

The Lived Experiences of African American Female Completers and Exiters of an Undergraduate Health Care Program While Attending a Historically Black College and University

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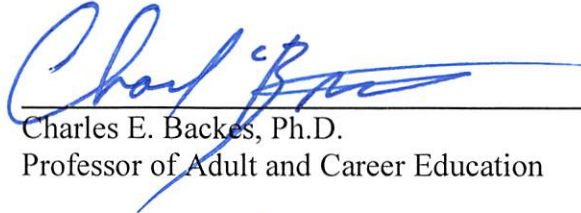
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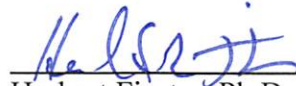
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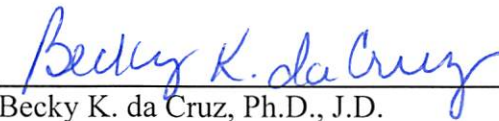
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ABSTRACT

This study addressed African American female completers and African American female exiters in an undergraduate health care program at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) within the University System of Georgia (USG). Because a gap existed in literature concerning African American female completers and African American female exiters in health care programs at HBCUs within the USG, this study provided colleges and universities with data that identified to what extent educational experiences, background, academic, environmental, social integration variables, race, gender, identity, and awareness correlated with intent to leave or successful program completion and graduation. The methodology utilized for this study included a phenomenological design, which was most suitable because the goal was to comprehend the meaning of the human experience. Studying these unique students' experiences and conducting the research, the researcher aimed to offer a novel understanding of how to formulate or review procedures, policies, teaching methods, resources, recruitment, and retention strategies not only for HBCUs, but for all for colleges and universities within the USG. The findings concerning the participants in this study revealed the meaning of their personal experiences through educational goals, family support, race, gender, identify, awareness, academic and family responsibilities, and social integration. This research was effective in revealing hidden barriers, addressing which would diminish the gap between these students and their counterparts.

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Finally, my beautiful mother, Odessa M. Wright, who always told me, “Can’t is not in your vocabulary.”

DEDICATION

“I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Deshun Maize and Kenneth (Nick) Jordan Jr., and my God son Kemorris Butts. I hope I have demonstrated to you that no matter the circumstances you are going through, having faith and a strong belief in GOD makes anything possible. I also dedicate this dissertation to my granddaughter, Camren Eve Maize and my loving and supportive husband Kenneth Jordan, you are the smartest man I know.”

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

In the global workforce of the health care industry, employers are feeling the pain as experienced older workers leave the labor force and take a vast wealth of knowledge and skill with them. The need for adults to pursue further education to meet the needs of a highly skilled workforce is more relevant than ever. The overall educational attainment of the workforce has increased dramatically. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), of the 1,895,000 bachelor's degrees conferred in 2014–15 academic year, most degrees were conferred in the fields of business (364,000) and health professions and related programs (216,000), with health care as one of the most popular majors. Occupations in the field of health care continue to rank near the top of careers with the brightest outlook, with a growth rate between 27– 43 % from 2014 to 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; Bosworth, 2008).

With this increase of competition in the workforce, diversity has become an issue of importance locally, nationally, and globally. The health care profession has been uniquely affected by the increase in diversity due to continued disparities in minority health care and minimal access to medical health for these at-risk populations. More workers are needed in the health care industry to assist in this issue. Occupational shortages are evident in the health care industry, and health care academic institutions continue to assist in meeting the growing needs in health care communities by providing

quality health education programs. Diversity has not only affected our workforce, but also changed the internal and external classroom environment. Minorities have not achieved the same successful outcomes as Caucasians. It was not until after the Civil War that American higher education virtually excluded African American students (NCES, 2010). Until the reconstruction era and through World War II, African Americans were able to receive a college education through private black colleges and universities. These colleges and universities are referred to as historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Historically black colleges and universities are institutions established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating black Americans (NCES, 2010). These institutions were founded and developed in an environment of legal segregation. Access to higher education contributed substantially to the progress African Americans made in improving their educational status. In 2017, there were 102 HBCUs located in 19 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Of these 102 HBCUs, 51 were public institutions, and 51 were private nonprofit institutions (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018b). These HBCUs include Albany State University, Clark Atlanta University, Fort Valley State University, Interdenominational Theological Center, Morehouse College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Morris Brown College, Paine College, Savannah State University, and Spelman College. Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, and Savannah State University are the only public HBSUs within the University System of Georgia (USG) (USG, n.d.). At half the HBCUs in the survey, the African American student graduation rate is 34 % or lower. For seven HBCUs in the survey, less than one in five attending African American students earned bachelor's degree within six years. The

number of minorities in post-secondary education has increased in recent decades. However, in health care professions, educators have struggled to account for representation that mirrors the demographics of the populations being served. In health care and social assistance industries, 78.7% of the workers are white females, compared to 17.4% black females. Among health care practitioners and in technical health care occupations (i.e., respiratory therapists, nurses, and physical therapists), 75.6% of the workers are white females compared to 11.8% who are black females (NCES, 2018b).

Due to the diversity of the United States and an ever-changing economy, health industries require health care educational programs to be rich in management competencies, with a focus on impacting social, political, and business interactions. These programs focus on meeting these needs by redesigning their curriculum; enhancing the development of technical, conceptual, and interpersonal skills; and enhancing personal growth and career development (White & Vetrovec, 2008). More culturally inclusive initiatives must be encouraged to recruit, retain, and graduate minority populations not presently represented in the health care industry. Post-secondary institutions should follow through in maintaining environments that are culturally encouraging, resourceful, open, and flexible to these under-represented student populations. These changes can be made in a way that meets the unique needs of nontraditional students and minorities while leading them on a path of successful degree completion and career attainment (Borkowski, Gordon, & Rushing, 2005; Campagna, Migliore, & Berman, 2011; Frazier, Young, & Fuller, 2012).

Phenomenological research attempts to understand how people find meaning in lived experience. From these individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are

then derived from the essences or structures of the experience. I have an interest in this study because I am an African American female who was enrolled and completed a health care program. I had to overcome many challenges to successfully graduate from a four-year program at a university, but I did not attend an HBCU. I understand that each person's experience is individual. My experience and understanding of what I found meaning in will not be the same as other individuals' personal experiences. This research helped me understand the essential experiences of African American female students in relation to how they define the meaning of completing an undergraduate health care program; it also helped me to understand the position of African American females exiting an undergraduate health care program while attending HBCUs within the USG.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate African American female students who are completers and those who are exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG. The goal was to gain a clear understanding of how they gave meaning to their lived experiences, thus assisting other academic institutions, faculty, staff, and the health care industries in understanding how African American females' experiences influenced their ability to succeed in completing their four-year undergraduate health care degree. I believe my own understanding of my education improved my understanding of why other African American females exited the undergraduate health care program before completion. The research questions addressed students' perspectives on the challenges and significant issues they faced during their enrollment in their health care programs, as well as factors contributing to the success of those students completing their health care programs.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of African American female completers and African American female exiters of undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?
2. What are African American female completers' and African American female exiters' common perceptions regarding their academic experiences?
3. How do background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables influence African American female completers and African American female exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?

