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## Barriers Faced by Nontraditional Black Female Students at a Historically Black College or University

Denata Williams

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BARRIERS FACED BY NONTRADITIONAL BLACK FEMALE STUDENTS AT A  
HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

By  
Denata Williams

A Dissertation  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Education  
in Curriculum and Leadership  
(HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION)

Columbus State University  
Columbus, GA

December 2018

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## DEDICATION

To my mother and father who have encouraged me throughout my entire life to never give up and to achieve my goals. I would not be the woman that I am today if I had not had both of my parents in my life. To Dennis Alphonza Williams Jr, I am so proud to be called your sister and to dedicate my doctoral degree in your name. I miss you so much, and, even though the road seemed rough without you, I never forgot that you were always in my heart, in my smile, in my tears, and in my laugh. I love you, and you are gone but never forgotten.

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I want to thank all my friends and family members who pushed me to my limits and encouraged me when I wanted to give up. I have stayed up many nights burning the midnight oil, and you all called me to encourage me to move forward.

To Dr. Pamela Lemoine, I will never forget you! You have been with me through this process from the beginning to the end, and I am so thankful for it all. I would like to send a special thank you to Dr. Linda Grimsley for helping me get through the IRB process and helping me with any issues I had with my dissertation. Also, I want to acknowledge Dr. Marguerite Yates for her encouragement, as well and for agreeing to be my chair. I dare not forget my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for providing me with the strength to endure the long road of completing my degree.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). There was an extensive amount of literature regarding barriers faced by nontraditional students; however, there was a limited amount of research and literature on the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and faculty perceptions regarding these barriers. The study was conducted at a HBCU in the southern part of the United States. Participants in the study included five HBCU faculty and five nontraditional Black female students. In this qualitative descriptive case study, focus groups, surveys, and faculty interviews were used to collect data on perceived barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The survey, which included open-ended and closed-ended questions; a focus group, where participants were asked open-ended questions to obtain personal experiences of the barriers encountered; and faculty interviews revealed perceived barriers. The barriers identified were the following: situational barriers, institutional barriers, and financial barriers. These findings regarding nontraditional Black female students' perceptions of barriers faced at HBCUs were also found in other research studies in the literature. This study concluded that faculty's perceptions and nontraditional Black female students' perceptions on the barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at an HBCU were similar. The research indicated that faculty are aware of the barriers that nontraditional Black female students face and want to assist with preventing these barriers from happening or having a negative impact on these students.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Overview

Over the years, higher education experienced changes, which improved how students were educated. Many different student populations increased in colleges and universities: African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Indians, traditional students, as well as nontraditional students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016), between the years of 2003-2013, the number of nontraditional students ages 25 years or older, increased by 19% (NCES, 2016). It has been discovered for over the previous decades, the number of nontraditional students has grown tremendously over the past three decades. Researchers have determined that this population of adult learners is described as a group of students that have been identified as being the fastest-growing segment of all the population groups in higher education (Brazzile, 1989). Even though the nontraditional student population continuously has grown, nontraditional students faced different challenges than traditional students. These various challenges that nontraditional students face need to be explored to serve student needs better. For the purposes of this study, the researcher focused on barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Nontraditional students would best be described as students who were over the age of 25, delayed enrollment for college, usually worked full-time, had families they supported, could be single parents, and were financially independent (Choy, 2002; Pelletier, 2010). Research by Johnson suggested that nontraditional students composed at



least 40% of the student population in higher education, and of that number, 20% worked full-time, 60% were enrolled at four-year institutions, and the rest attended two-year colleges (Johnson, 2013). In a report published by The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), CLASP concluded more nontraditional students were attending college and the population was very diverse as it pertained to race, age, personal relationship status, and family obligations (CLASP, 2015).

The nontraditional student population grew over the years. Wyatt (2011) indicated nontraditional students in the United States were a significant segment of growth in HBCUs. The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that institutions have enrolled 38% of individuals over the age of 25, and one-fourth were over 30 (NCES, 2014). Due to the vast increase of nontraditional students at these institutions, it has been projected that enrollment will increase another 23% by 2019 in adults over the age of 25 (NCES, 2014).

Black students were excluded from education in the United States during the antebellum period, which ranged from the 18th century until the beginning of the U.S. Civil War. European Americans did not allow Blacks to attend their colleges and universities (Biehlmann, 2016), and by the antebellum period, states had laws prohibiting the education of Black slaves. W. E. B. Du Bois and Augustus Dill study were done in 1900 and 1910 revealed limited higher education access for Black students in the South. By 1910, it was determined that only 658 Black women and 2,450 Black men graduated from colleges and universities in the South (Evans, 2002). Despite great resistance for educating African Americans from the U.S. higher education system, African Americans proved to be resilient and ultimately established their own colleges known today as

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Bradford & Montgomery, 2010). Expanded access to higher education for nontraditional Black female students increased with the following events: The Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the Women's Rights movements, Supreme Court decisions in *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896), *Brown v Board of Education* (1954), the establishment of HBCUs, the Government Issue (GI) Bills, and the Adult Education Acts.

The Morrill Act of 1862 provided the foundation for the Adult Education Act of 1962. The Morrill Act of 1862 was the political work of Justin Morrill of Vermont. Morrill played a prominent role in the passage of the act, and the political astuteness to be successful in the process; however, Jonathan Turner had the initial idea for the Morrill Act of 1862. The Morrill Act of 1862 was used to establish colleges and universities for the benefit of agriculture and mechanic arts (Herren & Hillison, 1996). The purpose of the 1862 Morrill Act was to create an endowment for colleges and build at least one college in each state with the funds provided by the act. The colleges were required to offer scientific or classical studies, which would teach students in the areas of agriculture and mechanic arts and provide an education for the industrial classes and professionals (Morrill Land-Grant Act, 1862). The Morrill Act catered specifically to Caucasian students, but after Congress passed the second Morrill Act, African American education was enhanced significantly (Redd, 1998). The second Morrill Act required that separate higher education systems have at least one land-grant college for African Americans. This law stipulated that land-grant funding is used to ensure that Black colleges and universities are equal to that of Caucasians colleges (Redd, 1998).

The American Women's Rights Movement had origins in the Civil Rights Movement (Evans, 1979; Freeman, 1975). The Women's Rights Movement evolved during the 19th century, initially emphasizing the right for women to vote. The civil rights movement was one of the big contributors to the Women's Movement (Evans, 1979; Freeman, 1975; McAdam, 1988).

Government Issued Bills were the most extensive direct scholarship program in the United States that provided funds for veteran in higher education. The 1941 to 1955 period marked by two major wars: World War II and the Korean War (Stanley, 2003). Educational assistance was provided to veterans after each war ended. The GI Bills were the most influential legislation that was ever produced by the federal government to impact the United States socially, economically, and politically (Batten, 2011). Veterans who served in the wars between 1940 and 1955 represented the bulk of veterans who benefited from the GI Bill. At least 70% of all men and women who turned 21 between the years of 1940 and 1955 were assured of free college plus a stipend under one of the two GI Bills (Stanley, 2003). At least 18% of the college-educated males in 1960 could claim that they received financial support from the GI Bill subsidy (Committee on Veteran Affairs, 1972). The benefits dispersed were given to veterans instead of the colleges and technical schools. The GI Bill provided benefits to all veterans regardless of race.

The Adult Education Act of 1966 was identified as the first direct and sustained effort implemented by the federal government for adult education, other than vocational purposes. The Adult Education Act of 1966 impacted many nontraditional students (Rose, 1991). The Adult Education Act of 1966 provided funds to help nontraditional

students pay for college, encouraged them to attend college, and increased programs that helped provide support to nontraditional students with learning shortages (Erye, 1998). The Adult Education Act of 1966 provided support for basic education as well as vocational training and working training on the job. The passage of the Adult Education Act of 1966 helped nontraditional students advance because of the appropriations provided to the nontraditional student population (Rose, 1991). Over the years, an emphasis was placed on widen education to include secondary education. The expansion of the Adult Education Act of 1966 was necessary to provide adult learners with essential knowledge, skills, and abilities to serve in society (Education Amendments, 1978).

#### Statement of the Problem

Researchers suggested that person's level of higher education correlated to lower probability of unemployment and higher earning potential (Doyle & Gorbunov, 2010; Kenner & Weinerman, 2011; Powell, 2009; Rummann & Florence, 2010; United States Department of Labor, 2012). Nontraditional Black female learners chose to attend higher education institutions for a wide variety of reasons, such as increased educational requirements in the job market, a financial need to support themselves or family, or the ability to increase or change job skills to obtain or keep a job. Nontraditional students need academic support and services to maintain success. These academic support services are tutoring, financial aid advising, and personal counseling-available off campus, during and outside of traditional business hours. These were services that HBCUs provided to their students (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007)

The nontraditional population grew over the years. Nontraditional students were one of the largest segments of students in higher education (Wyatt, 2011). Researchers

suggested that at least 38% of students enrolled in higher education fit the definition of a nontraditional student (NCES, 2014). Researchers projected a growth of another 20% of nontraditional students by 2019 (NCES, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).

Identification of potential barriers could help nontraditional Black female students overcome possible barriers and provide data to HBCUs to help better address the needs of these students. The researcher explored barriers that Black nontraditional females faced at a HBCU.

### Research Questions

The researcher proposed to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What were the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students concerning the barriers they faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of the HBCU faculty related to the barriers nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 3: To what extent was there a relationship between the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and HBCU faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students?

The enrollment of nontraditional Black female students in higher education might be hampered by barriers. Ascertaining perceived barriers by faculty might help nontraditional Black females enroll and persist in HBCUs. Identifying ways that HBCUs could eliminate or reduce these barriers for nontraditional Black female students would benefit both the students and HBCUs.

Administrators, faculty, and staff at HBCUs could identify factors that were preventing matriculation among nontraditional Black female students. Some colleges and

universities offered incentives for the adult learner. These incentives presented a starting point to support nontraditional Black female students; however, these incentives might not address all of the barriers faced by this population. The researcher proposed to study the perceived barriers faced by Black nontraditional female students at a HBCU.

### Significance of the Study

The region needed more educated female workers to create a productive environment to reduce the unemployment rate and to benefit from an educated workforce. Policy makers would not have to extend unemployment benefits due to nontraditional Black female students lacking the proper education to find jobs. Students might be equipped to enter the workforce with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to fulfill jobs that were in demand. Employers would gain workers valuable to the company or organization.

### Procedures

Nontraditional Black female students were the target population along with faculty members at the university. The researcher used the following instruments to collect data for research study:

1. Surveys were conducted with nontraditional Black females at a HBCU.
2. A focus group was conducted, which included nontraditional Black females at a HBCU.
3. Interviews were conducted among the faculty who work at the HBCU.

## Research Design

This qualitative descriptive case study explored nontraditional Black female students and faculty at a HBCU. The qualitative descriptive case study shares a comparable goal among other qualitative research designs that is to seek to reach an understanding of a specific phenomenon from the perceptions of the individuals undergoing the particular phenomenon (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Qualitative research methods focus on exposing perceptions and interpretations of reality (Creswell, 2013; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Qualitative research allowed for content analysis, had some flexibility, and was emergent in design. Qualitative research used a small population of participants, targeted for a more in-depth study (Hays & Singh, 2012).

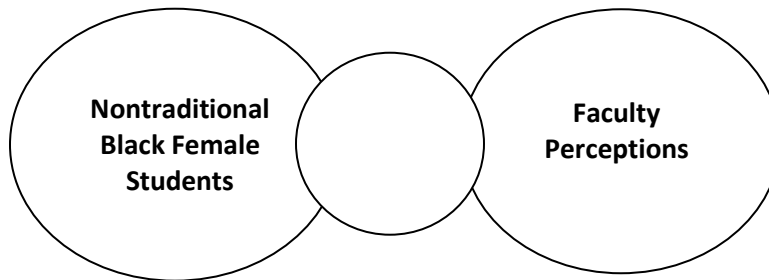
One of the strengths of qualitative descriptive research design is that it provided a narrative of the participant's experience (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The qualitative descriptive research design allowed the participants to express their actual experiences of the barriers they faced at the HBCU. Qualitative research provided a broader view of the problems and obstacles the participants faced (Mills, Abdulla, & Cribbie, 2010). The use of how and why questions in the qualitative research design provided more in-depth information (Miles et al., 2014). Qualitative research was exploratory and gave voice to the marginalized, provided explanations, chronology of events, provided deeper meaning in the form of probing questions during interviews, and was a way to study complicated issues (Miles et al., 2014).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher solicited participants, a purposeful sample, who fit pre-selected conditions related to chosen research questions (Creswell,

2013). A purposeful sample provided a representative sample from the target population to allow for generalization of the entire population of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Lambert and Lambert (2012) indicated that any kind of purposeful sampling could be used in a qualitative descriptive case study because it allows the researcher to acquire rich information.

### Conceptual Framework

In Figure 1, the conceptual framework portrayed the relationship between nontraditional Black female students' perceptions and faculty perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students. The researcher proposed to investigate perceptions of Black nontraditional female students as well as barriers perceived by faculty working with the population.



*Figure 1.* Conceptual Framework for barriers nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.

As presented in Figure 1, the researcher proposed to identify the barriers that faculty perceived nontraditional Black female students faced while attending HBCUs. Identifying barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at HBCUs might provide data to create new and innovative ways to work with nontraditional Black female students.



## Limitations

There were a small number of faculty members who work with the target population, nontraditional Black female students. Another limitation was the lack of trust from the students involved in the research study; students might not feel free to share data. Faculty also might not be willing to discuss their thoughts with the researcher on the barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at HBCUs.

## Definitions of Terms

The following terms applied to this study:

- *Nontraditional Students* - Students 25 years and older pursuing post-secondary learning.
- *Adult Learners* - Students 25 years of age and older returning to post-secondary education.
- *Andragogy* – Methods and principles used in adult education.
- *Barriers* - Barriers were obstacles faced when trying to move forward.
- *Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)* - Institutions of higher education in the United States founded before 1964 with intent to primarily serve the African American population.

## Summary

A review of the literature identified various barriers encountered by nontraditional Black female students. Research was necessary to obtain data, which could help facilitate admission, retention, and graduation for nontraditional black female students at HBCUs. Perceptions of barriers faced were gathered via survey, focus group, and faculty interviews, by both students and faculty to identify problem areas. Faculty need to

examine ways to elevate or reduce barriers to provide a quality education and a successful matriculation to graduation for nontraditional Black female students.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

#### Introduction

Nontraditional students were a new population that emerged on college campuses in recent years. In the United States, it has been identified that more than 47% of students enrolled in higher education recognized with being 25 years of age or older in 2008 (Pelletier, 2010). Students who were older than twenty-four years old were classified as nontraditional students because they delayed their enrollment. Researchers suggested nontraditional students had at least one or more of the following characteristics:

- Delayed enrollment for a period of time
- Attend college part-time
- Work at least 35 hours a week
- Financially independent
- Supported a family
- Single parent or
- Might not have a formal high school diploma (Johnson, 2013; Shillingford, 2013).

Research conducted by Johnson (2013) suggested that approximately 40% of all college students were older than 25, 25% of nontraditional students worked full time, 60% were enrolled at four-year or private schools, and the remainder of the nontraditional student population attended a two-year college. The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) published a report (See Table 1) about the nontraditional student population in

2015. CLASP presented data that showed that nontraditional students were once traditional students.

Table 1

*Population of Nontraditional Students*

Category	Percentage
Independent Students (veterans, married couples, orphans, or wards of the court, homeless or at risk of homeless)	51%
25 or Older	40%
Enrolled in a public two-year college	38%
Enrolled Part-Time	37%
Minority Students	42%
Low-Income	51%
Employed Part-Time	39%
Employed Full-Time	27%
Parents	26%
Single Parents	15%

Note: Data provided from a report by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2015).

As shown in Table 1, research conducted by CLASP showed that nontraditional students were older, diverse, working, and had family obligations to balance. These characteristics were also identified in the adult learner population (CLASP, 2015).

The adult learner population continued to grow, and a review of the literature demonstrated the need for administrators, faculty, and staff to understand the specific needs of this diverse population. Most nontraditional students had been out of the college arena for a while or had never been to college at all. These challenges lead to barriers that post-secondary institutions needed to address. Harris (2012) indicated understanding the needs of nontraditional students was an important key element for colleges and universities for marketing to this population.

## The GI Bills

The GI Bills of the 1940s and today made major impacts among the nontraditional student population of college and universities. The GI Bill was a major influence on the number of student veterans in higher education during the last 70 years, and the impact of the various iterations of the GI Bill was significant (Paulsen, 2014). The GI Bill produced high surges of nontraditional or adult learners during the 1940s, the 1950s, and the 1970s. The GI Bill was created to prevent large unemployment rates created with the return of soldiers at the end of World War II and subsequent wars.

The GI Bill provided:

1. One year of federally subsidized education for veterans who had been honorably discharged from the armed forces, had served at least 90 days and were under 25 when they entered the service. (This age restriction was deleted in 1946 making all veterans eligible for benefits).
2. Additional eligibility and duration of support, up to a maximum of 4 years of benefits, determined by the veteran's time on active military duty.
3. Benefits included tuition, fees, books, supplies, and a monthly living allowance (Gutek, 2013).

The significance of the WWII GI Bill was that it revealed information regarding the expected outcome with veterans after the war. What was important in this significance was that the WWII GI Bill identified crucial data that facilitated the placement of veterans as productive citizens in the United States. This information prevented massive unemployment and possible unrest for war veterans, which led to favorable employment outcomes after the war (Berger & Vecchi, 2014). Not only did the

GI Bill present opportunities for those veterans to return to college, but also, the GI Bill helped pave the way for the Post- 9/11 GI Bill. While different in scope, both were used to help support veterans who wanted to attend college (Berger & Vecchi, 2014).

Veterans fit the classification of adult learners or nontraditional learners.

Nontraditional students that are identified as active military duty members or veterans required assistance that connects to their unique, nontraditional needs and experiences. These active duty members are also students that have full-time jobs in remote locations throughout the world. These students, identified as veteran students, are attempting to integrate themselves into society while simultaneously dealing with social and emotional matters (University of North Carolina, 2011). Because of the GI Bills, veterans were new nontraditional students who were more advanced due to military experiences.

The presence of thousands of veterans on college campuses created a new population of students, which college and university administrators began to refer to as the nontraditional student. Nontraditional students were older, more mature, and more focused on their education. They were less interested in campus social and athletic affairs. The presence of nontraditional students helped colleges and universities recover from the decreased enrollment and freeze on higher education facility construction of the war years (Gutek, 2013).

### Baby Boomers

Baby boomers were individuals born during the years of 1946-1964 after World War II, the Great Depression, and the New Deal (Drake, 2003). At the time of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement was growing, and the Watergate Scandal was seen on every television screen in the United States. Baby boomers were very

competitive, had a strong sense of responsibility, and were uncomfortable with technology (Worley, 2011).

For baby boomer college students, new opportunities were given for college support. These opportunities were connected to the Higher Education Act, which allowed baby boomer college students to be involved in an era of massive federal support. This massive era of federal support provided tuition grants and guaranteed student loans and federal funding for work study (Selingo, 2015). The Higher Education Act helped many college students attend college regardless of household size or income. During the decades following the Higher Education Act, enrollment at campuses across the country grew threefold to 20 million students (Selingo, 2015). Of the 20 million students helped by the Higher Education Act, baby boomers benefited the most. In the 1960s and 1970s, the baby boomer generation went to college. This opportunity provided them with little to no payment on tuition; which resulted in nearly receiving a free public institutional education. The baby boomer generation received a generous amount of federal and state aid to pay for their degrees in higher education (Selingo, 2015).

Baby boomers had a colossal impact on the United States. The beginning of the baby boomer generation saw the rapid expansion of economic growth, which gave rise to baby boomers feeling a strong sense of financial security (Dziuban, Moskal, & Hartman, 2004). Dziuban et al. (2004) indicated that baby boomer held prestigious positions in all levels of government and industry. Baby boomers were considered as being legendary for their potential impact on the social security system. There were major technology

inventions in the baby boomer era including the internet, the fax machine, the BASIC computer language, and the minicomputer (Dziuban et al., 2004).

### Adult Education Act of 1966 (AEA)

The Adult Education Act of 1966 (AEA) was a pioneering part of legislation that provided funding for adult education programs serving educationally disadvantaged adults (Imel, 1991). The federal government was a key player in adult education for more than 200 years. The significance of the adult education act of 1966 was the start of the federal government assisting adult learners in receiving basic education and other training involving not only vocational but onsite training (Rose, 1991). The Adult Education Act of 1966 ushered in the transition was needed in the United States to develop adult basic education.

The Adult Education Act provided funding to states to develop, administer, and maintain basic education programs for adults (Rose, 1991). The act was expanded to include pre-high school students and students who needed English as a second language. Even though federal legislation intervened with educating adult learners, local and state municipalities still had direct control over the programs offered through the AEA. The federal government contributed at least 90% of the funding for programs that were created because of AEA. States were required to contribute at least 10% of funding needed to maintain created programs (Rose, 1991). To receive funds from the act, states had to submit plans, which met specific requirements for programs targeting adult learners. Over time, requirements to receive funds from the federal government for adult education became more defined. States had to be more specific and include diversity and community input on how the funds should be spent.



