to be accepted, whether obtained through dual enrollment or as traditional community college students. These are helpful because students can know exactly which courses transfer and how much credit they will receive (Brody & Muratori, 2015).

Accelerated Students in College. While research has looked at high ability students and college choice, there is a lack of information specifically related to accelerated students and their unique college choice process. Accelerated students would often be entering college before legal adulthood, which carries specific privileges and abilities. What is known about students who enter college before the age of eighteen is that although they are younger than their classmates and may initially encounter difficulties with social adjustments and logistics, such as driving, most students are overall happy with their college experiences (Colangelo et al., 2004). Students entering college underage may be prohibited for enrollment in certain courses or programs, or

the content discussed in courses may not be age appropriate. Parents must also be aware that even if students are under 18, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act still restricts access to student records (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2006). Overall, students who enter college early benefit from strong academic backgrounds, good study habits, and adequate social skills to interact and create meaningful interpersonal relationships in their collegiate environment (Brody & Muratori, 2015).

Intersectionality of High Ability Black Students. For high ability African American students, the intersection of exceptional academic abilities and race make the college choice process more complicated. Research on this population is almost nonexistent, other than one recent study that indicated that high achieving Black students consider college choice an integrated process that involves parents, family, and community. Being exposed to college early and considering curriculum, diversity, and community help students to make final decisions about where to attend college (Chapman et al., 2018).

Summary

Overall, this literature review provides background on gifted Black students, academic acceleration, and college choice. Gifted Black students can be overlooked in the gifted identification process because their expressions of gifted characteristics may look different from students of other cultural backgrounds. Because of this, a variety of strategies should be used to ensure that African American students are provided with appropriate academic challenges in school. One way of providing this is through academic acceleration. For Black students who are seeking to reconcile their racial and academic identities while facing issues such as stereotype threat and microaggressions, allowing students to accelerate by grade or in particular subject areas can be beneficial. While both types of acceleration impact students, grade-based

acceleration is more likely to impact students as they transition out of high school and into college.

The college choice process is an important but complex process for Black accelerants. Filtering their choices through both an academic and cultural lens, while simultaneously considering the logistic concerns of their younger age, can be a challenge. The various college choice models agreed that all students go through phases where they decide whether or not to attend college, which colleges they will apply to, and then make a final enrollment decision. High ability students spend more time than other students on the college choice process and consider the academic reputations of their prospective school. African American students often consider racial factors when deciding on an institution and consider HBCUs as well as PWIs.

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CHAPTER 3

A COMPARISON OF THE COLLEGE CHOICE FACTORS OF FIRST-YEAR BLACK ACCELERANTS AT PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS AND HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES FROM 2009-2014[1]

[1]Luckey Goudelock, J.D. To be submitted to *Gifted Child Quarterly*

Abstract

African American students who enter college early must make college choice decisions about historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as well as highly selective predominately White institutions. A multitude of factors influence this complex process. This study uses data from The Freshman Survey to investigate the college choice factors considered by Black students aged seventeen and under at PWIs and HBCUs between 2009 and 2014. Through the utilization of binary logistic regression analysis, this study found that while these students were similar in many ways to traditional-aged first-year college students, they also expressed unique considerations that may be related to their status as younger than average college students.

Keywords: college choice, historically Black colleges and universities, gifted African American students, binary logistic regression

Deciding where to attend college is an important decision for high school students. For higher education institutions to best use their resources, researchers have sought to understand the college choice factors of different populations of students. This study aims to extend the research on college choice. Although college choice factors of African American students and high ability students have been studied independently, there is a limited understanding of students who fall into both categories. Additionally, even among high ability students, those who have been accelerated are an often-overlooked population. This study sought to learn more about African American students who entered college as minors and their college choice factors related to their choice of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) versus predominately white institutions (PWIs) by examining the following research questions:

(c) What factors do accelerated African American students consider when choosing a postsecondary institution?

(d) Do the factors considered by African American students who attend HBCUs differ from the factors considered by African American students who attend PWIs?

Literature Review

African American Accelerants

African American accelerants are high ability students whose K-12 educational needs have been met through one of twenty different types of acceleration (Assouline, Colangelo, & VanTassel-Baska, 2015). The various types of acceleration fall into two overall categories, grade and subject based. Although both types allow students to move through the curriculum at a younger age or faster pace (Pressey, 1949), grade-based acceleration is most likely to result in a student finishing high school at an earlier age, usually while under eighteen years old. For high ability students, the next step is often college, where they have opportunities to pursue their

career and personal interests. For these younger students; however, there may be certain factors that must be considered as they embark on their postsecondary education at younger ages.

College Choice

Many students in modern times have an abundance of choices when it comes to colleges and universities. There are two- and four-year institutions, public and private schools in a variety of geographical locations. Each school is unique in the experience it gives its students, and finding the right fit involves a process that can take years. To better understand this process, researchers have studied students and developed models (Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Freeman, 2005; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982) to help understand the experiences students have when choosing a school. By doing this, higher education institutions have been able to hone their marketing and recruitment efforts to find students who will successfully matriculate through their institution (Litten, 1982). There are some groups of students; however, for whom the college choice process is more complicated. African American students have the additional responsibility of choosing between attending PWIs and HBCUs, and high ability students have the task of sifting through the options presented by more selective institutions. Understanding these groups' unique situations is at the center of this study, which explores the college choice factors of Black students who entered college while under age eighteen.

Choice of HBCUs for African American Students. When going through the college choice process, African American students consider HBCUs. Although the number of Black students attending HBCUs has declined since PWIS became more widely available in the 1980s, HBCUs are still considered to be viable and necessary options for African American students (Bracey, 2017). Deciding between attending PWI or an HBCU has many implications for

students, especially in today's times. Students at PWIs have increasingly been targeted in racial incidents on campuses across the country (Anderson, 2017), while research has maintained that students at HBCUs often experience a reprieve from these types of racialized occurrences (Bracey, 2017). Students who attend HBCUs have reported that racial, social, and academic factors such as the ability to continue their racial identity development (Van Camp, Barden, Sloan, & Clarke, 2009), financial assistance, perception of the academic environment, location (Freeman & Thomas, 2002), religious affiliation, and personal relationships (Astin & Cross, 1981; McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997) influence their college choice.

One of the most popular college choice models come from Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and includes three phases: (1) predisposition, (2) search, and (3) choice. To infuse cultural influences, Freeman (2005) renamed the first phase predetermination to emphasize the precollege cultural factors that can determine whether a student considers college as an option at all. Research suggests that at the first stage, the family relationships are especially important. And at the search phase, access to information about HBCUs, campus visits, and talking to alumni makes an impact on the eventual college choice (Tobolowsky, Outcalt, & McDonough, 2005). For high ability Black students, the decision around attending an HBCU can be compounded as they consider a more extensive range of PWIs including highly selective Ivy Leagues and other prestigious institutions. The additional options that their academic accolades may give them can also cause them to have a more complicated college choice process.

High Ability Students and College Choice. In high school, high ability students often have their educational needs met through programs such as Advanced Placement (AP), dual enrollment, or International Baccalaureate (IB) (Brody & Muratori, 2015; Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, & Kyburg, 2006; Rogers, 2004). The end of course examinations for AP and IB

courses can be used to gain college credit (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018; Hertberg-Davis et al., 2006; Rogers, 2004), and grade from dual enrollment courses can be used towards degree completion or be transferred from one institution to another (Brody & Muratori, 2015).

Because of these additional factors that must be considered, high ability students have a distinct approach to the college choice process (Litten, 1982). They begin earlier, apply to more schools, and rely on more input from school counselors and educators. When considering highly selective institutions, students consider academic reputation, future job prospects (Litten 1991), and scholarship availability (Wilson & Adelson, 2012) to help them decide where to attend. While high ability students may have specific ways of approaching the college choice process, most research from the college choice perspective has not distinguished between high ability students in general and those that are accelerated and entering college at younger ages. Legal adulthood, which carries specific privileges and abilities, can make the process of going to college simpler than for younger students, who still need parental consent for many important tasks.

Successful early entrants have strong academic backgrounds, study habits, and social skills. (Brody & Muratori, 2015). Research shows that although they are younger than their classmates and can encounter logistic and social difficulties, they are content with their academic experiences (Colangelo et al., 2004). There may be challenges with enrolling in certain programs or courses, and for students accelerated multiple years, the content discussed in some courses may not be developmentally appropriate (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2006). Additional research is necessary to understand how gaining access to acceleration impacts

students' choice of colleges and careers. The multitude of options available to Black accelerants makes the factors used in the decision-making process essential to research and understand.

Methodology

This study was conducted as a nonexperimental study using survey data. The data gathered represents the students' experience, uninfluenced by the researchers. Nonexperimental research can be especially helpful when researching a new topic, where the relationship between variables may not be known or preestablished (Reio, 2016). Because the data will come from a nonexperimental study, a correlational research design will be used to examine the relationship between various college choice factors and students' choice to attend HBCUs or PWIs. Correlational research is characterized by a lack of manipulation of the independent variables and is limited to determining correlation, rather than causation, between dependent and independent variables (Privitera, 2014).

Instrumentation. This study was conducted using existing data collected by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). CIRP has collected data on institutions of higher education and their students since 1966 (Astin, Korn, & Riggs, 1993; Keup, 2004). Originally part of the American Council on Education, CIRP surveys are now administered through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Since its inception, CIRP has gone from administering one survey to four; however, its first survey, the Freshman Survey (TFS) has remained popular with institutions around the country and is administered to over 400,000 incoming first-year students each year. Institutions pay each year for access to the survey, which is intended to be administered to incoming students before classes begin (Allen, Jayakumar, Griffin, & Hurtado, 2005). The survey provides information regarding more than sixty different variables (McDonough et al., 1997), and at the

end of each administration period, CIRP compiles the data and releases an annual report entitled *The American Freshman: National Norm for Fall [Year]*. They also make data available to institutions and individual researchers to use for independent research (Astin, Korn, & Riggs, 1993).

CIRP monitors the reliability of the instrument by developing constructs within the instrument and reassessing items to ensure that they are consistent with the goals of TFS what it seeks to measure (Sharkness, DeAngelo, & Pryor, 2010). Student self-reports are considered accurate means of assessing college students (Hurtado, Cuellar, & Guillermo-Wann, 2011), and TFS regularly adjusts its questions based on trends in higher education and the needs of the colleges and universities that participate in the survey (Astin et al., 1993). To bolster the reliability of the instrument, HERI works to promote consistent participation and achieves about 90 percent repeat participation from institutions each year (HERI, 2009). For this study, reliability and validity will be achieved by using multiple years of data to ensure that results are more representative of the population. Validity will also be achieved by using only survey questions that TFS characterizes as college choice reasons. The questions cover various aspects of college choice, such as students' characteristics, the role of significant others, and college and university characteristics to provide a comprehensive view of students' rationales.

Sample Selection. The population for this study will be African American first-year students who took TFS during the 2009-2014 administration periods. This is the most recent six years of data available from HERI to non-UCLA researchers. During this time, TFS asked students several demographic questions, including what age they would be on December 31 of the administration year. Students who responded that they would be seventeen or under at this time are most likely to have experienced some form of acceleration that caused them to enter

college early, so only students who responded in this manner were included in the dataset. Consequently, all the participants included in the study meet the following criteria: (a) age 17 or under on December 31 of their first year of college, (b) self-identify as African American or Black, and (c) attended a postsecondary institution that participated in TFS during the 2009-2014 administration periods.

Data Collection Procedures. To obtain this data, a proposal was submitted to HERI requesting the use of their data. The proposal included: (a) title, (b) purpose, (c) research questions, (d) which datasets and variable the researcher is requesting, (e) methods of analysis, (f) location of the study, (g) plans for dissemination, and (h) letter of support from faculty sponsor. Once the proposal was submitted and approved, HERI provided access to the data. Once data is analyzed, any publication using CIRP data must be submitted to HERI for inclusion in their database of CIRP research.

Data Analysis. The data from this survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlations, and logistic regression. Descriptive statistics were used to highlight data from the survey questions about college choice factors. The descriptive statistics listed include demographic information of participants, as well as frequencies of the independent variables, which represent various college choice factors. Correlations between independent variables were also examined, as some of the factors may be similar or closely related to each other. The correlations were also used to provide a rationale for the blocks used in the subsequent logistic regression. Logistic regression is useful when there is a binary dependent variable, and odds ratios were used to show how well the independent variables predict into which group of the binary dependent variable people will fall. In logistic regression, the relationship between X and Y is nonlinear, there is no assumption of homoscedasticity, and their errors are not normally

distributed (Pedhazur, 1997). In this case, students' attendance at either a PWI or HBCU provides a dichotomous manner in which to examine the differences in students' college choice factors. In logistic regression, the binary dependent variable options are often given values of 1 and 0. For this study, 0 indicated attendance at a PWI, while 1 indicated attendance at an HBCU. Logistic regression is suitable for use with either continuous or categorical independent variables; the independent variables for this study would categorical, using the college choice items from TFS that are measured on a three-point Likert scale. For example, on a question asking how important it was to the student that their colleges' graduates get good jobs, students could select that the factor was "very important," "somewhat important," or "not important." Data analysis occurred using the statistical data analysis software SPSS. The results of the logistic regression, including those statistically significant independent variables ($p < .05$), are reported in the results section.

Limitations. Because this study used existing data, it is limited to the factors that were included in the survey and may not touch on all factors relevant to Black accelerants. Additionally, the researcher had no control over the content or phrasing of the questions posed to participants. As a correlational study, this study is unable to prove causation between the factors and the choice of a postsecondary institution. However, by looking at correlations and the logistic regression model, the hope is to begin to gain useful information about the considerations of accelerated African American students.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

This data included students from the survey years 2009-2014. The distribution of students by year is shown in Table 3.1. The total $N = 3984$, representing first-year students who responded to all questions related to their college choice factors.

Table 3.1

Black Accelerants by Survey Year and Institution Type, N=3984

Year	PWIs	HBCUs	Total
2009	543	145	688 (17.3)
2010	576	119	695 (17.4)
2011	626	144	770 (19.3)
2012	522	106	628 (15.8)
2013	484	120	604 (15.2)
2014	453	146	599 (15)
Total	3204 (80.4)	780 (19.6)	3984 (100)

Table 3.1 shows that the Black accelerants who participated in the survey each year were reasonably stable over the six years included in the study. Of all Black accelerants in this time frame, 80.4% attended PWIs, while 19.6% attended HBCUs. This is a rate more double the general Black college student population, in which around 9% of students are enrolled at HBCUs (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). As noted in Table 3.2, most (68.9%) of these accelerated students identified as female, echoing research on both accelerated students and Black college students being predominately girls and women (NCES, 2019; Wells et al., 2009).

Table 3.2

Students Aged 17 and under by Gender

Institution Type	Male	Female	No Response	Total (%)
PWIs	998	2177	29	3204 (80.4)
HBCUs	231	541	8	780 (19.6)
Total (%)	1229 (31.1)	2718 (68.9)	37 (.9)	3984 (100)

When thinking about grade-skipping and accelerated students entering college, it is known that some students experience radical acceleration, skipping multiple grades at the same time or at various points throughout their K-12 education, which leads them to graduate from high school 3 or more years early (Jung & Gross, 2015). It can be reasonably assumed based on age that those students who were 17 on December 31st were only accelerated one grade, while those 16 and under experienced multiple accelerations. The majority (96.1%) of Black accelerants indicated they would be 17, therefore showing that most students were entered college one year early (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3

Students by Age and Institution Type, N=3984

	16 and under	17	Total
PWIs	125	3079	3204
HCBUs	29	751	789
Total (%)	154 (3.9)	3830 (96.1)	3984 (100)

In addition to looking at the age of accelerated students, it can also be important to differentiate between the types of PWIs and HBCUs they choose to attend (Freeman, 1999). In addition to choosing between HBCUs and PWIs, high ability students may also be making choices about institutional selectivity and private versus public institutions (Wilson & Adelson, 2012). From this dataset, 3197 students attended four-year PWIs. The selectivity of the institutions they attended is shown in Table 3.4. The accelerants in this group had diverse choices in PWI selectivity compared to what may be expected for high ability students, as over a quarter (25.9%) of them chose PWIs with low selectivity rates.