Significance of the Study

This study addressed African American female completers and exiters in undergraduate health care program at an HBCUs within the USG. Little research has been done concerning the experiences of African American female completers and exiters in health care programs at HBCUs within the University System of Georgia; this study provides colleges and universities with data identifying to what extent educational experiences, personal backgrounds, academic, environmental, social integration variables, race, gender, identity, and awareness correlated with intent to leave or successful program completion and graduation. By studying these unique students' experiences and related literature, I sought to offer a fresh understanding of how to formulate and review procedures, policies, teaching methods, resources, and recruitment and retention strategies not only for HBCUs but also for all colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia. This research was effective in revealing hidden

barriers that could be addressed to close the gap between these students and their counterparts.

Conceptual Framework

To gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of African American female completers and exiters in an undergraduate health care program at an HBCUs within the University System of Georgia, priority was given to analyzing current, relevant, and reputable research. My research focused on the participants' experiences and their ability to successfully complete their four-year health care programs. The study adopted the lens of Bean and Metzner's nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model (1985). They determined a significant relationship exists between background variables, academic performance variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables that can directly or indirectly result in the continued enrollment of students or their intent to leave.

Several attrition models were proposed before Bean and Metzner's (1985). In 1970, Spady believed there was the need for an analytical explanatory approach to the study of student attrition. Spady (1970) proposed the first conceptual model (Fig. 1) of the attrition process, based upon Durkheim's model reflecting on the social nature of suicide. Spady (1970) believed that the same process could be at work in a decision to leave an institution of higher education. He believed the way that the student's goals, interests, and dispositions interact with the subsystems of the college, affected other independent variables: grade performance, intellectual development, and friendship support. These variables interacted with each other, he believed, and a direct positive relationship existed between the level of a student's social integration and the level of

satisfaction the student experienced with the college. Spady's (1970) model presented a significant step forward in understanding student attrition.

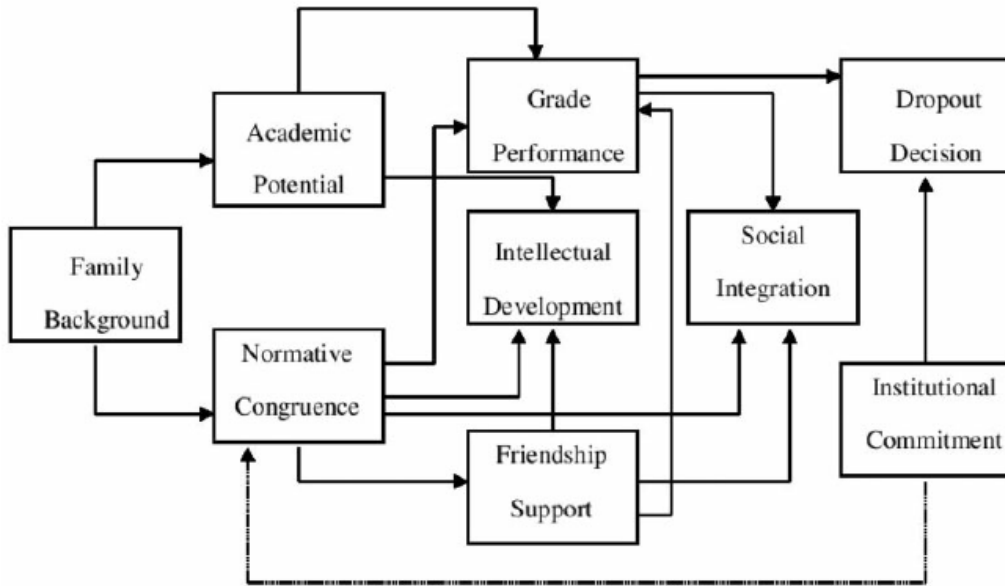


Figure 1. Spady's attrition model (1970).

After Spady's attrition model, Vincent Tinto developed a model of student attrition. Commitment to both college completion and to the institution was central to Tinto's model (Tinto, 1970). The central concept of Tinto's model was the level of a student's integration into social and academic systems of college. Level of integration was supposed to determine persistence or intent to dropout. The higher the degree of integration of the individuals into the college system, the stronger the commitment to the specific institution and the goal of college completion, leading to persistence.

Researchers were encouraged to advance the academic knowledge base concerning college student retention, and they developed and tested theories and hypotheses to incorporate multidisciplinary theories. This explained the order or process of keeping students in school and setting them on the path to graduation. Some researchers have

argued that Tinto’s theory failed to serve as the “grand theory” of student departure, because the evidence was weak when it was tested in different types of colleges and universities among different student populations.

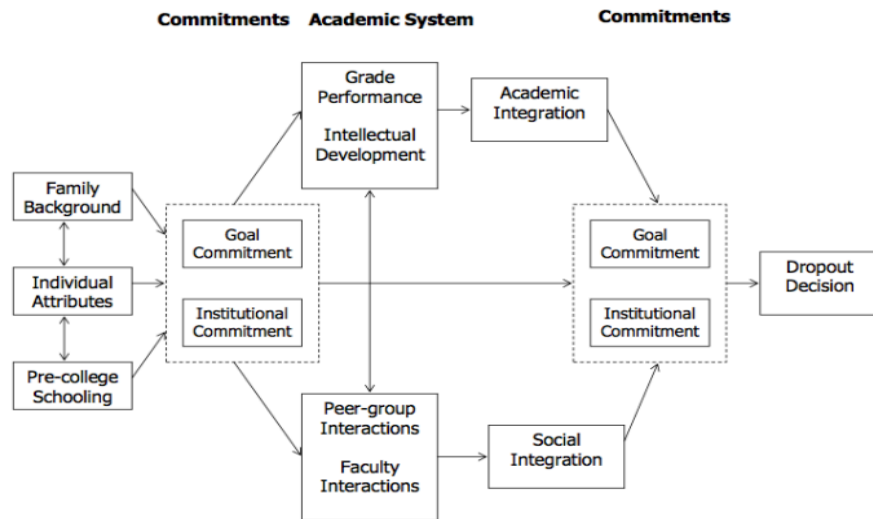


Figure 2. Tinto’s model of attrition (1975).

In my research, I incorporated Bean and Metzner’s (1985) idea that academic behaviors drive academic achievement, with the understanding that student engagement is linked to student development and success in graduation completion. Bean and Metzner’s nontraditional student attrition model (1985) is a theoretical model that explains the dropout process for nontraditional students. For Metzner, the defining characteristic of a “nontraditional student” was an age of 24 or older. Other variables used to characterize nontraditional students were associated with their background (race and gender) residence (i.e., not living on campus), level of employment (working full or part time), and enrollment in a non-degree occupation program. Bean and Metzner (1985) also added commuting to the list of characteristics making a student

nontraditional. These students were more affected by the external environment than by social integration variables affecting traditional student attrition.

Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model incorporated the social integration concept from Vincent Tinto's model, influenced on student persistence and withdrawal. Bean and Metzner's (1985) attrition model was based on four variables: (1) background and defining variables, (2) academic performance variables, (3) environmental variables, (4) and social integration variables. All four of these variables determined the student's intent to leave. The environmental variables consisted of items such as financial and family obligations and opportunities to transfer; all these variables were external to the college. Bean and Metzner (1985) determined that various students' background variables either directly or indirectly affected the decision to drop out and not finish an educational program. These direct and indirect influences impacted their academic variables (those variables internal to the college environment) and environmental variables (those variables lying outside of the college).

Several explanations can be offered for why students delayed or discontinued program completion, ranging from motivation factors, background variables, environmental issues, determination of academic success, and awareness of their lived experiences. The following conceptual framework illustrates how certain student variables and experiences influenced their lived experiences (Fig. 3). Bean and Metzner's attrition model (1985) was significant for evaluating the effects of the internal and sometimes external environments as it related to student learning and development.