The purpose of the AEA broadened to include secondary education as well as to include provisions for adults who required basic skills necessary to function in society (Education Amendments, 1978). AEA's focus was to educate adults who were lacking education and literacy. The act was updated in 1970 to include funding for adults who were seeking their high school diploma or high school equivalency program (Rose, 1991). While the initial target age of the AEA was adults 18 years or older, the act was later amended to include students who were 16 years of age or the appropriate age to leave school as stipulated by each state (U.S. Department of Education, 1991).

An advisory committee was formed to advise representatives about the policies, expansion of policies, and synchronization of the programs funded by the AEA. In the past, funding by AEA targeted certain groups of individuals who demonstrated great need, such as immigrants, the elderly, and Native Americans. AEA of 1966 was amended to include all adult learners from diverse backgrounds. The Adult Education Act provided successful funding for the creation of successful adult education programs in United States (Rose, 1991). Not only did the AEA provide funding to help support adult learners, but it also created a learning environment focused on adult learners at the state level (Rose, 1991).

Intervention by the Federal government became necessary for adult education. The federal government assistance was needed to hire teachers and start programs with federal money to help unemployed teachers and to provide education to adults who suffered from effects from the Great Depression. Education was one of the main topics in the United States that had been a concern for the federal government for years (Rose, 1991). One example of federal government intervention in education involving adult

learners was the Morrill Act of 1862. The Morrill Act of 1862 came before the AEA of 1966 and served as a foundation for AEA. The Morrill Act of 1862 provided grants to universities for specific fields of study, such as agriculture and the mechanical arts (Rose, 1991).

### The Morrill Act of 1862

The Morrill Act of 1862 was used to grant land to colleges and universities for education in areas, such as agriculture. The Morrill Act was amended in 1890 which facilitated the formation of agricultural colleges and mechanical institutions that were tailored to educate former slaves. After the Morrill Act was put into place, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was signed to provide vocational training (Tyler, 1974). All of these acts helped pave the way for the AEA. The federal government sought to help adult learners by providing educational resources for service men and women with the GI Bill and the Great Depression of the 1930s. Rose (1991) suggested the purposes for federal assistance for adults involved an opportunity to provide assistance to unemployed teachers and to provide education in underrepresented areas that were stricken by the Depression.

The AEA continued to be funded by different presidential administrations including the Kennedy administration, the Johnson administration, and the Reagan administration. About \$19,879,000 funds were allotted to the AEA in 1966, and the allotted funds increased to over \$200 million by 1989, with designated funding for each state (Rose, 1991).

There were some issues during the 20th century funding battles that impacted federal government funding of adult education. Over time, issues, such as local control,

integration, and religion became key items that caused problems among the states. There was great concern among southern states that federal funding would result in federal interference in the control of the funds awarded to states (Rose, 1991). However, the federal government continued to provide funding and increased complete aid packages for adult learners despite some resistance from states.

### Barriers

Nontraditional students faced many challenges upon the decision to attend college. Barriers included financial issues, lack of personalized attention, lack of flexibility of programs, and lack of learning support systems (Ritt, 2008). Nontraditional students wanted consistency and reassurance that they chose the right college or university to meet their needs. In order to attract nontraditional students, colleges and universities needed to find ways to eliminate obstacles faced by this population. According to the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2012) and Falasca (2011), there were three categories of barriers faced by nontraditional students: (a) situational/financial, (b) institutional, and (c) dispositional.

#### Situational/Financial Barriers

Situational barriers were barriers faced by nontraditional students, which limited their ability to enroll in a college or university, such as the lack of financial aid and the lack of time due to family commitments. These situations could occur at any point in the nontraditional student's life. Kasworm (2012) suggested that nontraditional students delayed college because of life responsibilities, while their traditional counterparts entered college straight out of high school. Nontraditional students also had to consider finances when attempting to enroll in college. When considering college, nontraditional

students viewed earning a certificate or degree as an opportunity to find better jobs and advance in their careers (Hageskamp, 2013). Most nontraditional students were single parents, or divorced, full-time working professionals who needed to go back to college to keep up with the demands of the job market (Ross-Gordon, 2011).

Many nontraditional students had trouble navigating the financial aid system, such as how to secure federal funds by completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or knowing how to secure limited scholarships. According to scholarships.com (2014), scholarships for nontraditional students were limited because most scholarships targeted high school students about to enter their first year in college. There were several types of federal aid for which nontraditional students qualified, but to receive the funds, students had to attend college at least half-time. A student had to enroll in up to 6-credit hours to be considered a half-time or part-time student. In general, nontraditional students were focused on taking care of their families and working, which often allowed nontraditional students to take only one course at a time, which in turn disqualified them for FAFSA.

#### Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers included practices and procedures, which discouraged nontraditional students from attending college. The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2012) indicated that barriers included: (1) scheduling or transportation problems, (2) provision of available courses that lacked practicality, (3) bureaucratic issues, (4) course requirement numbers, and (5) lack of information about postsecondary opportunities for nontraditional students. Many nontraditional students experienced some type of institutional barriers.

Prior learning experiences of Adult nontraditional students has been a prominent part of policy discussions in recent years (Council for Adult & Experiential Learning & HCM, 2012; Lane, 2012). The demand for increased and better information regarding awarding credit for prior learning has grown (ACE, 2013). Nontraditional students wanted to know the relevance of the college courses offered as compared to what was being required in the job market. Nontraditional students wanted courses of study that were attainable and allowed them to use their work experience to receive prior learning credits (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012).

Many times, nontraditional students also needed remediation before taking coursework. Adults who had been out of high school for some time and returned to college often needed to take remedial courses in math, reading, or writing skills (National Conference for State Legislators, 2016). Nontraditional students had problems with paying fees for admissions applications, admissions tests, and purchasing books. In addition to institutional barriers, nontraditional students often had to face dispositional barriers as well.

#### Dispositional Barriers

Dispositional barriers included poor learning perception, age concerns, and negative past educational experiences (Catherine, 2013). Nontraditional students wanted to be included as a part of the campus community and to feel a sense of belonging. Nontraditional students worried about competing with traditional age students, had perceptions of inadequate study skills, and worried about fitting in with younger students in class (Keith, 2007).

## Age

Nontraditional students were concerned that their age prevented them from learning new material presented by their professors. Some low-income nontraditional students experienced low self-esteem and were concerned about the age of students around them (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012).

## Support

Nontraditional students preferred one-on-one interactions with their professors. This interaction prevented them from becoming disaffected and departing from the institution. Nontraditional students wanted colleges and universities to embrace their needs and aid them when they had any questions or concerns. These students wanted to be able to contact the professor when they did not understand an assignment in class (CAEL, 2000). Nontraditional students wanted to know what types of support systems colleges and universities had for students who were struggling in their courses as well as making them feel like part of the institution.

According to the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (2012), educators needed to understand that nontraditional students required as much help as traditional 18 to 22-year-old students. The faculty was instrumental in creating learning environments that were supportive of nontraditional students. These learning environments incorporated important learning theories, research, and adult-oriented programs and services on campus (Blair, 2010).

## Programs to Attract Nontraditional Students

Dispositional barriers left nontraditional students wanting flexibility and structure from institutions to meet their needs. Ritt (2008) indicated most U.S. colleges and

universities offered and developed programs designed to attract adult students to their campuses. For instance, Capella University advertised adult friendly programs via television and radio specifically targeted for nontraditional students. Students were able to “test drive” one of Capella’s flex path courses to see if the university was the best fit for them. Students were not under any obligation to pay for the course but were allowed access into one of the Flex-Path course rooms in order to experience an actual course (Capella, 2018).

Kennesaw State University (KSU), part of the Association for Adult Learner Students in Higher Education, was known for its outstanding service for nontraditional students (CAEL, 2000). KSU provided a state-of-the-art center, which served their large population of nontraditional students (Kennesaw State University, 2015). KSU provided educational supports for nontraditional students, such as computer labs, tutors, and advisors for career planning. These resources could be found on KSU’s website under student development. In addition, KSU had a lottery for nontraditional students to help pay for books and childcare.

### Structure

A common issue exhibited by adults reentering college was a lack of self-confidence, along with the need for experiences that provided highly structured learning, which provided clear expectations of the student and the teacher (Ross-Gordon, 2011). While nontraditional students desired flexibility, they also often desired structure. KSU and Capella are examples of institutions, which responded to the needs of nontraditional students by building flexibility and structure in the programs that they offered.

## Flexible Pacing

Some nontraditional students were more interested in distance learning chose a college or university, which offered flexible pacing for completing programs. Colleges and universities that had flexible pacing demonstrated to nontraditional students that they were a priority and they wanted to assist them with their educational needs. Innovations in online learning and the management systems were developed to support distance education addressing several adult student issues, most notably access and flexibility (Lane, 2012).

## Online Programs

Online programs had to be organized and easy to understand for nontraditional students. Due to the growing population of unemployed nontraditional students, students required additional or different skills to become employable in the market place. Some students found the need to change occupations completely. Post-secondary institutions, such as community colleges, provided access for nontraditional students to obtain a wide range of education and training programs that led to individuals finding employment in new fields or industries (Jacobson, 2011).

## Adult Learner Theory

Andragogy was considered a scholarly approach to the learning of adults. Andragogy looked at understanding of science and supporting lifelong and life-wide education of adults (Reischmann, 2000). The term andragogy was originally identified by Alexander Kapp who was a German high school educator. Kapp (1833) wrote a book entitled *Plato's Educational Ideas*, which defined the reasons for lifelong learning. Kapp identified patterns, which he saw repeated in the evolving history of andragogy.



He suggested andragogy included and combined the education of inner self, subjective personality, and that learning happened not only through teachers, but also via self-reflection and life experiences (Henschke, 2009).

In 1925, Rosenstock-Huessy resurrected the term andragogy. He was a German scholar, and he implied that adult education (andragogy) should proceed from the suffering, which World War I brought students (Henschke, 2009). Rosenstock-Huessy presented the idea that historical events should be researched to find what could be learned from them to prevent the past events from happening again. The experiences of an adult learner's life provided the knowledge needed to move towards a positive future.

Around the time Rosenstock-Huessy was working with the andragogy theory in Germany, E. C. Lindeman (1926a), an American Educator, traveled to Germany to meet with the Workers Education Movement, where he was introduced to andragogy theory. Lindeman was the first to bring the concept of andragogy to the United States. Lindeman indicated that andragogy was the method for teaching adults, but the term was not widely accepted in the United States until Lindeman wrote his book titled, *The Meaning of Adult Education* (Lindeman, 1926b). Lindeman listed some assumptions about how adults learned in his book.

1. Adults were motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning would satisfy, which are starting points for organizing adult learning activities.
2. Experience was the richest source for adult's learning.
3. Adults had a deep need to be self-directed.
4. Adult's orientation to learning was life centered.

5. Individual differences among people increased with age (Knowles, Elwood, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, pp. 39-40; Lindeman, 1926b).

According to Henschke (2009), Lindeman laid the groundwork for andragogy to be accepted in the United States as the method for teaching adults.

In 1964, Simpson described andragogy as a term used to identify relevant training knowledge about adult education (Henschke, 2009). Simpson (1964) also suggested that the main strands were similar to what occurred in K12 education: the study of adult education, the psychology of adults, and the generalized andragogic methods for teaching adults. About two years later, Malcom Knowles, U.S. educator, published his first iteration of andragogy (Knowles, 1984, Tough, 1985).

Knowles' andragogy was labeled as a key technological innovation in the field of adult education. Knowles argued that adults learned differently from children. Later in his studies, Knowles coined andragogy as "The Adult Learning Theory", which consisted of five assumptions. The 4 assumptions of The Adult Learning Theory were:

1. Self-Concept develops as a person's self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
2. Adult Learner Experience develops as a person accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. Readiness to learn develops as a person's readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to developmental tasks of his/her social roles.
4. Orientation to Learning develops as a person's time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and

accordingly his/her orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject centeredness to one of problem centeredness (Knowles, 1984, pp. 45-47).

The fifth assumption was added in 1984, which specified that as a person ages, the motivation to learn is internal (Knowles, 1984, pp. 45-47).

### Transformative Learning

John Mezirow (1978a, 1978b) was the founder of the Transformative Learning Theory identified in 1978. Transformative learning occurred within the field of adult education, which was a powerful theory for understanding how adults learn (Dirkx, 1998). Mezirow conducted his first study on the theory of transformative learning with U.S. women who were returning to college or workplace after a delayed or extended time away from either. To address the needs of U.S. women returning to college and the workforce, Mezirow conducted a qualitative study to identify factors that typically hindered or facilitated women's progress in the re-entry programs (Kitchenham, 2008).

During Mezirow's (1978) study, he researched 83 women enrolled in 12 re-entry college programs. To make sure that study was fair and valid, Mezirow chose colleges, which offered the 12 re-entry programs and consisted of diverse populations. The 83 women were divided into two groups: one group attended a four-year institution and the other group attended a two-year college. Mezirow conducted telephone surveys and used the results from his findings to conclude that respondents had undergone a "personal transformation." Mezirow identified 10 phases that participants could experience during the personal transformation (See Table 2).

Table 2

*Mezirow's (1978a, p. 6), 1984b, pp. 100-110) Ten Phases of Transformative Learning*

Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma
Phase 2	A self-examination with feeling of guilt or shame
Phase 3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
Phase 4	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation were and that others have negotiated a similar change
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
Phase 6	Planning of a course of action
Phase 7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles
Phase 9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
Phase 10	A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory evolved over 26 years to include the ten phases listed above as well as the Salient Elements. The Salient Elements included Habermas (1972) three domains of learning: technical, practical, and emancipatory; it also included instrumental, dialogic, and self-reflective learning. More phases were added to the Transformative Learning Theory. The additional phases of the Transformative Learning Theory emphasized the importance of altering present and new relationships, stressed the importance of self-reflection, and acknowledged the importance of the affective, emotional, and social aspects of transformative learning (Kitchenham, 2008).

#### Adult Persistence in Learning Model

Adult Persistence in Learning Model (APIL) was another theory devised to synthesize theory on adult learners and offer a fruitful model that involves interventions

related to persistence (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). This model was based on person-environment interactionist paradigm. The person-environment interactionist paradigm in the APIL Model presented behaviors as functions of environmental interaction of the person. This APIL Model addressed issues that involved learning, personal issues, and university related issues (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994).

The APIL model contained three components. Component one encompassed personal issues that involved self-awareness, willingness to delay gratification, clear career and life goals, mastery of life transitions, and identification of interpersonal competence (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). The second component related to learning issues experienced by adult learners were educational competence, intellectual, and political dimensions of learning as the two factors of learning issues experienced by adult learners (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). The third component of APIL consisted of environmental issues experienced by institutions which impacted learners. This component included issues such as retrieval of information, opportunity awareness, environmental impairments and compatibility (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994). The APIL model was used by counselors to assist in evaluating elements that might cause problems for adult learners.

#### Chain-of- Response Model and Characteristics of Adult Learners

Cross (1981) contributed to the study of how adults learned with her study of Chain-of-Response Model (COR) and the Characteristics of Adults as Learners (CAL). Cross ventured her way into adult education via the publications that she wrote, and her first study with the Commission on Nontraditional Study. One of the most important publications from Cross was *Adults as Learners*, published in 1981. Cross's book focused on synthesizing as much information as she could collect about adult learning. She

popularized research regarding barriers to adult learning, studies of participation, and development stages (Hiemstra, 1993).

The Chain of Response framework was used to identify variables and hypothesize their interrelationships as they pertained to adult learner participation in learning (Hiemstra, 1993). The common elements identified in the COR model were:

- A. Motivation to participate is the result of an individual's perception of both positive and negative forces;
- B. Certain personality types were difficult to attract to education because of low-self-esteem;
- C. There was congruence between participation and anticipated learning outcomes;
- D. Higher order needs for achievement and self-actualization could not be fulfilled until lower-order needs for security and safety were met; and
- E. Expectations of reward were important to motivation (Cross, 1981, p. 124; Reynolds, 1986).

The Characteristics of Adults as Learners identifies two parts of variables, which are personal characteristics and situational characteristics. The personal characteristics encompasses life experiences, aging, and stages of development (Cross, 1981). Situational characteristics includes the comparison of part-time and full-time learning, and voluntary versus compulsory learning. Overall, the CAL model was proposed to be used as strategies for adult education (Cross, 1981).

## Multiple Intelligences

The theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) was presented and developed by Howard Gardner, a psychologist from Harvard University. Gardner's (1983) MI presented the idea that human beings had seven diverse types of intelligence (See Table 3). Gardner's definition of intelligence was "a biopsychological likely to process data that can be initiated in a cultural setting to resolve issues or create commodities that were of value in a culture" (Gardner, 1999, pp. 33-34).

Table 3

*Multiple Intelligences developed by Howard Gardner (1983)*

Type of Intelligence	Meaning
Linguistic/Verbal Intelligence	Person perceives and responds to tones, sounds and writing.
Logical/Mathematical Intelligence	Person uses nonconcrete symbols, good at logical problem solving
Musical Intelligence	Person learns through listening
Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence	Person learns through touch and movement
Visual Spatial Intelligence	Person learns by watching
Interpersonal Intelligence	Person learns through bonds and interacts easily with others
Naturalist Intelligence	Person has the natural tendency to classify and discriminate among elements in complex systems

Harvard researchers found that the MI theories as delineated in Table 3 helped adult learners by offering teachers different learning strategies. MI-based methods for adults were categorized as constructivist in nature. Teachers and students found that using MI theory allowed them to take more risks and expand their teaching methods and students' learning (Murray & Moore, 2012).

MI Theory has been used mostly in primary and secondary education. However, it was revealed in the National Center for Study of Adult Learning and Literacy that Harvard University used the MI Theory in an extensive study of applications for adult literacy (Kallenbach, 1999). Harvard researchers identified six themes that centered on adult learners. Teachers found that when students evaluated their own intelligences, it helped them reflect on how they learned.

Costanzo and Paxton (1999) worked with adult students, introduced their students to the MI theory, and worked with them to identify their areas of strengths and weaknesses. There were two goals that Costanzo and Paxton wanted to achieve when they began using MI as a way for nontraditional students to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

The first goal for nontraditional students was to assist the students in participating in nontraditional learning activities that redirect their limited expectations in the classroom for basic adult education. The second goal was to encourage nontraditional students to develop metacognition and awareness of their thinking and learning processes in higher education (Costanzo & Paxton, 1999). Costanzo and Paxton (1999) built self-assessments into their courses as well as individual and group reflections. Costanzo and Paxton encouraged feedback from students and provided individual conferences for each student. The constructive feedback was used to improve lesson plans aimed at developing interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences.

#### Conditions/Environment

Researchers indicated that it was important for adult learners to have a positive learning environment which promoted learning. The environment was contingent upon



organizational structure, environmental situations, or time constraints. Child and Heavens (2003) indicated, “The learning capabilities of adult learners were, at least in part, socially constructed by national, occupational, or other institutions” (p. 310). Also, Child and Heaven (2003) suggested that core boundaries were created by specialties or departments within the outline of organizations that prevent cross-learning.

Starbuck and Hedberg (2003) suggested that ecological issues within an organization or institution, which encouraged positive outcomes, were more inclined to result in a successful learning experience. Starbuck and Hedberg stated, “Pleasant outcomes reinforce Stimulus Response Links whereas unpleasant outcomes break Stimulus-Response Links which produces pleasant results which were more conducive for new teaching behaviors” (Starbuck & Hedberg, 2003, p. 331).

An important aspect of environment for adult learners was organization. Individuals who taught adults had to take time into consideration because time pressures could speed up or slow down the learning process for these students. Time constraints which could be a motivation or threat. With time constraints became too stressful among adults, learning could be decelerated or made impossible (Weber & Berthoin, 2003).

The online learning environment provided convenience and flexibility for adult learners (Lim, 2004). Researchers from American Psychological Associations Media purported the importance of eLearning or distance learning to adult learning. Luskin (2010) touted the benefits of eLearning to include education, excitement, enthusiasm, enjoyment, and energetic when connected to media in the adult learning environment.

## Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning Theory, developed by David Kolb, emphasized the role that experiences played in the learning process. Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning consisted of two levels: a four-stage cycle of learning and four separate learning styles (McLeod, 2010). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory encompassed the learner's internal cognitive processes. Kolb indicated that learning encompassed the achievement of abstract concepts applied to a range of flexible higher educational situations (McLeod, 2010). The experiential learning theory also required the development of new concepts, which were provided by new experiences (McLeod, 2010).

The four stages of the experiential learning cycle presented what happened in the new experiences that individuals encountered. The first stage was a concrete experience, which occurred when an individual encountered a new experience or had a reinterpretation of previous experience. In stage two, individuals used observation and reflection of the experience, which led to stage three, the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations. In stage four, experiences were used to test the hypothesis in future situations. Kolb (2014) stated, "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). Experiences faced by individuals became the source for observation and reflection. These reflections were assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implication for action were drawn (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's research related to adult learner's experiential life cycle of learning. Kolb indicated that adult learners move to the next step once they have processed their experiences in the previous step (Kolb, 1984).