Table 3.4
Selectivity of 4-Year PWIs

Selectivity	*n*	%
No Selectivity Reported	15	0.4
Low Selectivity	1034	25.9
Medium Selectivity	728	18.2
High Selectivity	1419	35.5
Total	3197	100.0

Table 3.5
Types of HBCUs Attended by Students Aged 17 and Under

Type of HBCU	*n*	%
Public	396	50.8
Private	214	27.4
Religious-affiliated	170	21.8
Total	780	100.0

Table 3.5 looks at the 780 students who attended HBCUs, further breaking down the data by the types of HBCUs they attended. About half of the students attended public HBCUs, followed by private institutions, then religious-affiliated institutions. Because of the apparent diversity within the types of institutions these students attended, an examination of these

students' college choice factors can give better insight into students' rationales for attending HBCUs and PWIs.

Logistic Regression Analysis (LRA)

For the LRA, a forward stepwise selection process was used to enter 27 factors into the model, using seven blocks based primarily on categories derived from previous research on student choice of HBCUs versus PWIs. The blocks included financial, academic, family/community, advisement, future aspirations, and institutional characteristics (see Appendix A). Each block stems from previous research on the college choice of Black students at HBCUs, which has indicated that Black students deciding between HBCUs and PWIs often acknowledged their financial considerations, look at institutional factors such as religious affiliation, and are influenced by family members (Chapman, Contreras, & Martinez, 2018; Freeman, 1999; McDonough et al., 1997; Van Camp et al., 2009). For the full list of variables and categories, see Appendix A. At each step, only significant predictors continued to the next step in the model. Overall, the regression model showed that a rate of correct classification of 80.6%. However, the observed accuracy for HBCUs was only 3.6% (see Table 3.6), indicating that the model was better at predicting the attendance of students at PWIs than HBCUs. This was echoed when looking at the R squared values, which showed that between 6.0% (Cox and Snell's) and 9.6% (Nagelkerke) of the total variation in the likelihood of attendance at PWIs versus HBCUs was explained by the model shown in Table 3.7. However, the full model was statistically significant ($X^2 = 248.18, p < .001$), indicating that the model was able to adequately distinguish between those students choosing HBCUs and PWIs (see Table 3.8). Hosmer and Lemeshow's goodness of fit test was not significant ($p = .186$), which also indicated that the model is a good fit for the data.

Table 3.6
LRA Classification Matrix

		Predicted		
		PWIs	HBCUs	Overall percent
Observed	PWIs	3183	22	99.3
	HBCUs	752	28	3.6
				80.6

From the logistic regression model, 11 factors emerged as differentiating between Black accelerants who attended HBCUs and PWIs (see Table 3.8). PWIs were coded as 0, while HBCUs were coded as 1. Therefore, factors with negative β values were more highly associated with students choosing to attend PWIs, while those with positive β values were associated with students choosing to attend HBCUs. For each unit of increase on the scale (1 = not important, 2 = somewhat important, and 3 = very important), the chance of a student choosing an HBCU or PI increases according to the odds ratio.

Six predictors had negative β values, indicating that students were more likely to attend a PWI: (a) being offered financial assistance, (b) good academic reputation, (c) wanting to live near home, (d) parents wanting them to attend, (e) teacher advisement, and (f) recruitment by the athletic department. Students who considered it very important to be offered financial assistance were almost 6.6 times more likely to choose a PWI than those who considered it somewhat important. Those who considered the academic reputation of the institution to be important were seven times more likely to choose a PWI. The most significant predictor was the desire to live near home, where for each level, students were 8.6 times more likely to choose a PWI. Students were 7.4 times more likely to choose a PWI if they considered it important to attend the institution that their parents wanted them to attend. Teachers had a similar influence as parents, with the odds ratio indicating that students were 7.6 times more likely to choose a PWI when

they considered teacher advisement to be an important factor. Finally, students who felt it was important to be recruited by an athletic department were eight times more likely to choose a PWI.

Five predictors were significant for students attending HBCUs: (a) gaining a general education and appreciation of ideas, (b) relatives wanting them to attend, (c) ability to make more money, (d) ability to take online courses, and (e) the religious affiliation/orientation of the school. Students were 13.4 times more likely to choose an HBCU if they considered it to be important to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas. The importance of relatives wanting them to attend made students 20.6 times more likely to choose an HBCU, making this the most significant predictor. The importance of making more money increases the odds of attending an HBCU by 14.6 times, while the importance of online courses increased odds by 124 times. Finally, the importance of the religious affiliation of the institution led students to 136 times more likely to attend an HBCU. The odds ratios of the HBCU predictors were higher than the ratios for the PWI predictors, indicating a stronger correlation between the predictors and the outcome of attending an HBCU. These students were more likely to consider the predictors to be very important.

Table 3.7

Overall Model Evaluation

	X^2	*df*	*p*
Likelihood Ratio	248.18	12	<.001
Hosmer and Lemeshow's Goodness of Fit	11.28	8	.186

Table 3.8

Logistic Regression Analysis

Predictors	β	S.E.	Wald	*df*	*p*	Exp(β)	95% C.I. for Exp(β)
Block 1: Financial							
I was offered financial assistance	-.41	.05	59.87	1	<.001***	.66	[.60-.74]
Block 2: Academic							
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	.29	.09	9.67	1	.002**	1.34	[1.11-1.61]
This college has a very good academic reputation	-.35	.08	20.45	1	<.001***	.70	[.60-.82]
This college has a good reputation for its social activities	.11	.07	2.56	1	.109	1.11	[.98-1.27]
Block 4: Family/Community							
I wanted to live near home	-.12	.06	7..38	1	.007**	.86	[.77-.96]
My relatives wanted me to come here	.72	.08	75.01	1	<.001***	2.06	[1.75-2.42]

My parents wanted me to come here	-.30	.08	15.70	1	<.001***	.74	[.64-.86]
Block 5: Advisement							
My teacher advised me	-.28	.08	14.15	1	.<.001***	.76	[.65-.87]
Block 6: Future Aspirations							
To be able to make more money	.38	.10	15.95	1	<.001***	1.46	[1.21-1.76]
Block 7: Institutional Characteristics							
The athletic department recruited me	-.23	.08	7.41	1	.007**	.80	[.67-.94]
Ability to table online courses	.22	.08	6.49	1	.011*	1.24	[1.05-1.46]
I was attracted by the religious affiliation/orientation of the college	.31	.06	23.69	1	<.001***	1.36	[1.20-1.54]
Constant	-1.96	.39	25.43	1	<.001***	.14	

Note. *N*=3984, $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$.

Discussion

Several significant findings emerged from this analysis. From the descriptive statistics, it can be noted that Black accelerants chose HBCUs at more than double the rate of all Black college students. This indicates that there was something about HBCUs that attracted younger students at higher rates than traditional-aged students and highlights the complexity of the college choice process for these students. When looking at the significant factors for students who attended PWIs, these accelerated Black students echoed previous research indicating that financial support is important in the decision-making process for African American students (Freeman, 2002; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). HBCUs are often pressed for financial resources and may not have the same availability of merit-based scholarships as PWIs (Blacknall & Johnson, 2011), which may lead students to choose PWIs to offset financial costs.

Similarly, recruitment by an athletic department was also associated with attendance at a PWI. Research indicates that there is a discrepancy between HBCUs and PWIs in their ability to recruit and fund talented athletes, with most academically and athletically gifted students choosing to attend PWIs (Hodge, 2015). Having a good academic reputation was also highly associated with attending a PWI, further research would be necessary to understand how Black accelerants define a good academic reputation and where they gain information on institutions to make such determinations. Because factors such as national rankings were not significant in the model, more information about how students determine the academic reputation of an institution would be helpful. Research has shown that HBCUs are perceived to be second-rate institutions designed for students with lower grades and test scores who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds than PWIs in general (Freeman, 1999; Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018), but

especially highly selective institutions, so this may influence the decision of high ability students.

Another significant factor for accelerated students who chose to attend a PWI was the institution being located near home. For these younger students, living near home may be important to give them additional support, and because HBCUs are concentrated in certain geographical regions, moving further away to attend an HBCU may be less appealing for accelerated students. Attending a college close to home may also be a way of reducing financial expenses for students (Freeman, 1999), who may be able to continue living at home. Similarly, the influence of parents and teachers was significant for those attending PWI, indicating that parents may encourage their younger students to stay closer to home, and teachers may tend to encourage students to attend local schools or highly selective PWIs. Previous research indicates that parents of high achieving African American students look for diverse institutions that have a multitude of resources to support their students (Chapman et al., 2018), so parents may perceive PWIs as being more diverse and resourced institutions. Ensuring that teachers and parents have access to a range of information on the different types of institutions is essential when assisting Black accelerants in considering all postsecondary options. Three factors mentioned by students attending PWIs were similar to McDonough, Antonio, and Trent's (1997) study: recruitment by an athletic department, living near home, and valuing the college's academic reputation. This indicates that although there is some overlap in the rationale of accelerated and nonaccelerated students, there are differences as well in the impact that parents and teachers have on the choice process for accelerated students.

The factors that attracted Black accelerants to HBCUs are also noteworthy. The religious affiliation of the school was a significant factor influencing students' choice to attend an HBCU.

This echoes previous research on the decision to attend an HBCU, which has indicated that African American students are often drawn to HBCUs for their religious affiliations (McDonough et al., 1997). No factors related to academic reputation were found to be significant indicators of attendance at HBCUs; however, students did indicate that their decision was based on the desire to gain a "general education and appreciation of ideas." Since the survey did not ask any questions directly related to students' willingness to have racial or cultural experiences, this significant predictor may be an indication of previous research indicating students' desire to attend an institution where they could learn more about their cultural backgrounds (Van Camp et al., 2009). Although the survey does include demographic questions about the racial makeup of students' schools and neighborhoods, it would be beneficial for the instrument to include more pointed items on students' racial and cultural experiences and the influence on college choice, such as the importance of attending a diverse institution or the importance of having access to culturally relevant courses or experiences.

In contrast to the influence of parents, the predictor of relatives wanting them to attend was significant in favor of students attending an HBCU. Research indicates that this is an important factor for students (George Mwangi, 2015; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008), but it may be especially so for accelerated students who would be looking to establish a sense of community and seek familial support when leaving home at a younger age. Additionally, the ability to make more money was significant for Black accelerants attending HBCUs. HBCUs have been successful in preparing students for both graduate education and in being competitive in the job market (Wenglinsky, 1997). Black graduates of HBCUs also achieve higher status occupations and earn higher annual salaries after completing their undergraduate degree (Strayhorn, 2017), so accelerated students understand that they will receive the type of education and preparation at an

HBCU that will allow them to have a lucrative career. The final significant predictor of attendance at an HBCU was the ability to take online courses. This is surprising because, in 2010, only 20% of HBCUs offered online courses. Since that time, HBCUs have continued to lag behind PWIs in their implementation of online courses and programs (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). However, Black accelerants may be drawn to the larger, more selective HBCUs, that have more resources available than smaller institutions to give students access to online learning opportunities (Castro Samayoa, Nyugen, Gasman, Commodore, & Abiola, 2016). Research has also shown that males tend to perform better in face-to-face classes versus online ones (Glenn Jones & Davenport, 2018). Since the majority of the Black accelerants studied were female, it may be that they were more comfortable with online learning and sought that feature from their postsecondary institution.

Conclusion

This study sought to answer two research questions: (1) What factors do accelerated African American students consider when choosing a postsecondary institution and (2) Do the factors considered by African American students who attend HBCUs differ from the factors considered by African American students who attend PWIs? In answering the first question, this study found that African American accelerants consider many similar factors to other African American students. Financial assistance, academic reputation, religious affiliation, and location are all common factors to consider in the college choice press. However, regarding the second research question, there were clear factors that distinguished Black students who chose PWIs from those who chose HBCUs. Black accelerants who chose PWIs were more likely to strongly consider the academic reputation of the institution and make decisions that were fueled by financial considerations, such as being offered financial assistance, being closer to home, and

parents wanting them to attend. The factors considered more important for students who chose HBCUs in many ways mirrored the research on Black students at HBCUs, but the inclusion of the ability to take online classes has not been noted in previous research on students' rationales for attendance at HBCUs.

Because this study is correlational, causation cannot be assumed between the college choice factors and attendance at a PWI or HBCU. This study was limited because it used existing data, and student responses were limited to those factors listed in The Freshman Survey. There may have been other factors that students considered, but were not listed on the survey, and because of the nature of quantitative research, students' responses were limited to the choices on the survey, and no further explanation is given. Additionally, the logistic regression model predicted attendance at PWIs at a much higher rate than attendance at HBCUs. Due to the difference in sample sizes, more Black accelerants at HBCUs must be studied to fully understand the factors contributing to their college choices. Finally, the majority of the students in this study were female. Disaggregating the data by gender would provide a more nuanced look at how Black males and females may emphasize different factors. Overall, however, this study provides a starting point for considering the college choice factors that Black accelerants consider, and can be helpful for students, parents, and educators when assisting students with navigating the college choice process.

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CHAPTER 4

"IF YOU'RE GOING TO GO TO AN HBCU, YOU OBVIOUSLY GO TO HOWARD": THREE COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF ACADEMIC ACCELERATION AND MATRICULATION THROUGH A HISTORICALLY BLACK UNIVERSITY[2]

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Abstract

This article, through the critical race methodology of counter-narratives, highlights the experiences of three African American women who skipped grades during elementary school and graduated from Howard University, a historically Black university. By examining their stories, the author developed themes to further understand the best ways to facilitate the academic acceleration of Black students and assist students in weighing their options for postsecondary education. Results from the study indicated that students experienced significant parental involvement in their education and understood the impact of influential teachers, who helped them to continue achieving and accessing academic opportunities. Throughout the college choice process, they sought both independence and familial environment, merit-based financial aid, and resisted the thought of attending Ivy Leagues or other prestigious predominately White institutions. Using credits gained before college, these women were able to chart their own course through undergrad and achieve success in their future endeavors.

Keywords: academic acceleration, gifted Black students, college choice, HBCUs, transfer credit policy, counter-narratives, critical race theory

When students begin elementary school, it sets off a series of educational experiences that can have lifelong effects. Even as adults, people can often recollect important events, favorite teachers, and best friends from their childhood. These experiences can influence students' choice of college, career, and other important life decisions. In particular, researchers have sought to understand how students come to decide on their postsecondary plans (Kinzie et al., 2004). However, previous research has focused mainly on broadly applicable processes versus special populations of students (Chapman, Contreras, & Martinez., 2018; Daire, LaMothe, & Fuller, 2007; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008). African American students have the added task of balancing the options of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately White institutions (PWIs) (Freeman & Thomas, 2002; McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997; Teranishi & Briscoe, 2008; Van Camp, Barden, Sloan, & Clarke, 2009; Van Camp, Barden, & Sloan, 2010), an aspect of the decision-making process that is unique to them as a racial group. Additionally, students who are academically gifted, especially those who are entering college early, must often consider the draw of Ivy Leagues and other prestigious institutions due to their exceptional academic abilities (Wilson & Adelson, 2012). The current study explores the intersection of these two groups (Black and accelerated) through three research questions:

1. How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their K-12 education and acceleration experiences?
2. How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their college choice process and matriculation?
3. What are the university transfer policies used to award advanced standing to students at HBCUs?

Literature Review

Gifted Education and Academic Acceleration

Underrepresentation of minorities in gifted education has existed since the emergence of gifted education services when intelligence tests were normed on middle-class White children (Witty & Jenkins, 1935). Because of issues such as testing bias, teacher referral processes, and inequitable resources in schools with high populations of marginalized groups, Black and Brown students are often few and far between in gifted and talented programming (Ford & Whiting, 2010). However, we know these children exist. Their giftedness is being ignored by teachers, masked by poverty, or mischaracterized as behavioral problems, but it is there.