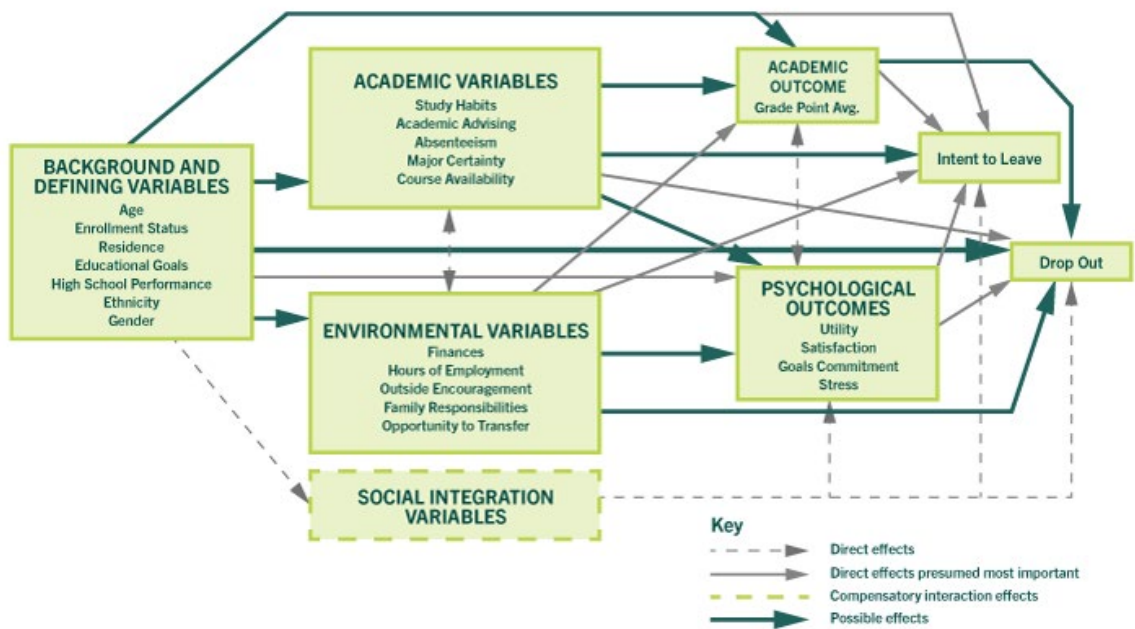


Figure 3. Bean and Metzner's nontraditional student attrition model (1985).

Definition of Terms

Attrition: Students' departure from the school (and possible departure from the entire educational system). The departure could be either a voluntary or involuntary decision on the part of the student.

African American: "African American student" was interchangeable with the meaning of "Black student." "Black" was a term used about a racial group with a dark or brown skin color. The term has been used to categorize several diverse populations into one common group. The term "Black" was considered to describe a person with origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa, except those of Hispanic origin. For this study, the students were all born in the United States and self-identify using the terms "Black" and "African American" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Completer: A person who had met all the requirements of a state-approved academic preparation program. Program completers included all those who documented as having met such requirements. Documentation took the form of a degree, institutional certificate, program credential, transcript, or other written proof of having met the program's requirements (Education Testing Services, 2015).

Exiter: Any student who left school for any reason before graduating or program completion of any program of studies without transferring to another academic institution for completion (Glennie, Bonneau, Vandellen, & Dodge, 2012)

Graduation completion university: A state university that reflects completion and graduation from a program to occur within six years.

Health care administration program: A program that prepares individuals who develop, plan, and manage health care operations and services within health care facilities and across health care systems. Included was instruction in planning, business management, financial management, public relations, human resources management, health care systems operation and management, health care resource and policy making, health law and regulations, and applications to specific types of health care services (Campagna, et al., 2011; White & Vetovec, 2008).

Historically Black colleges and universities: Universities and colleges established prior to 1964 with the principle mission of educating African Americans or Blacks. These institutions were founded and developed in an environment of legal segregation and provided access to higher education. This access contributed substantially to the progress African Americans had made and improved their educational status (NCES, 2018-a).

Nontraditional Student: A student would be considered “nontraditional” given one of seven characteristics: 1) delayed enrollment into postsecondary education, 2) part-time college attendance, 3) full-time employment, 4) financially independent for financial aid purposes, 5) dependents other than a spouse, 6) single parenthood, 7) or no high school diploma (Knowles, 1978; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2011; NCES, 1993; Pelleteir, 2010).

Retention: The term “retention,” also known as “institutional retention,” was used in this study to indicate the process of student retention from the perspective of the institutions in which students enrolled. Retention rates were measured for the academic progression of a group of students from one period to the next. Retention rate reports provided information on fall cohorts of entering students who returned in subsequent fall semesters; this information was categorized by degree level, number of years tracked, full-time and part-time status, race and ethnicity, and gender.

Traditional student: Characterized as an individual who earned a high school diploma, enrolled full time immediately after finishing high school, depended on parents for financial support, and was usually between the ages of 18 and 24 (Ritt, 2008; NCES, 2002, NCES, 2018).

Undergraduate: A student at a college or university who had not yet earned a bachelor’s or equivalent degree.

University System of Georgia: At the time of this study, there were 29 higher education institutions, including four research universities, four comprehensive universities, 10 state universities, and 11 colleges that were state sponsored schools in Georgia, governed under the Board of Regents in the USG (USG, n.d.).

Summary

In Chapter 1, I included an introduction of full-time African American females who had completed and African American female students who had exited an undergraduate program while attending an HBCU within the USG. I provided information that described a unique perspective on this study, a conceptual framework, the research questions, and important definitions to the study. I have drawn attention to the significance of the study as it may initiate a new and better understanding of how African American females defined meaning in their learning experiences. In Chapter 2, I will review literature directly associated with this topic in a manner that will help comprehend what is known about factors that influence African American female completers and African American exiters of undergraduate health care programs while attending HBCUs within the USG.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reviewing the literature was a vital component in building a strong foundation for the theoretical framework for the research. Chapter II provides a broad review of available literature related to full-time African American female students who were completers and African American female students who were exiters of an undergraduate health care education program while attending a HBCU within the USG. Additionally, I reviewed the literature related to student retention and attrition, academic impact on student learning and engagement, defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and students' intentions to leave before successful academic completion.

Upon reviewing the literature, it was determined that although an abundance of research on African American students existed, little research had been done on African American female completers and African American exiters of undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG. Hence, I introduced a review of the literature directly associated with issues influencing African American female completers and exiters of undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG. Throughout the research, I found the term "Black" and "African American" were used interchangeably and described the targeted population; I continued and used these terms interchangeably.

Defining Nontraditional Students

Various definitions of “nontraditional student” were found in the literature. The definition of an “adult student” varied slightly, according to institutions of higher learning. Nontraditional students were also referred to as “adult learners.” The most widely used definition for “nontraditional students” was from Horn (1996). This definition was presented with the support of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) from the U.S. Department of Education. According to Horn (1996), nontraditional students were any who took one or more of the following actions: 1) delayed enrollment (did not enter college in the same calendar year as their high school graduation); 2) attended part time for at least part of the academic year; 3) worked full time (35 or more hours per week) while enrolled; 4) were considered financially independent for the purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid; 5) had dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others); 6) were single parents (either not married or married but separated with dependents); or 7) had no high school diploma, completed high school with a general education diploma (GED) or other high school completion certificate, or did not finish high school.