## Nontraditional Black Female Students

The inclusion of African American women in higher education dated back to the civil rights movement when segregation was widespread, and African American women appreciated the opportunity to obtain a higher education (Taylor, 2015). The early history of African Americans in higher education only referenced African American males and failed to include African American females (Gasman, 2007). Sealey-Ruiz (2007) indicated that in the past century, Black women have made great strides in the struggle for higher education.

Colleges and universities faced challenges when dealing with the needs of diverse and heterogeneous populations, such as providing programs, services, and support (Taylor, 2015). The challenges of meeting the needs of nontraditional Black female students were varied. Institutions had to find ways to help foster an academic environment that was accommodating to nontraditional Black females who were struggling with balancing work, academics, and family responsibilities (Hagedorn, 2006).

Nontraditional student populations were growing. In Fall 2013, the U.S. Department of Education (2015) reported that 17.5 million undergraduate students and 2.9 million post-baccalaureate students were attending degree-granting postsecondary institutions in the United States. Of this number, 31.2% were students age 25 or older, and 61.3% were nontraditional female students (Lin, 2016).

In contrast to their male counterparts, nontraditional female students experienced the competing pressures of child care, financial, and school responsibilities (Bauer & Mott, 1990). Nontraditional female students served in many different roles outside of the classroom. These responsibilities presented a wide range of barriers and challenges to

nontraditional Black female students, which affected their academic experiences (Bauer & Mott, 1990; Lin, 2016). African American women were matriculating in large numbers and were also among other underrepresented populations (Mangino, 2010; NCES, 2014). Many studies explored societal assumptions of African American female stereotypes and anti-deficit perspectives as well as how their strength fueled their persistence to finish college (Brown, 2008; Harper, 2009, 2012; O'Connor, 2002; Payne, 2011).

Nontraditional Black female students had to work twice as hard to advance in the academic setting. As a result, nontraditional Black female students had expectations of what they expected colleges to make available to them and what their knowledge, skills, and abilities they should be after attending college (Lin, 2016). If expectations and reality did not match up, the women were more likely to drop out (Kasworm, 2002).

Various factors served to motivate nontraditional Black female students to attend college. Research conducted by Coker (2003) suggested that personal, family, and community development were some of the factors which motivated African American women to attend college. The study also suggested that nontraditional Black females used education as a catalyst for personal redefinition, empowerment, personal success, and greater financial stability (Coker, 2003). Miller, Pope, and Steinmann (2006) indicated that there was not a right time for adult females to attend college due to the multiple roles and time constraints that they had in their daily lives.

A major factor in motivating nontraditional female students to attend college revolved around career issues. In order to be more marketable in an aggressive job market as well as to address career burnout, nontraditional Black female students went

back or attended college (Coker, 2003). Nontraditional Black female students faced many challenges that motivated them to graduate from college. See Figure 2.

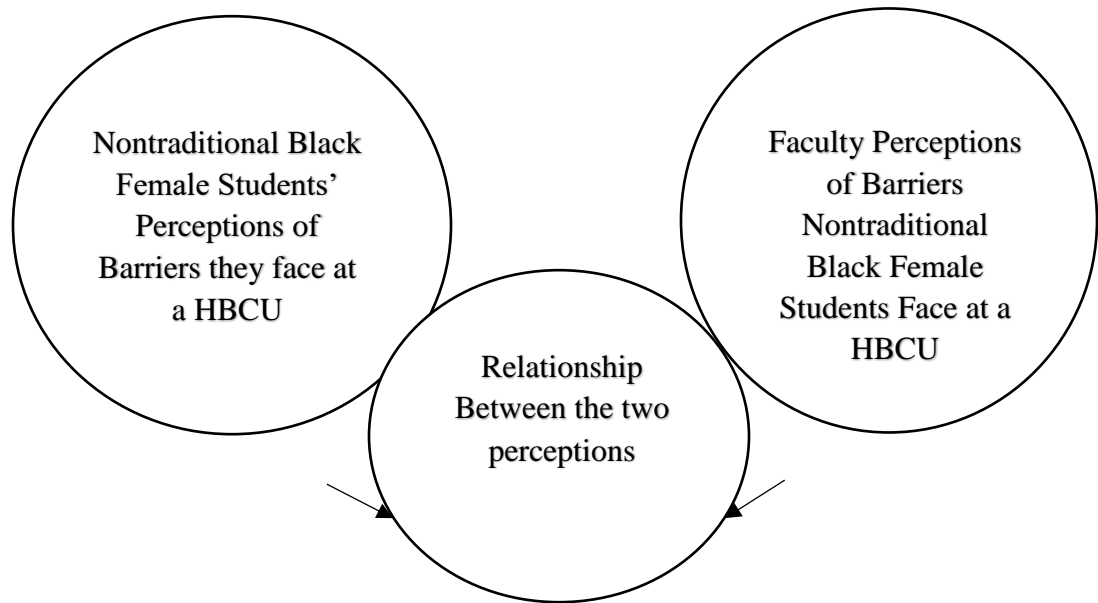


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework.

The Table 4 below summarizes the data of majoring contributors to researcher's study. The table included information regarding adult learning, which includes the author of the study and year, the topic of the study, the population included in the study, and the study results.

Table 4

*Adult Learner Studies*

Authors	Dates	Topic	Population	Results
Alexander Kapp German High School Teacher	1833	Andragogy	Adult Leaners/ Non- Traditional Students	Kapp suggests that andragogy (Study of Adult Learners):
Eugen Rosenstock- Huessy, German Teacher	1925	Andragogy Introduced in Germany	German Adult Workers	Resurrected the andragogy term.

(Continued)

E.C. Lindeman U.S. Educator	1926	Andragogy Introduced in America	American Adult Learners	Lindeman teaching presented 5 andragogical Themes.
Simpson	1964	Andragogy	Adult Learners	Identified four strands that were relevant to adult learner education.
Malcom Knowles U.S. Educator	1966	Adult Learner Theory	Wide range of adult learners in America	Knowles combined andragogy with his own meaning generated from educational experience in adult education to develop the Adult Learner Theory.
John Mezirow	1978	Transformative Learning Theory	Earlier study was on women in the US	Identified that the women in the study undergone a "Personal Transformation" and identified ten phases that they experienced.
Fiona MacKinnon- Slaney	1991	Adult Persistence In Learning Model	Adult Learners	The model attempt to provide a hybrid model for those who work with adult learners.
Alan B Knox	1958	Proficiency Theory of Adult Learning	Adult Learners	Proficiency theory provided a parsimonious explanation of the teaching-learning transaction for adults.
Howard Gardner	1983	Multiple Intelligences	K-12 Adult Learners	Students needed choices in their own learning.
David Kolb	1984	Experiential Learning Theory	Adult Learners	Kolb indicates that the experiential learning theory encompasses the acquisition of abstract concepts that can be applied flexibly in a range of situations.
K. Patricia Cross	1981	Chain of Response (COR) & Characteristics of Adults as Learners (CAL)	Adult Learners	(COR)- Adult Participation in Learning.

## Summary

Nontraditional students and Black female nontraditional students faced common barriers in higher education. The GI Bill paved the way for many nontraditional veterans and their families to attend college. Baby Boomers played a role in the Higher Education Act of 1965 and the Adult Education Act of 1966. Both Acts provided educational funding and support for nontraditional students. The Morrill Act of 1862 helped establish many different colleges especially HBCUs. The Morrill Acts of 1862 provided land for colleges like HBCUs to be built upon to provide a equal education to African Americans.

Barriers which contributed to nontraditional students' difficulty matriculating through college included situational/financial barriers, dispositional barriers, and institutional barriers. These situational barriers/financial barriers consisted of barriers that happened beyond the adult learners' control, such as family and finances. Dispositional barriers are adult learners feeling a disconnect between the professor and students at the institution. Institutional barriers are those barriers that adult learners face when obtaining with applying to the college, receiving financial aid, or other resources that are provided by the institution.

Major contributors to the study of the adult learner were presented and their influences on the evolution of adult learning were discussed. Kapp and Knowles were known for their contributions to the androgogy and adult learner theory. Kapp defined the reasons for adults to be lifelong learners and Knowles suggested that adults learn differently from children in his study. Knowles coined andragogy as The Adult Learner Theory that contains five assumptions on how adult learners learn were also contributors to the study of androgogy, which was conducted by Kapp and Knowles (Knowles, 1984;

Lindeman, 1926a; Simpson, 1964). The contributors conducted research to add to the body of research done on the topic of androgogy.

John Mesriow (1978a) conducted his study in order to identify what prevented or enabled women from progressing or re-entering into college. During this study, Mesriow was able to develop the Ten Phases of Transformative Learning, which identified that an adult learner would experience some type of personal transformative learning while attending college.

The Adult Persistence in Learning Model is a model that presented research on the persistence of adults while learning. The groundwork for the APIL model was built upon the idea that the adult learners' environment was a contributing factor on the of how much persistence that the adult learner has toward learning (MacKinnon-Slaney, 1994).

Patricia Cross was another contributor to adult learner education by the development of two models, which were the Chain of Response Model and the Characteristics of Adult Learners Model . The Chain of Response Model was associated with adult participation in their education (Cross, 1981). COR presented patient variables and theorized their interrelationships as they refer to adult leaner participation. The CAL model was used to examine the characteristics of adult learners and presented two characteristics, which were situational characteristics and personal characteristics (Cross, 1981).

Howard Gardner was another major contributor to the way that adult learners learn by developing the multiple intelligences theory. Gardner multiple intelligences presented the idea that adult learners had seven diverse types of intelligences (Gardner,



1983). The multiple intelligences was a model that offered different learning strategies for adult learners.

Researchers have found that the adult learner environment and condition of the learning environment is a key component that has to be examined. The environment of an adult learner must be organized in order to produce a proper learning environment. Researchers like Starbuck and Hedberg (2003) indicated institutions that provide and encourage positive outcomes in the learning environment would produce successful learning experiences. Experiential learning was a theory developed by David Kolb who indicated that experiences played a major role in the learning process of adults. The experiential theory encompassed two levels, which contained four-stage cycles. The four-stage cycle of Kolbs' experiential learning provided answers to what happens when adult learners encounter new experiences or previous learning experiences. This theory became the introduction of incorporating observation and reflection after learning.

Nontraditional Black female students first entered into higher education during the Civil Rights Movement when segregation was at its peak in the United States. Nontraditional Black female students wanted to attend a college that motivated them to pursue more education. The factors that motivated nontraditional Black female students to attend college were for personal, which could have ranged from improving family life to be a catalyst to help improve their communities. Nontraditional Black female students wanted to feel empowered, to have personal success, and to have financial stability for themselves and their families. Even though nontraditional Black female students could not identify an appropriate time to attend college due to roles that they held in their homes and daily lives, they persevered through to complete college.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The National Center for Education Statistics (2016) indicated that the number of females enrolled in higher education between the years 2004 and 2014 increased nearly three times the rate of males enrolled during that same period (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Higher education became very diverse in terms of the types of students enrolled in colleges and universities. According to NCES (2016), between the years of 2003-2013, there were increases in nontraditional students, accounting for part of the diversification of the population in higher education. While numerous studies were conducted on nontraditional Black female students in higher education, there was limited research specifically targeting nontraditional Black female students at HBCUs.

Nontraditional students, especially nontraditional Black female students, faced barriers when attending institutions of higher education. Whether it was a financial, institutional, or dispositional barrier, nontraditional Black female students needed support from faculty and administrators to eliminate or address these barriers. A review of the literature identified four types of barriers faced by nontraditional students, and the literature was limited regarding the perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The four types of barriers identified in the review of the literature were situational barriers, financial barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers. The researcher proposed to study nontraditional Black female students' perceptions about the barriers that they faced at a HBCU. Also, the researcher sought to explore faculty perceptions concerning the barriers faced by nontraditional

Black female students faced at a HBCU. For the purposes of this study, the researcher proposed to examine the following questions:

#### Research Questions

Research Question 1: What were the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students concerning the barriers they faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of the HBCU faculty related to the barriers nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 3: To what extent was there a relationship between the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and HBCU faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students?

#### Population/Participants

For this study, the researcher elected to solicit participants to create a purposeful sample who fit pre-selected conditions related to chosen research questions (Creswell, 2013). A purposeful sample provides a representative sample from the population studied to allow for generalization for an entire population of participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Nontraditional Black female students age 25 years and older were selected for the study. Most of the participants had at least a bachelor's degree and had obtained their GED or high school diploma. The population consisted of nontraditional Black female students enrolled in the Master of Public Administration program. The participants' responses were based upon their actual experiences and perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The age of the faculty varied. Faculty members were interviewed to collect data regarding their perceptions of the barriers faced

by nontraditional Black females at a HBCU.

The qualitative descriptive case study research method allowed participants to tell their stories and express their thoughts regarding their experiences in the classroom, on campus and off campus as nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. Also, the study explored data gathered from faculty regarding their perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students.

### Sample

The researcher requested access from the studied institution's graduate school to access institutional data identifying currently enrolled nontraditional Black female students. Participants were eliminated if they did not meet the criteria of being a nontraditional student or were not the race or gender that could answer the researcher's research questions. The researcher used the data to contact potential participants. First, the researcher obtained consent from the participants who were willing to take the survey. Second, participants were given the opportunity to choose to participate in the focus group. Participants who indicated the desire to participate in the focus group were contacted for participation.

Participants provided rich data pertaining to their experiences at a HBCU. Participants identified barriers encountered and provided feedback regarding how faculty and institutions could address issues faced by nontraditional Black female students. Faculty provided feedback pertaining to their perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students on campus.

## Instrumentation

A qualitative descriptive case study research design was chosen for this study. A qualitative descriptive design not only allows the researcher to understand how participants cope in their real-world settings but also allows the voice of the participants to be presented as well. The qualitative descriptive case study draws from realistic inquiry, which signifies an obligation to observe something or individuals in their natural setting (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). According to Hayes and Singh (2012), qualitative research design is ideal for studies that may use a small population of participants, targeted for a more in-depth study (Hayes & Singh, 2012). In qualitative research, Miles et al. (2014) posited, “The researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local participants from the inside through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding...about the topics under discussion” (p. 9). Qualitative research allowed the researcher to understand how people coped in their real-world settings (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2016). Qualitative research designs are exploratory and gives voice to the marginalized, provides explanations, a chronology of events, provides deeper meaning in the form of probing questions during interviews, and verbal evidence for the purposes of this study is a way to study complicated issues (Miles et al., 2014). Yin (2016) indicated that qualitative research provided the means to study the everyday lives of people and what they thought about under many different circumstances (Yin, 2016).

In this study, the researcher decided to use three qualitative instruments. The qualitative instruments used in this study were a student survey, which contained open-ended and closed-ended questions, student focus groups, and faculty interviews. The student survey focus groups and faculty interviews provided rich data needed to explore

the barriers experienced, as well as the awareness of faculty of these barriers. By collecting and analyzing data on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students, a HBCU's administration might be able to form strategies to address these barriers and increase enrollment of this diverse population.

### Data Collection Procedures

#### Permissions

First, the researcher gained necessary permissions from the institution. Permission was requested from the Graduate School to conduct a study, which included a survey, focus group, and individual interviews with faculty and staff (Appendix A). Once permission was granted by the Graduate School (Appendix B), the researcher requested permission from the department head of the History, Political Science, and Public Administration Department (Appendix C).

#### Survey

A pilot survey was developed by the researcher based on the literature review and helped the researcher clarify the survey questions that would align with the research questions. The pilot survey was developed via Survey Monkey® and emailed to at least five participants of the target population to establish content validity. The participants who received the pilot survey were not included in the actual study.

A report was generated by the department from available institutional data, which identified individuals who met participant qualifications. An email was sent to participants, which included the student survey consent form and a link to the survey (See Appendix D). Instructions were given requesting the student survey consent form be returned to the researcher (Appendix E). After a week, the researcher emailed a reminder

message to participants to complete the survey (Appendix G).

The survey was sent out through Survey Monkey® (Appendix F). The researcher sent an email to students, which presented information about the study and gathered permission from respondents. The target population consisted of nontraditional African American female students in a master's program. The survey (Appendix F) included open ended questions about student demographics, educational background, and perceptions of barriers faced at a HBCU. The researcher received the surveys back electronically by logging into the Survey Monkey® website to gather the responses of the surveyed participants.

Survey results were coded to search for themes. The coding process allowed the researcher to identify themes and laid the foundation to develop questions, which were asked in the focus group. Respondents were asked if they would like to participate in a focus group. Respondents who indicated they would like to participate in the focus group were asked for their contact information. After the survey data were analyzed, the focus group questions were created (Appendix K).

#### Focus Group

The researcher used WebEx software to conduct the focus group. WebEx software allowed the researcher to host a meeting virtually without participants leaving their home or work. The researcher used video conferencing, recorded the conference, and shared computer screens with participants in the meeting.

Next, the researcher sent an email with proposed dates and times for the focus group (Appendix H). When the final date for the focus group was chosen, the researcher sent an email including the link to the WebEx focus group with the time and date of the

session (Appendix I). Participants were sent a copy of the focus group consent form to be signed and emailed to the researcher (Appendix J). The researcher proposed to have a minimum of five participants in the focus group.

In the WebEx session, participants met the researcher, were given information about the study, and introduced themselves. An explanation of the study was given to the focus group about the purpose of the study and how the focus group was to proceed. The focus group protocol consisted of open-ended questions (Appendix K). The amount of time granted for the focus group was approximately 60 minutes. The proceedings of the focus group were digitally recorded through an electronic device secured with a protected password, known only to the researcher. The recording was transcribed by a third-party company named EndQuote®.

After the WebEx focus group, the transcription was loaded by the researcher into NVIVO software to code the transcription of the conversations that transpired in the focus group. NVIVO is software that supports qualitative research methods. The NVIVO software helps a researcher organize, analyze, and find insights in unstructured or qualitative data, such as interviews and open-ended surveys (NVIVO12, 2018).

#### Faculty Interviews

Next, department professors were interviewed to identify their perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU. An email was sent to faculty to request an interview and a convenient time to conduct the meeting (Appendix L). A week before the interviews, the faculty received a reminder email about the scheduled interview (Appendix M).

Prior to the interview, the researcher reviewed information about the study, and



interviewees were given a consent form to sign (Appendix N). The faculty was asked open-ended questions, which inquired about their awareness of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU (Appendix O). The interview sessions were recorded and stored on an electronic device that was password protected. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes. Once the interviews were concluded, they were transcribed by a third party, EndQuote®.

### Limitations

The research focused on the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and faculty on barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The researcher's goal was to have 30 to 40 participants for the survey. The researcher also proposed to have four to five participants in the focus group. In addition, the researcher conducted interviews with five professors from the master's program.

### Delimitations

The researcher was a staff member at the higher education institution under study; thus, the researcher's employment status may have prevented some potential participants and faculty from participating in the study. Because of the researcher's employment status at the studied institution, nontraditional Black female students and faculty was reluctant to participate in the study.

### Role of Researcher

The researcher kept a reflective journal to record the researchers' thoughts throughout the study. The journal allowed the researcher to compare written thoughts to collected research to consider possible bias in the study. The researcher was the sole researcher in this study.

## Data Analysis

Data consisted of responses from surveys, a focus group, and interviews. To ensure trustworthiness of the data collected, member checking was used to protect the integrity of respondent's answers. A pilot survey was used to improve accuracy, credibility, and validity of the study. The survey was administered via email and included a consent form, which respondents completed and emailed back to the researcher. Once the survey was completed, the surveys were coded using NVIVO software and evaluated for recurring themes. Once the recurring themes were identified, the researcher used the themes to form questions for the focus group.

The second data collection instrument was a focus group interview protocol. The focus group was conducted via the WebEx system. During the WebEx, the meeting was recorded and secured on a digital password protected device to insure trustworthiness of the data. The WebEx meeting was approximately 60 minutes. The recording was transcribed verbatim by EndQuote®. A copy of the transcript was offered to focus group members to verify accuracy of the transcription (i.e., member checking). The researcher used NIVIVO and hand coding to code and examine the script. The coding helped the researcher to organize the responses and identify the themes that were identified through the analysis of the focus group script. The themes were presented in a chart form.

After the focus group was conducted, the researcher conducted interviews with the faculty. The faculty interviews were recorded and locked in a digital device. Each recording was transcribed verbatim by EndQuote®. A list of themes was compiled from the interview transcripts. To ensure trustworthiness of the data, the interviews were recorded and stored on a password protected device only known by the researcher.

The data collected in the interviews were presented in a chart form for ease of analysis. The data from the surveys, focus group, and faculty interviews provided a rich pool of data, which identified perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU, as well as differences in the perceptions of those barriers from the perspective of the nontraditional Black female students and faculty of the HBCU.

Table 5 shows the research confirmation table, which lists the research questions, instrumentation used, and strategies used to analyze data for student survey, focus group, and faculty interviews.