Black students who overcome barriers to identification may participate in gifted and talented programming and be served through interventions such as pullout classes, resource rooms, and special schools. However, African American students in these settings often experience feelings of "otherness" and alienation (Ford & Whiting, 2010) because they lack adequate representation in pullout classrooms for advanced learners. Another way of serving gifted students, however, is through academic acceleration. Usually defined as "progress through an educational program at rates faster or ages younger than conventional" (Pressey, 1949, p.2), academic acceleration can occur in many ways. There are at least twenty distinct forms of acceleration that can be chunked into two main subcategories: grade-based and subject-based (see Table 4.1). While there are some differences in the impacts of these two types of acceleration on a student's trajectory, both have overwhelming evidence in their favor as effective ways of serving gifted students (Assouline, Colangelo, & VanTassel-Baska, 2015; Culross, Jolly, & Winkler, 2013)

Table 4.1
Types of Academic Acceleration

Acceleration Type	The Student…
Early Admission to Kindergarten	Enters kindergarten before achieving the minimum age for school entry (per the district or state policy).
Early Admission to First Grade	Skips kindergarten or is accelerated from kindergarten in the student's first year of school.
Grade-Skipping	Is placed a grade-level ahead of chronological-age peers. Can be done at the beginning of or during the school year.
Continuous Progress	Is given progressive content as prior content is completed and mastered. The student's progress exceeds the performance of chronological peers at the rate and level.
Self-Paced Instruction	Proceeds through learning and instructional activities at a pace they set for themselves in consultation with educators. Student has control over all pacing decisions.
Subject-Matter Acceleration/Partial Acceleration	Is placed with older peers for a part of the day (or with materials from higher grade placement) in one or more content areas.
Combined Classes	Interacts academically and socially with older peers. It may or may not result in advanced grade placement later.
Curriculum Compacting	Has reduced amounts of introductory activities, drill, and practice. Time gained is used for advanced content instruction or participation in enrichment activities.
Telescoping Curriculum	Is provided instruction that entails less time than is normal. This differs from curriculum compacting in that time saved from telescoping often results in advanced grade placement.

Mentoring	Is paired with a mentor or expert tutor who provides advanced or more rapid pacing of instruction.
Extracurricular Programs	Enrolls in coursework or after school or summer programs that confer advanced instruction and/or credit.
Distance or online learning	Enrolls in coursework delivered outside of normal school instruction. May be delivered by mail, internet, or televised courses.
Early Graduation	Graduates from high school or college in 3 1/2 years or less. May be accomplished by increasing coursework, through dual/concurrent enrollment, or correspondence coursework.
Concurrent/Dual Enrollment	Takes a course at one level and receives credit for a parallel course at a higher level.
Advanced Placement	Takes a course that will confer college credit upon successful completion of a standardized assessment.
International Baccalaureate	Completes requirements for an IB diploma and may receive college credit for performance on IB exams (offered at IBO-authorized schools).
Accelerated/Honors High school or residential high school on a college campus	Attends a selective high school specifically for gifted students. Students often complete high school graduation requirements in tandem with college coursework.
Credit by Examination	Is awarded advanced standing credit by successfully completing some form of mastery test or activity.
Acceleration in College	Is awarded an advanced level of instruction at least one year ahead of normal, achieved through dual enrollment and credit by examination or as determined by the college.
Early Entrance into Middle School, High School, or College	Completes two or more majors in a total of four years and/or earns an advanced degree along with or in lieu of a bachelor's degree.

Note. From "Acceleration 101," by J.D. Luckey & T.C. Grantham, 2017, *Parenting for High Potential, 6*, 14-16. Copyright 2017 by the National Association for Gifted Children.

Despite the enormous evidence in support of acceleration, little research has been done on the impacts of acceleration for specific underrepresented groups (Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, Peternel, 2010). Acceleration researchers often made broad statements about the positive effects of acceleration, but these claims have not been adequately scrutinized in terms of specific racial and ethnic groups within the United States.

College Choice

College Choice Models. In the 1970s and 1980s, numerous researchers began to look at how students make decisions regarding postsecondary education (Anderson, 1976; Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) shared one of the most popular models, dividing the college choice process into three phases. In the first stage, predisposition, students decide whether or not they are interested in attending college. If students decide that they do want to pursue higher education, they move into the second phase, search. During this phase, students investigate different schools and formulate a list of schools to which they will apply. The third phase is the choice phase, in which students make a decision about which school they will attend. This model of college choice sounds simple on the surface, but at each stage, there are many factors that a student must consider. Later researchers have contended that college choice is also influenced by racial factors (Chapman et al., 2018; Freeman, 2005; McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1990). Freeman (2005), especially discusses Hossler and Gallagher's lack of attention to cultural differences at the predisposition phase. Her revised model renamed the first phase "predetermination" and characterized the phase with factors such as family and kinship, school characteristics, and student cultural characteristics. Although it is necessary to look at all three phases through a cultural lens, Freeman (2005) provides a good start for looking at college choice with students'

culture in mind. This study examines the experiences of students at each of these phases (see Figure 4.1). “As colleges and universities compete for the best and brightest students, it is imperative to better understand the complex practices African American families employ to make college choice decisions,” (Chapman et al., 2018, p.32), and by employing a model of college choice that integrates cultural influences throughout the process, a better understanding of the process that Black students and families go through.

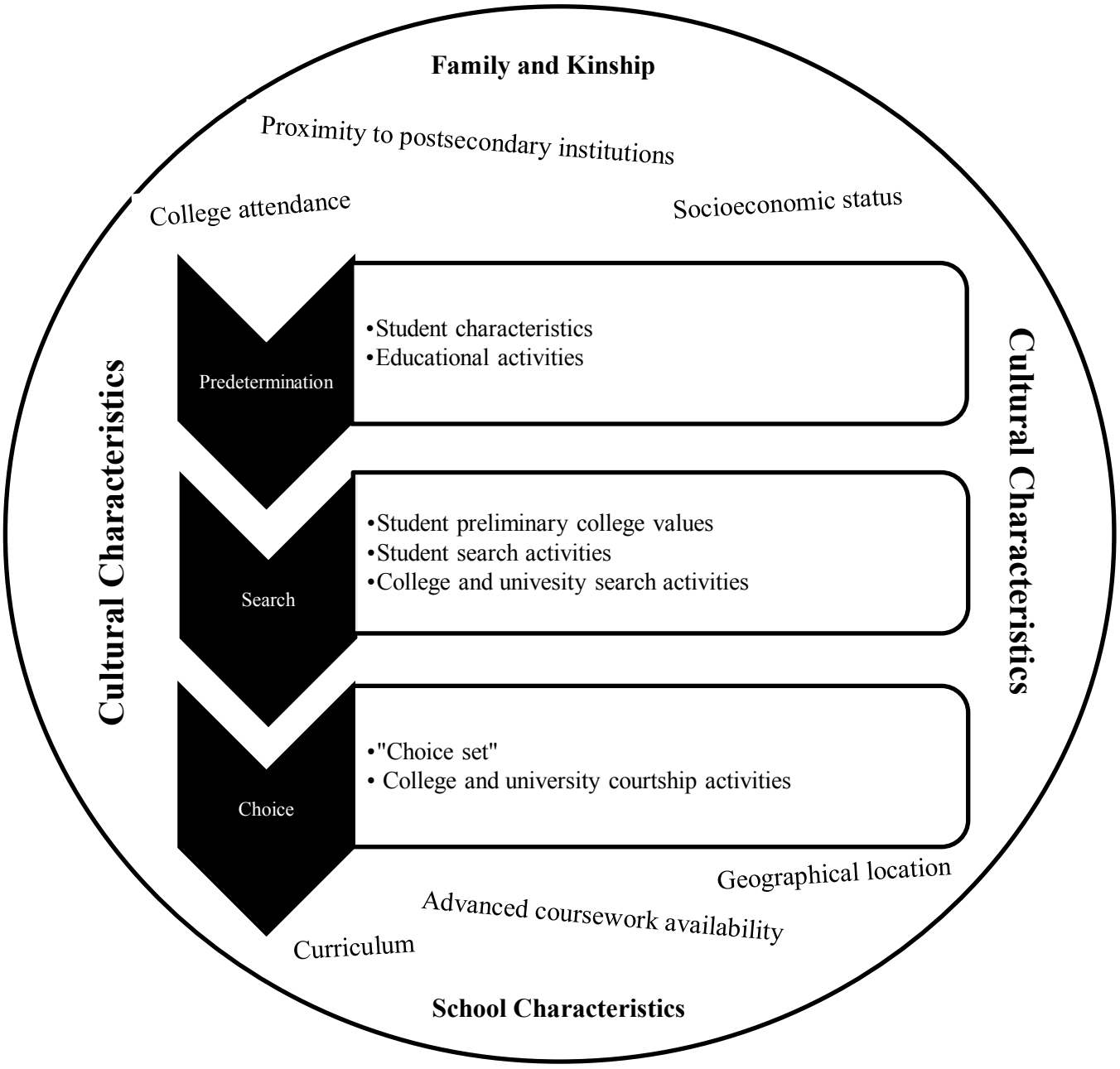

Figure 4.1. A Cultural-Responsive College Choice Model. This proposed model combines Freeman's (2005) first phase of predetermination with the final two phases of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model: search and choice. This model expands the impact of cultural influences, emphasizing them as an all-encompassing aspect of the college choice process impacting all three phases of college choice.

HBCUs versus PWIs. When operating on the premise that the college choice process looks different for Black students, it is understandable that choosing between a PWI and an HBCU becomes a point for discussion. Since Africans first arrived in the United States, there have been systematic measures taken to ensure that African Americans were unable to rise to the levels of achievement and success that other racial groups in the United States have been able to attain. One of the first ways in which this was done was by not allowing slaves to learn to read and write. However, as the era of slavery was coming to a close, and the Civil War ended slavery, institutions of higher education began to be created for African Americans (Bracey, 2017). These colleges and universities allowed many influential African Americans to be educated in ways that allowed them to achieve their dreams and advance the Black community.

The first HBCUs, located in the North, were founded before the conclusion of the Civil War in order to educate free Blacks. In Pennsylvania, Lincoln University and Cheyney University were founded by Quakers, and in Ohio, members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church founded Wilberforce University (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010). Many of these first HBCUs were founded as normal schools or seminaries (Cantey, Bland, Mack, & Joy-Davis, 2013). After the Civil War concluded, more HBCUs were founded around the country, mostly funded by the Freedman's Bureau or church missionaries. However, "it is simply wrong to think that HBCUs were created because Black people wanted their own separate, higher educational institutions" (Bracey, 2017, p.675). Even after the end of the Civil War, Blacks were still systemically discriminated against in higher education.

Since their founding, many of the country's 101 HBCUs have thrived despite financial and economic challenges and have risen to the top in educating Black leaders and scholars (Bracey, 2017). Although the number of Black students who choose to attend HBCUs had

decreased in the year since *Brown v. Board of Education*, HBCUs have remained relevant in today's society. Research has shown the persistent positive impacts of HBCU attendance on students, emphasizing that HBCUs have the ability to provide Black students with a welcoming environment (Bracey, 2017), positive educational experiences, and more intimate settings that PWIs (Abdull-Alim, 2016).

High Ability Students and College Choice. In addition to the differences that have been shown in the college choice decision-making process for Black students, high ability students have additional considerations (Litten, 1982). The limited existing research has shown that these students approach the college choice process in different ways. They begin earlier, apply to more schools and rely on high school counselors (Litten, 1991). For students who attend highly selective institutions, they are influenced by factors such as academic reputation, post-graduate opportunities (Litten, 1991), special programs, and scholarships (Wilson & Adelson, 2012).

While there is a lack of research on gifted students and college in general (Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011), there is even less on accelerated students and college choice. Accelerated students often entering college before legal adulthood, which may lead them to consider different factors in the college choice process. Most of what is known about students come from students who enter college early by graduating from high school early or participating in early college entrance programs. These students often thrive in college because of their academic backgrounds, study habits, and social skills (Brody & Muratori, 2015). Although they may initially encounter difficulties with social relationships and logistics such as driving at the beginning, most students are happy with their experiences in college, even when entering at a younger age (Colangelo et al., 2004).

High ability African American students stand at the intersection of the discussion on HBCUs and the college choice processes of gifted students. This population of students suffers from a lack of attention, and little is known about the rationale of these students' choice of postsecondary institutions. Chapman et al. (2018) examined the college choice process of high-achieving African American students as it relates to their interaction with parents throughout the process. They found that parents looked for institutions that had traits such as quality curriculum and professors, a comfortable and racially diverse environment for students, and support services. These high-achieving students were exposed to college at an early age, through conversation or actual campus visits. Parents also sought out schools where they had a kinship network. This network of family, friends, and community resources helped to alleviate parents' concerns about sending their child away for college.

Transfer Credit Policies. Usually, transfer credit policies are thought of in the context of students who attend community college, then seek to transfer to a four-year institution to complete undergraduate studies. However, these same policies govern the credits that students are able to receive from dual enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. This is especially relevant for gifted students who are likely to participate in these types of advanced opportunities while in high school (Brody & Muratori, 2015; Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, & Kyburg, 2006; Rogers, 2004). While dual enrollment allows students to obtain a college transcript from a higher education institution, AP and IB courses use end of course examinations. Students who obtain certain scores can then use those to receive college credit (Hertberg-Davis et al., 2006). University transfer credit policies usually include guidelines on which tests they accept, as well as the minimum scores that students must receive to get credit (College Board, 2018). Some universities also have established relationships with

community colleges that allow certain courses to be accepted, whether obtained through dual enrollment or as traditional community college students (Brody & Muratori, 2015). This study seeks to explore the experiences of students throughout all phases of their K-16 education, from acceleration to college choice, all the way through matriculating to college.

Methodology

Ford and King (2014) gave six recommendations to integrate gifted education. One of these recommendations is to collect data about the experiences of gifted Black students. They specifically mention the use of qualitative data to accomplish this task, stating, "surveys, interviews, focus groups, and case studies from Black students and families regarding their experiences are essential to desegregating and integrating gifted education" (p.307). This study advances that mission by exploring the experiences of the subset of gifted Black students who have been accelerated and subsequently attended an HBCU by centering on the theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT).

Theoretical Framework

CRT emerged out of critical legal studies (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Milner & Howard, 2013), which argued that although the law was designed as a means for social justice, those in power more often manipulate the law for their own benefit (Dayton, 2017). CRT both extended critical legal studies and sought to shore up its shortcomings by focusing more explicitly on calling out racism and actively seeking to combat it with systemic changes. Most literature on CRT describes five tenets: (a) counter-storytelling, (b) the permanence of racism, (c) Whiteness as property, (d) interest convergence, and (e) the critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1999) (see Table 4.2). However, some articles have

added additional tenets, such as structural determinism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), and intersectionality (DeCuir-Gunby & Shultz, 2014).

Table 4.2

Tenets of Critical Race Theory

Tenet	Description
Counter-storytelling	Stories and narratives used to challenge dominant narratives and give voice to minority communities who may have similar experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)
Permanence of racism	Belief that conscious and unconscious racism continue to permeate all political, social, and economic aspects of society (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004)
Whiteness as property	Idea that Whiteness is both intangible and tangible, and can be used as a resource that has value and can be transferred from one person to another to maintain generational privilege (DeCuir-Gunby & Shultz, 2014)
Interest convergence	Belief that gains for people of color primarily occur when their interests are intertwined with the self-interests of White elites (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)
Critique of liberalism	Critiques the beliefs around equal access and opportunity, race neutrality and color blindness, and incremental change (DeCuir-Gunby & Shultz, 2014)

Critical race theory uses counter-storytelling, also known as counter-narratives, as a way to give voice to those whose stories have not been told and whose experiences run contrary to the experiences of White American culture. This helps to dispel widely held beliefs that contribute to racial disparities. For instance, in education, critical race theory uses counter-narratives to expose the feelings, emotions, and experiences thought to be common among African Americans. Operating on the premise of the permanence of racism, it can be assumed that racism is an ever-present part of the education of African American students, and gifted education is no exception to this. Evidence of this is that even after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decisions, the expansion of gifted programming resulted in resegregation within schools, which continued the permanence of racism throughout the public education system (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ford & King, 2014). Another aspect of gifted education that relates to critical race theory is the critique of liberalism, which includes the myth of meritocracy. According to DeCuir-Gunby and Schultz (2014), "the idea of a meritocracy assumes that all things are equal and that hard work translates into success. This view, however, does not acknowledge…systemic practices of racism, the function of financial privilege, or group contributions to success. Specifically, the myth of meritocracy helps to serve as a justification of racial discrimination and class hierarchies." The myth of meritocracy is important to gifted education because the reality is that things are not equal. Processes for gifted identification are often not equitable and either intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against minorities (Ford & King, 2014).