Nontraditional students were also identified as “adult students,” “re-entry students,” “returning students,” and “adult learners” (Benshoff, 1993). According to Cross (1981) a nontraditional student was an adult who returned to school full time or part time while maintaining responsibilities such as employment and family or other responsibilities of adult life. While these older students share classroom space and educational experiences with traditional students (ages 18–24), their developmental needs, issues, and stressors differed considerably from their younger student-peers.

According to the NCES (1986), students of different levels of being categorized as nontraditional. *Moderately nontraditional* students had two or three nontraditional characteristics. These students, who made up 25 to 31 % of undergraduates in the three National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) surveys, tended to be independent and older than usual, attending part time. *Highly nontraditional* students had four or more nontraditional characteristics. In addition to those characteristics associated with moderately nontraditional students, about two-thirds of highly nontraditional students either had dependents or worked full time. About one-quarter were single parents. Highly nontraditional students accounted for about one in four undergraduates in the three NPSAS surveys.

Regarding the outcome measured, it should be noted that the intention of this study was not to imply that degree attainment was the only way students could profit from postsecondary education. While the labor market benefits for those who earned a bachelor's degree relative to those who attended college but did not attain a degree have long been known, it was possible that nontraditional students who did not attain a degree benefited in other ways not measured in this study. For example, nontraditional students enrolled in an associate degree program with the intention of taking specific courses to enhance an established career rather than to earn a degree. In doing so, their combined work experience and postsecondary courses taken improved their marketability in ways not yet possible for their traditional counterparts, who had not begun their careers (NCES, 1996).

Overall, nontraditional students were more likely to be women, to belong to a racial–ethnic minority group, and to have had less educated parents than traditional

students (Cross, 1981). However, as previously noted, rather than focusing on background characteristics, the criteria chosen identified nontraditional students in this study who were subject to intervention or change at various stages of their academic lives. Given a definition of “nontraditional students” with reference to several qualities, the nontraditional student cannot be defined by age or any one characteristic. The term “nontraditional” transformed from being defined by any single category, instead to terms representing one’s life and educational experiences. The definition was helpful to identify the nontraditional student, but it was not the only description that identified those students. Nontraditional students were unique in not only life experiences but also in motivation and achievement.

National Enrollment Demographics

Institutions of higher learning or college campuses have become more diverse, not only in age, but also in gender and race. The U.S. population will be much older and more racially and ethnically diverse by 2060. Hispanics had been the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, but at the time of this study, Asian Americans have become the fastest growing ethnic group (U.S. Census, 2010). While nationally African Americans are making tremendous strides in graduation completion, they still had a large graduation completion gap. Caucasian student graduation rates were at 64%, compared to African American student graduation rate of 42.4% (NCES, 2015). The percentage of American college students who were Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, and African American had been increasing. From fall 1976 to fall 2015, the percentage of Hispanic students rose from 4% to 17% of all U.S. residents enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Asian or Pacific Islander students’ percentage rose from 2%

to 7%. The percentage of Black students increased from 10% in 1976 to 14% in 2015, but the 2015 percentage reflected a decrease since 2011, when Black students made up 15% of all enrolled U.S. residents. American Indian or Alaska Native students' percentage rose higher in 2015 (0.8%) than in 1976 (0.7%). During the same period, the percentage of White students fell from 84% to 58%. Neither race nor ethnicity were reported for nonresident aliens, who made up 5% of total enrollment in 2015 (NCES, 2018a).

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

African Americans continued to pursue higher learning, and the issue of discrimination lingered in the background of the United States. The Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s initiated a movement to end such injustices experienced by ethnic minorities of these areas (NCES, 2018b). History has continued to move in the right direction towards diversity and to establish and maintain inclusive environments, a complex process requiring more than legislation. In the past, HBCUs were established for the sole purpose of educating African American citizens. Times have changed, and the establishment for African American citizens remained the same, but they now have an additional focus on being developed in an environment of legal segregation. The educational system provided access to higher education and contributed substantially to the progress African Americans made in improving their status (NCES, 2018b).

These institutions were established beginning in the decades after the Civil War and continuing until after 1964. HBCUs were the only higher education option for most African Americans. These institutions were founded and developed in an environment of legal segregation, and by provided access to higher education to African American

students, but they had historically enrolled students other than African Americans (Titcomb, 2014). They were established prior to 1964 with the principal mission of educating African Americans (NCES, 2018b).

In 2017, there were 102 HBCUs located in 19 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Of the 102 HBCUs, 51 were public institutions, and 51 were private nonprofit institutions (NCES, 2018b). The number of HBCU students increased 47% from 223,000 to 327,000 students between 1976 and 2010, then decreased 9% to 298,000 students between 2010 and 2017 (NCES, 2018b). In comparison, the number of students in all degree-granting institutions increased 91% from 11 million to 21 million students between 1976 and 2010, then decreased 6% to 20 million students between 2010 and 2017 (NCES, 2018b). Although HBCUs were originally founded to educate Black students, they enrolled students of other races as well, and this diversity increased over time.

Non-African American student made up 21% of enrollment at HBCUs, and among black students enrolled at HBCUs, the percentage of enrollment had fallen over time from 18% in 1976 to 8% in 2014. In 2017, non-African American students made up 24% of enrollment at HBCUs, compared with 15% in 1976 (NCES, 2018b).

Historically Black colleges and universities in the 2016–17 academic year conferred some 49,500 degrees. Of the degrees conferred by HBCUs, associate degrees accounted for 11%, more than two-thirds were bachelor's degrees (68%), while master's degrees accounted for 16%, and doctor's degrees accounted for 5%. Of the degrees awarded at HBCUs, the majority (74%) were conferred to Black students in 2016–17, they accounted for 45% of the 5,500 associate degrees, 81% of 33,500 the bachelor's

degrees, 70% of the 8,000 master's degrees, and 62% of the 2,500 doctor's degrees. At all levels, most of the degrees awarded to African American students were awarded to female students (NCES, 2018b).

Graduation rates in postsecondary education across the country saw much improvement. More than two-thirds of public colleges and universities increased their graduation rates over the previous decade, but these improvements were not equal among certain subgroups of students. For African American students at four-year public institutions, the numbers of graduates were much lower. In one study, 232 institutions across the U.S. were researched for overall graduation rates over the previous decade; to be included in the study, the universities had to have at least 30 first-time, full-time, Black students and 30 first-time, full-time White students. In the previous 10 years, graduation rates for Black students at those institutions improved 4.4% compared with 5.6% for White students. Graduation rates for Black students continued to show less progress (NCES, 2018b).

Students by Gender

At the time of this research study, the gender gap was widening in the classroom. Gender was an important factor when it came to enrollment, retention, and graduation. Female enrollment for nontraditional students in post baccalaureate programs had surpassed males since 1988. Women made up approximately 57% of all college students, an exponential gain compared to around 40% during the 1970s. Bachelor's degrees conferred to African American females were at 65% compared to African American males at 35%. Black students increased degree completion by 10–11%, but this increase did not represent itself in undergraduate health care programs. According to the NCES

(2018b), between 2005 and 2015, the number of female students rose 12%, while the number of male students rose 17%. Although male enrollment increased by a larger percentage than did female enrollment between 2005 and 2015, the majority (56%) were female. Since fall 1988, the number of female students in postbaccalaureate programs has exceeded the number of male students. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of full-time male postbaccalaureate students increased by 24%, compared with a 25% increase in the number of full-time female postbaccalaureate students. Among part-time postbaccalaureate students, the number of males enrolled in 2015 was 6% higher than in 2005, while the number of females was 8% higher.