Table 5

*Research Confirmation*

Research Question	Instrumentation	Analysis	How will strategy answer research question?
Demographic Question (Please check all that apply to you)	Student Survey	Survey were coded for themes	The survey identified information about the nontraditional Black female student population.
Would you like to participate in a focus group to discuss barriers nontraditional Black female students face at your current institution	Student Survey	Survey responses identified students who wanted to participate in a WebEx focus group.	The survey helped the researcher identify individuals who wanted like to speak about their personal experiences with barriers that they faced at a HBCU as a nontraditional Black female student.

(Continued)

Table 5 (Continued)

Have you faced any barriers at your current institution	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This survey identified some the barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.
What types of courses do you feel would benefit you to complete your degree?	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified institutional barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.
What types of paperwork gave you the most problems when applying to your current institution?	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified institutional barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU.
What types of financial funding did you have access to at your current institution?	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified financial/situational barriers that studied population faced.
What type(s) of academic and financial resources do you perceive your institution should provide nontraditional students?	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified financial/situational barriers that the studied population faced.
Do you perceive that nontraditional students have the opportunity to participate in campus activities?	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified dispositional barriers that nontraditional Black student at a HBCU faced.
Was there a time that you perceived a disconnection between your professors and you, as a student enrolled in your current institution?	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified any dispositional barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU.

(Continued)

Table 5 (Continued)

Do you have any suggestions that you could provide that will assist your current institution in providing support for nontraditional Black female students	Student Survey	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified the perceptions of nontraditional Black students' suggestions on how the institution can help eliminate or reduce the barriers that the studied population faced.
Focus Group Questions	Focus Group Protocol	Focus group questions were developed when survey has been evaluated.	By using the responses for the survey, the researcher was able to develop questions to help answer the research questions in this dissertation.
Could you please elaborate on your experiences with nontraditional Black female students who have experienced situational/financial barriers? (Ex: family, financial aid, and transportation)	Faculty Interview Protocol	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified the faculty perceptions and awareness of situational/ financial barriers that the studied population faced.
Will you please provide your experiences with nontraditional Black female students who have experienced institutional barriers? (Ex: admissions process, financial aid process, graduation process, or departmental processes)	Faculty Interview Protocol	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified the faculty perceptions and awareness of institutional barriers that the studied population encountered.

(Continued)

Table 5 (Continued)

Would you please provide your experiences with nontraditional black female students who have experienced dispositional barriers? (Ex: not feel a part of the classroom because of their age).	Faculty Interview Protocol	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified the faculty perceptions and awareness of dispositional barriers that the studied population faced while attending a HBCU.
Do you have any suggestions that would help administrators, faculty, staff, and students at a HBCU prevent these types of barriers?	Faculty Interview Protocol	Survey data were analyzed using narrative data.	This question identified the suggestions that faculty had about eliminating or preventing barriers that the studied population is encountered.

Table 6 shows the analysis of the data as it pertained to the researchers identified in the literature review.

Table 6

*Item Analysis*

Item	Research	Student Survey Question	Research Question
1. Demographic Questions	Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984;	1	1
2. Participation in Focus Group	Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b	2	1
3. Barriers Faced	Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b	3	1,2
4. Courses		4	1
5. Paperwork	Cross, 1981	5	1

(Continued)

Table 6 (Continued)

6. Financial	Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1984	6	1
7. Financial Resources	Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984;	7	1
8. Campus Activities	Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833 Knowles, 1984; Gardner, 1983	8	1
9. Disconnection	Cross, 1981	9	1
10. Suggestions		10	1

Item	Research	Faculty Protocol Question	Research Question
1. Situational/Financial Barriers	Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1978a; Gardner, 1983; Kolb, 1984	1	2
2. Institutional Barriers	Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1978a	2	2
3. Dispositional Barriers	Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1978a; Gardner, 1983	3	2
4. Suggestions	Knox, 1985	4	2

## Summary

The researcher conducted a qualitative descriptive case study for this research study. First, the researcher conducted surveys with approximately 30 to 40 nontraditional Black female students in the master's program at a HBCU. The researcher coded the surveys to identify themes which the population viewed as barriers. Once surveys were evaluated, focus group and interview questions were formed. The focus group data were collected and coded through NVIVO software to identify reoccurring themes. The researcher coded the data and presented the data in a table format to display the results of the study.



CHAPTER IV  
REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The nontraditional student population in higher education has increased. Nontraditional students were students are over the age of 25, had delayed enrollment for college, usually worked full-time, had families they supported, could be single parents, and were financially independent (Chen,2017). Nontraditional students composed at least 40% of the higher education student population: 20% worked full-time, 60% were enrolled at four-year institutions, and the rest attended two-year colleges (Johnson, 2013). According to the Center for Law and Social Policy (2015), the nontraditional student population attending college was very diverse as it pertained to race, age, personal relationship status, and family obligations.

Wyatt (2011) indicated that a significant segment of growth in HBCUs in the United States could be attributed to nontraditional students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that 38% of nontraditional students who were enrolled in higher education institutions in the United States were over the age of 25, and one-fourth of nontraditional students were over the age of 30 (NCES, 2014). Also, NCES reported that the higher education population of nontraditional students over age 25 was projected to increase another 23% by 2019 (NCES, 2014).

HBCUs experienced an increase in enrollment of nontraditional Black female students. Nontraditional students were defined as students returning to school and managing responsibilities, such as employment, family, and other stressors of adult life (Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Cross, 1980). Nontraditional students faced

situational/financial barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2014), the 2013 fall enrollment consisted of 17.5 million undergraduate students and 2.9 million graduate students. Included in the 20.8 million students attending these postsecondary institutions, the percentage of nontraditional females was 61.3% (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

There was a significant amount of research available on barriers faced by Black nontraditional students in STEM majors, but there was a limited amount of research on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The purpose of this study was to explore the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students. The study aimed to explore the perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU and to ascertain faculty perceptions about the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

The researcher used a qualitative descriptive case study research design to explore the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU and identify the faculty perceptions of these barriers. The researcher employed three instruments to obtain data pertaining to nontraditional Black female students at HBCUs. These instruments were student surveys, a focus group, and faculty interviews.

First, the researcher conducted an online survey, which was emailed to 30 nontraditional Black female students currently enrolled in the Master of Public Administration program at a HBCU in the southeastern part of the United States. The survey was analyzed and evaluated to identify potential barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU. Once the survey was analyzed using the NVIVO software program, the results were used to construct focus group questions.

Second, the researcher conducted a focus group with five participants, conducted via WebEx. WebEx was a software system that allowed individuals to meet online regardless of one's physical location. The WebEx software was used to record the focus group session. The questions for the focus group were formed after the survey responses were analyzed. The researcher used NVIVO software and hand coding to code the data from the transcription of the focus group meeting. Data were organized based according to themes and placed in a tabular format.

Next, the researcher used a semi-structured faculty interview protocol to conduct interviews with five faculty members at the HBCU. The faculty interviews were transcribed by EndQuote® and coded using NVIVO software. The faculty interviews were coded and organized the same way as the focus group. The themes that emerged from the survey, student focus group, and faculty interviews were compared to identify any similarities or differences.

### Research Questions

Research Question 1: What were the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students concerning the barriers they faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of the HBCU faculty related to the barriers nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 3: To what extent was there a relationship between the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and HBCU faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students?

## Research Design

A qualitative descriptive case study approach was used to explore the data. First, the researcher sought approval from the dean of the graduate school and asked for permission to conduct the study (Appendices A & B). After approval was received, the researcher sought approval from the department chair (Appendix C). Once both approvals were received, the researcher obtained a report detailing email addresses of currently enrolled nontraditional black female students in the MPA program to invite them to participate in the survey, with open-ended and closed-ended questions, and later, in a focus group (Appendix D). The survey included a consent form to be signed by each participant prior to taking the survey (Appendix E). The survey was used to identify the population's perceptions of the barriers that they faced at the HBCU (Appendix F). If no response was received after 2 weeks, students were sent an email reminding them about survey (Appendix G). Once the survey data were returned to the researcher, they were coded and analyzed; the researcher then constructed student focus group questions for the WebEx focus group.

The researcher sent emails to the individuals whose survey responses indicated that they were interested in participating in a WebEx focus group and requested a date and time that would be convenient for their schedules (Appendix H). Once the participants agreed on a time and date for the WebEx interview, the researcher emailed the time and date for the online focus group; a WebEx link and a focus group consent form were also attached to the email (Appendices I & J). The participants were asked to sign and return consent forms via email before participation in the focus group. Focus

group questions were open-ended and asked participants about the barriers they faced as nontraditional Black female students attending a HBCU (Appendix K).

The WebEx session was recorded using an electronic device with a password only known to the researcher. Once the WebEx focus group session was completed, the recorded session was transcribed by a third party. The transcription was coded with a combination of hand coding and NVIVO software to identify themes.

The third part of the data collection process consisted of faculty interviews. Five faculty members agreed to participate in an interview (Appendix L). The purpose of the interviews was to determine faculty perceptions and awareness of the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU. A week before the interviews were conducted, the faculty received an email reminder about their scheduled interview (Appendix M). Before the faculty interviews were conducted, each interviewee was given a consent form to sign (Appendix N). Open-ended questions focused on faculty's awareness and perceptions of the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU (Appendix O). The interviews lasted 60 minutes and were recorded on a password protected device. The password was known only by the researcher. At the end of the interviews, the recordings were transcribed for analysis. The researcher coded transcripts by searching for emerging themes. NVIVO software was used to help code and organize data from the interviews.

## Respondents

### Survey

Nontraditional Black female students from a master's program at a HBCU participated in an online survey. The survey consisted of 12 open-ended and closed-

ended survey questions, which included a question asking for participation in the focus group. Informed Consent was obtained from each respondent prior to participation in the survey. Respondents were given fictitious names to ensure privacy. The fictitious names assigned were participant 1, participant 2, participant 3, participant 4, and participant 5. The survey was created in Survey Monkey® and sent to students via institutional email accounts. The survey was sent to 30 female students who were currently enrolled in a master's program at a HBCU. Out of the 30 surveys emailed, 20 students responded, which yielded a 66% return rate. Information about responses are presented below.

Age. One of the questions in the survey asked the students about their current age. Figure 3 depicts age ranges of the respondents who participated in the survey.

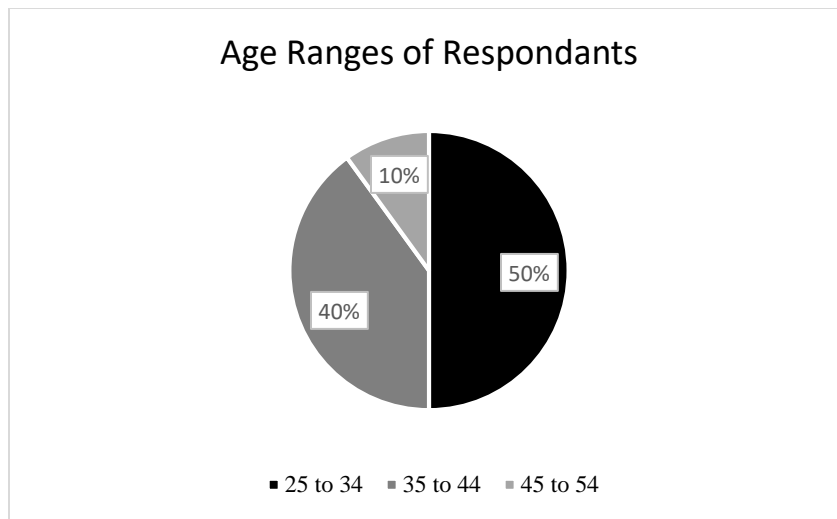


Figure 3. Age Ranges of Respondents.

Figure 3 showed the age ranges of respondents who completed the survey. The chart indicated the youngest respondents in the sampled group were between the ages of 25 to 34. This group represented 50% of all respondents. The middle age range of respondents was from 35 to 44, which represented 40% of respondents, and the oldest age range in the sampled population was between 45 and 54, and represented 10% of

respondents. According to the data, most of the respondents in the sample population were between the ages of 25 to 34.

Race. Figure 4 represents information pertaining to the race of the sample population. While the targeted group was nontraditional Black female students, survey results reflected that at least one respondent indicated she represented more than one race. Of 20 respondents depicted in Figure 4, 19 indicated that their race was Black or multiple race.

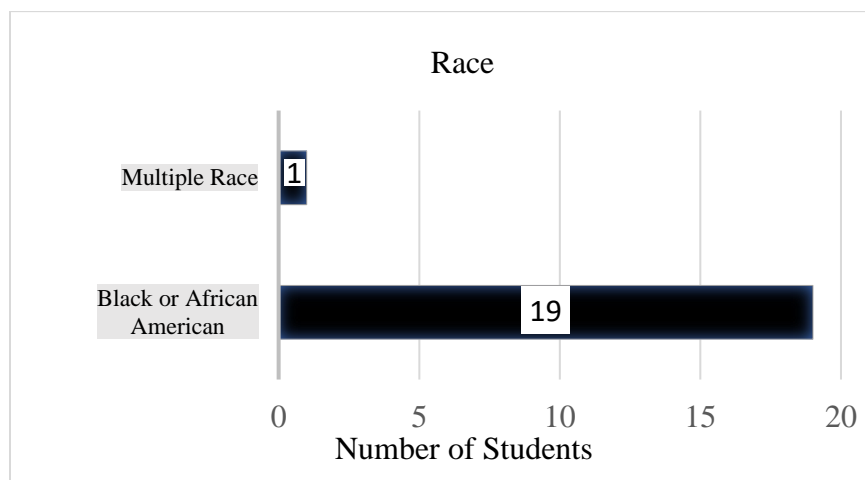


Figure 4. Race of Respondents.

Barriers. An open-ended survey question was used to ask respondents whether they had faced barriers, types of barriers faced, and to provide examples of barriers they faced as a nontraditional Black female student attending a HBCU. Figure 5 depicts the percentage of respondents who indicated whether they faced barriers while attending the HBCU. Of the 20 respondents surveyed, 50% reported that they experienced some type of barrier, while the remaining 50% stated that they had not experienced any type of barrier. Only one-half of the population indicated they had faced barriers.

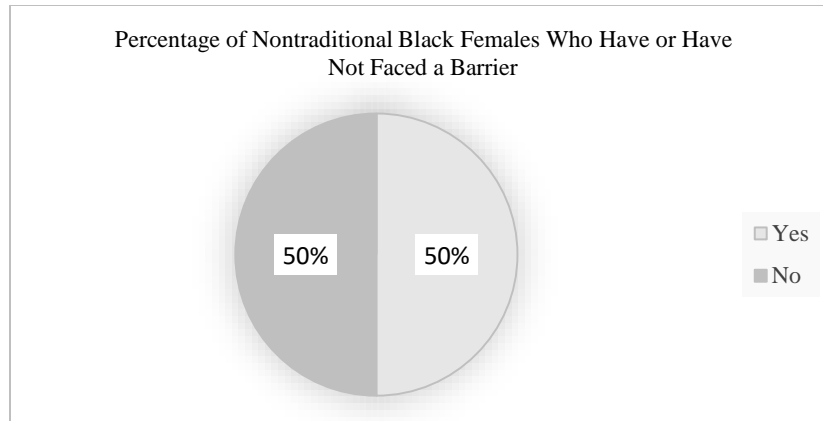


Figure 5. Percentage of Nontraditional Black Female Students Who Have or Have Not Faced a Barrier.

Types of Barriers. Figure 6 below showed the types of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU. Types of barriers faced by respondents included (a) situational barriers, (b) lesser tasks, (c) financial aid, (d) dispositional barriers, and (e) discrimination.

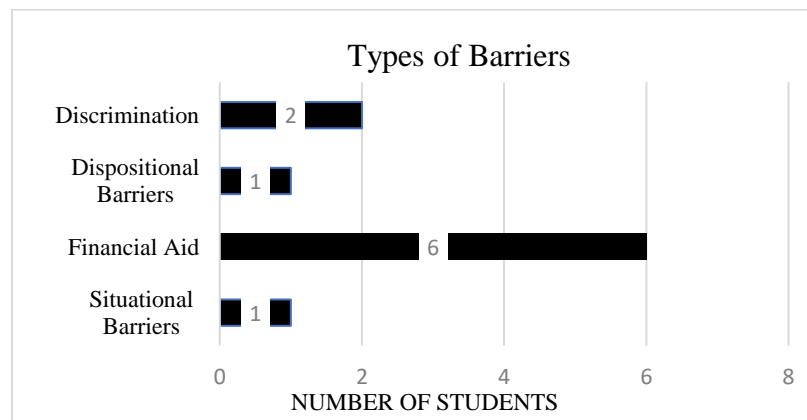


Figure 6. Types of Barriers Experienced.

Coursework Access Options. Respondents were asked which coursework delivery option would best benefit them in their goal to complete their degree. There were four types of courses that respondents indicated they would like the department to offer. The majority of respondents indicated that online courses would best benefit them in their goal of degree attainment, as they would allow more flexibility and conform to



their life demands. Thirty percent (30%) of respondents stated that evening courses offered after five on weekdays would best meet their needs. Respondents also suggested Independent courses as another type of coursework access option, as they allow students to learn independently with limited amount of supervision according to participants responses on the survey. Ten percent (10%) of respondents indicated independent courses would best meet their needs. Lastly, weekend courses were also suggested, which would allow students to attend class on weekends instead of during the week. Five percent (5%) of respondents indicated that weekend courses would best meet their needs. Figure 7 shows the types of courses respondents felt would help them complete a degree.

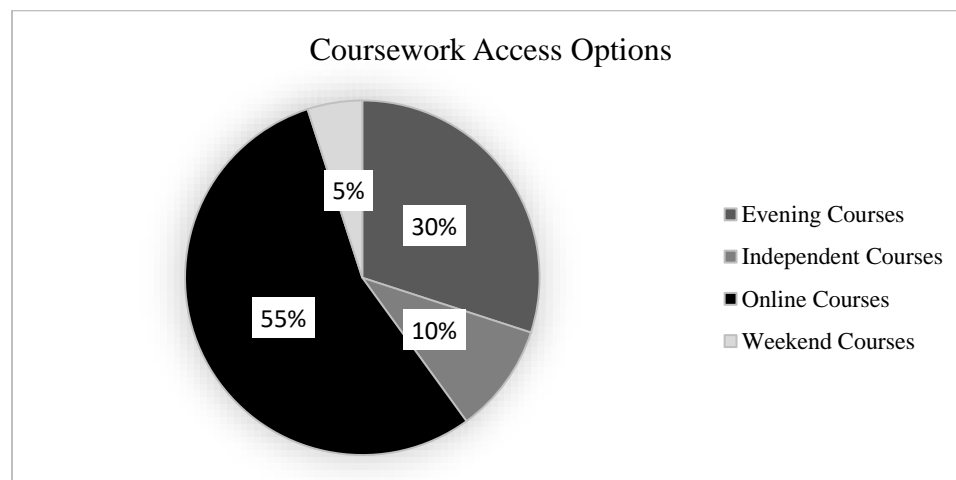


Figure 7. Coursework Access Options.

Paperwork. In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate which type of paperwork they found most challenging to complete while attending the HBCU. Categories included departmental applications, Free Application for Federal Student Aid, admissions applications, and other. Figure 8 depicts the percentage of respondents who had problems with various types of paperwork. Respondents reported that department applications and applications for financial aid were equally challenging. Twenty percent (20%) of respondents reported problems with other paperwork, and 10% reported

problems with admissions applications. Respondents reported they experienced these problems concerning paperwork because they did not have an assigned person to assist them or needed assistance with completing the paperwork. In Figure 8, respondents indicated what types of paperwork most challenging to complete while attending their current HBCU.

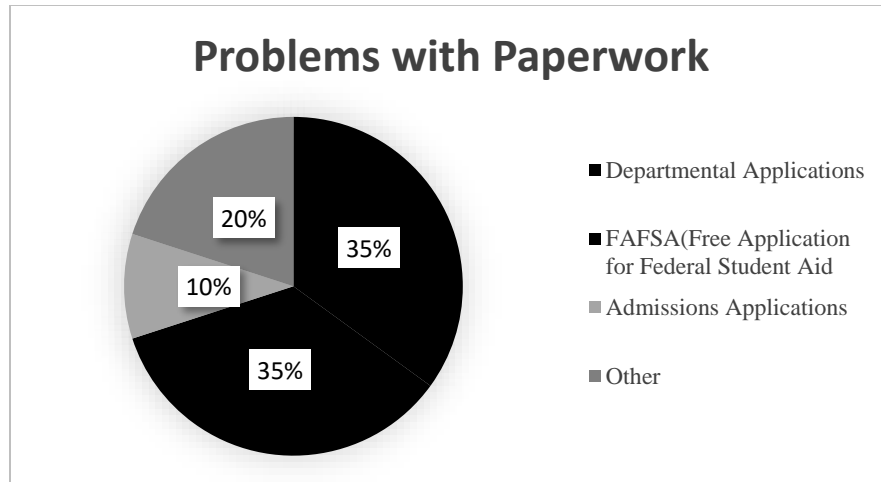


Figure 8. Types of Paperwork.