As gifted students move through school and into higher education, the ramifications of being a minority can continue to impact students' educational experiences. The idea of Whiteness as property stems from the institutional systems that maintain racial inequity.

Whiteness has historically been an asset necessary to gain access to college until HBCUs were founded in order to provide African American students with opportunities to pursue higher education.

Purpose of the Research

To understand the nuances and impact of acceleration on African American students, research is needed that chronicles their experiences. The purpose of the current study was to learn about individual African American accelerants' experiences in K-12 education and provide information that can ultimately enlighten parents and educators about ways to approach acceleration and obtain the best possible outcomes for Black students. It is important to look at acceleration, not as an isolated K-12 experience, but also how it influences students in the selection of and matriculation through college. In order to do this, research participants served as case studies of accelerated African American students from one selective HBCU.

Subjectivity Statement

In qualitative research, being aware of the reasons we are drawn to our topics of interest is important to be able to assess our own views (Watt, 2007) and consider how to approach our data collection and subsequent analysis. Qualitative research operates from the assumption that our subjectivities are inherent within us and should not be dismissed or overlooked. Acknowledging one's subjectivities allows for openness throughout the research process that prevents threats to the quality of the research (Peshkin, 1988; Watt, 2007).

As an African American accelerant, I experienced the majority of my K-12 education identified as a gifted student. I attended a public middle school designated specifically for gifted students and experienced both positive and negative events as a result of my label as a gifted African American student. After considering my own postsecondary options, I chose to attend

Howard University, where I was again given various opportunities to explore my identity as a high ability African American woman. After finishing graduate school, I taught a diverse group of gifted identified students in a general education classroom. This firsthand experience led me to my interest in the policies and regulations that influence gifted services and access to accelerative opportunities.

To properly address my own subjectivities throughout this study, I first conducted a bracketing interview (deMarrais, 2004), during which I answered my interview questions from the participant perspective. While conducting subsequent interviews, I approached the data collection process with broad, open-ended questions in order to ensure participants feel free to share their own experiences versus me projecting my own thoughts and feelings onto them. During the analysis process, member checking was used to ensure that the themes are truly representative of the thoughts and opinions of the interviewees, and personal interpretations did not skew the intent of the participants. By sticking closely to the theoretical framework and methodology selected for the study, participants experiences can be trusted to shed light on the decision of Black accelerants who attended an HBCU.

Multiple Case Study Research

Mendaglio (2003), made a case for the use of qualitative research, namely case study research in the field of gifted education, stating, "Qualitative case study researchers can approximate the perspectives of gifted persons in various contexts. By enabling us to understand gifted persons' experiences, qualitative case study research serves to deepen our understanding of giftedness" (p.163). In contrast to a single case study, which examples a single case and unit of analysis (Mendaglio, 2003), this study is a multiple case study, with several cases coming from varying backgrounds and contexts, all of which influence their responses to the research

questions. With a multiple case study, the researcher seeks to transcend a number of settings with the thought that similar results will occur, or there will be explainable differences (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Research Participants

The current study involved three African American young women who experienced whole-grade academic acceleration during their K-12 education. Criterion-based selection was used to compile the initial list of participant characteristics (deMarrais, 2004). Selected participants were (1) between the ages of 18 and 30, (2) self-identified as African American and/or Black, (3) had experienced whole grade acceleration between Kindergarten and 12th grade, and (4) had graduated from a federally recognized HBCU. This study limited the type of acceleration to whole-grade because those students who are whole-grade accelerated would be on track to complete high school at ages younger than their grade-level peers and start college while under the age of eighteen.

Data Collection

This study utilized a combination of network and snowball sampling to recruit participants. The flyer was sent to various listservs and distributed to HBCU groups on social media. After potential participants contacted the researcher, they were given a brief overview of the study and what participation would entail. If they indicated a willingness to participate, they were sent the full consent form to review and asked to set up an interview time. The participants lived in various locations throughout the country, so interviews were conducted online via Facetime or G-chat. All interviews were conducted using an interview guide (see Appendix B) and recorded using a portable audio recorder.

Consent forms were electronically signed by participants and emailed to the researcher prior to the scheduled interview start time. All three participants were female and graduated from Howard University, a large HBCU in Washington D.C. They were raised in various regions of the county and had varying career interests (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Research Participants

Name	Age	Type of Acceleration	Location of K-12 Education	Occupation or Education at Time of Interview	Date and Duration of Interview
Lauren	25	Early entrance to Kindergarten	North Carolina	Pre-doctoral Anthropology Program	October 11, 2018 60 minutes
Nia	26	Early entrance to 1st grade	New York	Joint MD/Ph.D. Program	October 25,2018 36 minutes
Keisha	27	Skipped 4th grade	Illinois	Law School	January 25, 2019 89 minutes

This sample it is limited by gender, gives a unique look at how accelerated African American girls experience acceleration and navigate the college choice process. Although the purpose of this dissertation was not to explore specific gendered experiences, research does indicate that girls who are accelerated may have an easier time making social adjustments but have decreased motivation after acceleration (Kretschmann, Vock, Lüdtke, & Gronostaj, 2016). Long-term effects of acceleration are positive for girls, and they often pursue advanced degrees in law and medicine (McClarty, 2015a; McClarty, 2015b).

Data Analysis

Constant Comparative Analysis

Data from participant interviews were analyzed using a constant comparative approach. Constant comparative analysis is an approach most often associated with grounded theory but used with other forms of qualitative research as well (Fram, 2003). Constant comparative analysis is considered an inductive, emergent approach, where the codes are determined by the data, rather than being decided beforehand (Hewitt-Taylor, 2001). With constant comparative analysis, comparisons can occur at various levels of the data, both within and between cases. This aligns well with multiple case studies, as there are various levels of cases and possible units of analysis (see Table 4.4). The data can be constantly reassessed, new information can be integrated into already existing codes, or new categories and codes can be created.

Table 4.4
Constant Comparative Analysis in Multiple Case Study Research

Type of Comparison	Analysis Activities	Aim	Questions	Results	Frequency
1. Comparison within an interview	Open coding	Develop preliminary categories	What is the core message of the interview? How are different fragments related? Is the interview consistent? Are there contradictions?	Summary of the interview, provisional codes	Occurs after each interview is transcribed
2. Comparison between interviews with persons	Axial coding, comparing interviews,	Conceptualization of the subject, produce a typology	Is A talking about the same thing as B (C, D…)? What do the	Expansion of codes, development of themes and	Continuous, can occur between two individual

who share similar experiences	develop patterns		interviews reveal about the category? What are the similarities and differences between interview A, B, C….?	categories, clusters of interviews (typology)	interviews or groups (3+) interviews at a time

Note. Adapted from "A Purposeful Approach to the Constant Comparative Method in the Analysis of Qualitative Interviews," by H. Boeije, 2002, *Quality and Quantity, 36,* p. 396. Copyright 2002 Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Coding

As noted in Table 4.4, code development first began with an open coding process on the first interview. Throughout this first transcription, the coding process occurred inductively but resulted in themes that primarily followed the research questions and theoretical framework. Preliminary codes were categorized by the main topics of the research questions, and other noteworthy information was coded as well. The subsequent interviews were transcribed and coded in the same manner as they occurred but were also subjected to the second type of comparison, which occurred between interviews. To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, a bracketing interview (deMarrais, 2004; Roulston & Shelton, 2015) was conducted before the first interview, which was utilized to prevent bias during the analysis process. Member checking (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Baxter & Jack, 2008) was utilized after the interviews were conducted, with the participants being sent copies of their transcripts to review and a summary of main themes from their interview to provide comments, confirmation, or changes. Themes were developed within each category and the codes were separated by theme. Some codes could be categorized under multiple themes and individual content was re-coded or separated. The

findings from this study are first shared as complete counter-narratives from each of the three participants, then collectively by category and theme.

Lauren's Story

K-12 Experiences

Lauren's story began when she moved from Maryland to North Carolina shortly before she was slated to begin Kindergarten. Because of differing kindergarten entrance dates, Lauren was eligible to start Kindergarten at age 4 in Maryland, but not in North Carolina. Lauren discussed her mother's advocacy as she worked with her new school system to find a solution.

> I had completed pre-K and I exhibited all the skills that you needed, far beyond surpassed all the kindergarten skills that one would be looking for. So they [the school administrators] were basically saying, "Well, she's too young, she's gonna have to wait a year," and my mom was like, "Well, just give her some work. She will show you that she's far surpassing your kindergartners, I promise." So, she went back and forth. I actually have no idea what she did, but I know that I did not start kindergarten until maybe January or February. I missed the first part of the year, but I didn't miss much.

Once Lauren was finally allowed to start school, she continued to flourish academically. She discussed one experience in first grade, a year during which she was subject accelerated in math. In this vignette, Lauren describes her first-grade teacher's response to her advanced mathematic abilities and resentment toward her for her advanced autonomy.

> I guess she told the [third-grade] teacher, "Just watch her and see how she gets along." I was fine, but did notice that…once I started consistently going to the third-grade classroom, and even just taking ownership of that like, "Hey, it's time for me to go, I need to walk down the hall….okay, I need to go and get my lunch and I need to go to my third-

> grade classroom and I need to do my lesson and I need to come back." I was responsible for these things. And she just acted like it was the just craziest thing she had ever seen. I think she resented it a little bit. I think she was like, "Act your age. You're in first grade, you need to act like it, you need to listen to me."

Lauren also described multiple occasions throughout elementary school with educators who questioned her advanced reading abilities, asking her to choose less challenging material or attempting to baby talk her, not realizing her vocabulary was advanced for her age. She saw these incidents through a racial lens, stating:

> Now having been an educator and knowing what I know, I can look back and say there was probably some racial influence, even if just because all the administrators I had this issue with were White women. And knowing how Black children are treated, especially when they are some sort of outlier, some sort of special case. There's always ...this reluctance to believe that they're doing something differently or doing something special, whereas maybe if I was a White child it would be immediately like, "Oh, of course. Yes, sure. This is great," with no pushback.

Despite these incidents, Lauren described overall positive interactions with educators, as well as with her peers. Much of the discussion around acceleration deals with social and emotional development. Lauren describes her thoughts about her social interactions, stating, “maybe socially things were a little weird, just because people started driving at a certain time and I couldn't do it…anything like those kinds of milestones that people get to do at a certain age, mine was always later.”

In addition to reaching milestones later than her grade-level friends, Lauren also mentioned that her mom often held her back from participating in social events with her grade-

level peers because of their age difference, stating, “that was her only way of I guess maintaining my youth…and keeping me from growing up too fast or whatever, because I was already always around older people, people already assumed that I was even older than I was.”

Academically, Lauren continued to excel, participating in a special high school academy for high ability students before transferring to an early college high school. She described this experience, stating

> After tenth grade, I found out that there were some alternative high school options, and the one that I chose was a middle college. It was a high school program that was on a college campus, and it would allow us to do dual enrollment. I liked that, I liked the fact that I would be with more kids who were at my same level and have a certain level of independence that I knew I was capable of but didn't get in the regular high school setting.

As Lauren neared the end of high school, she began to consider her options for college. Attending an early college high school gave her a good frame of reference for what kind of school she wanted to attend, and she worked to balance this knowledge with information from a variety of sources.

College Choice Process

> When asked about her options when it came to postsecondary education, Lauren stated: My option was always college. That was a non-negotiable from my mother. And not only college, but an HBCU. That was it. I could not choose from anything else. She was like, "There's a hundred of them, pick one. I don't care which one you pick, but that's what you're picking from...my mom, she had gone to North Carolina Central University, as did

> my great-aunt. I think that was it as far as people who went to college, but for some reason, they were just like, "No, you are picking one of those.

Although her mother had narrowed her options for college, Lauren's teachers encouraged her to explore other options, especially in the local area.

> "I had teachers who were like, 'You don't want to go to UNC-Chapel Hill? You don't want to go to Duke? You don't want to go to [North Carolina] State, Wake Forest? North Carolina has all these colleges and they're amazing. You don't want to go to any of them?' and I had to be like, "I can't. I literally cannot apply."

Despite various teachers' input, her mother's desire for her to attend an HBCU was a determining factor, and Lauren set out to decide where to apply. Throughout this process, she considered various other institutional characteristics. She stated, "Without knowing it, I was considering size…I realize that I was picking smaller schools." Lauren also investigated the national rankings of HBCUs that are released by U.S. News and World Report each year. She rationalized this, saying, "If I'm gonna go to one, I'm gonna go to the best…I'm only applying to top 25". Lauren eventually narrowed her choices to Howard University, Spelman College, and Clark Atlanta University. When making her final decision, location and proximity to her extended family helped Howard to be Lauren's first choice:

> My whole family is in the D.C. area. My father, my grandparents, my other siblings, my aunts, uncles, literally everybody. I think that's also part of the reason why I chose Howard is because my entire family is here, everybody except my mom and some distant cousins maybe. But that was it. So, I knew that if I needed something there were a multitude of people who would come running. That made me feel comfortable about being there, as opposed to Atlanta, where we don't know anybody.

Once Lauren had settled on attending Howard, her focus shifted towards planning for matriculating through college.

Transfer Credits and Matriculation

Because Lauren had attended an early college high school, she had already begun taking college-level courses before starting at Howard. In order to receive credit for these courses, Lauren went through the process of transferring credits during her freshman year at Howard.

> I was able to graduate early from Howard because I came in with a lot of electives already done, foreign language already done, and it was at a higher level than I would have gotten in your standard 11th-grade Spanish class. That was really cool. I graduated high school from there with my high school diploma and with about 15 college credits.

Later, she continued discussing the ease of her transfer credit process, stating:

> It wasn't difficult because it was I guess the same it would be if I was transferring from a college. I was able to get a transcript from Brownsville College as if I was just a typical college student, and then I just brought those to my advisor and she went through, matched it up. Some things didn't fit, some things did. Some things she could convert.

Lauren did not declare a major before starting at Howard, but when she attended an information session and saw the course requirements for the School of Education's human development major, she realized she had reduced her coursework by at least a semester by using her transfer credits. Because of this, Lauren was able to graduate with her bachelor's degree in three and a half years. As she stated:

> That left me time to have a minor and take some extra classes in my minor. If I had stayed the extra semester I probably could have double majored, but I was ready to go, so I just went on and left. But I think it definitely helped in just giving me some breathing

> room and a little bit more room to actually explore some more things that I was interested in.

As the previous quote points out, as Lauren transitioned and matriculated through Howard, she continued to see the effects of the multiple types of acceleration she experienced. When asked about her experiences were influenced by being under 18, Lauren detailed the additional considerations she and her family had to navigate:

> Coming in under 18, I knew that there were a lot of things I would have to do with my mom...After freshman move-in, she stayed in the area for about a week just in case I needed to go handle something. I had to go to student health and get something, and they were like, "Oh, you're 17. We can't do this for you. Is there any way that you can find your mom?" And gratefully, my mom has the kind of job and the kind of connections where she can stay with somebody for a week while I get myself situated, because I don't know what it would have been like if my mom was all the way in North Carolina and I was up there trying to navigate on my own.

Overall, Lauren credited much of her success in undergrad to the experiences she had from attending an early college high school. The confidence these previous experiences gave her helped to offset starting college at a younger age.

> I think that because I took advantage of a middle college, early college program, I was a little bit better equipped to handle the independence of it all…So, I did feel like it was a fairly easy transition because I knew the rigor of a college course, I knew how to read a syllabus. I knew how to keep track of my classes and actually do my work.

Reflections on Acceleration and HBCUs

Throughout the interview, Lauren shared her general feelings and reflections about acceleration and the impact of attending an HBCU on her life. She stated that Howard exposed her to the field of anthropology, the area which she is now pursuing a doctorate degree. Lauren also noted that in college she "realized that there were other people who were young and couldn't do anything", which gave her a social circle and feeling of shared experience with other accelerated Black students. Lauren's overall feelings about acceleration were positive as she said, "As an adult now looking at it and thinking about my own future children and if I would advocate for them to move up or anything like that, I think that I would." However, she did express that she thought radical acceleration (i.e. a five-year-old in third grade) would be a more difficult situation for both the student and teacher.