Female Students Compared to Male Students

At the time of this study, more females were enrolled in postsecondary institutions but faced more challenges than did their male counterparts. The increase of enrollment was most likely influenced by the women's movement (Kimmel, Gaylor, & Hayes, 2014). In a recent study, females were significantly more likely to be motivated to seek higher education because of encouragement from their children (Kimmel et al., 2014). Female enrollment at HBCUs has been higher than male enrollment in every year since 1976. The percentage of female enrollment at HBCUs increased from 53% in the fall of 1976 to 61% in the fall of 2017. In 2017, some 87% of HBCU students attended a four-year institution, while 13% attended a two-year institution. About 76% of HBCU students attended public institutions, while the remaining 24% attended private nonprofit institutions.

At the same time, barriers that were more significant to females were numerous and included the lack of childcare, the lack of funds for childcare, the role of caregiver

within the family, time away from family, time away from a job, lack of grants and scholarships, and concern about being an older student attending school with younger students (Kimmel et al., 2014). Some of the largest areas of motivation for females were pure desire to complete their degree to assist families, desire to attain a pay increase to support themselves and their family, desire for promotion, desire for a new career opportunity, and the influence of a spouse or significant other. Those factors were important to female adult learners because these learners drew their motivation from the support of others rather than from males (Kimmel et al., 2014). Those barriers for nontraditional learners (male or female) made participating in on-campus or off-campus activities difficult for them.

Undergraduate Health Care Programs

An undergraduate health care program can be defined as a program preparing individuals with skills in developing, planning, and managing health care operations and services within health care facilities and across health care systems. Such programs include instruction in planning, business management, financial management, public relations, human resources management, health care systems operation, strategy, quality management, health care resource, policy making, health law and regulations, and applications to specific types of health care services (White & Vetrovec, 2008).

Academic health care programs comprise one of the fastest growing majors in academics. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), of the 1,870,000 bachelor's degrees conferred in 2013–14, most degrees were conferred in the fields of business (358,000) and health professions and related programs (199,000), with health care as one of the most popular majors. Occupations in the field of health care

continue to rank at the top, with an expected growth rate between 27% and 43% from 2014 to 2024 (BLS, 2019).

The employment outlook was bright in the field of health care, and it is no wonder why there are so many students enrolling in health care programs (Temple & Thompson, 2014). Taking a closer look at the numbers gave a better understanding of the role race played in enrollment and degree completion. As the statistics broke down by race, it painted a very different picture of the face of the undergraduate health care student. According to the NCES (2015), a total of 216,228 individuals were enrolled in health professions and related programs, 134,434 of whom were white students, compared to 24,915 black students and 20,634 hispanic students. According to the NCES (2015), bachelor's degrees were conferred to a total of 182,570 female students. Of those female students, 124,375 were white females, 21,314 were black females, and 17,059 were hispanic females.

University System of Georgia

At the time of this study, the USG was composed of all 159 counties and provided services throughout the state of Georgia. The system was composed of 29 higher-education institutions including four research universities, four comprehensive universities, 10 state universities, and 11 state colleges. The Georgia Public Library System included 389 facilities within the 61 library systems through the state of Georgia (USG, n.d.).

The State of Georgia currently had a total of three four-year public colleges or universities categorized as an HBCU. Those public HBCUs included 1) Albany State University, 2) Fort Valley State University, and 3) Savannah State University. The State

of Georgia also had private HBCUs. Those private HBCUs included 1) Clark Atlanta University, 2) Interdenominational Theological Center, 3) Morehouse College, 4) Morehouse School of Medicine, 5) Morris Brown College, 6) Pain College, and 7) Spelman College.

University of Georgia Degrees, Majors, and Enrollment

The USG institutions conferred a total of 62,545 degrees in the 2016 fiscal year, including 38,514 bachelor's, 11,044 master's, and 1,645 doctorate degrees. Most baccalaureate level degrees awarded within the USG were in the fields of business, education, and nursing. At the time of this study, 12 colleges and universities offered a four-year bachelor's degree in health care administration and management. Of these 12 that offered the degree, three of them were HBCUs. Those three are Albany State University, Fort Valley State University, and Savannah State University (USG, 2017). The USG had strived to present individuals with an education steeped in quality and academic excellence. The latest statistics showed that approximately 301,396 students were enrolled at a USG college or university (USG, 2017). The most current enrollment data available for spring 2016 through fall 2016 indicated that of the 228,907 students enrolled in the USG, 130,516 were male students and 170,880 were female students (56.7%). Of all those students within the USG, 83,146 (27.6%) were Black students, 22,318 (7.4%) were Hispanic students, and 154,500 (51.3%) were White students (USG, 2017)

Nontraditional Student Attrition Models

Several models of attrition have been noted in the literature. During the 1960s, researchers described the problem of attrition and identified certain key variables leading students to drop out. Knoell (1960) identified four major types of studies: 1) census studies designed to identify the magnitude of the problem, 2) autopsy studies in which dropouts were questioned at the time of withdrawal, 3) case studies that followed up on students, and 4) prediction studies that looked for variables related to success and failure.

Spady's attrition model (1970). In 1970, William Spady recognized the need for a more analytical approach to understanding attrition. Spady wanted to practice a more methodological approach, and he proposed the first conceptual model of the attrition process (Spady, 1970). The model was based on another model, called "Durkheim's Model on the Social Nature of Suicide" (Durkheim, 1951). Spady believed that the same process could be used to determine why a student would leave an institution. In Spady's Model (Fig. 1), one could see how the student's goals, interests, and personality dispositions interacted with subsystems within the college and how it affected other independent variables: grade performance, intellectual development, and friendship support. Those variables interacted with one another and influenced the degree to which the student was integrated into college life. His model proposed a direct positive relationship between the level of a student's social integration and the level of satisfaction the student experienced with the college. The actions impacted students and their commitment to the institution. Spady's model added grade performance and assumed a direct effect of a student's grade performance on the dropout decision.

Tinto's attrition model (1975). With his model Vincent Tinto was building upon Spady's attrition model when he developed his model (Fig. 2). Spady's model had been the most researched and had withstood scrutiny from the profession. Tinto's model became accepted as the most reliable in explaining the causes of student dropout (Aljohani, 2016). Tinto's model also drew upon Durkheim's research on suicide and the concept that students would withdraw from a social academic community if they were not socially integrated into it. Tinto believed that upon entering college, a student must detach from past communities, be transitioned from high school to college, and become incorporated and engaged in the society of college. Tinto's model declared the dropout process was viewed longitudinally and was related to the commitment made by students as to their goals and to the institution. Dropout process was also influenced by personal and family characteristics and by previous school experiences. (Tinto, 1975)

There was no doubt that commitment to college completion and to the academic institution was vital in both models. The commitments had a direct impact on the dropout decision of the students. The models were similar in their own way, but they were very different from other models. Knoell, Spady, and Tinto all focused on the traditional student. It was not until Munday (1976) emphasized the plurality of students. Many ideas of what encompasses a nontraditional student have been offered. The definition of an adult student varied slightly according to the differing institutions of higher learning. Nontraditional students were also referred to as the term "adult learners." Adult learners were those whose age, social roles, or self-perception defined them as adults. Nontraditional students were identified as "adult students," "re-entry students," "returning students," "returning adults," "adult returners," and "adult learners"

(Benshoff, 1993). According to Cross (1981), students were adults who returned to school full or part time while maintaining responsibilities in their adult lives. Those older students shared the classroom space and educational experiences with traditional students' ages (ages 18–24), but the developing needs, life issues, and stressors differed much from their younger student peers.