Financial Aid. Financial aid was needed by respondents. In the survey, respondents were asked what types of financial aid were available to them at their current institution. There were four choices for respondents to choose from including job related aid, grants, student loans and other. Figure 8 shows the types of financial aid that nontraditional Black female students received at the HBCU. Most respondents reported student loans as the type of financial aid they received. Job related aid, such as Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), was reported as the second largest source of financial aid received by the sample pool. Grants and other sources were reported equally by the respondents. Some of the participants indicated that they received other types of aid,

such as the GI Bill and scholarships from churches and companies. Figure 9 depicts the types of financial aid that nontraditional Black female students received at the HBCU.

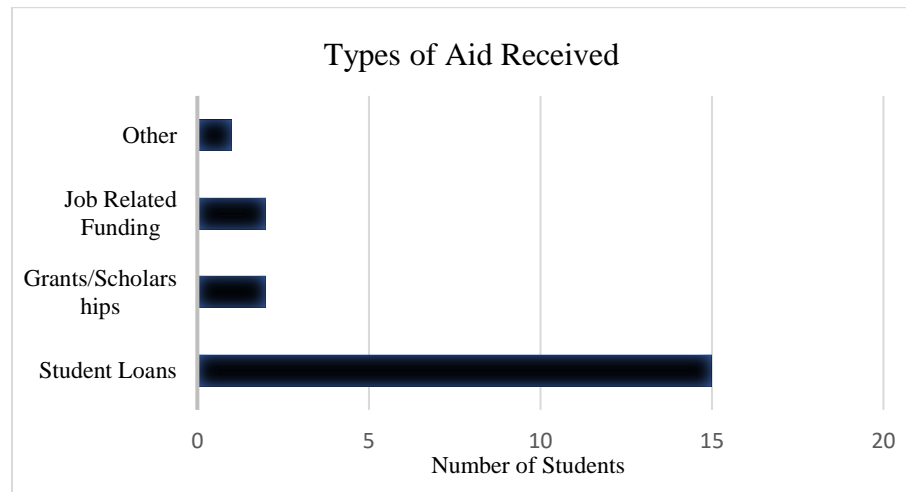


Figure 9. Types of Aid Received.

Disconnection. One question on the survey asked respondents if they had experienced any disconnection between their professors and other students in their classes. Disconnection refers to the feeling of detachment among the students and the faculty. Students may feel that the faculty do not empathize with barriers that they face as a nontraditional Black female student attending a HBCU, which cause the student to become detached and disconnected.

Figure 10 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that they experienced some type of disconnection with their professor and/or classmates. Respondents provided mixed information about disconnection from faculty; however, most respondents indicated there was no disconnection. Forty percent (40%) of respondents reported feelings of disconnection with their professor and/or classmates. Sixty percent (60%) of respondents reported that they had not experienced feelings of disconnection with their professors and/or classmates.

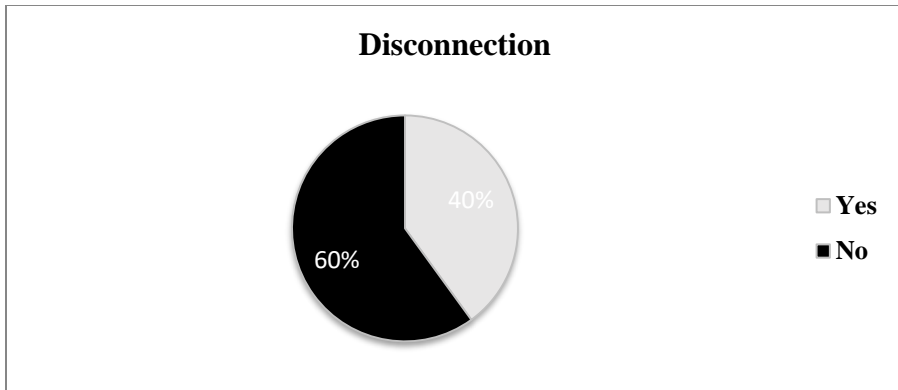


Figure 10. Respondents Feelings of Disconnection Among Professors and Students.

Support. Respondents were asked to provide suggestions of types of support they would find most helpful as nontraditional Black female students. Suggestions given by respondents included nontraditional support groups, different types of aid, cultural training, more empathy, more computers, evening faculty office hours, and providing an online learning system. Figure 11 provides data, which illustrate the suggestions that are offered by respondents to address areas that could provide support for nontraditional Black female students who are attending the HBCU.

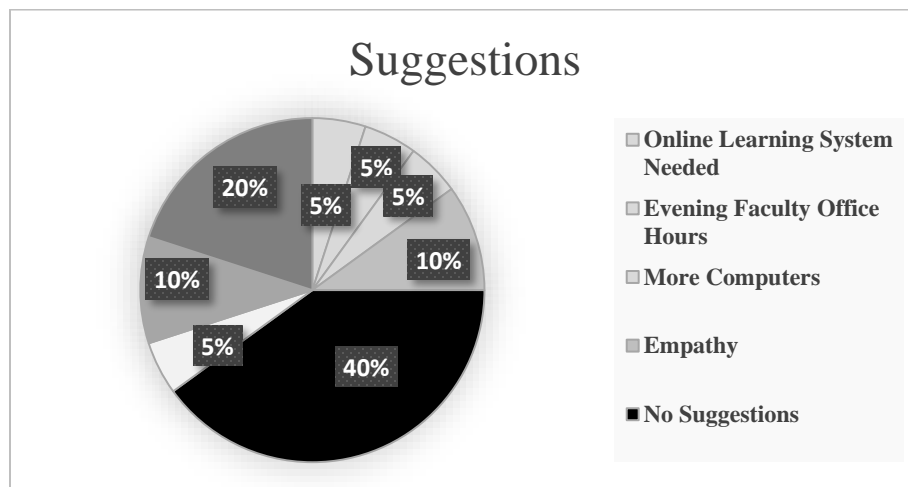


Figure 11. Suggestions.

## Focus Group

Survey respondents were asked if they were interested in participating in a focus group. Respondents who indicated an interest constituted the focus group. The focus group consisted of five members. A WebEx link was sent to all participants that indicated on the survey they would like to participate in the focus group. The questions were developed after the survey responses were collected. The questions centered on participants' experiences with barriers faced at a HBCU as a nontraditional Black female student. The questions covered areas, such as barriers that faculty may not be aware of, experiences with institutional barriers, financial barriers, and dispositional barriers, and suggestions that could help prevent barriers for nontraditional Black female students.

Table 7 reflects areas discussed in the focus group.

Table 7

### *Main Themes Discussed During Focus Group*

Theme	Frequency
Course Access Options	5
Childcare	2
No Nontraditional Activities/Feeling Left Out	2
Online Courses and Degrees	4
Generation Gap	3
Intimidation	1
Financial Aid Issues/Scholarships/ Student loan Debt	2
Empathy/Need Help	5
Communication	3

(Continued)

Course Access Options. A major theme discussed by participants pertained to the convenience of course delivery methods offered by the HBCU. Inconvenience of courses was reported to be one of the main barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at the HBCU. Inconvenient courses were courses that did not accommodate the life demands and schedules of nontraditional students, such as courses that were only offered on campus or at times these students could not attend. Table 8 shows some of the commentary from participants in the focus group as it pertained to their need for flexible schedules and more convenient courses.

Table 8

*Focus Group on Course Access Options*

Participant	Commentary
1	<i>There are not many lenient schedules of classes offered by the department.</i>
2	<i>The course offerings are not offered in a very convenient rotation for student to take the courses.</i>
3	<i>I do agree with participant 1 &amp; 2. As far as courses being offered only in the fall or spring, I think the courses should be offered in both fall and spring because you have to wait almost a whole year to take your next set of courses and that is really inconvenient for some students.</i>

Childcare. Childcare was another major theme discussed by participants in the focus group. Participants identified childcare as one of the barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at the HBCU. Table 9 depicts the commentary of participants in the focus group as it pertained to the barrier of child care faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU.

Table 9

*Focus Group on Childcare*

Participant	Commentary
2	<i>We have experienced issues from paying for college, child care, and loan debt.</i>
1	<i>Altogether, I haven't experienced a whole lot being a nontraditional black female but others may experience some different barriers than yourself, and you do notice these barriers such as child care that your colleagues may need help with in order to finish college.</i>

No Nontraditional Activities/Feeling Left Out. Another theme discussed in the focus group was the limited amount of activities available for nontraditional Black female students, which left them feeling excluded from the campus community. Participants stated that activities provided during hours when nontraditional students cannot participate led to feelings of being left out of the campus community. In addition, participants indicated the need for more age appropriate activities for nontraditional students. Table 10 has commentary from focus group members as it pertained to limited activities for the nontraditional Black female students

Table 10

*Focus Group on No Nontraditional Activities/Feeling Left Out*

Participant	Commentary
4	<i>I believe one of the barriers as a nontraditional Black female student is limited provided services and activities for nontraditional students. For example, providing activities during the hours where nontraditional students are able to participate. Sometimes, the limited activities lead to nontraditional students feeling left out. Also, some of the activities and programing offered are not related to nontraditional because of the hours and the age differences.</i>
5	<i>A lot of the activities they have are offered at late hours of the night. Well it just depends if the activities are convenient for nontraditional students and sometimes they may not have</i>

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*transportation or other things going on and may not be able to get to the school to participate.*

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Online Degrees and Courses. Online degrees and courses were major topics of discussion in the focus group. The participants expressed their concerns regarding course offerings and indicated that there were not enough online courses and degrees offered at the HBCU. The focus group participants voiced that online degrees and online courses would better fit their demanding life schedules. Also, the focus group commentary presented participants' concerns about how their current institution is not providing more online options as other HBCUs have provided for nontraditional students. Table 11 shows the commentary of the participants in the focus group as pertained to the limited number of online courses and degrees as a barrier that nontraditional Black female students faced at the HBCU.

Table 11

*Focus Group on Online Degrees and Courses*

Participant	Commentary
2	<i>Yes, make more online degrees. We have sat in class for most of our bachelor's degree and now that we are working on our masters, I feel like they could be more lenient most of time with the class offerings. You are doing your masters; you already working using your bachelor's degree. They don't have a lot of online classes. I'm taking up business management and in this major, all of the courses are offered in class which is an inconvenience. There are a lot of online schools that are providing online courses and that would be a great help if my current institution offers more online courses. .</i>
3	<i>I agree with participant one and two. I would like to have taken all my classes online.</i>

Generation Gap. The generation gap between the traditional and nontraditional students was another barrier that participants discussed in the focus group. Participants felt that the traditional students knew more about current events on campus, how to



complete different types of paperwork, and received more assistance from the institution or high schools that traditional students attended. Nontraditional Black female student felt that by the time that they entered into college, they did not have the opportunity to take advantage of the assistance provided to traditional students from their high schools. Table 12 shows the participants' commentary on the generation gap between the nontraditional Black female students and traditional students as it pertained to one of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students.

Table 12

*Focus Group on Generation Gap*

Participant	Commentary
4	<i>I believe sometimes the institution thinks that nontraditional students should already know certain things such as the admissions process and financial aid processes like traditional students do but being out of school for a long time, we are not going to have the education and knowledge needed in order to get through the process.</i>
3	<i>A lot of people catch on quickly, but we do not catch on fast, like others, so a lot of teachers that I met just being in grad school say we should know things that we learned in undergrad and they don't really like going back over that same information. They feel like you should know the material even if it has been several years since you have even seen some of the material being taught now.</i>
4	<i>Sometimes it can be a bit intimidating because they think that we should already know these things. Sometimes professors would ask the student "why you are asking this, you should already know these types of things." Sometimes it can be intimidating for nontraditional student to ask their professors because they feel like due to our age we should know. We deserve the same amount of treatment that a traditional student is receiving and guide us and help us just like everyone else.</i>

Financial Aid Issues/Student Loan Debt. During the focus group, participants also discussed financial aid issues, such as scholarships and student loan debt.

Participants expressed how they felt about the financial aid issues that they have faced

and how these financial issues became barriers for them as nontraditional Black female students to complete their degree. Table 13 shows participant's commentary about the financial issues as it pertained to the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU.

Table 13

*Focus Group on Financial Issues/Student Loan Debt*

Participant	Commentary
5	<i>There are not a lot of scholarships offered to nontraditional students. I have applied online for life scholarship, had the GPA, met all of the qualifications and everything toward the scholarship, but they said that the scholarship was geared towards the younger students.</i>
4	<i>Students who are nontraditional are dropping out of school because of financial situations. It would be good to give out scholarships to nontraditional students to help with paying for college. I'm the first one in my family ever to go to a college or university, so I feel like I'm reaching a milestone, and I want to leave a strong legacy. If there were scholarships for nontraditional students to apply for, I think that would help me get closer to my milestone.</i>

Empathy/Need Assistance. Participants in the focus group discussed the need for professors to show empathy towards nontraditional students due to the barriers that they faced. Participants indicated that the institution should provide some type of academic assistance for nontraditional Black female students to help this population matriculate through college and graduate. Participants expressed the need for professors to understand the specific challenges associated with being nontraditional students, such as trying to obtain their degrees after many years of being out of school, taking care of families, and facing financial issues. Table 14 provides some of the commentary from the participants in the focus group as it pertained to professors providing empathy and

needing academic assistance as it pertained to barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at the HBCU.

Table 14

*Focus Group on Empathy/Need Assistance*

Participant	Commentary
5	<i>Last semester, I went through an issue because my mom was sick and I had to take on more responsibilities in my own household and in the process of caring for my mom I got sick and was hospitalized. When I came back to school to give my teachers my doctor excuses for the assignment it was not accepted. I went through a lot trying to catch up and I felt like my professors could have shown a little more empathy in order to help me with completing assignments and catching up with my work.</i>
2	<i>We paid tuition just like others did. Because of our age administrators, faculty and staff think that they don't have to tend to us nontraditional students and we end up not receiving the same treatment as traditional students.</i>
4	<i>I think that they should have some type of ambassadors for the traditional students; they need to have some ambassadors for nontraditional students. I think that they should have it not only just for nontraditional students but especially nontraditional African-American students to be able to have mentors or some type of person there that can guide them through the process to make it easier on some of those barriers, to alleviate some of those barriers. I think some type of support group should be in place for those nontraditional students who need help academically or personally. I think that'll be a good way to eliminate some of the barriers. Maybe have the faculty and the support group work together to identify some common issues that nontraditional females face, to eliminate those before they even get to the college. So, when nontraditional students get here, they don't even have to face those barriers because the institution is working hand-in-hand with the support group together as far as helping each other. You know so I think maybe some type of support group for every nontraditional, African American student definitely would help because they have it for international students when they get to university especially HBCUs, but I don't see any for nontraditional African, American female students.</i>

Communication. Participants in the focus group discussed the importance that communication between the departments and students can become a barrier for nontraditional Black female students attending a HBCU. Table 15 below shows some of the commentary that the focus group participants discussed as it pertained to communication between the departments and students.

Table 15

*Focus Group on Communication*

Participant	Commentary
4	<i>Communication is a barrier in certain departments especially in financial aid, not being able to access and get the one-on-one that you need. Being a nontraditional student, they have more questions because they are not familiar with the process. Nontraditional students haven't been to school in a while and things change, policies change, the campus is different and when a nontraditional student is not able to get the information they need from one departments because of the communication breakdown, the student is penalized because they do not know where to go and get assistance. This could be prevented if there was more communication among the departments and the student.</i>
5	<i>Sometimes faculty and staff do not have time, issues which have them always busy and prevents them from returning emails. When faculty or staff do not return your emails or phone calls that creates a communication barrier for the student and causes frustration. It is like you had a better chance of communicating with the students better than the faculty and staff at the school.</i>
3	<i>Once nontraditional students start to attend a particular college, nontraditional students should have a way to communicate, reach out to each other as well as have open communication with the faculty and staff. It would be good to have someone designated to check on the currently enrolled nontraditional student to see how everything is going and to see if they need anything like assistance with financial aid or academics.</i>

## Faculty Interviews

The faculty interview questions centered on the types of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU and the extent of faculty awareness regarding the barriers. Five faculty members participated in the faculty interviews.

Table 16 shows the themes that were discussed, and the frequency each of them presented in the interviews. An asterisk (\*) near a theme signifies that the theme was mentioned in every interview.

Table 16

### *Main Themes and Their Frequency During Faculty Interviews*

Theme	Frequency
Community Resources*	16
Childcare/Caregiver *	10
Financial Issues*	20
Responsibility*	7
Stream Line Process*	7
Student Skill Level*	8
Standardized Tests (GRE/MAT)	5
Dropping of Students' Grades	4
Advance School Technology	6
Career Change	5
Students Learning from Others*	19
Students feeling there is no help	6
Scholarships*	6
Academic Resources*	13
More Course Offerings	6
Self-Management Resources	5

Community Resources. A theme discussed during the faculty interviews was Community Resources. Community resources included such things as childcare, financial resources, and other services. Faculty members discussed suggestions on how community resources could be used to overcome situational/financial barriers faced by

nontraditional African American female students at the HBCU. Table 17 shows some of the commentary from the faculty as it pertained to community resources.

Table 17

*Faculty Interview on Community Resources*

Interviewee	Commentary
1	<i>Students that are single parents, you know, have a child, or maybe a caregiver for someone, so if they have children, one thing that I know from working in public health is my primary focus is to know what resources are available to these students. One resource could be child care assistance. I will point them in the right direction, like DFACS Department of Family and Children Services. Sometimes you can go to the department of labor and they have the WIA program. DFACS helps if there is not enough food in the house, they can apply for food stamps and childcare. You also have rental assistance and they are different types of rental assistance.</i>
2	<i>The university can have some community referrals for the nontraditional students when they need it. Here's this child care service number that if you ever need child services on the dime, you can go and call them, and they may even have some slots available for them.</i>

Childcare/Caregiver. Childcare/caregiver was another theme discussed during the faculty interviews. Participants discussed their experiences with nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU trying to secure childcare for their children or being a caregiver to a family member. Table 18 shows some of the commentary from the faculty as it pertained to the barrier of nontraditional Black female students securing childcare and being a caregiver for a family member.

Table 18

*Individual Faculty Interviews on Childcare/Caregiver*

Interviewee	Commentary
2	<i>For the situational barriers, I've had certainly family issues to come up, the main one being the female as the primary caregiver for children. If a child is sick something related to school and it hampers their ability to come to class on time or they'll have to</i>

*leave or be absent. Then we've had mothers to having to take off time for maternal leave. We've had the parental situation where they've been parental caregivers just this last year. I had one student who had been out, maybe three semesters, taking care of her father and her father passed in the fall.*

3 *I think the first one is family issues to come into the program either married or have a family and you're coming back to school, and that makes it difficult for them to transition from that life into an academic environment, and they may face obstacles in terms of how to care for their children and come back to school full-time.*

5 *A lot of nontraditional Black female students have stated to me that child care is an issue and that's a burden for them and because they don't have the child care, sometimes they will miss class, and then, if they miss class, they begin to fall behind for a long period of time, they will have less than a mediocre grade in the course.*

Financial Issues. Financial Issues were also a theme discussed during the faculty interviews. Interviewees discussed their experiences with nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU who have struggled with securing financial aid to pay for college.

Table 19 shows some of the commentary from the faculty as it was related to the financial barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.

Table 19

*Faculty Interviews on Financial Issues*

Interviewee	Commentary
1	<i>The biggest issue that I found is always financial. If you know of a scholarship, let the student know. Just about every major company has some type of internship or scholarship program. It's just whether or not you choose to look for it. Even the banks, DOCO have scholarship application that just opened. Bank of America has one. So, then you have the engineered STEM programs. You know, PNG has internship, so any little thing that you can help piece together the funding that'll help.</i>
2	<i>I have had one student to not have the finances and that would include paying for graduation regalia, where I did pay for one student, where a student didn't have enough for the tuition because of financial aid changes, they were short about 500 or anywhere between 5, maybe \$800 and I did set up a personal contract and I loaned it to them and they did pay it back. They have been other students who did not have the money and they had to sit out for a</i>

*period. I had one student who was a mother of seven. She was expecting her eighth and she had just run out of financial aid money and I believe she sat out for maybe two semesters, but she did come back after she saved up. She came back, and she finished so those were financial. Financial aid is limited for graduate students. The only financial source that they have is student loan and maybe a graduate plus loan. I think it would go across the board in terms of just have an emergency fund for nontraditional students who have the extra issue of having been out of the school setting and things of that nature.*

3 *You also have financial issues some of the nontraditional Blacks females might not have access to funding. You know to come back to school and there are always issues with financial problems. We need to make sure that that we equip them with the financial needs before the come into the program. We should ask the student do they have some sort of funding to pay for college and talk to them about how to fund their college.*

5 *I've also been told that there is a barrier with financial, just financial stability. As you know, whatever the situation is, if they're going part-time or they're going full time, are they just taking one or two classes it's a financial situation that they embarked on. Even though HBCUs aren't always costly type of institution to attend, students still face financial barriers that stops them not continuing on throughout their particular endeavors at a HBCU.*

Responsibility. Responsibility was a theme discussed during the faculty interviews. Interviewees stressed how important it was for nontraditional Black female students to understand the responsibility they are embarking on when they enroll in college. Interviewees stressed the need for nontraditional Black female students to be diligent with their course work and outside demands to matriculate through college and graduate. Table 20 shows some of the commentary from the faculty as it pertains to importance of being a responsible nontraditional student.