Nia's Story

K-12 Experiences

Nia's acceleration began similarly to Lauren in that she entered elementary school early. However, in Nia's case, she was moved from Pre-K to first grade at the age of four while attending a small Christian private school. At the beginning of the interview, Nia emphasized her parents' advocacy and attention to her advanced abilities:

> It was completely their idea. I was four, so I only remember very vague memories before then, but it was like I remember telling them I was bored all the time, and they knew that I liked learning and school and stuff, and so I remember it was after a parent-teacher conference or something like that, they…asked how I felt about moving up to first grade.

Nia described smooth experiences with her teachers, as well as other students in the first couple of years following her acceleration. However, after moving to a public school, more difficulties

arose with educators who questioned her grade placement and social difficulties with other students. Nia explained, “when I transferred to public school, it was a little different. I got picked on a lot because nobody knew me, and I was just this weirdly small kid.” However, after a period of transition, Nia became involved in school activities and continued to have high academic achievement. She also recognized the value of having predominately Black teachers, stating:

> I think it was really important that I had a lot of teachers who were super vested in my development and in me. I don't think that would have been the same had I been one Black kid at a predominantly White school. I don't think I realized this until later, just how formative and important it was to have that experience and have teachers who looked like me…who would see a kid who was probably acting out, like instead of being the annoying kid who didn't want to take nap time and probably now has ADHD or something, they were like, "No, she's just bored and she needs to go up a grade.

Throughout her K-12 education, Nia was fortunate to have teachers who were aware of gifted characteristics and recognized her need for a more challenging curriculum.

College Choice Process

As Nia was nearing the end of high school, she began weighing options for college. Like Lauren, Nia’s explained that her breadth of options was limited by her parents:

> You finish high school, then you go to college at Howard. That's what you do…my dad went to Howard; all of his siblings went to Howard. They all did double degrees at Howard. Like, college and then either medical school or pharmacy school. Then my mom went to Dillard, so going to an HBCU, it was just what you're supposed to do. And if you're going to go to an HBCU, you obviously go to Howard.

Nia expressed no aversion to attending an HBCU, although she actively investigated other options as well. At her teachers' suggestion, she considered Ivy League institutions and visited Dartmouth College, which she said, "felt like prep school" and solidified that she did not want to apply. When asked what she was looking for in a postsecondary institution, Nia stated:

> I wasn't particularly concerned about being the only Black kid in any places, because that had never happened to me before, so I didn't know what that was like. So, I wasn't really looking at anything like that. I think I wanted a really small school with a really tight class and a tight population. I wanted something where I could take a bunch of liberal artsy things that weren't just like math and science.

Throughout the interview, Nia discussed extensively her parents' role and the friction that existed as they navigated the college choice process:

> I also wanted some distance from my parents. I mean, they're lovely people, they're also just very helicopter-y and overbearing…They didn't exactly approve of all of the places I was looking at, but credit to them, they definitely let me go and explore those colleges and take the overnight trips to see how I'd like them. They were going to let me make my own decision on this, kind of. I think they were keeping up the illusion that I could make my decision on this, until it came down to the wire and it was like, "You're going to go to Howard because that's the only place that you get money."

In addition to receiving a scholarship to attend Howard, Nia also expressed her liking for the distance from home, but also the familiarity of Howard. After growing up in Harlem and attending predominately Black schools, Nia spoke of Howard, stating, "there were Black people everywhere, which I didn't realize it would be such an important thing to me at the time. But it felt very comfortable…it felt kind of like visiting a family member."

Between her parents' urging, a tempting scholarship offer, and a community feeling, Nia expressed that she somewhat unexcitedly chose to attend Howard, but she felt she could obtain a good undergraduate foundation before applying to medical school, while also exploring a variety of other interests through her elective courses.

Transfer Credits and Matriculation

During high school, Nia's coursework included several AP courses. Nia looked into transferring her AP scores for credit at Howard but ultimately decided against it. She expressed a desire to take the classes at the university level, especially those related to her major, stating:

> I didn't want to transfer any of the chemistry or physics classes because I wanted to take those classes in college. Then when it was just English or history I was like, "Whatever. It will probably be different at Howard anyway."

During her time at Howard, Nia did pursue her various interests by taking art, music, and literature classes. She also took advantage of research opportunities, which led her to want to apply for dual MD/Ph.D. programs. After undergrad, Nia took a gap year to work in research and apply for programs. In explaining her gap year, Nia stated:

> I definitely would have taken the gap year anyway, but having accelerated, it felt like I had two extra years to play with. And yeah, I can spend one of them on a gap year and still be on track…I think that you should take the time that you need and not rush into things.

Reflections on Acceleration and HBCUs

At the conclusion of her interview, Nia shared some of her thoughts on acceleration and attending an HCBU, empathizing the positive experiences of both:

> I think it was definitely worthwhile both for me to have been accelerated and for me to have gone to Howard…I just did not realize the extent to which having teachers who didn't think that you were dumb just because you were Black made a difference, and how nice it was to be able to ask questions in class and not be treated as if you didn't know anything about the source material…Then just socially, I think that there is something to be said for being able to come into the age of majority and growing into an adult, not around teenage White people who are discovering Black people for the first time and saying whatever racist thing pops into their head…But now I think the major benefit of having accelerated was that I was able to keep engaged with school. I think had I stayed in first grade or third grade or wherever, in my appropriate age group, I would have been more of a problem. I probably would have been diagnosed with some learning disorder, and that would have been the thing that tracks me up through high school and college and beyond. Instead, it was like, "Oh no, this is just a smart one."

Keisha's Story

K-12 Experiences

Mid-way through third grade, Keisha and her family moved halfway across the country. After completing the rest of the year at a new school, Keisha skipped fourth grade and began the next year in fifth. Her teacher was one who initially brought up the idea of skipping a grade to her parents after noticing Keisha's interpersonal behavior in the classroom. Keisha described her time in third grade:

> I found myself very bored in class and I was very gossipy. I started clubs with people just so I could break them down and shake up the leadership and all that. Because I just had way too much time on my hands.

Once her teacher noticed this behavior and talked to Keisha's parents, the school administrators became involved to make a final decision about her acceleration. When describing her experience of being told that she would be skipping a grade. Keisha expressed frustration with knowing she would have to make new friends again, stating, "my mom told me that the next year I would not be going back to the classes with all the people I'd just taken all the effort and energy to befriend and establish myself as kind of a cool girl." Keisha expressed overall displeasure with her lack of input in the decision-making process, and when the next school year started, although the academics were a better fit, she experienced social difficulties through the year. Keisha described one experience in detail:

> I'd just been being teased like pretty much all year. Like "Go back to fourth grade, you little fourth grader", "You're not ten yet, we're all ten, blah blah." People just went on and on all the time about my age, my size, just generally about me being in their space as a non-real fifth grader like they were. And one day I just got fed up with it, and I walked out of the classroom. I went to the hall and whoever the teacher was who was teaching came out and kept trying to insist that I come back in the classroom. I was crying, I was like, "I'm not going back in. You can't make me go back in. I'm not going back in." So at some point when she went back in to settle down the class or whatever she was doing at that point, I just left. I just walked off. I didn't leave campus, the school campus, but we had, I guess she was like a guidance counselor or whatever, [name]. And I just went to her office and I was like, "I just can't do this anymore." I feel like now, looking back, I was actually probably depressed because I was so unhappy going to school every day.

Keisha attributed some of the social issues to the fact that her teachers struggled to properly address classroom incidents and failed to create safe classroom environments. However, Keisha

later shared that her social difficulties mostly dissipated after the first year, stating, “I definitely had issues with fifth grade, but other parts of middle school were not as bad, and I liked some parts of my middle school.”

Once Keisha got to high school, she participated in a pre-International Baccalaureate (IB) program before going through the IB diploma program. While in the program she was one of only two Black students and suffered numerous racialized incidents, including having a teacher scream a racial slur at her and the other Black student while in class.

College Choice Process

Keisha expressed an early interest in college and learning about different types of institutions. She described getting her first U.S. News and World Report magazine in sixth grade and comparing institutions and changes in rankings over the years while she was in middle and high school. While Keisha herself was college-minded at an early age, this was also reinforced by others in her community.

> Teachers were always like, "Okay, *when* you go to college…" People at church were always like, "*When* you go to college." And because there were older girls than me going to college, it was never like a, "Oh you've got to be the trailblazer." It was like, "Well so and so went to Princeton, so you better figure out where you're going." My neighbors, same thing. Extended family, I feel like I didn't talk to too much. I think they probably just expected it because both of my parents have college degrees, that [I] would also go to college…nobody ever drilled it into me. It was just kind of the known factor that you'll go to college.

Although there was consensus around her college attendance, similar to Nia, Keisha

experienced friction with her parents over their limitations on the schools she could apply to. Keisha listed distant colleges in large cities such as New York City and Miami as her top choices, but indicated that for her parents, "what was weird for them was kind of the idea of their daughter, who is a minor, being somewhere away and not accessible. I think that was probably one of the biggest guiding things from them of like, 'We need to make sure she's in the best possible situation to deal with anything that might come up because she's young.'" Keisha described her frustration around this thinking:

> There's a reason I skipped a grade, presumably. It must be because I'm intelligent enough to do something. And certainly that "intelligent enough to do something" should encompass being able to figure out New York City or figure out wherever else. So a little bit of it for me also felt like this is an insult to my intelligence.

In the end, Keisha did not apply to schools in New York or Miami but chose other options in larger cities that were closer to home. And although neither of Keisha's parents attended an HBCU, she learned about them through a local youth organization she was a part of through the National Urban League. Her experiences in this program gave her information about different HBCUs around the country and opportunities to meet graduates of HBCUs and hear about their experiences. Through learning about these institutions, Howard became an option on her list, because of its location in a larger city and availability of opportunities. Keisha's parents also asked her to apply to Ivy League institutions, a request which Keisha begrudgingly fulfilled. In the end, her decision came down to Howard University and one other school. Keisha described her final decision-making factors:

> [It came down to] which one will be a good place where I can go learn how to be me and not have anything interfere with me figuring out who is Keisha? And I mean, I also really

> liked Howard when I went to visit…the Ooh La Las, and the band, and the Blackness. And Black people talking about intellectual things that they did was cool. Other people being National Achievement scholars…I also really liked my [aunt] who works for Howard, who we just discovered when I was applying.

Overall, Keisha expressed great dissatisfaction with her college choice process but described her visit to Howard as one of her major determining factors.

Transfer Credits and Matriculation

Once she graduated from high school and moved to Washington D.C. to begin school at Howard, Keisha was able to use some of her high school academic experiences to her advantage. She eventually received credit from both IB and AP tests that she had taken but did have some difficulty navigating the transfer credit process.

> I ended up having to take a Spanish class because they messed up my credits…but that was a Howard thing, it wasn't like anything with my high school or IB or AP. I ended up getting 18 credit hours…Howard would only take my higher-level scores for IB exams, so my Spanish, my math, and my Psychology didn't count for anything. But my English did…and my History of the Americas one did.

Outside of the difficulties with transfer credits, Keisha had mostly positive experiences at Howard. She described meeting other accelerated students, stating, “Some of them were younger than me, so I got to be the oldest one sometimes. That was neat.”. She described her evolution of social and political views, and also spoke of the lasting relationships she built:

> Some of the most important friendships and relationships that I've built came either from Howard directly or being in D.C. to go to Howard. Pretty much all of the people who I talk to on a daily or near daily basis, I either know from Howard, or through people I

know from Howard, or from an internship that I was able to do because I was at Howard. Most of my core people come from Howard in some way. So I'm very grateful for that.

Reflections on Acceleration and HBCUs

When discussing final thoughts on the impact of her acceleration and attendance at Howard, Keisha shared several thoughts. On acceleration, she emphasized the differing long and short-term effects:

> I think in the long, long, long run, it has turned out probably that the positives of skipping a grade have outweighed the very acute immediate and significantly impactful negatives. I think in the long run it has probably played out in my favor. But I did not feel that way for a long time.

She also spoke to the extra time that she felt accelerating gave her when it came to starting a career and further education.

> I think also when I looked at like, okay I'll be younger and be able to get started on some of the things I want, like a law degree or a career or whatever, and even if it's just a year that I'm saving, it's still some time that I'm saving and it gives me a little leg up in just I have more time in life to do things. And then when it was like okay because I skipped a grade, people have now kind of tracked me into the "smart kid" situation, and I think I probably benefited from, I'm sure I benefited, from being on that track for the entirety of my K-12 education for sure.

When discussing her experiences attending an HBCU, Keisha spoke with conviction about the value of her time at Howard and having a space where Blackness and scholarship intersected:

> I looked around everywhere and I saw Black people doing it. And by "it", I mean literally whatever it was they wanted to do…When I could go into the libraries and see not just a bunch of books written by Charles Dickens and boring White people and could see Black people have produced scholarship, intellectual research, and law, and policy in very important ways for us historically and contemporarily…I think Howard is so powerful in bringing Blackness from across the globe together in a way that is not perfect. There's a lot about Howard, that needs to be better and improved upon and changed. But in some ways, I'm grateful for the struggles.

Overall, Keisha felt that " [Her] Howard experience was pretty much fundamental to the person [she] is now" and appreciated the experiences that she had there.

Discussion

Throughout these women's counter-narratives, they recounted several consistent ideas that have been compiled into themes and separated into three categories: (a) K-12 experiences, (b) college choice process, and (c) transition and matriculation. By exploring each of these categories, it is evident that although there were many shared themes, acceleration and college choice are also very individualized experiences. All themes are summarized in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Overall Themes

K-12 Education Experiences	College Choice Process	Transition and Matriculation
• Parent engagement • Social relationships • Significant impact of teachers	• Tradition • Tension with parents • Kinship networks • Resistance to prestigious institutions	• Use of transfer credits • Personal development • Gift of time

• Additional accelerative opportunities	• Merit-based scholarships

K-12 Education Experiences

Parent engagement. All the participants discussed parent engagement with mixed feelings. All had parents who were actively involved in their acceleration process, but also in their schooling and lives in general. They appreciated their parents' involvement in their education, but towards the end of high school, also had a strong desire to gain independence from their parents. Previous research has shown that parents are able to effectively identify traits of giftedness in young children (McGee & Hughes, 2011). However, parents must also have the knowledge, as these parents did, to be able to effectively advocate and converse with educators about their children's educational needs. These students' experiences highlighted the need for parents to remain engaged in the process throughout and continue to have conversations with educators before and after acceleration occurs. Literature in gifted education has indicated that gifted students, in general, are in need of advocacy by adults in their lives. This is especially true for African American students who may not have teachers in school who are aware of the varying traits of giftedness in underrepresented students (Ford, 2015; Grantham, 2013; Grantham & Henfield, 2011).

Social relationships. Social readiness remains one of the main concerns with accelerating students (Rogers, 2015), and each of the participants interviewed mentioned their differing social circumstances. Based on these participants' experiences, early entrance seemed to impact social relationships less than accelerating later in elementary school, as Keisha expressed significantly more frustrations with social relationships than the Lauren and Nia. Most

of the discussion around social relationships focused on reaching important milestones such as driving later than their grade-level peers. For accelerated students, being able to engage in social events is important to maintain friendships, but this must be balanced by the age-appropriateness of the activities. For these women, their parents made the majority of those decisions until they reached college.

Significant impact of teachers. All of the participants recognized the impact of their teachers on their school experiences. Whether these influences were positive or negative, they were significant. Teachers, as gatekeepers to many advanced opportunities in school (Ford, 2015; Grantham, 2013; Swanson & Lord, 2013; Wright & Ford, 2017), are in a unique position. When teachers express resistance to the student themselves or acceleration as a practice, it can lead to apathy in the pursuit of acceleration, as occurred with Lauren, or lack of attention to the post-acceleration transition period, as Keisha experienced. However, when teachers are actively engaged and maintain a dynamic perspective about the abilities of Black students, they can champion the cause of high-ability Black students and effectively help them to navigate the full acceleration process. Fortunately for Nia and Keisha, they had teachers who did recognize their abilities and were able to actively pursue acceleration on their behalf. Nia spoke of the importance of having teachers who believed in her and her abilities and were not blinded by a deficit thinking mentality about Black students. While most of the teachers Nia spoke of were African American, Keisha's initial acceleration advocacy began with a White teacher who recognized her abilities and the impact that the lack of academic challenge was having on her social and emotional well-being.