Bean and Metzner's attrition model of nontraditional students (1985). Bean and Metzner (1985) later decided to add commuter students. They believed commuter students should be added to the list of characteristics, because it was a characteristic that made them a nontraditional student. According to Bean and Metzner (1985), "No theoretical model had been available to guide attrition research on the nontraditional student enrolled in institutions of higher education" (p. 485). They developed a conceptual model of student attrition specifically designed for the nontraditional student.

Bean and Metzner's (1985) nontraditional students were more affected by the external environment than by social integration variables. They thus developed Bean and Metzner's Nontraditional student Attrition Model (Fig. 3). They noted four distinct variables that influenced attrition in nontraditional students: 1) background and defining variables, 2) academic performance variables, 3) environmental variables, 4) and social integration variables. The environmental variables consisted of items such as financial and family obligations and opportunities to transfer; all of which were external to the college. This nontraditional student attrition model determined that different students' background variables affected the decision to drop out and not finish an educational program, either directly or indirectly. Those direct and indirect influences impacted their academic variables (i.e., those variables internal to the college environment) or

environmental variables (i.e., those variables lying outside of the college). Bean and Metzner's (1985) focus shifted from what was happening to students on campus to what was happening in the students' lives off campus.

Background and Defining Variables. Bean and Metzner (1985) believed that a student's high school educational experiences, educational goals, family support, age, ethnicity, and gender all influenced the way a student interacted with the college or university he or she chose to attend. Bean and Metzner (1985) understood that nontraditional students had reduced emphasis on social integration factors since nontraditional (older, working, commuting) students had less interaction with others on campus than did traditional and residential students.

Academic variables. Bean and Metzner's (1985) definition of nontraditional meant that a student was either over the age of 24, not a resident of the college (e.g., commuter student), attend part time, or some combination of the three. They noted that a traditional student was defined as being 18 to 24 years old, living on campus, and attending college fulltime. Their model's academic variables directly influenced academic outcomes such as grade point average (GPA). They believed this influence led to poor academic outcomes, which would eventually cause involuntary academic dismissal. This variable led to great psychological outcomes such as stress, diminished sense of utility, or weakened academic goal commitment. Academic variables (e.g., study hours, study skills, academic advising, absenteeism, major and job certainty, and course availability) worked indirectly through the psychological outcome. Bean and Metzner's (1985) model presented only possible effects for social integration variables even though they were central to Spady's (1970) model and Tinto's (1975) model.

Environmental variables. Bean and Metzner (1985) believed the nontraditional students' environmental factors played an important part in determining academic outcomes, specifically in the decision to depart the academic institution. Finances, hours of employment, family responsibilities, opportunity to transfer, and weak academic support all played a part in the nontraditional student's day-to-day life. Even though these were nonacademic factors, for the nontraditional student they still resulted in low levels of academic success. Environmental factors occurred off campus for the nontraditional student, but still influenced what happened on campus.

Social integration variables. According to Bean and Metzner (1985) when their model was tested, they found social integration variables lacked importance because those students were nontraditional students, and these variables had no direct relationship with the departure decision, though indirect relationships were found. Environmental and background variables were also found not to have direct relationships with the departure decision. Social interaction variables included memberships to clubs, school friends, and faculty contact. Psychological outcomes were found not to have direct effects on either the dropout decision or intent to leave.

Outcomes relied largely on the four sets of variables that directly or indirectly impacted a student's intent to leave. Bean and Metzner's (1985) model presented three unique scenarios for the nontraditional student. First, students were more likely to stay in school and complete the academic program if both academic and environmental variables were good, but they were more likely to leave when both variables were poor. Secondly, students were more likely to leave school when academic variables were good but environmental variables were bad, and the academic variables on retention would not be

seen. Thirdly, students were more likely to leave school when environmental support was good and academic support was bad, the environmental support assisted in supporting for low scores in the academic variables. For example, students with good academic support would not remain in school if their job schedule was not supportive or if they did not have the finances to pay for child care. Students with good environmental support, such as support for their jobs, being lenient with their work schedules, or family support with child care, would more likely remain in school despite their poor academic support.

These variables presented by Bean and Metzner (1985) led to a second compensatory effect for two kinds of outcomes: 1) academic outcomes that involved GPA and 2) psychological outcomes that involved goal commitment, stress, and utility. Students would remain in school if scores in both sets of outcomes were high, but the low scores in both would directly influence students to leave. If students had low levels of utility, satisfaction, or goal commitment, or high levels of stress, this condition would cause students to dropout no matter how high their GPA. Some students could continue in school if they were supported with positive psychological outcomes from attendance, and this support was possible even if they have a low GPA. According to this model, students remained in school with high levels of academic success only if accompanied by positive psychological outcomes from school.

Bean developed a longitudinal student attrition model in 1990. This model addressed the departure issue from multiple perspectives. The model included sociological variables, economic variables, organizational variables, and psychological variables. Bean believed that those factors affected how students integrated academically

and socially. This effect increased their self-confidence and development and strengthened their perceptions of the utility of college education. In turn, they became more likely to continue their enrollment to program completion.

The theory associated with Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional student attrition (1985) was chosen to provide the conceptual framework for this study. Tinto's student integration model was more robust than Bean and Metzner's model, based on the number of validated hypotheses (70% versus 40%), but Bean and Metzner's model explained more of the variance in the student's persistence (44% versus 38%). Several models of college student attrition and retention theories were considered before this selection (Bean, 1980; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Spady 1970; & Tinto, 1975), and Bean and Metzner's conceptual model of nontraditional student attrition (1985) was most appropriate for this study.

Review of the literature clearly showed there was a need to understand how African American females find meaning as completers and as exiters of an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU within the USG. Review of the literature stated more women had become successful, but a large gap remained between ethnicities in terms of academic goal completion. The numbers were even lower for African American women in undergraduate health care programs. Understanding how they gave meaning to their experiences can help other HBCUs across the nation with recruitment, retention, and assistance of students in their academic success.

Conclusion

Unique views and ideas of education program completion of African American female students enrolled in an undergraduate health care administration program at HBCUs within the USG were provided. Much scholarly literature was available for review on the topic of African Americans in higher education, but the literature was limited concerning African American female students who were completers or exiters of an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU within the USG. The research of that unique population was necessary to understand their lived experiences and academic accomplishments. The research questions were presented to explore how that population found meaning by understanding their personal lived experiences. Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature based on various models and theories related to the research questions. Chapter 3 presents the study's Methodology.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter I provided the phenomenological framework for this study. Chapter II outlined the literature. This chapter clarifies the study's methodological framework how participants were collected, how data was collected, and how data was analyzed. The research centered on the lived experience of African American female students listed as completers and as exiters of an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU within the USG.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed:

- What are the lived experiences of African American female completers and African American female exiters of undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?
- What are African American female completers' and African American female exiters' common perceptions regarding their academic experiences?
- How do background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables influence African American female completers and African American female exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?