Table 20

*Faculty Interview on Responsibility*

Interviewee	Commentary
1	<i>Students are going to have to take some responsibility and initiative themselves. Okay, everything is not going to be easy. You</i>



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	<i>are going to have to put forth a little effort. It's not going to be handed to you.</i>
2	<i>I had a nontraditional Black female student who knew she had barriers but did things that she knew she needed to do to help her performance and we got along very, very well.</i>
5	<i>Their issue is they don't have the time to go to the particular department that they have to go to get through a particular process. So, what happens? If they put it off or they wait to the very last minute, they get frustrated, get angry, and want to leave. Not all nontraditional Black females who attend a HBCU have had issues with just going through the process. You know to make sure that your paperwork is on time, but the paperwork is not on time. They do not want to walk through the process and then there's just some things they just must walk through for instance, if they have to get a hold or get some type of release. You know for that the hold has to be released in order for them to actually be admitted into a department, so they can move forward to get registered and the student sometimes just don't want to go through all of that.</i>

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Student Skill Level. Student skill level was a theme discussed during the faculty interviews. Interviewees discussed experiences with nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU who were behind in skills needed in the classroom to keep up with the other students. Other issues faced by this population included the inability to meet and maintain GPA requirements, as well as some of these students not completing their first semester. Interviewees reported lack of technological ability as an issue for this population as well. Table 21 shows some of the commentary from the faculty as it pertained to nontraditional students' skill level in the classroom.

Table 21

*Faculty Interviews on Student Skill Level*

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Interviewee	Commentary
2	<i>For nontraditional students if they have been out of school for a while, then their skill levels are not where they would need to be, and sometimes they fall below a certain GPA or they do not complete the first semester in our program. Students must make all B's or better in their first 9 hours, but some of the students are not</i>

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*meeting the GPA requirement, which the graduate school makes students appeal due to academic suspension. I will say that this requirement maybe across the board in terms of male and female, not necessarily female.*

*Some of them did not do well in terms of the age difference and it mostly related to technology and I can recall one student and I still feel badly, because the student feels as if I was not being as helpful to them as I should have been, but coming into the graduate program the expectation is whether you're a traditional or nontraditional, that you have technology skills and this particular nontraditional female did not.*

3 *You know first, we have to be aware of the fact that they are not as technologically-advanced as younger students who are technologically- advanced. HBCUs should offer opportunities for them to take additional courses in computer science introductory classes in computer science or create computer labs.*

4 *The other thing for people coming back to school, it is totally different. Knowledge is different from when I first went to school and barely kept up with that, and then they were all the other things that happened, that I didn't know about and couldn't relate to.*

Streamline Process. During the faculty interviews, the issue of stream lining processes was mentioned. Interviewees discussed how important it is for a HBCU to stream line their processes as it relates to the admissions process, financial aid, and departmental processes. Table 22 shows some of the commentary from the faculty as it pertains to HBCU streamlining institutional processes.

Table 22

*Faculty Interviews on Streamlining Institutional Processes*

Interviewee	Commentary
1	<i>One thing for admission: it could be easier to submit an application. Like I said, I've been on both aspects of it. I've been a student and I've gone to two different universities. I've also been, you know, on that back end as a faculty member that has to look in review and walk people through it. So the application process for some universities should be a little bit easier. It should be okay if I'm researching this institution and I want to go here. I should not have the click 10 times just to get to where I need to get to. One or</i>

4	<p><i>two clicks is okay, that way I can find it. I can save it. I can go back to it. Streamline the process links things together.</i></p> <p><i>Our students bounce from one place to another place to another place, you go to financial aid and they say no, you have to talk to admissions and they say no you have to talk to another department. Then you have to come back and get the signature from your advisor and people give up because they can't take time off work if they're, working and just the whole process is so frustrating, so I think every one of my students has had some issue when they withdraw them from school and either for nonpayment or because of some kind of hold on the student's account.</i></p> <p><i>One thing that they could do is make the processes easier, so the processes are streamlined, and everybody has a one-stop-shop, and they don't have to run all over campus.</i></p>
5	<p><i>You know here at the university we can make (Continued) smoother and I am not saying we have to hold the hands of these nontraditional African, American women. I'm, just saying if we know somebody's coming back to school, you know for the first time in 30 years, the first time in 20 years, the first time in a decade, let's just stay with them that first year and then that second year we can see them and handle them from a distance, maybe send an email.</i></p>

Scholarships. There was a limited amount of funds for college for nontraditional Black female students who may attend a HBCU. Scholarships were an emerging theme discussed during faculty interviews. Table 23 shows the commentary from the faculty on scholarship funding for nontraditional Black female students.

Table 23

*Faculty Interviews on Scholarships*

Interviewee	Commentary
1	<p><i>The biggest issue that I found is always financial. You need to have even the smallest bit of knowledge of resources like that or help the student financially and then let them know as well. If you know of a scholarship, let them know. Just about every major company has some type of internship or scholarship program.</i></p>
2	<p><i>Most of the time, all of the funding earmarked for the undergrad. Maybe some of the undergraduate nontraditional students face these things too, but I work with the graduate population, so but I think it would go across the board in terms of just have an emergency fund for nontraditional students who have the extra</i></p>

- 3 *issue of having been out of the school setting and things of that nature.*  
*Having access to funding is this always a problem. You know, maybe external funding can help some of them, such as scholarships.*

Academic Resources. During the interviews, faculty stressed the importance of having academic resources for nontraditional Black female students who attend the HBCU. Academic resources were a theme discussed in the interviews. Table 24 shows some of the commentary from the faculty as it pertained to academic resources provided for nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU.

Table 24

*Faculty Interviews on Academic Resources*

Interviewee	Commentary
2	<i>I know we had one of our students for their internship project placement was working on a graduate center where they will be certain workshops or resources available. I don't know how far the project has gone since they're finished placement. If anyone else picked it up after that, person does something like that may be helpful, so they would be in a setting where they wouldn't feel out of touch with the population.</i>
4	<i>Professors don't understand that a lot of our students come in and they don't know anything about the area that they want to major in. So before going into school, there needs to be an orientation that is not 2 hours long, but it's either over several nights over or even a week-long when they come in and they get oriented about their field of choice and what academic resources the institution has to offer them.</i>

- 5 *There should be an advisor in place for nontraditional African American students that attended HBCUs. I think if the students knew that there's this person or are this branch, that's connected to any university that wants to see their success. I find it very hard to believe that these individuals would not tap into those resources, because these are the individuals that are going back to school. The majority of them are paying for the education and they serious, so if they know that there's resources out there and they know that somebody actually cares about them matriculating through the process. I would think that would alleviate a lot of barriers that the African American woman, that you know they may come across being at a HBCU, but with the resources being limited, they feel as though they are in that same population with the traditional students, sometimes they say, they're getting lost in the shuffle.*
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### Data Analysis

The review of the literature identified various barriers faced by nontraditional female students in higher education, which included situational barriers, financial barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers (Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984; Mezirow 1978a, 1978b). The researcher designed the survey protocol to examine the barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at the HBCU. The survey contained questions pertaining to demographics, such as age and race. The survey also contained questions about perceived barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU, such as types of courses that would be beneficial for them, problems experienced with certain types of paperwork, types of financial funding received, types of academic and financial resources needed, campus activities for nontraditional Black female students, disconnection among faculty and classmates, and a question asking for suggestions to address the perceived barriers. Table 25 summarizes the survey results collected.

Table 25

*Summary of Survey Findings*

Category	Meaning	Evidence from data
Population	Sample of participants in the study	20 Participants
Demographics	Statistical characteristics of the population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Black-19 participants</li> <li>2. Multiracial-1 participant</li> </ol> </li> <li>• Age               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 25 to 34-50%</li> <li>2. 35 to 44-40%</li> <li>3. 45 to 54- 10%</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Experienced any barriers	Participants who did or did not experience a barrier while attending a HBCU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes-50%</li> <li>• No-50%</li> </ul>
Barriers Reported	Types of barriers faced while attending a HBCU.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination- 2 participants</li> <li>• Dispositional Barriers- 1 participant</li> <li>• Financial Aid- 6 participants</li> <li>• Situational Barriers- 1 participant</li> </ul>
Coursework Access Options	Types of courses needed to accommodate the studied population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online Courses-55%</li> <li>• Evening Courses-30%</li> <li>• Weekend Courses-10%</li> <li>• Independent Study Courses-5%</li> </ul>
Problems with Institution Applications	Applications that participants must complete in order enroll into the college or program and receive federal student aid.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departmental Applications- 35%</li> <li>• Free Application for Federal Student Aid 35%</li> <li>• Admissions Applications- 10%</li> <li>• Other Types of Applications- 10%</li> </ul>
Types of Aid Received	Funds that are used or received to pay for college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Student Loans-16 participants</li> <li>• Job Related Funding, Grants, or Paid Out of Pocket-4 participants</li> </ul>
Experienced Disconnection	The feeling of detachment among the students and the faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes-60%</li> <li>• No-40%</li> </ul>

(Continued)

Suggestions	Ideas for HBCU Administrators to consider while developing strategies to help prevent barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Suggestions-40%</li> <li>• Support Group -20%</li> <li>• More Empathy -10%</li> <li>• Different Types of financial Aid provided 10%</li> <li>• Cultural Training, more computers, &amp; evening faculty hours- 20%</li> </ul>
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The focus group yielded six emergent themes. The emergent themes were: child care, course access options, generation gap, financial aid, empathy, and communication.

Table 26 below shows the themes that emerged and their frequency with which they were mentioned by the focus group.

Table 26

*Focus Group Emerging Themes*

Theme	Frequency
Child Care	2
Course Access Options	5
Generation Gap	3
Financial Aid	2
Empathy	3
Communication	3

Faculty interviews focused on the perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU and examined faculty awareness of barriers faced by this population. The results of the faculty interviews yielded six emergent themes including: streamline processes, lack of knowledge of community resources, lack of academic resources, financial issues, managing responsibilities, and student skill level.

Table 27 below shows the themes that emerged and the number of times each theme was mentioned during the faculty interviews.

Table 27

*Faculty Interviews Emerging Themes*

Theme	Number of Times Mentioned
Community Resources*	16
Childcare/Caregiver *	10
Financial Issues*	20
Responsibility*	7
Stream Line Process*	7
Student Skill Level*	8
Students Learning from Others*	19
Students feeling there is no help	6
Scholarships*	6
Academic Resources*	13

Response to Research Questions

Research Question 1: What were the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students concerning the barriers they faced at a HBCU?

Nontraditional Black female students at the studied institution perceived that the barriers they faced at the HBCU were childcare, course access options, a generation gap, financial aid issues, departmental communication, and the need for more empathy. The survey and the focus group provided more in-depth information about the participants' experiences with these emerging themes in the data collection.

The first theme, which emerged from participant's responses, was child care. The second theme, which emerged, was course access options. These barriers fell under the category of situational barriers as defined by Cross (1981). Participants reported that they all have faced problems with securing childcare for their children while attending college. Some of the participants even mentioned that they have seen fellow classmates struggle with securing childcare. The problem of child care was a barrier, which was



identified in the review of the literature (Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1984).

Course access options was another barrier perceived by participants. Participants agreed that there were not enough courses offered in a convenient rotation, or in an online format for students as needed. Participants reported that they had to wait for classes to be offered in the next academic semester to move forward in the program. Participants expressed the need for more online courses to be offered to assist nontraditional Black female students in making their degree more attainable. This perception aligned with the review of the literature (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Lane, 2012).

The third theme, which emerged, was generation gap. This barrier fell under the category of dispositional barriers as defined by Catherine (2013) and Keith (2007). The participants stated that the generation gap was a barrier because faculty expected them to know certain material that should have been learned during their undergraduate studies. Participants indicated that faculty did not understand that they had been out of school for a while, which caused them to fall behind the traditional students in class. This perception aligned with research findings identified in the review of the literature (Catherine, 2013; Cross, 1981; Keith, 2007)

The fourth theme identified by the analysis of the data was financial aid. This barrier fell under the category of financial barriers as indicated by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2012) and Cross (1981). Participants expressed their concerns about student loan debt resulting in large amounts of student debt, and limited scholarships and grants available for nontraditional students to apply for to help pay for college. This perception was reiterated throughout the review of the

literature as stated by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2012) and Cross (1981).

The next theme, which emerged from the analysis of the data, was communication. Participants expressed frustration when departments failed to communicate with them, because they felt like they were bounced back and forth without having their problem resolved. This perception was not identified in the review of the literature.

The final theme, which emerged from the analysis of the data, was empathy. Respondents expressed the importance of professors and other key stakeholders to recognize and address academic needs specific to nontraditional Black female students. This perception was a dispositional barrier. Participants wanted professors and administrators to understand the barriers they faced to discover better ways of assisting nontraditional Black female students. This perception aligned with research performed by Ross-Gordon (2011).

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of the HBCU faculty related to the barriers nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU?

The faculty perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU included six similar themes as identified by the student survey and the focus group. Faculty perceived the following barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU: lack of knowledge of community resources available to assist them, financial aid issues, issues pertaining to managing responsibilities of college and family, issues with institutional processes, differences in student skill level/generation gap, limited scholarships, and limited academic resources.

The first perception identified by faculty members pertaining to barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students was a lack of knowledge of community resources available to them. This perception was not reviewed in the literature review. Faculty members expressed the importance of faculty awareness of community resources available for students, which could assist nontraditional Black female students who faced situational barriers, such as childcare and parental care. The second barrier perceived by faculty participants was financial issues. This perception was a financial barrier. Faculty participants expressed the need for more scholarships for nontraditional Black female students.

Faculty participants perceived that issues managing responsibilities of college and family, as well as issues with institutional processes were barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students. This perception was a situational barrier. This perception aligned with the review of the literature (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Kasworm, 2012). Faculty participants were concerned about nontraditional Black female students handling graduate course work along with the regular responsibilities they had away from the university. Faculty participants expressed the need for nontraditional Black students to understand that managing work, home, and school would be challenging, but being responsible and using time management would help prevent some of their frustrations. Faculty participants discussed streamlining certain processes for nontraditional Black female students, such as making the website user friendly, having a one stop shop where students could get their questions answered quickly, or having a designated advisor for nontraditional Black female students. These perceptions aligned with the review of the literature (Blair, 2010).

Faculty also discussed student skill set and generation gap. Faculty felt that nontraditional students needed more academic resources, such as computer courses, writing labs, and personal academic advisors to help assist nontraditional students. With these academic resources, faculty felt that these resources would increase nontraditional student skill level.

Research Question 3: To what extent was there a relationship between the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and HBCU faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students?

The relationship between the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and HBCU faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students coincided with each other. Student participants identified several barriers, such as lack of grants and scholarships, childcare, a generation gap, course access options, departmental communication, and lack of empathy.

Faculty perceptions mirrored the perceived barriers as student participants. Faculty identified the need for community resources for nontraditional Black female students with situational and financial barriers. Faculty stressed the importance of awareness by faculty and students alike regarding resources available to assist in addressing situational and financial barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students. Faculty discussed the issue of managing going to college and taking care of other life demands, such as work and family, and how these obstacles often presented a barrier for nontraditional Black female students. This barrier was a situational barrier as identified by Cross (1981). Faculty also perceived that departmental processes should be streamlined to better assist nontraditional students. This barrier was an institutional

barrier identified by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2012) and Kapp (1833). Faculty suggested that a one-stop shop be created for students as well as assigning a designated academic advisor for nontraditional students. Faculty also perceived that nontraditional Black female students and nontraditional students faced the barrier of lacking necessary skill sets, such as computer, writing, and math skills to be successful in their courses. Faculty also perceived a potential barrier for nontraditional Black female students by failing to learn from their traditional student peers.

The next barrier perceived by the faculty were the lack of scholarships and academic resources available to nontraditional Black female students. This perception was a financial barrier. Students and faculty both discussed the issue of lack of scholarships and academic resources. This perception aligned with the review of the literature (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012). Faculty expressed a need for a separate orientation for nontraditional students to acclimate them to reenter college as adult learners. Faculty expressed the importance for institutions to offer nontraditional students refresher courses on computer literacy as well as to provide them with an academic advisor. This perception was a dispositional barrier and aligned with barriers identified in the review of the literature. According to Catherine (2013) and Keith (2007), nontraditional students worry about their lack of skills that they need to succeed in the classroom. This research conducted by Catherine (2013) and Keith (2007) indicates the need for remedial courses for nontraditional Black female students.

#### Summary

Nontraditional Black female students who were enrolled at a HBCU perceived that they faced many different barriers. Data collected from the student survey and

student focus group discussion, identified barriers faced including: the need for resources such as childcare access, lack of grants and scholarships, limited course access options, generation gap, lack of empathy, and departmental communication. Students in the study expressed frustration and the desire to see changes regarding supports available to assist them with these barriers.

Faculty perceptions of barriers mirrored the barriers identified by the student participants. Faculty participants indicated that awareness of community resources could prevent some of the situational and financial barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students. Faculty discussed skill level as a barrier for nontraditional Black female students who have returned to college after many years. Faculty discussed the benefit of streamlining institutional processes. Lastly, faculty expressed the need for additional academic resources, such as separate orientation and an academic advisor specifically for nontraditional students.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The evolution of the nontraditional student in higher education dates to the World War II, Korean War, the Civil Right Movement, and even the Women's Rights Movement. The introduction of GI Bills, the Adult Education Act, and the Morrill Act of 1890 helped nontraditional students become more common in colleges and universities. The Korean War and World War II provided many nontraditional students assistance with funding for their education. The Korean War and World War II were two major wars that produced the GI Bill. Veterans were able to use these funds allotted by the federal government to pay for housing and college expenses for themselves as well as for their dependents. The Adult Education Act provided funds for nontraditional students to attend college. The Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Rights Movement provided more access to nontraditional Black female student to enter college. The Morrill Act of 1890 provided separate but equal institutions among African Americans and Whites. The Morrill Act of 1890 was used to create land grant institutions, which yielded 17 African American institutions, which became known as HBCUs.

According to literature, the nontraditional student population are students who are 24 years or older, work full-time, and have family and other responsibilities. Nontraditional Black female students make up part of the nontraditional student population, and some of them have chosen to attend a HBCU to achieve their academic goals. Nontraditional students face barriers that hinder them from matriculating through

college. Faculty should be aware of the barriers to assist this population through their academic career.

HBCUs were formed to provide African Americans with a quality education that they could not, at that time, receive at predominately white colleges and universities. HBCUs emerged in 1837, at Cheyney University located in Pennsylvania, which currently stands as the oldest HBCU in the United States. Many nontraditional Black female students who have attended a HBCU experienced different types of barriers that traditional students may not have experienced. Faculty expressed awareness of the barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at their current HBCU, and they were willing to help identify ways to assist them with the services they needed to succeed.

Nontraditional Black female students in the study faced many of the same barriers identified in the review of the literature. There were some additional barriers that students and faculty presented to the researcher during the study. The review of the literature indicated that there are at least four barriers that nontraditional students faced while attending college including: financial barriers, situational barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers. The nontraditional Black female students' perceptions of the barriers they faced were evaluated as well as faculty perceptions and awareness of the barriers that faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

To evaluate the perceptions of the barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU, a qualitative descriptive case study research design was used. The researcher conducted three data collection methods. First, the researcher emailed a survey to 30 nontraditional Black female students who were currently enrolled in a



master's program at a HBCU. The survey was used to collect data on the perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU. The survey responses were used to develop the questions for the focus group. There were 20 students who participated in the survey. Responses were hand coded by the researcher. The second data collection was a student focus group. Students were asked on the survey if they would like to participate in a focus group session to talk about the barriers that they had experienced at the HBCU. There were five student respondents who participated in the focus group. The data collected were evaluated using a combination of hand coding and NVIVO software.

To evaluate the perceptions and the awareness of faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU, faculty interviews were conducted. The interview data collected from the faculty interviews were compared to the student survey responses and student focus group commentaries to identify any similarities or differences between the perceptions of the studied population and the HBCU faculty. The data collected from the faculty were transcribed by a third party, evaluated, and coded using a combination of hand coding and NVIVO software.

#### Research Questions

Research Question 1: What were the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students concerning the barriers they faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of the HBC faculty related to the barriers nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU?

Research Question 3: To what extent was there a relationship between the perceptions of

nontraditional Black female students and HBCU faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students?