Additional accelerative opportunities. At some point in their K-12 education, each participant was able to participate in some kind of specialized school or program. Nia began her

education in a private school, which allowed her to accelerate two grades at once. She later took several AP courses while in high school. Lauren attended an early college high school for eleventh and twelfth grades, allowing her to get accustomed to a college campus and spend her day with other high ability students. And Keisha completed the IB diploma program at her high school. These additional opportunities indicate that the students continued to excel in their academics even after acceleration, and furthers the idea that even after acceleration, there is still an opportunity for students to be challenged in specific areas of interest. Attention must be paid by teachers and parents to ensure that students continue to be challenged academically after an initial acceleration occurs.

College Choice Process

Tradition. All three participants shared about the prior knowledge they had of Howard University or HBCUs in general. They interacted with HBCU alumni who encouraged their attendance, whether this was family, friends, or others from the community. This theme strongly paralleled previous research on predictors of attendance at HBCUs. When a student knows someone who attended an HBCU or suggests it to them, they are more likely to attend one themselves (McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997).

Tension with parents. Before and during the college choice process, parents participate in their child's pursuit of postsecondary education by helping to set goals and aspirations for their children, providing them with encouragement towards college attendance, and supporting their child's choice process (Chapman et al., 2018). The friction experienced in the college choice process was especially emphasized by Nia and Keisha, but even Lauren alluded to her frustration with her mother's insistence that she narrow her choices to include only HBCUs. This tension with parents was often centered around the location or size of the institutions that the

participants wanted to attend. For parents of accelerated students, who have often spent years monitoring their students' position amongst older classmates, this seems to carry over into their feelings about colleges and their ability to help their children navigate a new environment.

Kinship networks. Related to tension with parents was Keisha and Nia's desire to be far away from home. Despite this desire for distance from their parents, all three students ended up choosing Howard University and spoke about the kinship network that drew them there. Both Keisha and Lauren had extended family members in Washington D.C., which influenced their level of comfort with being away from home at seventeen years old. For accelerated students who are motivated toward developing their independence by going away from home for college, a happy medium for families may be to consider institutions that are located close to extended family or close friends and can provide students with a "home away from home" and adults who are available to assist with tasks that the student may be too young to legally navigate on their own. This theme echoed previous findings that kinship networks can help both parents and students throughout all phases of the college choice process (Chapman et al., 2018).

Resistance to prestigious PWIs. Most mentions of Ivy League institutions throughout interviews with the participants were negative and indicated the participants' lack of desire to attend. Lauren received promotional material from several institutions but did not apply. Nia visited Dartmouth but chose not to apply after an unpleasant visit, and Keisha applied to two Ivy Leagues but did not desire to attend either. Although all of the participants spoke of their high test scores and academic ability to compete for admission to Ivy League institutions, none of them felt that the environment of the institution was what they desired for their undergraduate experience. The participants expressed their desire for an environment that allowed them the freedom to be themselves, versus trying to fit into a stereotypical mold of an Ivy League student.

They also indicated their belief that they would be able to receive a quality education at Howard and have opportunity to participate in rigorous academic programs. This indicated the complexity of these students' choices and their view of Howard as a prestigious institution in its own right, not as a downgrade in comparison to highly selective PWIs.

Merit-based scholarships. Finally, all the participants mentioned the financial influences on their college choice process. Lauren chose Howard despite a more substantial scholarship offer from another HBCU. Nia's parents encouraged her to choose Howard as they were the only ones to offer her a scholarship. And Keisha had missed the financial aid deadline for the other of her final two choices, so she also chose to attend Howard, where she had been offered a scholarship. As accelerated students who had continued to excel in their academics, all these women were able to take advantage of merit-based scholarships that were offered by Howard University. Financial considerations are often high on the list of considerations for African American students when considering their postsecondary options (Chapman et al., 2018; McDonough et al., 1997; Means, Clayton, Conzelmann, Baynes, & Umabch, 2016; Van Camp et al., 2009), so the ability of all types of institutions to increase the availability of merit-based scholarships for high performing Black students can potentially make a difference in the recruitment of talented Black students.

Transfer Credit and Matriculation

Use of transfer credits. Each of the participants, while taking advantage of accelerative opportunities in high school, obtain college credits or potential credit from AP and IB tests. Keisha used her credits to lighten her course load in undergrad, giving her the time to take advantage of additional opportunities. Lauren transferred her credits as well, using them to be able to graduate a semester early and transition into the workforce. Nia chose not to transfer her

credits, as many of them were in her major and she wanted to take the courses at the collegiate level rather than using AP credits. The flexibility that these students experienced because their pre-college preparation allowed each of them to make individual decisions about how they wanted to accomplish their goals for their undergraduate programs.

Personal development. For all students, college is a time of personal growth and development. But for these students, they spoke passionately about their ability to grow and mature as accelerated students in college. Lauren mentioned that she felt she was better prepared than many of her college classmates, and that her experiences at Howard helped her to discover her love for anthropology, which has become her current career field. Nia also spoke about the variety of coursework that Howard offered and how grateful she was to have been able to take advantage of courses that assisted in her personal development outside of her major. And Keisha expressed the impact of her time at Howard on her political views and her awareness of important topics of discussion within the Black diaspora. Overall, the participants felt that their time at Howard has prepared them well for their long-term goal and allowed them to continue their personal development beyond the activities they had participated in before college.

Gift of time. All the participants spoke to their use of the extra time that acceleration had given them. Lauren was able to graduate a semester early and get a start on her career, Nia was able to take a gap year between undergraduate and medical school to get research experiences, and Keisha spoke about being able to get started in law school at an earlier age. All three participants felt being younger had long term advantages, as previous research has indicated (McClarty, 2015a; McClarty, 2015b; Steenbergen-Hu & Moon, 2011). The participants spoke of this gift of time and the ways in which they were able to use it to their benefit academically, with additional time being beneficial for building a career. Interestingly, none of the participants

focused on potential personal benefits of extra time related to interpersonal relationships such as marriage or starting a family.

Implications

From these themes, it is evident that acceleration was beneficial for all the participants. It put them on a track that afforded them appropriate academic rigor throughout their K-12 education, allowed them to get a jumpstart on college credit, and gave them extra time to explore varied interests in college while still get an early start on their career or graduate school. However, it was also evident that attention must be paid to the circumstances surrounding acceleration, including teachers, timing, and social relationships. While these students' experiences cannot speak for all accelerated Black students, their varied counter-narratives do point to several thoughts about best practices for acceleration. Early entrance has been touted for its ability to minimize the social effects on children since it occurs before students have had the opportunity to form a social circle in elementary school. The later in elementary school that acceleration occurs, the more chance there is for it to disrupt a student's established social dynamics. Similarly, if possible, adults should try to have acceleration occur at the timing of a natural school transition, such as early entrance, or between elementary and middle school. This reduces the salience of the acceleration, making it potentially easier for students to make the transition. For Black children who already experience hypervisibility due to their decreased presence in advanced classes, this can be important.

As students become interested in learning about colleges and deciding what factors are important to them, it is important to look back at Hossler and Gallagher's model, as influenced by Freeman (2005). The predetermination phase is particularly important for accelerated students, as it is often the narrative that students with high abilities naturally see college as the

next step after high school. This was the case for the students in this study, who all had college-educated parents and supportive communities. This predetermination to attend college was not perceived as a pressure, but rather as a comfortable fact. The search phase was also influenced by cultural factors, as the selections for the participants' "choice set" of colleges to apply to was impacted by the value that parents and others placed on certain types of institutions. For example, the insistence of Lauren's mom that she attend an HBCU limited her choices to around one hundred institutions. Lauren further limited this selection by choosing only from the top 25 ranked HBCUs. From here, she was able to begin considering other options such as size and location. Finally, the choice phase was also influenced by cultural factors. During this phase, the interaction between the institution and the student regarding topics such as campus visits and financial aid awards help students to make final decisions about where to matriculate. When the participants visited Howard, they were able to see how their culture would be celebrated and they would be able to take advantage of culturally relevant coursework while also having a social environment that was conducive to both their culture and age. Research has noted the impact that college visits have for students considering attending an HBCU (Tobolowsky, Outcalt, & McDonough, 2005). This highlights the role that higher education institutions in this process, especially for Black accelerants, to emphasize their campus' safe and welcoming environment, point out campus resources that may assist in the transition process, and provide merit-based scholarship opportunities to accelerated students. This can help to ease both student and parent reservations about matriculating at a younger age than usual. Because Black students often have financial considerations when it comes to choosing a college, providing accelerated and other high ability students with merit-based scholarships can increase the appeal of HBCUs for high ability Black students.

It is not surprising that these accelerants would continue to achieve at high levels and to take advantage of professional and personal development opportunities afforded to them by their institutions. Acceleration helped these students to take full advantage of all that Howard offered them, as they used transfer credits to create space for additional opportunities. Research on HBCUs has indicated as previously stated that they provide nurturing environments for students (Bracey, 2017), and the participants in this study spoke to the impact that their collegiate environment had on their future goals and aspirations.

Conclusion

The research questions for this study were: (a) How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their K-12 education and acceleration experiences? (2) How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their college choice process and matriculation?, and (c) What are the university transfer policies used to award advanced standing to students at HBCUs? The themes detailed above describe the participants' experiences in the context of what we know about accelerated students and the long-term effects of acceleration.

The findings of this study contribute to the research on gifted African American students and college choice. Through this study, Black accelerants were able to give voice to their own experiences in K-12 education and at an HBCU known for its academic reputation. For K-12 professionals, this information can help to provide information about how to facilitate acceleration experiences for Black students and the importance of ensuring that students have access to quality teachers who are trained and willing to recognize and accept Black students' advanced abilities. For higher education institutions, information on college choice helps them to better market their institutions to accelerated students who may have unique considerations when selecting a college. For HBCUs in particular, the focus on alumni interactions, campus visits,

and availability of merit-based scholarships should encourage these schools to develop programs where students are given the opportunity and resources necessary to visit various institutions and understand the environment and opportunities that they would be a part of when attending an HBCU.

Although this study was limited in the type of HBCU that the students attended, as well as the gender of the participants, it provides a starting point for research in this area. In order to continue developing this research, accelerated African American students must be given opportunities to delve into their experiences. Examining this topic through the lens of critical race theory allows for a juxtaposition to be made between the experience and outcomes of acceleration for students who have not been marginalized, in comparison to African American students, who have been historically marginalized and blocked from participation in advanced academic programs. More specific research should be done in regard to the types of K-12 environments accelerated students are coming from, and the policies, or lack thereof, that allowed them to have opportunities for acceleration. In addition, research on the impact of HBCUs on students' future aspirations needs to be investigated. African American accelerants at HBCUs are a unique population that has been overlooked in previous research, so there is still much to explore about this group of students.

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CHAPTER 5

NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE WITH ACCELERATED BLACK STUDENTS ATTENDING HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR K-12 EDUCATORS AND HIGHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS[3]

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Abstract

This article provides practical information for K-12 educators and higher education professionals on African American accelerants who are transitioning to college. Accelerated and other high ability students often participate in dual-credit opportunities such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual enrollment before entering college. Because of this, they may have credit hours that can be transferred for advanced standing once they enroll as first-year college students. This process is traditionally governed by university transfer credit policies. This manuscript gives the example of one HBCU's transfer credit policy and student experiences with navigating the transfer credit process to help educators gain a better understanding of the varying rationales that accelerated students at HBCUs may have for choices around transferring credits and give recommendations for ways to ensure transfer credit policies accommodate the needs of accelerated and other high ability Black students.

Keywords: historically black colleges and universities, college choice, transfer credits, acceleration, gifted Black students, gifted education policy, higher education policy

Going to college is a significant transition for students, who are often on their own for the first time in their lives. For students who are entering college early, the transition can be complicated because they are not legally adults. Students who have been accelerated early in their academic careers or are graduating early from high school have often taken coursework that can be transferred to college for credit. Most of these opportunities such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment are not exclusive to students who have been identified as gifted, but they especially relevant for accelerants, as research has shown that the most significant outcome of dual credit programs if the reduction in time that students take to complete an undergraduate degree (Freismuth, 2017). For students who are already accustomed to an accelerated pace, this can be an appealing thought.

Literature Review

African American Accelerants

African American accelerants are students who identify as African American or Black and have experienced some form of academic acceleration (see Table 5.1) that has led them to be entering college at a younger age than traditional. Although twenty types of acceleration have been identified, those listed are the whole-grade forms of acceleration from which students would be most likely to enter college early. In most cases, these are entering college at sixteen or seventeen years old, unless they are radically accelerated by three or more years (Hertzog & Chung, 2015). Academic acceleration has allowed these students to complete their K-12 education at a younger age and faster pace than their peers but also puts them in the position of entering college before the age of eighteen. This carries additional considerations around how to navigate in a new environment where they do not have all the rights or responsibilities of adulthood. Those issues will not be discussed in depth here; instead, the focus will be on how

Black accelerants consider the ability to transfer credits when making decisions about where to attend college. To do so, it is essential to understand the overall considerations for Black students when deciding on a college.

Table 5.1

Common Types of Whole Grade Acceleration in K-12

Type of Acceleration	Description
Early Admission to Kindergarten	A student enters kindergarten before reaching the minimum age for school entry according to the district or state guidelines.
Early Admission to First Grade	Similar to early admission to kindergarten, a student either skips kindergarten completely or is accelerated from kindergarten during the student's first year of school.
Grade-Skipping	When a student is placed at least one grade-level ahead of their chronological-age peers. This can be done at the beginning of or during the school year.
Early Graduation	When student graduates from high school in 3 1/2 years or less. This can be accomplished by increasing coursework, through dual/concurrent enrollment, or correspondence coursework.

College Choice for Black Students

Overall, the college choice process can be divided into three parts. The most popular college choice model identifies the three phases as predisposition, search, and choice (Hossler &

Gallagher, 1987). However, these three phases lack attention to cultural differences that can impact the three phases. Freeman (2005) sought to address this issue by renaming the first phase predetermination, emphasizing the cultural and family influences that influence students' decisions to attend college in the first place. For Black students; however, cultural factors must be considered at all phases to fully understand the process that students go through. Figure 5.1 shows the college choice stages with cultural influences and an all-encompassing element of the process. One of the most significant aspects of the college choice process for many African American students is the consideration of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and predominately White institutions (PWIs).