Research Design

Phenomenology

This study used phenomenological research design. Examined was the phenomenon of African American females who were completers and African American female student who were exiters of an undergraduate health care administration program while attending an HBCU within the USG. Participants of the study could reflect on their experiences as African American female completers or exiters. The hope was to gain a better understanding that accurately described their lived experiences as participants of the phenomenon. Phenomenology was inspired by the phenomenon of human consciousness as a reflective analysis of life-world experiences (Husserl, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology was an appropriate methodology because the goals of this study were to comprehend the meanings of human experiences. Phenomenology allowed the true “essence” of understanding to be revealed and the meaning of the experience of participants. The intention for this study was to provide awareness of this social phenomenon.

Sampling Techniques

Site Selection

At the time of this study, the USG had three public HBCUs that offered undergraduate health care administration degrees. The USG’s HBCUs were in the southeastern region of the United States, and student populations range from 2,000–6,000 students. The privacy and confidentiality of these institutions was maintained by not using any additional identifying information. It was appropriate for this study to use all three public historically black colleges because of the size and location of the institutions.

The institutions presented useful information in understanding the unique lived experiences of the participants; therefore, I originally included all three HBCUs as sites for this study.

All sites selected offer a four-year undergraduate health care administration program. Historically Black colleges and universities were listed with graduation rates from the highest to the lowest. Institutions selected for this study were used to compare the completion and exit rates of full-time African American females with the overall graduation rates at these institutions. This comparison allowed the best opportunity to examine how background, variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social interaction variables influenced the participants' abilities to find academic success. Approval from the IRB for each institution was obtained, as well as Valdosta State University's IRB (Appendix A) prior to the study being commenced. During IRB approval process, one of the three universities had to be eliminated because it no longer offered a health care administration program, according to their IRB committee. Therefore, two HBCUs in the USG were included in the study.

Participant Selection

Creswell (2014) advised a purposeful sample strategy as an appropriate fit for phenomenological studies. According to Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006), sampling in qualitative research was more purposeful rather than random in nature. Narrowing the study to the population of African American female completers and African American female exiters was pragmatic, meeting the interest of a significant population of students while keeping the population narrow enough to ensure saturation.

Creswell (2014) and Patton (2002) advised that the number of participants in phenomenological studies should typically range from three to ten. If had been necessary, contact would had been made with the health care administration program directors to obtain a list of participants needed for this study. However, the president of the Alumni Association of the two HBCU was contacted to assist in gaining access to participants. The purpose of the study was thoroughly explained as to research the lived experience of African American female students who had completed or exited an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU within the USG. According to Bean and Metzner's nontraditional model (1985), participants were selected based on the demographic and background-defining variables of age, resident or commuter status, full-time or part-time status, and pre-college academic experiences. The factors used in the selection process for participants included the following:

- a list of African American females who completed (completers) or exited (exitters) their undergraduate health care administration program (information provided by the Alumni Association of the institutions),
- the age range of students,
- status as a resident of the college or commuter student, and
- enrollment status (full-time or part-time student).

It was necessary to have equal representation of each of the sites and each of the above factors. Participants were selected by categorizing them based on each of the factors in descending order. Items 1–4 were objective factors, while Item 5 was subjective and was based on discretion.

The study includes the following six participants:

- two students from each of the following age ranges: 24–35 years, 36–45 years, and 45–55 years;
- three students who were residential, and three students who were commuter
- three students who were full time, and three students who were part time.

A final decision was made based on several factors, including the robustness and variety of the participants and pre-college academic and college experiences. Emphasis was placed on the depth of academic support, academic counselor interaction, participation in academic activities such as student organizations and social events, and availability of educational resources at the participant's secondary-level institutions.

A list of participants from the HBCUs was obtained, and each participant was contacted by email with a brief description of the research, the title and purpose of the study, and its timeframe. A link to a brief survey was provided to participants to allow them to offer pertinent information related to the items to be used for final participant selection.

Once participants were selected, they were then emailed and invited to be part of the study. Additionally, interview options including Skype instructions, a protocol, and a consent form were provided. Skype was used only if the student was unable to meet face-to-face or if distance would make a face-to-face interview difficult to schedule. Participants' responses or lack thereof were recorded. The protocol was to move down the list to the next participant for invitation to participate in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Seidman's (2006) Three-Step Interview Series was used for this phenomenological study, because it allowed me to gain rich data in three profound steps. Each interview comprised a wealth of information that may not be available with a one-step process. The open-ended, in-depth inquiry was best carried out in a structure that allowed both the participant and the interviewer to maintain a sense of the focus of each interview in the three-step series. Seidman's (2006) three-step interview process was an appropriate choice for this study.

All interview questions were designed to be synchronized with Seidman's (2006) three-step interview process. In Phase I, the first set of questions focused on the participant's life history. The first interview phase established the context of the participants' experiences. In Phase II, the second set of questions assisted participants in providing details of their experiences. This phase allowed participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within their context. In Phase III, the third set of questions focused on the participants' perceptions of each experience's meaning. This final phase encouraged participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences, and it addressed the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and lives. According to Seidman (2006), the three-step interview process allows the individual's behavior to be meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of his or her life and the lives of those around them.

Each interview provided a foundation of rich details that assisted in illuminating the next interview. Depending on the results of the pilot interview (see Appendix B), the interview protocol would have been adjusted if not enough data was provided. The face-

to-face interviews were held in public places where the participant could feel safe and comfortable. Those places included a library, a campus classroom, or a conference room. Before all interviews, a relationship was formed between the researcher and the participant by contacting them before the interview with a telephone call, a letter, or a contact visit. Relationships were built to confirm schedules and appointments. Seidman (2006) proposed the interview protocol that was used in this study. The protocol ensured the process was effective and consistent with each participant for each interview (see Appendix B).

Following Seidman's (2006) suggestion, interviews were spaced from three to seven days apart. This spacing of interviews allowed time for the study participants to critically reflect upon the upcoming interview, but it did not provide enough time to lose the relationship between the two interviews. This spacing allowed me to work with the study participants over a two to three-week period. This time also allowed the participants to clear their minds if they were having difficult days related to sickness, work, or role obligations.

Bean and Metzner (1985) detailed how background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables were significant to the academic success of graduation completion or intent to leave in nontraditional African American female students (Fig. 3). These characteristics of variables were used and created a foundation for the topics to be covered during the interviews.

The interview process for this study was semi-structured (see Appendix C) to discover alternative meanings for understanding this phenomenon. The interview

technique allowed one to understand participants' experiences and how they constructed meaning within their everyday lives (Merriam, 2002; Seidman, 2006). Each interview question started with words like "describe," "reflect," "recall," "express," and "explain," and they encouraged active and effective communication for qualitative research. The questions were formative and constructed a narrative of the participants' lived experiences, prompting the participants to 1) describe their experiences as African American completers or exiters from an undergraduate health care program at the HBCUs, 2) detail their experiences academically, environmentally, and socially (or the lack thereof), and 3) reflect upon the meaning of their lived experiences. Saturation of rich data was the key to excellent qualitative work. Four interviews were conducted as needed; however, when saturation occurred with three interviews, the fourth interview was not needed. Interviews were conducted with each participant until saturation of the data occurred. Interviews were recorded using a hand-held digital tape recorder.

A 90-minute interview was conducted in a safe and comfortable location. If distance was an issue, the participant was interviewed by Skype (see Appendix D). Using Skype allowed real time face-to-face interactions, and the ability to see and hear the participants, and the researcher take note of non-verbal body language. The web-based communication tool was more cost effective for study participants than traveling a great distance to the location of the institution (Seidman, 2006).