### Methodology

The researcher utilized a qualitative descriptive case study research design. A qualitative research method approach provided the researcher with in-depth information from participants during the focus groups and faculty interviews. By using a qualitative research design, the researcher was able to capture the participants' actual experiences and perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU. A qualitative research approach allowed the researcher the ability to gather and narrate the experiences identified by respondents to provide rich detailed data regarding perceived barriers faced by nontraditional Black females at the HBCU.

### Analysis of Data

The analysis of the research findings indicated that out of the 20 survey respondents, the age ranges were as follow: 50% were between the ages of 25-34 years of age, 40% were between the ages of 35-44, and 10% were between the ages of 45-54. This aligned with the demographics of nontraditional students as outlined in the literature review (Choy, 2002; Pelletier, 2010). The overall population had a wide range of ages, which fit the nontraditional student definition. The race of the student population showed that all the students who responded to the survey were of Black African descent although one student identified herself as being multiple race. The results of the data indicated that among survey respondents, the sampled population was split as to whether they had faced at least one barrier at the current HBCU they were attending. The results of the survey data indicated that financial aid was the barrier faced most often by nontraditional Black

female students at the institution. This barrier aligned with findings of research performed by Kasworm (2012). The student participants identified intuitional barriers faced including inconvenient course delivery methods and suggested that offering courses, such as online courses, evening courses, and weekend courses would provide greater flexibility and leniency for students who had additional responsibilities, such as family and work. The studied population indicated that the FAFSA was a major obstacle as it pertained to problems with paperwork, followed by departmental applications. These perceptions aligned with institutional barriers identified in the review of the literature (Council for Adult & Experiential Learning & HCM, 2012; Lane, 2012).

The results of the survey also indicated that nontraditional Black female students only had the option of student loans as a means of paying for college. Due to limited scholarship funds for nontraditional students, the amount of debt incurred by the target population was a major concern because they did not want to have to pay back large amounts of money to the government. The inadequacy of financial aid options aligned with the literature because researchers indicated that there were limited amounts of scholarships for nontraditional students because most scholarships were targeted towards traditional students (Scholarships.com, 2014).

The majority of respondents did not indicate that they experienced any disconnection from the faculty, while 40% of respondents reported that they did experience some type of disconnection in the classroom. This response aligned with the review of the literature because researchers indicated nontraditional students had dispositional barriers that included age concerns, negative past experiences, competing with traditional students, and poor learning perceptions (Catherine, 2013; Keith, 2007).

Most of the students provided suggestions on what could be done to better serve the nontraditional Black female student population at the HBCU. Some of the suggestions provided included: having more cultural training for faculty, providing a nontraditional support group, increased empathy by faculty towards nontraditional learners, providing more computer labs for nontraditional students, faculty offering evening office hours, providing different types of aid for nontraditional students, and providing an online learning system for nontraditional Black female students.

The focus group revealed some experiences that nontraditional Black female students faced at the HBCU. Some emergent themes from the focus group were: the need for more course and degree access options, such as online courses and online degrees, childcare assistance, campus activities for nontraditional students, nontraditional students' feelings of intimidation and belonging, lack of grants and scholarships, and the lack of communication among the departments. The perceived experiences reported by the respondents aligned with research findings identified in the literature review as institutional barriers, financial barriers, dispositional barriers, and situational barriers (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Catherine, 2013; Cross, 1981; Keith, 2007).

The faculty interviews revealed some major themes regarding their perceptions of the barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced at the HBCU. The themes identified were community resources, childcare, financial issues, responsibility, streamlining processes, student skill level, students learning from others, scholarships, and academic resources. Faculty strongly expressed the need for community resources to help nontraditional Black female students with financial barriers, such as financial aid,

housing, and situational barriers, such as not being able to provide child care for their children. This perception aligned with findings in the review of the literature as stated by Cross (1981) and Kasworm (2012). Faculty expressed the importance that faculty become aware of community resources to inform and assist all nontraditional students. This perception was an area not identified by the literature. Faculty expressed concern about the ability of nontraditional Black female students to manage the responsibility of their school work and outside responsibilities. This perception aligned with findings in the review of the literature indicated by Kasworm (2012), Cross (1981), and Ross-Gordon (2011). During the interviews, faculty were very concerned these students could lose focus due to the outside responsibilities causing their grades to drop.

Streamlining the processes within the departments on campus was a barrier that faculty identified. Faculty discussed that they had seen students from the studied population become frustrated due to being sent back and forth to different departments. This barrier was also identified in the review of the literature (The Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012). Faculty indicated that if the processes were more streamlined, nontraditional Black female students could receive better service and be able to have their questions answered and problems solved quickly.

Student skill level was another barrier that the faculty pointed out. From the faculty perspective, some nontraditional Black female students were lacking key skills, such as computer skills and even writing skills. Faculty indicated that they understood it may have been some time since the studied population had been in a classroom, but faculty understood that to keep up with the course materials, students must have or acquire needed skills to be successful. This awareness aligned with the review of the

literature indicated by Catherine (2013), Cross (1981), Keith (2007), and the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Aid Assistance (2012). During the interviews, some of the faculty members suggested that computer courses and writing labs should be available for nontraditional students to help them succeed.

Faculty also discussed the barrier of the generation gap and suggested that the target population could benefit by learning from traditional students. During the interviews, faculty noted that nontraditional students most likely would benefit by interacting more with the traditional students. The traditional students know what is happening on campus because many of them spend most of their time on campus and could keep the nontraditional Black female student up-to-date with pertinent information, such as the deadlines for financial aid, departmental changes, and what they need to do for class. This finding aligned with the review of the literature reported by Keith (2007), Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2012), and National Conference for State Legislators (2016). Faculty advised that it was key for students, regardless of generation or age group, to communicate with each other to stay abreast with campus changes to reduce student frustration.

Faculty came to a consensus regarding the issue of limited availability of scholarships and academic resources for nontraditional Black female students on campus. This perception aligned with the literature review indicated by Cross (1981) and Kasworm (2012). In the interviews, faculty indicated that there was limited amount of scholarship funding for nontraditional students and suggested that there should be a scholarship that was specifically tailored to nontraditional students. Faculty also agreed that there was a limited amount of academic resources available for nontraditional

students. Faculty indicated there should be an academic advisor for all nontraditional students. Also, more academic labs should be set up to help nontraditional students with academic issues they may be having in class.

### Summary of Findings

The following findings were identified in the study and were used to answer research questions pertaining to the perceptions of barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The findings suggested that perceived barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students included situational barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers, which were found in the literature.

Research Question 1: What were the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students concerning the barriers they faced at a HBCU?

Theme 1: Situational Barriers. Student participants expressed concerns about childcare and parental care for aging parents. Student participants indicated that they had major responsibilities that prevented them from attending class, such as childcare issues and taking care of an aging parent. These barriers aligned with the research conducted by Cross (1981), Kasworm (2012), and Hageskamp (2013).

Theme 2: Institutional Barriers. The student participants indicated that institutional processes, such as admissions and financial aid departments, who need further communication between departments to better assist the studied population. Student participants perceived this lack of communication between departments as a source of frustration, which discouraged some from completing their degree at the HBCU. Student participants expressed the opinion that if communication were better between departments, they would not be shuffled around campus to have their questions

answered. These perceptions aligned with the review of the literature (Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984).

Theme 3: Financial Barriers. The student participants' perceptions of financial barriers were that there were not enough scholarships and grants nontraditional Black female students could apply for. Student participants expressed concern about incurring large amounts of student loan debt due to the limited amount of scholarships and grants available for nontraditional Black female students. Most of the scholarships offered were tailored to the traditional student population or required the student to attend college at least half-time to be eligible. These findings aligned with the review of the literature as indicated by scholarships.com (2014).

Theme 4: Dispositional Barriers. Some of respondents expressed that they experienced feelings of disconnection with faculty. The meaning of disconnection is the lack of communication between the student and faculty. Forty percent (40%) of respondents indicated they had experienced some type of disconnection. Student participants expressed that they felt intimidated in class because they did not know certain materials that they should have learned in their undergraduate studies. They also felt that the faculty would not listen to them regarding issues or barriers that they faced while attending college. One student expressed that faculty treated them differently because they were nontraditional and expected that they should already know some of the information taught in class. Students reported that there had been a lapse in time since they were last enrolled in school. The studied population expressed that they needed time to become acclimated to new materials being taught in class, which required information that they had learned several years before. These findings also aligned with the review of



literature (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Cross, 1981; National Conference for State Legislators, 2016).

Research Question 2: What were the perceptions of the HBCU faculty related to the barriers nontraditional Black female students faced at a HBCU?

Theme 1: Situational Barriers. Faculty and student participants mirrored the same perceptions pertaining to situational barriers. Faculty expressed that the studied population faced many situational barriers and provided some suggestions that would help address those issues. One suggestion made by faculty was the availability of onsite childcare where a parent could obtain assistance with childcare while attending courses.

Another situational barrier that faculty expressed was parental care. Faculty expressed that taking care of parent was a responsibility that many nontraditional students have. One faculty member recounted an experience where one of her students had to take care of their aging father. The faculty member expressed that the student had to stop-out to care for her father. The faculty member was concerned because the student did not have any assistance with her aging father, and this situational barrier prevented her from continuing her education. These findings aligned with the literature review (Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Kasworm, 2012; Ross-Gordon, 2011).

Theme 2: Institutional Barriers. Faculty perceptions on institutional barriers mirrored students' perceptions on the barriers they faced. Faculty expressed the same perception as it pertained to communication between departments to help make the process easier for the studied population. One faculty member suggested a separate orientation for nontraditional students to acclimate them to returning to college as adult learners. Also, the studied institution could offer computer courses, writing courses, and

other needed academic resources to help nontraditional students to help with academic deficiencies. These findings aligned with the review of the literature (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2012; Cross, 1981; National Conference for State Legislators, 2016).

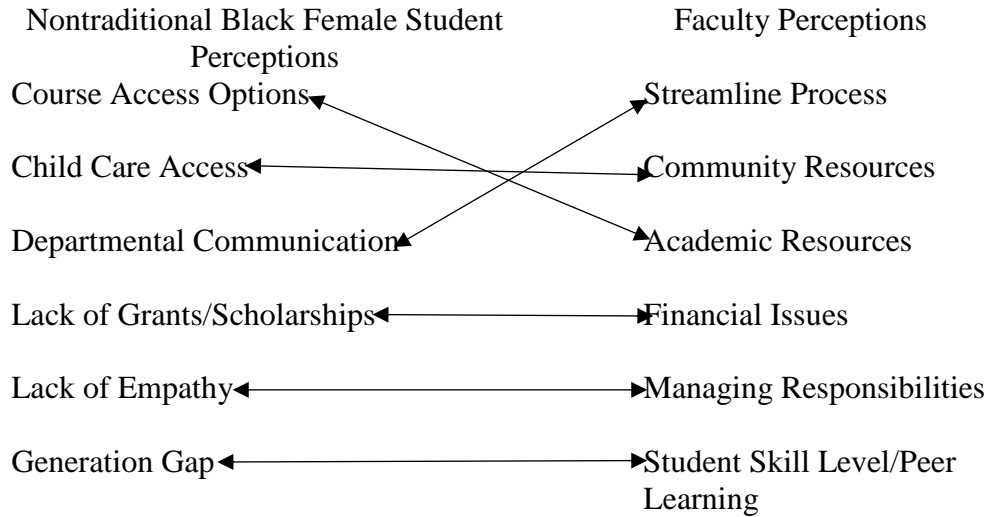
Theme 3: Financial Barriers. Financial barriers were another theme shared by student participants and faculty. The faculty agreed that there were not enough scholarships and grants for nontraditional students and that student loans were the only option for them to pay for college. The review of the literature aligned with this perception as stated by Scholarships.com (2014).

Theme 4: Dispositional Barriers. The faculty perceived a difference in the skill level of the studied population verses traditional students. Faculty indicated that nontraditional students often lacked technical skills, which put them behind traditional students in terms of skill level. This phenomenon is seen in the review of the literature as indicated by the National Conference for State Legislators (2016).

Research Question 3: To what extent was there a relationship between the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and HBCU faculty on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students?

The perceptions of the student participants mirrored the faculty perceptions, as seen in Figure 12. Barriers perceived by students were childcare/parental care, course access options, empathy, generation gap, and departmental communication. Barriers perceived by faculty included lack of knowledge of community resources, financial aid issues, managing responsibilities, issues with institutional processes, student skill levels, and limited academic resources. The barriers identified aligned with barriers identified in

the literature review (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Issues, 2012; Cross, 1981; Kapp, 1833; Knowles, 1984).



*Figure 12.* Relationship between perceptions identified by nontraditional Black female students and faculty at the HBCU.

### Discussion of Findings

Alexander Kapp was the first contributor to the study of andragogy, which is the study of adult learners. Kapp centered his study on the lifelong necessity to learn. The argument that Kapp presented included and united patterns that are found in the history of the study of andragogy. The patterns found in Kapp's study included the education of inner, subjective and outer personality, objective competencies, and learning happens not only through teachers but also self-reflections and life experiences (Henschke, 2009).

The researcher found that the studied population was aware of how important education was to the advancement of their careers and lives. The researcher also found that participants decided to return to school because of life experiences, which caused them to make the necessary changes to return to college. The researcher found Kapp's

study of andragogy was relevant to the current study conducted by the researcher.

Knowles indicates in his study that learning happens not only through teachers but through other methods. The participants felt like they did not have enough help from their professors, which lead the researcher to believe that nontraditional Black female students who attend a HBCU may need more assistance to learn the material that is being taught.

According to Knowles (1973, 1984) the characteristics of adult learners were distinct as learners in terms of self-direction, experience, readiness to learn, problem oriented, and a motivation to learn. The researcher used Knowles (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005) andragogical theoretical framework to compare the six assumptions of Malcom Knowles andragogy theory to the researcher's findings of the barriers that nontraditional black female students faced at a HBCU.

The first assumption that Knowles presented was self-concept of adults moved from that of a dependent personality toward a self-directing human being. Self-concept or self-teaching was related to autonomy and self-directedness. According to Knowles, adult learners wanted to take control of teaching themselves and take ownership of the goals and purposes of their learning (De Vito, 2009). The researcher found that nontraditional Black female students who participated in the study did not have much autonomy and were not able to self-direct themselves or self-teach because of the limited knowledge and skills that they currently possessed. Respondents stated they were behind traditional students as it pertained to computer skills and knowledge they should have learned previously. Respondents wanted more guidance as it pertained to faculty showing examples on how assignments should be done. Participants stated the external barriers,

such as situational and financial barriers prevented them from becoming the independent learners that Knowles presented in his first assumption.

The second assumption presented by Knowles was that an adult accumulated a growing reservoir of experience, which was a resource for learning (Knowles, 1973, 1984, p. 12). Knowles presented the idea that experiences of adult learners would impact learning in multiple ways. The researcher found respondents had different skill sets and knowledge and were unaware on how to apply these experiences to what they were currently learning.

The third assumption that Knowles provided was the readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role. This assumption is based on life situations creating a need to know. The researcher found that situations faced by respondents caused them to return to college, but also these situational barriers caused them to also stop out of college. The results indicated that this assumption of the characteristics of adult learners was partially true for the participants in the study. The studied population had a need to learn based upon the life situation that they had encountered, such as job loss, and life situations caused barriers to prevent them from completing their degree.

The fourth assumption developed by Knowles as it pertained to adult learner characteristics suggested there was a change in time perspective as people matured from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application. Adult learners wanted to have the information and services that were ready and available for their use. The researcher found that respondents wanted information but were unsure how to find the information they needed. However, participants were clear about wanting more online

classes and more online degree programs to accommodate their work and family schedules.

The fifth and sixth assumptions that Knowles had about characteristics of an adult learner suggested that the most potent motivations were internal rather than external; and that adults wanted to know why they needed to learn something. The researcher found that participants' motivation to learn was internal; some of participants indicated that they were going back to school to show their children and grandchildren that they received their degree, but most were pursuing their degree to advance their career. The researcher found that research supported Knowles assumption that adult students wanted to know the reason they were learning something. Participants wanted professors to explain in more detail about the reasons for learning certain concepts.

Malcolm Knowles' use of andragogy and his assumptions of the characteristics of adult learners were still relevant to nontraditional students as well as nontraditional Black female students that attended a HBCU. Knowles mainly wrote about situational barriers, which were still relevant today for nontraditional students. The researcher found that nontraditional Black female students needed more assistance and were not as self-directed learners as Knowles indicated adult learner were. Knowles also indicated that nontraditional students came with a reservoir of experience; however, the researcher found that participants did not know how to apply experiences to information taught in the classroom.

John Mezirow is the founder of the Transformative Learning Theory and was a contributor to the study of adult learners. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory developed from his study conducted on women's second chances of pursuing an

educational degree. Mezirow's study was also based upon the reason there was a plethora of women returning to college during 1978. The results from the study helped Mezirow to develop the ten phases of transformative learning. The ten phases of transformative learning are disorientating dilemma, self-examination, sense of alienation, relating discontent to others, explaining options of new behavior, building confidence in new ways, planning a course of action, knowledge to implement plans, experimenting with new roles, and reintegration. The main basis for Mezirow's research was to show educators who taught adult learners that there was a great need for communication skills to prevent internal and external conflicts among adult learners (Christie, 2015).

After conducting the study, the researcher found that participants demonstrated the phases of transformative learning. According to the results of the study, the findings suggest that participants were concerned about the lack of communication among departments in terms of financial aid and admissions processes. The researcher also found that nontraditional Black female students who attended the HBCU showed signs of a sense of alienation in terms of not being included in student activities on campus and having the feeling of disconnect between the professors and students. One of Mezirow's phases of transformative learning was building confidences in new ways for students. The researcher found that the studied population were not building confidence in new ways due to lack communication among departments with applying to college and not receiving more assistance from faculty in terms of learning material that faculty felt the student should already know. The researcher found that some of Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning were not evidenced in this study. For example, the phases of planning a course of action, knowledge to implement plans, experimenting with new

roles, and reintegration were not observed or found in the research conducted. In terms of reintegration, the researcher would have to follow the studied population's educational journey until graduation.

Howard Gardner presented seven different intelligences, which evolved into the multiple intelligence theory. Gardner indicated that the education system assumes that all students can learn the same materials in the same way, and the educational system needs to evaluate this assumption by evaluating students learning styles. Gardner's multiple intelligences theory included seven different intelligences, which are visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, and logical-mathematical. Gardner also asserted there were several things to consider when choosing the appropriate learning style. The things, which must be considered according to Gardner are visuals, printed words, sound, motion, color, reality, instructional setting, learner characteristics, reading ability, categories of learning outcomes, and performance.

The researcher did not find any aspect of the research conducted that related to Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory. The researcher's study did not demonstrate any of the findings that Gardner presented in his research study. The study conducted by the researcher did not center on the learning styles of nontraditional Black female students who attend the HBCU only the barriers that they faced at the HBCU.

### Conclusions

The researcher concluded there were many different barriers that nontraditional Black female students faced while attending the HBCU. These barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU ranged from financial, situational, institutional, or even dispositional barriers. The researcher concluded nontraditional



Black female students and faculty had the same perceptions of the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students. Also, the researcher concluded that faculty understood that nontraditional Black female students faced many obstacles and barriers and were willing to assist nontraditional Black female students with these barriers.

### Implications

Faculty were aware of the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU, and they wanted to assist with identifying new financial resources, academic resources, and other resources that could assist nontraditional Black female students with their educational needs. The student participant's responses in the survey and focus group aligned with the data found in the review of the literature pertaining to barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students in college.

### Implications for Practice

Faculty may want to conduct dialogue sessions with nontraditional Black female students to open lines of communication with the studied population. During these dialogue sessions, nontraditional Black female students could express their concerns, and the faculty could address these concerns. Faculty also could provide an open-door policy to not just nontraditional Black female students but all nontraditional students. The open-door policy would encourage nontraditional students to come by faculty offices to discuss their issues privately if they do not feel comfortable with discussing their issues in a group setting.

Another implication for practice is to provide nontraditional students with an academic advisor that would follow them from the time they are accepted until the time they graduate. Also, a separate orientation for nontraditional students, and computer

courses that could help with computer skill deficiencies.

### Recommendations

The first recommendation for further research was to conduct the study using a bigger population than students in just one program, such as nontraditional Black female students in associate degree programs, bachelor's degree programs, and master's degree programs. A second recommendation was to offer faculty opportunities to participate in interviews via different mediums, such as Skype and digital conferencing, in order to facilitate greater participation.

Another recommendation for further research was to conduct the research at more than one HBCU to determine if there is a consensus on the perspectives among other nontraditional Black female students and faculty. The third recommendation was to evaluate barriers faced by nontraditional Black females by age group. By implementing this recommendation, the researcher will be able to evaluate how certain barriers affect certain age groups. The fourth recommendation for further research would be to examine other female student races, such as Latinos, Caucasians, Asians, and Indians to identify if they are facing the same barriers not only at HBCUs but at predominately white institutions (PWI), technical colleges, and two-year colleges. Also, the researcher recommends further study of the perspectives of administrators on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. Lastly, the researcher recommends further research to evaluate the barriers that traditional students face at a HBCU, two-year college, technical college, and PWI.