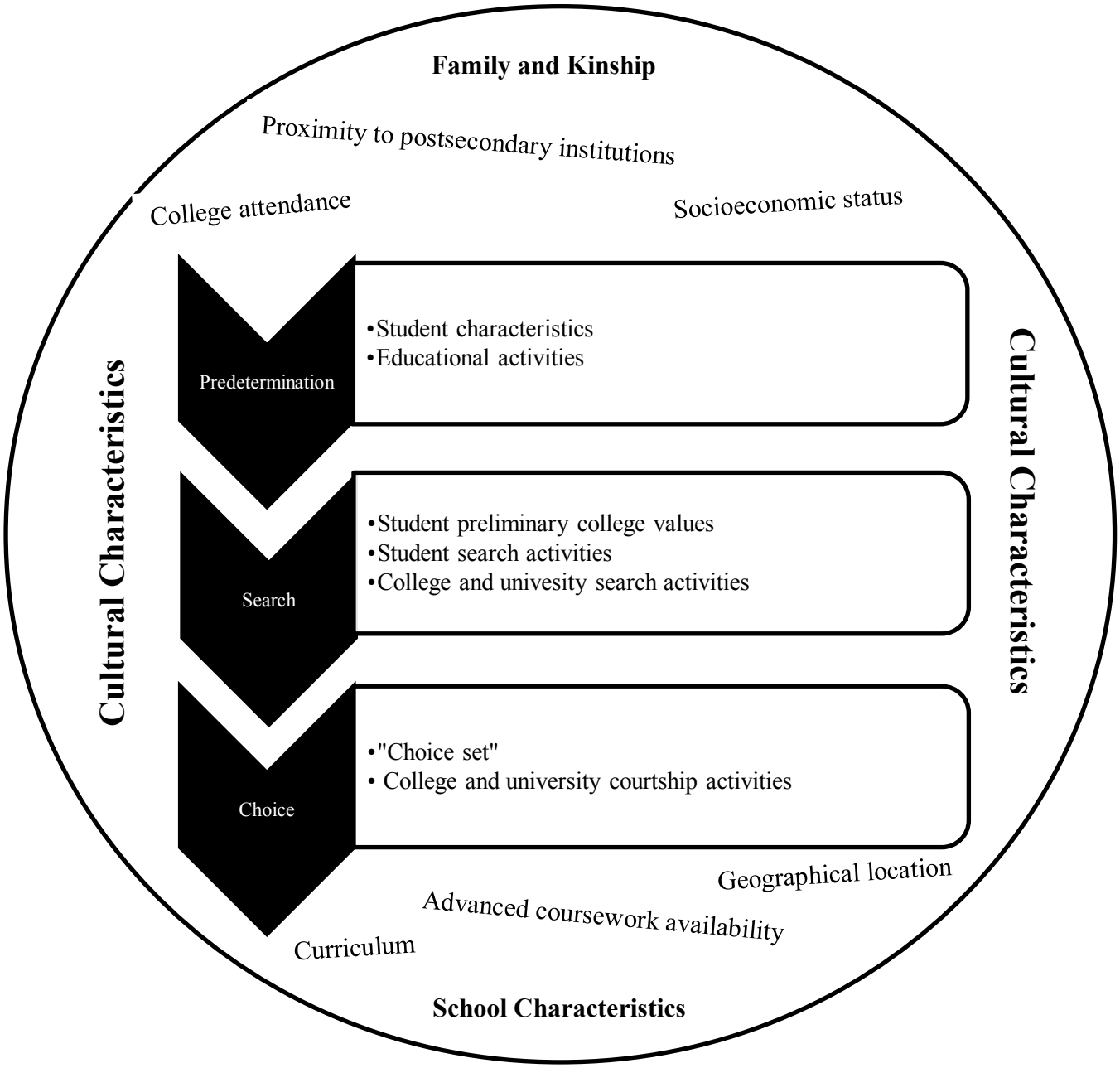

Figure 5.1. A Cultural-Responsive College Choice Model. This proposed model combines Freeman's (2005) first phase of predetermination with the final two phases of Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model: search and choice. This model expands the impact of cultural influences, emphasizing them as an all-encompassing aspect of the college choice process impacting all three phases of college choice.

Deciding on an HBCU. HBCUs were created not to give choice, but to give opportunity. When institutional racism led PWIs to block Black students from attending (Bracey, 2017), HBCUs were created by religious groups such as Quakers and members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (Gasman, Lundy-Wagner, Ransom, & Bowman, 2010) to educate newly freed African Americans to be primarily pastors and teachers (Cantey, Bland, Mack, & Joy-Davis, 2013). Since the first HBCU, Cheyney University, was founded in 1837 (Bracey, 2017), many more have been created around the country. There are currently 101 federally-recognized HBCUs that span nineteen states, Washington D.C., and the Virgin Islands. These institutions have survived many years of accreditation concerns and financial challenges (Cantey et al., 2013) and have thrived in providing welcoming but academically challenging environments for students. In the long run, HBCUs have been praised for their ability to produce large numbers of African American graduates in STEM fields (Abdull-Alim, 2016), and overall graduates are likely to have higher status jobs (Strayhorn, 2017) and better financial well-being (Abdull-Alim, 2016). Although there is strong empirical evidence of the benefits of African American students attending HBCUs and the academic and personal support they receive at these institutions, there is a gap in research on the transfer credit policies of HBCUs and the aspects of transfer credit policies that can attract high ability high school students. For institutions that are interested in attracting high ability students, it is essential to consider how the availability of continued accelerated learning can be marketed as an attractive institutional characteristic.

Transfer Credits

There are three main types of dual credit opportunities for high school students (Brody & Muratori, 2015; Hertberg-Davis, Callahan, & Kyburg, 2006; Rogers, 2004). Students who are whole-grade accelerated and later participate in dual credit opportunities have been shown to

have positive outcomes for their long-term academic achievement (McClarty, 2015). Each type of dual credit discussed here: (a) AP, (b) IB, and (c) dual enrollment, has unique aspects that must be addressed when considering transferring credits, so understanding each one is important for parents, counselors, and higher education professionals working with accelerated students who are looking to receive dual credit. It is important to remember; however, that although these accelerated opportunities exist, they are not always accessible for African American students. Although Black students have the right to access these opportunities (Ford, Dickson, Davis, Trotman Scott, & Grantham, 2018), they are often missing from majority-minority schools, urban schools, and those with high proportions of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Advanced Placement. The AP program has been run by the College Board, the non-profit organization that also produces the SAT, since 1955. Since that time, the program has grown to include 38 different courses that can be offered by high schools around the country (College Board, 2019a). Student participation in AP courses has grown over the years as well, with over two million students across the country now participating (Kramer, 2016). It is at the discretion of the school or district as to which AP courses are offered at a particular school. For students in AP classes, the way to obtain college credit is through taking an end of course exam (Hertberg-Davis et al., 2006). The College Board charges a $94 exam fee for students (College Board, 2019b), and the exams are scored on a scale of 1-5. More than 90% of colleges and universities have policies allowing students to receive credit for AP test scores (Rogers, 2004); however, which tests are accepted, the minimum required scores, and how much credit is received is dependent upon the institution (Freismuth, 2017).

International Baccalaureate. The IB program was founded in 1968 as an international education organization with the mission of "creating a better world through education." The organization offers four different programs: Primary Years, Middle Years, Diploma, and Career-related (International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2019). The diploma programme usually comprises the last two years of high school and is the program through which students can potentially receive college credit (Freismuth, 2017). Like the AP program, IB courses include end of course exams, which are scored on a 1-7 scale. However, within the diploma programme, IB courses are offered at two levels: higher level and standard level, with higher level courses offer a deeper level of content than standard level (IBO, 2019). When considering using these courses for dual credit, it is important to know what kinds of courses (higher level, standard level, or both) universities accept, and what the minimum score requirements are for each type of test. If attention is not paid to this, students can lose opportunity to receive credit because of the level of course that was taken or the score achieved on the end of course exam.

Dual Enrollment. The final type of dual credit is dual or concurrent enrollment. Dual enrollment occurs when a student is still enrolled in high school but takes regular college courses in addition to or in place of high school coursework (Pretlow & Wathington, 2014). This can occur through a partnership between a school district and a local community college or four-year university. It can also occur as a result of an early college high school, where high school students attend high school on a college campus and can take advantage of specific university courses. Dual enrollment saw a sharp increase in the 1980s when state laws were changing to recognize the need to provide opportunities for high school students who were ready for the rigor of college courses (Brody & Muratori, 2015). Unlike AP and IB, end of course exams are not the pathway to credit from dual enrollment; instead, students receive traditional college transcripts

that are processed similarly to a college student who is transferring from one university to another (Loveland, 2017). After completing high school, these students may stay at the university where they took courses and continue to matriculate to graduation, or they may go to a different institution and transfer the credits there.

Transfer Credit Policies. Once students have taken advantage of dual credit opportunities, the challenge becomes navigating the inconsistencies among university transfer credit policies (Freismuth, 2017) and figuring out how to make the most of their pre-college academic experiences. The policies that address students who are transferring from one university to another are the same as those that govern students who are first-time college students looking to transfer credits. Some institutions have already established articulation agreements, which means that an agreement has already been formed so that students know exactly which courses transfer and how much credit they will receive (Brody & Muratori, 2015). The elements of a university transfer credit policy will be described here using an example from a large HBCU, Howard University.

Example of an HBCU Transfer Credit Policy

Howard University's transfer credit policy includes four separate documents that are available on their website: (1) the Undergraduate Transfer Credit Policy, (2) the Howard University Credit Hour Assignment Policy, (3) an Advanced Placement Exam Credit chart, and (4) a list of institutions with whom Howard has articulation agreements. A summary of the documents is presented in Table 5.2 as they relate to each type of dual credit opportunity.

Table 5.2

Summary of Howard University's Transfer Credit Documents

Type of Dual Credit	Policy Elements

Advanced Placement	• Scores must be sent from the College Board • Minimum score to receive credit from university is 3 • Departments may set higher cutoff scores • Higher scores count for more courses • 3-10 total credit hours possible from one test, depending on subject and score
International Baccalaureate	• IB certificate must be submitted to the Office of Admissions • Scoring a 4 allows credit for a first level course • Scores of 5 or above allow credit to be awarded for the first two levels of a course
Dual enrollment	• Official transcripts must be presented • Must be a comparable course offered • Maximum of 60 credit hours can be transferred • Only courses with grades of "C" or higher can transfer • Credits are transferable; grades do not impact grade point average • Conversions are made if the previous institution operates on a different academic schedule

In addition to the elements discussed in Table 5.2, Howard's policy also discusses credit that can be awarded for Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations, as they often receive a high number of international students from this region. This provides a good example for other institutions with high populations of international students; advanced placement exams from other countries can also be important to include in a transfer credit policy. Howard's transfer credit policy includes many essential elements; however, a few issues may arise, especially for African American accelerants. The policy was unclear on how determinations are made about the comparable content of courses, so discretion may be used on which courses are allowed to

transfer if not already part of an articulation agreement. Students who have taken many AP, IB, or dual enrollment courses may accumulate more than sixty credit hours before completing high school. The ability to transfer more credits may allow them to have additional opportunities in college due to the reduced number of credit hours left to graduate. The AP credit document stipulates that students "may receive credit for work completed in secondary school" (Howard University, 2019).

Additionally, although the AP credit document gave unambiguous guidance on required scores and courses that aligned with AP courses, the same was not true for IB. There are a variety of IB courses as well, but the policy did not differentiate between higher level and standard level IB courses, nor did it explicitly explain which IB classes aligned with which Howard courses. For accelerated students, being able to examine and understand the aspects of the university credit policy is an important part of finding a good fit for college and planning to make the most of their college experience. Students participate in advanced opportunities and attend college for a variety of reasons and understanding these rationales in important for helping students to navigate the college choice and transfer credit process.

Student Experiences with Transfer Credits

Black accelerants looking to attend HBCUs may have several motivations for transferring credits received in high school. From a previous study (see Chapter 4), common motives for Black accelerants transferring credits at Howard University were to graduate early, to take additional courses, to add another degree, or for their enjoyment. Because accelerated students are already accustomed to being younger or moving through coursework at a faster pace, this natural inclination often carries over into their college experiences. Younger students are in the unique position of having extra time but often preferred to save this time to break after college or

to get a jump start on graduate school. By transferring credits and graduating early, students were able to enter the workforce and gain practical experience before applying to and attending graduate school. When transferring credits, these students were able to navigate the transfer credit process effectively. They did express that there were some credits they were unable to transfer; dual enrollment courses for which there was no equivalent course, and standard level IB courses for which credit was not offered.

Because of the various reasons that students take advantage of dual credit opportunities, some students do not transfer credits to college. From the previous study, it was evident that accelerated students valued the college learning experience and the level of academic rigor that comes from a college course. Because of this, one student chose not to transfer any of the AP credits she had for classes related to her major because she wanted to experience the content at the college level. And although some students transferred credits, they did not use this to lighten their workload, but rather to take advantage of additional courses, internships, or other professional development. Although each student is unique in their needs and goals, there are general recommendations that can be offered to counselors and higher education professionals who are responsible for navigating this process with students.

Recommendations

K-12 Counselors

It is essential that K-12 counselors know about transfer credit policies to help students take full advantage of the opportunities that are available to them. Four recommendations for counselors are to:

- understand students' rationales for completing advanced coursework,
- provide information and equitable access to dual enrollment as well as AP and IB,

- become familiar with transfer policies to plan for courses that are likely to be transferrable, and
- become familiar with articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions.

Guidance counselors should meet with high school students early and consistently to ensure that students understand their options and can plan coursework appropriately. Vertical articulation of coursework from secondary to postsecondary education is important to ensure that students can receive as much credit as possible. For students looking to transfer credits, this is especially important to saving time and money. However, counselors must also understand that some students desire additional academic challenges in high school, but their postsecondary interests are not best served by transferring some or all of their potential dual credits. Starting early and designing a plan that best meets the students' long-term goals is important.

Another recommendation is for counselors to encourage a variety of options and a balance of AP, IB, and dual enrollment options. Because policies are not consistent from one institution to another, dual enrollment courses give students the experience of college-level coursework that they can benefit from even if the classes themselves do not transfer. They also give students the flexibility to explore a variety of interests, which may help them to make decisions regarding education and career interests. Students who attend school with an IB program can benefit from the higher-level thinking that IB courses require but can also take AP and dual enrollment courses since some schools do not accept all types of IB test scores. And although most colleges accept AP scores, score cutoffs differ, so being aware of the general range or specific score necessary for a particular postsecondary institution is helpful in the planning process.

Helping students plan for the types of courses they should take also requires counselors to familiarize themselves with university transfer credit policies. Although there is no way that counselors can know the ins and outs of every school's policy, they should be familiar with local institutions, and take the time to help students find and understand the policies of institutions they are interested in attending. Parents can also play a part by helping counselors to be aware of the institutions their child is interested in attending and finding the transfer credit policy to assist students and counselors in the planning process. It is vital that counselors keep an open mind to students' choices of institutions. Especially for Black accelerants looking at HBCUs, they may have a variety of institutions they are interested in, so understanding how their credits may transfer at different institutions can be an important factor in the college choice process.

Similar to being familiar with transfer credit policies, counselors should be familiar with articulation agreements between local community colleges and four-year institutions. For students who are taking advantage of dual enrollment programs, the use of articulation agreements can allow students' credits to transfer seamlessly to a variety of four-year institutions around the nation. For example, California's community colleges have had a transfer agreement since 2015 with thirty-seven HBCUs, guaranteeing entrance to transfer students meeting certain academic requirements (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2019).

Higher Education Professionals

Just as high school counselors bear much of the burden for helping secondary students plan appropriately for their postsecondary goals, higher education professionals, especially academic advisors, are responsible for assisting students in ensuring that credit hours are correctly transferred to college and planning with Black accelerants to take advantage of

opportunities in college to continue their academic and professional development. Higher education professionals should:

- understand that accelerated students may come in with significant amounts of credits,
- identify multiple interests to allow students to add additional majors or minors,
- create accelerated programs enabling students to complete dual degrees/programs, and
- work with students to develop modified course schemes for chosen majors.

Because they are accustomed to moving at a faster pace and may be able to handle multiple types of advanced coursework simultaneously, accelerated students sometimes accumulate significant amounts of credit hours before completing high school. Higher education professionals working with students wishing to transfer credits should be aware that if their school has a cap on transferable hours, students may need to have a waiver to transfer all their hours or counseling on which courses would be most useful to transfer. Understanding students' long-term plans such as early graduation, honors programs, or dual degrees may influence the institution's ability to accommodate students coming in with significant amounts of transfer credits.

Students who are accelerated may be interested in multiple degree programs, majors, or minors. One way in which higher education professionals can help students is by providing them with guidance on integrating multiple programs and using transfer credits to reduce the total degree completion time. Students may be open to career interest inventories or other tools to help them hone in on their interests, or they may already have developed ideas of how to pursue multiple career fields. Similarly, higher education professionals and institutions can create dual degree programs and accelerated programs to draw high ability and accelerated students to take advantage of these opportunities.

Another way in which higher education professionals can help accelerated Black students is to work with students to create modified course schedules for their majors. Students with transfer credits may have already covered many general education courses and advising students on additional classes related to their major or minor may be helpful. Additionally, some students may be looking to graduate early, so knowing and explaining that process to students can help them stay on track and meet all degree requirements on an accelerated timeline. Finally, some students may be looking to explore various interests through their college coursework and take classes that are not directly related to their degree programs. Meeting students' expressed desires throughout this process can help students have a fulfilling academic experience in college.

Conclusion

There are many factors that students must consider when choosing a college. For Black accelerants, their college choice process is complicated by many factors, including attending an HBCU or PWI. Once the significant factors are understood, it becomes apparent that helping students best utilize dual credit opportunities is important to the success of Black accelerants in college and beyond. These students are bright and often ready to continue on accelerated paces in college, so making the transition to college an academically and financially smooth process can make the difference in where they choose to attend school.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation's purpose was to examine the K-12 experiences of African American accelerants and their college choice factors and processes related to the choice between PWIs and HBCUs. By approaching the topic with a mixed methods methodology, this dissertation was able to capture the voices of accelerated Blacks students, while also looking at a broader range of student experiences through the use of data from the Freshman Survey.