### Limitations

The researcher used purposeful sampling to acquire the sample population. A

limitation of using purposeful sampling was the probability of researcher bias. Another limitation of using purposeful sampling revolved around the representativeness of the sample (Creswell, 2013).

Another limitation was that participation in the student survey was limited. During the first 2 weeks of the survey, only five students completed the survey. The survey was sent to 30 students in Masters in the Public Administration program at a HBCU but only 20 students responded. The researcher would have preferred a larger survey population.

The last limitation was the small sample in the focus group. Only five students indicated that they wanted to participate in a focus group. By having a larger number of participants in the focus group, the researcher would have collected more data to show actual experiences of the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at the HBCU.

#### Delimitations

A delimitation of the study was that the researcher was an employee of the Historically Black College or University where the study was conducted, which may have impacted willingness to participate.

#### Dissemination

The researcher intends to disseminate the information presented in this study in higher education publications, conferences, and peer review articles. The data collected should be presented in journal publications, such as *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, *Sage Journals*, and *African American Review*, *Journal of Blacks in Education*. This research should be presented at conferences, such as the U.S

Department of Education's Annual HBCU Week Conference, and College Board's Historically Black Colleges and Universities Conference and presented to conferences and trainings for American Association of University Women (AAUW).

### Concluding Thoughts

Little research has been conducted on the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. More in-depth information about the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and faculty about barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU is needed. The researcher encourages more research on nontraditional Black female students because this population is increasing and administrators, faculty, staff, and the student body in colleges and universities, including HBCUs, need to understand the needs of this population to help them persevere through college. This study could be an impact for positive social change for nontraditional Black female students who attend HBCUs. This study could provide insight to administrators, faculty and staff on barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU and change the future of how all universities view this particular student population.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTION PERMISSION



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD, IRB

December 1, 2017

Columbus State University  
Institutional Review Board  
4225 University Ave  
Columbus, GA 31907


Re: Letter of Cooperation

To Whom It May Concern:

Please note that Ms. Denata Williams, a doctoral candidate in Higher Education with a concentrations in Curriculum and Leadership at Columbus State University, has the permission of Albany State University's Institutional Review Board to conduct her study entitled, Barriers faced by non-traditional females at a Historically Black College or University. It is understood that the study may even help higher education institutions administrators, faculty and staff understand the barriers that non-traditional Black females face and the difference in the perceptions between non-traditional Black females and faculty of these barriers.

Specifically, the researcher proposes to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of barriers faced by non-traditional Black females at a HBCU?
2. What are the perceptions of faculty on the barriers faced by non-traditional Black females at a HBCU?

Since  a university within the state of Georgia, our institution would be ideal for her research. The potential participants of the study would be students and faculty members who are in the Masters in Public Administration. Specifically, it is understood that her research could develop new and innovative ideas to increase stakeholder's knowledge, eliminate or prevent barriers which will assist in the matriculation and graduation of non-traditional Black females at higher education institutions. Since the USG system is the fourth largest university system in the United States and is undergoing profound changes in developmental courses affecting an estimated 80,000 remedial students, the data from this study can be used to help improve their success rate.

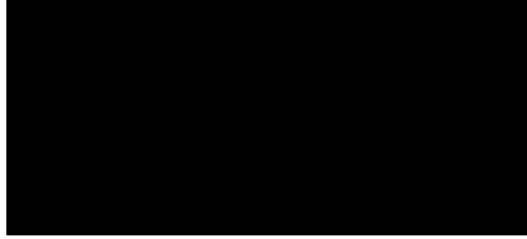
Albany State University is requesting a copy of her IRB approval along with any associated documents. For additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact at Dorene.medlin@asurams.edu or at 229-420-7020 or the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 229-430-3690.

Sincerely,



## APPENDIX B

### IRB PERMISSION FROM STUIDED INSTITUTION



DATE: February 14, 2018

TO: Denata Williams, AS,BS,MPA,&MBA  
FROM: [REDACTED]

PROJECT TITLE: [1198190-1] Barriers Non-Traditional Black Females Face at an Historically Black College or University

REFERENCE #:  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: February 14, 2018

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 1

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The [REDACTED] IRB has review your protocol and is approving this project as exempt under Category #1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: regular and special education instructional strategies, or effectiveness or comparison of instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

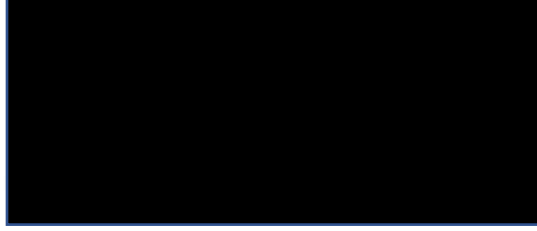
We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within [REDACTED] IRB's records.


## APPENDIX C

### DEPARTMENT CHAIR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY



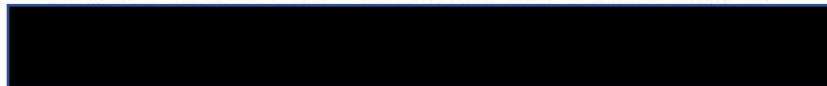
January 8, 2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

The Department of History, Political Science & Public Administration is pleased to cooperate with Ms. Denata Williams in her doctoral study titled "Barriers that nontraditional Black females face at a Historically Black College or University." We understand that the cooperation will include surveys of students, focus group, and interviews with faculty and approved by the  Institutional Review Board.

We look forward to working with Ms. Denata Williams, and please consider this communication as our Letter of Cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



## APPENDIX D

### INITIAL EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Masters Student,

You are being asked to participate in a survey that is part of a research study conducted by Denata Williams, a doctoral student in the Department of Counseling Foundations, and Educational Leadership at Columbus State University. The purpose of this survey is to examine and collect data about the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at an Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Information will be collected from nontraditional Black female students currently enrolled in the Master in Public Administration program (MPA) at a local historically black college in southwest Georgia.

The data gathered and reported in this study may provide significant information to administrators, faculty, and stakeholders at a HBCU who want to reduce or prevent barriers that nontraditional Black female students face. Information collected from this study will help administrators; faculty, staff, and the studied population understand barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU. Data from the study can be used to increase enrollment, matriculation, and graduation of nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

If you are interested in participating in this survey, please click the link below to complete the consent form and the survey to return it back to [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu).

Please be assured that your answers will remain confidential. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu).

Thank you so much for assisting us with this important study.

Sincerely,

Denata Williams MPA, MBA  
Doctoral Candidate at Columbus State University

## APPENDIX E

### STUDENT CONSENT FORM



#### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD **Informed Consent Form**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Denata N. Williams, a student in the Department of Counseling, Foundations, and Educational Leadership at Columbus State University. The faculty member supervising the study is Dr. Marguerite Yates at Columbus State University.

#### **I. Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to examine and collect perceptions concerning barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at an Historically Black College or University. Information will be collected from nontraditional Black female students currently enrolled in the Masters in Public Administration program (MPA) at a local historically black college in southwest Georgia. The data collected from a survey will not be used other than in the dissertation. The data gathered and reported in this study may provide significant information to administrators, faculty, and stakeholders at a HBCU who want to reduce or prevent barriers that nontraditional Black female students face. Information collected from this study will help administrators; faculty, staff, and the studied population understand barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU. This research can be potentially used to increase enrollment, matriculation, and graduation of nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.



## **II. Procedures:**

By signing this Informed Consent Form, you as the participant are agreeing to participate in this study. You are agreeing to participate in a survey pertaining to barriers nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU. Surveys will be taken by students who are nontraditional Black female students currently enrolled in the Masters in Public Administration Program. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete and will include voluntary demographic data

## **I. Possible Risks or Discomforts:**

This research study proposes minimal to no risk to the participants involved in the survey.

The inconveniences that participants may incur may include modifications to their personal schedule for participating in the survey.

All survey responses will be stored on a password protected digital device. After one-year, all research data will be permanently deleted and destroyed.

## **II. Potential Benefits:**

Participation in the research study will add to the present body of literature as it relates to barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The faculty responses in the interview answers will also help identify faculty awareness about barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.

## **III. Costs and Compensation:**

Participants in the student survey will not incur any cost or receive any compensation for participation in this study.

**IV. Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality and privacy will be upheld throughout the study. All information will be stored on a password protected digital device for which only the researcher has access. After one-year, all research data will be permanently deleted and destroyed.

**V. Withdrawal:**

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Denata N. Williams at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at [irb@columbusstate.edu](mailto:irb@columbusstate.edu).

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

## APPENDIX F

### STUDENT SURVEY PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

#### Barriers Faced by Nontraditional Black Female Students at a Historically Black College or University

1. What is your gender?

Male  Female

2. What is your age?

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65 to 74

75 or older

3. Please describe your race/ethnicity.

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian/Pacific Islander

Black or African American

Hispanic

White/Caucasian

Multiple ethnicity/other

4. Would you like to participate in a focus group to discuss the barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at your current institution? Please indicate Yes or No.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please add your email or telephone contact information in the comment box below.

5. Have you faced any barriers at your current institution (Please indicate Yes or No in the space below)? If yes, please list the barriers that you faced in the comment box below.

6. What types of courses do you feel would benefit you to complete your degree?

\_\_\_ Online Courses

\_\_\_ Evening Courses

\_\_\_ Weekend Courses

\_\_\_ Off-Site (Ex: Courses offered in a city near you)

\_\_\_ Independent Study Courses or Directive Study (Definition: Course that is offered with little or no supervision).

7. What types of paperwork gave you the most problems when applying to your current institution?

\_\_\_ Free Application for Federal Student Aid

\_\_\_ Departmental Applications

\_\_\_ Admissions Application

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

8. What types of financial funding did you have access to at your current institution?

\_\_\_ Student Loans

\_\_\_ Grants

\_\_\_ Outside Scholarships

\_\_\_ Scholarships provided by your institution

\_\_\_ Job related funding (Ex: TAP, Employee Education Assistance Program, etc.)

\_\_\_ Other

9. What type(s) of academic and financial resources do you perceive your institution should provide nontraditional students?

10. Do you perceive that nontraditional students are provided the opportunity to participate in campus activities? Please indicate Yes or No.

\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_ No

If No, please explain why you perceive nontraditional student do not have the opportunity to participate in campus activities.

11. Was there a time that you perceived a disconnection between your professors and you as a student enrolled in your current institution?

Yes

No

12. Do you have any suggestions that you could provide will assist your current institution in providing support for nontraditional Black female students?

## APPENDIX G

### REMINDER EMAIL FOR SURVEY

Dear (Student Name),

Hurry, time is running out! This email serves as a final reminder to complete the survey asking for your perceptions of the barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). This study is being conducted to obtain the perceptions of nontraditional Black female students and faculty have about barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.

The survey will take no more than 15 minutes. Please be assured that your answers to this survey will remain confidential.

If you choose to participate in the survey, please click the link below to start the survey. Also, please be sure to answer the consent to participate question at the beginning of the survey.

Your answers to the survey questions are important to the study because it may provide data concerning barriers nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.

Thank you for your valuable time and attention.  
Sincerely,

Denata Williams MPA, MBA  
Doctoral Candidate of Columbus State University.

Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QTKTSGJ>

## APPENDIX H

### FOCUS GROUP TIME AND DATE

Dear (Student Name),

Thank you so much for volunteering to participate in a WebEx focus group online. To best suit your needs, please choose a time and date that will be convenient for you to participate in the WebEx focus group.

1. March 7, 2018 at 6:00pm
2. March 8, 2018 at 6:00pm
3. March 9, 2018 at 6:00pm
4. March 12, 2018 at 6:00pm
5. March 13, 2018 at 6:00pm

The online WebEx will last approximately 60 minutes. In order to participate in the WebEx focus group, participants need to have a computer with access to the internet.

The identities of participants will be kept confidential and all responses by individuals in the focus group will also remain confidential.

Please send all responses with your desired date to [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu).

All responses for the proposed date must be received by March 5, 2018.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu).

Thank you for your participation,

Sincerely,

Denata Williams MPA, MBA  
Doctoral Candidate at Columbus State University



## APPENDIX I

### WEBEX FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION

Dear (Student Name),

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a WebEx focus group. This portion of the study will consist of conducting an online WebEx focus group discussing with you and your peers the perceptions of personal barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

The online WebEx will last approximately one hour. To participate in the WebEx focus group, participants must have a computer with access to the internet.

The identities of participants will be kept confidential and all responses from participating individuals in the focus group will remain confidential.

Please see the attached document that includes the focus group questions for your review.

If you choose to participate in this focus group, please respond to this email by March 1, 2018 at 6:00pm. The focus group session will be held March 7, 2018 at 6:00pm.

Please use the below link and password to log in to the WebEx focus session.  
Link to WebEx site: [www.Webex.com](http://www.Webex.com)  
Password: ASU1903

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or you may email me at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu).

Thank you so much for assisting me with this important study.

Sincerely,

Denata Williams MPA, MBA  
Doctoral Candidate at Columbus State University

## APPENDIX J

### STUDENT CONSENT FORM FOCUS GROUP



You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Denata N. Williams, a student in the Department of Counseling, Foundations, and Educational Leadership at Columbus State University. The faculty member supervising the study is Dr. Marguerite Yates at Columbus State University.

#### III. **Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to examine and collect data about barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at an Historically Black College or University. Information will be collected from nontraditional Black female students currently enrolled in the Masters in Public Administration program (MPA) at a local historically black college in southwest Georgia.

The data collected from the focus group will not be used other than in the dissertation.

The data gathered and reported in this study may provide significant information to administrators, faculty, and stakeholders at a HBCU who want to reduce or prevent barriers that nontraditional Black female students face. Information collected from this study will help administrators; faculty, staff, and the studied population understand barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students face

at a HBCU. This research can be potentially used to increase enrollment, matriculation, and graduation of nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

#### **IV. Procedures:**

By signing this Informed Consent Form, you as the participant are agreeing to participate in this study. You are agreeing to participate in an online WebEx focus group pertaining to barriers nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU. Focus group participants will be selected based on the interest indicated on a survey. Students who indicate that they want to participate in a WebEx focus group will be sent an email providing potential dates and times that will be convenient for them to participate. The WebEx focus group will last approximately 60 minutes. The online WebEx focus group will be recorded digitally within the WebEx system. Recording for the WebEx focus will be transcribed.

#### **VI. Possible Risks or Discomforts:**

This research study proposes minimal to no risk to the participants involved in the WebEx focus group.

The inconveniences that participants may incur may include modifications to their personal schedule to be a part of the WebEx focus group. The researcher will remain mindful of possible uneasiness of the focus group participants during the WebEx focus group. The recorded WebEx focus group session will be stored on a password protected digital device. Once one year has passed, all documentation will be deleted.

#### **VII. Potential Benefits:**

Participation in the research study will add to the present body of literature as it relates to barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

**VIII. Costs and Compensation:**

Participants in the focus group will not incur any cost or receive any compensation for participation in this study.

**IX. Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality and privacy will be upheld throughout the study. All information will be stored on a password protected for which only the researcher has access. After one-year, all research data will be permanently deleted and destroyed.

**X. Withdrawal:**

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Denata N. Williams at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at [irb@columbusstate.edu](mailto:irb@columbusstate.edu).

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

## APPENDIX K

### FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

1. Could you please provide me with any barriers that you have faced as a nontraditional Black female student at a HBCU that you perceive that the faculty is not aware of?
2. Do you feel you have experienced any institutional barriers, for example with admissions applications, financial aid application, departmental applications, receiving academic resources, course offerings, or etc? If so, could you please share those experiences?
3. Since you have been attending your current institution, have you experienced any financial/situational barriers such as financial aid issues or family responsibilities that made it a little difficult for you to progress through your academic career? If yes, please share your experiences that you have had?
4. As a nontraditional Black female student attending a HBCU, have you experienced any type of dispositional barriers such as a feeling of disconnect with the faculty or with younger students in your courses? If so, would you please share any experiences that you may have?
5. Do you have any suggestions as a nontraditional Black female student attending a HBCU that you can provide administrators, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders that could help eliminate or elevate these barriers that you are currently facing?

## APPENDIX L

### FACULTY INTERVIEW CONTACT EMAIL

Dear (Professor's Name),

My name is Ms. Denata Williams and I am a Doctoral Candidate at Columbus State University in Columbus Georgia. I am writing to request an interview with you to gather perceptions about barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at an Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Information collected from this study may help administrators, faculty, staff, and studied population understand the barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. This research can be potentially used to increase enrollment, matriculation, and graduation of nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

Faculty Interviews will be scheduled on the week of February 26-March 2, 2018. Please respond to my email and let me know what time and date will be best to schedule an interview with you. The interview session will be recorded on a digital recording device and protected by a password known only by the researcher. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

If you choose to participate in this interview, your answers will remain confidential. During the interview, you will be provided with a consent form to sign. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu).

Thank you so much for assisting me with this important study.

Sincerely,

Denata Williams MPA, MBA  
Doctoral Candidate at Columbus State University

## APPENDIX M

### FACULTY INTERVIEW REMINDER EMAIL

Dear (Professor's Name),

This is a friendly reminder about your scheduled interview for April \_\_, 2018. Please review the attached interview questions. The interview will include questions pertaining to the barriers that nontraditional Black students face at a HBCU.

The interview session will be recorded on a digital recording device and protected by a password known only by the researcher. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

If you participate in this interview, your answers will remain confidential. During the interview, you will be provided with a consent form to sign. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu).

Thank you so much for assisting me with this important study.

Sincerely,

Denata Williams MPA, MBA  
Doctoral Candidate at Columbus State University

## APPENDIX N

### CONSENT FORM FACULTY INTERVIEWS



You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Denata N. Williams, a doctoral student in the Department of Counseling, Foundations, and Educational Leadership at Columbus State University. The faculty member supervising the study is Dr. Marguerite Yates at Columbus State University.

#### V. **Purpose:**

The purpose of this project is to examine and collect data about barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at an Historically Black College or University. Information will be collected from nontraditional Black female students currently enrolled in the Masters in Public Administration program (MPA) at a local historically black college in southwest Georgia.

The data collected from faculty interviews will not be used other than in the dissertation.

The data gathered and reported in this study may provide significant information to administrators, faculty, and stakeholders at a HBCU who want to reduce or prevent barriers that nontraditional Black female students face. Information collected from this study will help administrators; faculty, staff, and the studied population understand barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students face



at a HBCU. This research can be potentially used to increase enrollment, matriculation, and graduation of nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU.

**VI. Procedures:**

By signing this Informed Consent Form, you as the participant are agreeing to participate in this study. You are agreeing to participate in a faculty interview pertaining to barriers nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.

Faculty who will be asked to participate in interviews will be composed of faculty who teach in the Masters in Public Administration program and other faculty members teaching in other master's programs on campus. Participants will be contacted via e-mail for their participation. Interviews with faculty members will last approximately 60 minutes. The faculty interviews will be recorded on a digitally password protected device. Recording for the individual interviews will be transcribed.

**XI. Possible Risks or Discomforts:**

This research study proposes minimal to no risk to the participants involved in the faculty interviews.

The inconveniences that participants may incur may include modifications to their personal schedule for faculty interviews or focus group participation. The researcher will remain mindful of possible uneasiness of the interviewee while answering interview questions. Faculty interviews will be requested to schedule their interviews between February 12, 2018 to March 31, 2018 at a time that is convenient for their work and personal schedules.

Interviewees will be offered a copy of the transcribed personal faculty interviews transcripts for their review. All faculty interviews will be stored on a password protected digital device. After one year, all research data will be permanently deleted and destroyed.

**XII. Potential Benefits:**

Participation in the research study will add to the present body of literature as it relates to barriers faced by nontraditional Black female students at a HBCU. The faculty responses in the interview answers will also help identify faculty awareness about barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at a HBCU.

**XII. Costs and Compensation:**

Participants in the faculty interviews will not incur any cost or receive any compensation for participation in this study.

**XIII. Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality and privacy will be upheld throughout the study. All information will be stored on a password protected for which only the researcher has access. After one-year, all research data will be permanently deleted and destroyed.

**XIV. Withdrawal:**

Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Denata N. Williams at [williams\\_denata@columbusstate.edu](mailto:williams_denata@columbusstate.edu). If you have

questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at [irb@columbusstate.edu](mailto:irb@columbusstate.edu).

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered.

By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project.

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Signature of Participant

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Date

## APPENDIX O

### FACULTY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

The literature review presents four different barriers that nontraditional Black female students face at post-secondary institutions and they are situational/financial barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers.

1. Could you please elaborate on your experiences with nontraditional Black Female students who have experienced situational/financial barriers? (Ex: family, financial aid, and transportation)
2. Will you please provide your experiences with nontraditional Black female students who have experienced institutional barriers? (Ex: admissions process, financial aid process, graduation process, or departmental processes)
3. Will you please provide your experiences with nontraditional Black female students who have experienced dispositional barriers? (Ex: not feel a part of the classroom because of their age, race, & gender).
4. Do you have any suggestions that would help administrators, faculty, staff, and students at a Historically Black College or University prevent these types of barriers?