Summary

The review of literature on gifted Black students, acceleration, and college choice revealed that systemic racism has historically attempted to keep African Americans from accessing quality education at every level from elementary school to college. However, for years, scholars argued against the false arguments that Black children are not gifted and that there is no place in higher education for African Americans. By continuing to excel academically despite race-related issues such as microaggressions and stereotype threat, and by creating institutions of higher education where Black minds could learn and thrive, high ability African Americans have consistently beaten the odds and continued to achieve. This dissertation sought to expand upon the current research on high ability African American students by specifically examining those students who have been academically accelerated.

Study One concluded that, in general, African American accelerants consider college choice factors that are similar to nonaccelerated African American students. Financial assistance, academic reputation, religious affiliation, and location have all been indicated to be important

issues for African American students when considering colleges. However, several factors distinguished accelerated students at PWIS from those at HBCUs. Black accelerants at PWIs found the institution's academic reputation to be a high priority and were more likely to desire a school closer to home, have high regard for parental advice, and be drawn to schools that offered financial aid. Black accelerants at HBCUs were more likely to consider the ability to take online classes, as well as the ability to make money and gain a general appreciation of ideas. Like students at PWIs, they were also influenced by significant others, but students at HBCUs were more profoundly influenced by relatives than parents. The study was correlational, and therefore it cannot be said that the consideration of certain college choice factors caused students to choose a particular type of institution; however, the data does indicate that there are important differences in the college choice rationales of students at different types of institutions.

Study Two found several consistent themes among the three accelerated Howard alumna who were interviewed about their experiences. In their K-12 education, the participants described memories of parent engagement with their acceleration and broader education and mixed experiences with peer social relationships. They also spoke about both the positive and negative impact of influential teachers, and the additional accelerative opportunities they were able to take advantage of following their initial whole grade acceleration. In the college choice process, the participants described the significance of following a family tradition of attending an HBCU, as well as the importance of finding a kinship network to help them feel comfortable with going away to college at a younger age. They also spoke of the merit-based scholarships they were able to receive. Negative aspects of the college choice process included tension with parents over the choice set of school to which they wanted to apply and negative feelings about prestigious PWIs such as Ivy Leagues. This study was limited in the type of HBCU and gender of Black

accelerants but provided a starting point for research in this area. Accelerated African American students should continue to be given opportunities to delve into their experiences and juxtapose their counternarratives to the experiences on those students who have not been historically marginalized in education.

Implications

From these studies, it can be concluded that there are many factors students, in general, consider when choosing a college. The process of considering these factors is more complicated for Black accelerants, especially those who are considering HBCUs. Both K-12 and higher education professionals play important roles in the college choice process, and the information from these studies can help African American accelerants at various stages of their academic careers. Allowing students to reflect on their acceleration can help educators learn more about best practices for facilitating whole grade acceleration and early entrance. And higher education professionals, especially HBCUs who are seeking to increase their enrollment of high ability Black students, can work to develop strategies to recruit and retain accelerated students by providing merit-based scholarships and creating programs to support accelerated students in their transition process.

Future Research Directions

The data from these studies provide preliminary ideas about how African American accelerants experience their K-12 education and how acceleration impacts their college choice process. Future research should continue to explore accelerants K-12 experiences with special attention to the types of schools, racial makeup, and acceleration policies of schools where Black students are accelerated. Future research would also look for differences in Black accelerants' experiences based on the five dimensions of acceleration. When it comes to the college choice

process for Black accelerants, future research is needed to understand the experiences of male students who are accelerated and chose to attend HBCUs. Additionally, because of the diversity among HBCUs, understanding student choice between different types of institutions can lead to a better understanding of students' rationale. Finally, these studies were limited by the fact that they only examine college choice from the student perspective. Understanding the experiences of parents and families, as well as educators and higher education professionals would provide for a more comprehensive understanding of African American accelerants and their unique experiences.

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APPENDIX A

STEPWISE LOGISTIC REGRESSION BLOCKS

Block #1 - Financial:

Could not afford first choice

Cost of attendance

Not offered financial aid

Offered financial assistance

Block #2 - Academic:

General education

Learn more about things

Make a more cultured person

Early action program

National rankings

Information from website

Academic reputation

Block #3 - Social:

Visit to campus

Size of college

Social reputation

Block #4 - Family:

Live near home

My parents wanted me to come here

My relatives wanted me to come here

Block #5 - Advisement:

High school counselor advised

Private counselor advised me

Teacher advised me

Block #6 - Future Aspirations:

Admission to top graduate programs

Better job

Graduates get good jobs

Make more money

Block #7 - Institutional Characteristics:

Athletic department recruited

Online classes

Religious affiliation

APPENDIX B

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Questions:

1. How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their K-12 education and acceleration experiences?
2. How do African American accelerants who attended HBCUs describe their college choice process and matriculation?
3. What are the university transfer policies used to award advanced standing to students at HBCUs?

General Probes:

- You mentioned _____, tell me more about that.
- You mentioned _____, what was that like for you
- You mentioned _____, how was that?

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about how you ended up being accelerated.

   Possible Probes: How old were you?, What grade did you skip?, Were you tested?
2. Tell me about a significant school experience you had during the first year after you were accelerated.
3. How did others (parents, teachers, siblings, classmates, etc.) react to your acceleration?

4. Tell me about some academic experiences or opportunities you were able to take advantage of in the years after you were accelerated.
5. Did you participate in any AP, IB, dual enrollment, or similar programs in high school?
6. Tell me about your experience being an African-American student in the K-12 schools you attended.

   Possible Probes: What kind of schools did you attend? What were the racial demographics of your school? Your neighborhood?
7. Do you think your acceleration experience was impacted by the fact that you are African-American? If so, how?
8. When it came time to look at postsecondary options, what did you perceived to be your choices?
9. Walk me through your thinking as you were considering what college to attend. What factors did you consider?
10. Do you believe there are any special considerations that younger students have to consider when transitioning to college? If so, what are they?
11. Describe your transition from high school to college. If there were special considerations, how did you navigate those?
12. If you participated in IB, AP, dual enrollment, or other programs, how was the process of receiving credit for those courses from your institution?

APPENDIX C

HOWARD UNIVERSITY TRANSFER CREDIT DOCUMENTS

Undergraduate Transfer Credit Policy

Howard University accepts academic courses from regionally accredited colleges and universities as transfer credits. For a new student entering Howard University, and upon receipt of the student's official transcript(s), transfer credits will be evaluated by using the following criteria.

College Credits:

- Transfer courses must be of comparable content, academic level, and scope to the curricular offerings at Howard University
- Credit hour(s) assignment to transfer courses will be *semester credit hours.* If the originating institution is other than the semester system, the appropriate conversion of credit hour (s) will take place by the Office of Enrollment Management.
- Students must have earned a grade of "C" or higher in academic courses in order for the courses to be transferred to Howard University.
- For transfer course credits that are discipline specific, the Office of Enrollment Management will request a review and assignment of the transfer credits by the specific discipline
- The maximum of 60 credit hours from an accredited institution can be transferred. (Note: Howard University requires that the last 30 credit hours for an undergraduate degree be taken at Howard University)
- Credit hours are transferable to Howard University, not grades. Therefore, grades for academic courses transferred will not be included in the overall GPA of a student
- All transcripts from international institutions must be evaluated by World Educational Services (WES)

Credit by Advanced Placement (AP) Examination:

New students entering Howard University may receive course credit for academic courses completed in secondary schools under the Advanced Placement Program administered by the College Board.

- AP score must be sent directly from the College Board to the Office of the Enrollment Management
- AP credit hours are awarded by Howard University according to Exam Credit Advanced Placement Chart (https://www2.howard.edu/sites/default/files/APCredit.pdf)
- A minimum exam score of 3 is required for each subject that a student wants to receive transfer credit for an AP examination. However, some departments may require a score of 4 or 5 to receive the transfer credit for an AP examination

Credit by International Baccalaureate (IB) Examination:

Howard University will evaluate and award course credits for an IB examination score, based on the following criteria.

- Submission of an IB certificate directly to the Office of Admissions
- Score of 4 or better on IB exam will result in awarding credits for the first level of the course
- Score of 5, 6, or 7 –award first and second levels of the course (e.g. Biology Higher Level score of 5, 6, or 7 and receive credit for BIOL 101 and 102

Credit by Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination:

Howard University will award transfer credits as follows for scores ranging from 1-3

- Unit 1 = 1 course in specified curriculum/discipline sequence
- Unit 2 = 2 courses specified curriculum/discipline sequence

Howard University Credit Hour Assignment Policy

The Credit Hour Assignment Policy is intended to ensure that the number credits awarded per each transferable course reflects Howard University's academic rigor and contact hour requirement. University transfer credit hour values are based on the credit hour value assigned by the originating institution and the appropriate conversion is made to yield semester credit hours when deemed necessary. If the academic calendar of the originating institution is not following a semester system, the appropriate conversion of the assessed credit hours of course work will take place based on the calendar of the originating institution and the formula for converting to semester credit hours. (Quarter hours are multiplied by .667 to convert them to semester hours)

The Office of Admission and Office of the Registrar evaluate General Education courses. Core courses are subject to the approval of the individual schools and colleges and are submitted via the Advanced Standing form to the Office of the Registrar. Credit hours are submitted to reflect the initial values and converted in the Office of the Registrar if necessary.

Graduate level courses are subject to the same policy but may differ per academic program accreditation requirements.

Semester Calendar Credit Hours

Definition of a Credit Hour
In accordance with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates:

1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester;
2. At least an equivalent amount of work as outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practicum, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.

Contact hour or clock hour: A unit of measure that represents an hour of scheduled instruction given to students.

Credit or credit hour: A unit of measure representing the equivalent of an hour (50 minutes) of instruction per week over the entire term. It is applied toward the total number of credit hours needed for completing the requirements of a degree, diploma or certificate, or other award.)

Howard University operates on an academic year divided into two semesters of 15-16 weeks, with a winter break of 2-3 weeks and a summer session of 10-12 weeks, plus additional shorter breaks. The actual amount of academic work that goes into a single semester credit hour is calculated as follows:

- One lecture (taught) or seminar (discussion) credit hour represents 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time and 2 hours of student preparation time. Most lecture and seminar courses are awarded 3 credit hours. Over an entire semester, this formula represents at least 45 hours of class time and 90 hours of student preparation.

- One laboratory credit hour represents 1 hour per week of lecture or discussion time plus 1-2 hours per week of scheduled supervised or independent laboratory work, and 2 hours of student preparation time. Most laboratory courses are awarded up to 4 credit hours. This calculation represents at least 45 hours of class time, between 45 and 90 hours of laboratory time, and 90 hours of student preparation per semester.

- One practice credit hour (supervised clinical rounds, visual or performing art studio, supervised student teaching, field work, etc.) represents 3-4 hours per week of supervised and /or independent practice. This in turn represents between 45 and 60 hours of work per semester. Blocks of 3 practice credit hours, which equate to a studio or practice course, represent between 135 and 180 total hours of academic work per semester.

- One independent study (thesis or dissertation research) hour is calculated similarly to practice credit hours.

- Internship or apprenticeship credit hours are determined by negotiation between the supervising faculty and the work supervisor at the cooperating site, both of whom must judge and certify different aspects of the student's work. The credit formula is similar to that for practice credit.

A typical bachelor's degree program of study on a semester calendar requires at least 120 credit hours to be earned by the student. Normal full-time registration is usually 15 credit hours per semester or 30 per academic year (shortfalls can be made up in summer sessions or independent study). This roughly translates into at least 30-40 courses (depending on the major subject and thus the proportion of types of credit hours earned) and represents at least 5,400 – and probably more – actual hours of dedicated academic work for a non-science or non-art concentration, and well over that total for graduates of programs in the sciences, engineering, fine arts, or performing arts. A master's degree program requiring at least 33 credit hours and including a research thesis or project represents over 4,000 actual hours of supervised and unsupervised (independent research) study, while a doctoral program can represent 8,000 or more actual hours of advanced study and research beyond the master's degree.

Exam Credit

Advanced Placement

Entering students may receive credit for work completed in secondary school under the Advanced Placement (AP) Program administered by the College Board. In order to be considered for credit, official score reports must be received. In each subject for which credit is sought, a minimum score of 3 is required (some subjects may require scores of 4 or 5).

Advanced Placement Course	Score	Howard Equivalent Course	Total Credits
Biology	4	BIOL 101	4
Biology	5	BIOL 101 & 102	8
Chemistry	4	CHEM 003 & 005	5
Chemistry	5	CHEM 003, 004, 005 & 006	10
Economics- Macro	4 or 5	ECON 001	3
Economics- Micro	4 or 5	ECON 002	3
English Language	5	ENGL002	3
English Literature	5	ENGL 014	3
English Literature	6	ENGL 014 & 015	6
US History	4	HIST 009	3
US History	5	HIST 009 & 010	6
World History	4	HIST 001	3
World History	5	HIST 001 & 002	6
Math (AB)	4 or 5	MATH 156	4
Math (BC)	5	MATH 156 & 157	8
Statistics	4	MATH 009	4
World Languages (All German, Russian, Spanish…etc.)	3	Credit at the 003 Level (Exempt from 001-003)	3
World Languages (All German, Russian, Spanish…etc.)	4 or 5	Credit at the 003 & 004 Level (Exempt from 001-004)	6
World Language Literature	3	Credit 040 (Exempt from 001-003)	3
World Language Literature	4 or 5	Credit 040 & 050 (Exempt from 001-004)	6
Physics	4	PHYS 001	5
Physics	5	PHYS 001 & 002	10
Political Science	4 or 5	POLS 010	3
Psychology	4	PSYC 050	3

Articulation Agreement

An Articulation Agreement is a formal agreement between Howard University and an institution of higher education or a university system that allows students to transfer credits to Howard University for specific degree programs. The agreement specifies the acceptability of transfer courses toward meeting specific degree requirements.

Howard University currently has articulation agreements with the following institutions.

Affiliated College/University	Howard University School/College
Baltimore City Community College	College of Arts and Sciences
Central State University	School of Education
City College of Chicago	Engineering, Architecture & Computer Sciences
City College of San Francisco	Engineering, Architecture & Computer Sciences
College of Southern Maryland	Howard University
Convention-Cadre De Codirection De These	College of Arts and Sciences
El Camino Community College	Engineering, Architecture & Computer Sciences
Hampton University	College of Arts and Sciences
Lansing Community College	College of Arts and Sciences
Los Angeles Community College District • East Los Angeles College • Los Angeles City College • Los Angeles Harbor College • Los Angeles Mission College • Los Angeles Southwest College • Los Angeles Trade-Tech College • Los Angeles Valley College • Pierce College • West Los Angeles College	College of Arts and Sciences
Massachusetts Community Colleges • Berkshire Community College • Bristol Community College • Bunker Hill Community College • Cape Cod Community College • Greenfield Community College • Holyoke Community College • Massachusetts Bay Community College • Massasoit Community College • Middlesex Community College • Mt. Wachusett Community College • North Shore Community College • Northern Essex Community College • Quinsigamond Community College • Roxbury Community College • Springfield Community College	College of Arts and Sciences
Montgomery College	College of Arts and Sciences

Affiliated College/University	Howard University School/College
Montgomery College	Division of Pharmacy, Nursing & Allied Health Science
Northern VA Community College	Engineering, Architecture & Computer Sciences
Oakland Community College	Howard University
Prince George's Community College	Howard University
Prince George's Community College 2	Division of Pharmacy, Nursing & Allied Health Science
Prince George's County Public Schools	Howard University
San Diego Community College District • Mesa • Miramar College • City College	College of Arts and Sciences
San Diego City College	Howard University
University of Cape Town	School of Social Work
University of Illinois at Chicago	Division of Pharmacy, Nursing & Allied Health Science
University of the District of Columbia Community College	Howard University
El Camino Community College	Engineering, Architecture & Computer Sciences
Lansing Community College	College of Arts and Sciences
Lansing Community College	Howard University
Lansing Community College	Howard University
College of Southern Maryland	Howard University