Phase I of the interview involved my introduction, defined the scope of the study, and required each participant to answer a specific set of questions that focused on their life history. Phase II of the interview involved a reintroduction of me, reviewed the scope of the study, and interviewed participants with questions that provided details of

their lived experience. Phase III of the interview involved a set of questions being asked that allowed participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. All questions were designed to allow each participant to respond with a first-hand account of lived experience questions related to four topics: background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables. The confidentiality of each participant was ensured with an explanation that the study proposed to seek understanding of their lived experience as African American female completers or exiters of an undergraduate health care administration program while attending HBCUs within the USG.

After each question, the participant was asked to confirm whether more clarification was needed. Questions were asked that encouraged narrative responses. For example, “What did you think I meant when I asked this question?” “How did this question make you feel?” “What did the question mean to you?” Upon videotaping or recording, minimal notes were taken, as not to disrupt the flow of the conversation. If at any time the participant did not understand the question or needed clarification, notes of that question were taken, and a description of the participant’s response was noted. If necessary, the question was reworded to suit the participant’s understanding. It was noted whether the responses differed between the two versions of a question. Probing was explored as an experience with the participant, as probing tended to convey a sense of power of the interviewer, treating the participants as objects (Seidman, 2006).

Pilot Testing Interviews

The purpose of pilot testing was to learn whether the research structure was appropriate for the study and allowed understanding of the practical aspects of

establishing access, making contact, and conducting interviews. As specified by Creswell (2014), certain steps were followed to collect information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interviews, documents, and visual materials; and a protocol was established for recording the information. Interview questions, design, and techniques were tested with a small number of participants for face-to-face and Skype interview formats (Seidman, 2006).

Selection of Participants for Pilot Testing

Newman and Benz (1998) advised that participants should be selected with homogenous traits (i.e., similar traits for needed for this research study). A face-to-face interview was costlier and predicated on the use of smaller participant samples. Baker (2004) noted that “a pilot study was often used to pre-test or try out (pp. 182–183) a research instrument.” A sample size of 10–20% of the sample size for the actual study was a reasonable number of participants to consider enrolling in a pilot study (Baker, 2004).

Two participants were selected from Middle Georgia State University (one completer and one exiter) for the pilot study. The pilot study participants were administered the initial survey and were interviewed according to the protocol plan for the actual study. Any data obtained from the pilot study was not used in the actual study. Pilot testing ensured question clarity and the ability to gain the depth of information required for the actual study. Opportunities were identified to correct potential problems that could arise during the face-to-face or Skype interview sessions by implementing pilot testing. Based on the results of the pilot testing, minor modifications were made to the interview questions and the interview protocol.

Data Analysis Procedures

Following Seidman's suggestion (2006), all interviews were transcribed immediately upon completion of all three-interview series. As per Moustakas (1994), organization of data began when with the placement of transcribed interviews, and I studied the material through the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis. Member checking was implemented to ensure accuracy, credibility, and validity of information. A constant comparison model was used to sort and classify recurrent or significant themes within participants' responses where each idea and thought unit was grouped with similar ones. Each group of similar ideas formed and received a label, and each labeled category became an overarching theme. Concept mapping was utilized and formed recurring themes. Those categories assisted in differentiating similarities and differences, with a primary focus on similarities.

According to Roberts (2010), qualitative analysis provided a description of matrices used to display the data and identified the coding processes used to convert the raw data into themes or categories for analysis. The description included specific details about how one managed a large amount of data associated with qualitative analysis. A five-step process for analyzing qualitative data was used for interview transcripts:

Step1: Initial Listening and Reading of Transcripts

- Carefully listen to all audiotapes. Review all the data twice before developing a preliminary list of categories, themes, and patterns and after all tape-recorded interviews were transcribed. Recurrent or significant themes within participants' responses that directly reflected the study's research questions and the phenomenon studied.

Step 2: Organization and Coding of Responses

- Responses were sorted and grouped by research question. Several prominent themes emerged from the initial reading. Each theme was given an initial coding.
- Pertinent information was highlighted, and a master coding list of responses was developed. Within each response, categories were counted by frequency.
- Interpretive meanings of each of the recurring statements and the integration of the findings into themes by coding and categorizing were developed. A thorough study of the descriptions for coding and the interpretation of the recurrent and identified themes determined the essence of the phenomenon.

Step 3: Review of Total Transcripts and Final Coding

- The full transcript was coded of each participant and noted when second or third references were made in a response category from the master coding list from Step 2. The coding list was then finalized.

Step 4: Completion of Data Analysis and Report Findings

- The analysis of each response to the research questions and analysis of each interview transcript was conducted. This resulted in themes, patterns, and categories for the research questions.
- Coding was defined by Seidman (2006) as the effort to organize excerpts from the transcripts into categories. A professional transcriptionist was used for this study. The transcripts were reviewed and documented what was common to several interview responses. Data was analyzed and determined what the data was revealing. Coding categories emerged from the data and with those sets of categories. The interview transcripts were critically analyzed and applied a

category to everything that was said. This coding process allowed information of connecting threads and patterns to be searched among the data, enabling significant information regarding the participants' lived experience.

Step 5: Review of Total Transcript to Ascertain Validity of Findings

- All the transcripts were reviewed a final time to ascertain that the finding and the main themes and patterns were consistent with the data. A comparison of the literature was made and determined which findings were supported or not supported by the literature. A complete summary of the descriptions was provided to each participant for authentication of the conclusion interpreting their meaning. If study participants revealed that information was incorrect and did not capture the true meaning of the description of their lived experiences, then further clarification or explanation was obtained. Tapes will be kept in an office under lock and key. Once research study is complete and successfully defended, audio tapes and interview transcription logs will be destroyed.

Biases

As an African American female who was successful in completing an undergraduate degree in health care, I paid close attention to avoid placing judgment or personally interfering in the study. Caution was taken to ensure that the interpretations and assumptions of the research of the lived experiences were understood from only the participants' points of view. As a person who was in the participant's position as a student and now as a university professor, the difficulty of minority students endured was familiar and understood. Acknowledgement was made that the research topic may lead

to misinterpretation and misrepresentation of the analysis of the findings. Every effort to ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of the data and findings was made.

Trustworthiness

According to Roberts (2010), the term trustworthiness referred to the concept of validity. To ensure the trustworthiness of the interpretations and conclusions, multi-method triangulation was utilized for the interviews. Understanding was gained to justify themes that ensured reliability. The goal was to ensure the interpretations of the participants' responses were clear, correct, and unbiased. Only after the participants were asked and agreed that their responses were reflected accurately was the data considered to be trustworthy. Qualitative researchers often used the term "trustworthiness" to refer to the concept of validity. Credibility was ensured for qualitative data collection, as reflective mediation (Epoche) and reflective journaling was used. Upon completion of research study, a professional editing service was utilized.

Reflective Meditation

According to Moustakas (1994), Epoche was the best process to encourage reflective meditation and the letting go of preconceptions and prejudgments entering the consciousness. Trustworthiness was ensured as one reflected on information and allowed it to leave freely. This meditative procedure was repeated until an internal sense of closure concerning the information received by the participant was reached. All prejudgments were labeled and written out. Once written out, prejudgments were reviewed from the list until the hold on the consciousness was released. A pure state was needed for fresh perspectives in experiencing phenomenological research. An extra

hand-held tape recorder was available to tape record any thoughts, questions, ideas, or reflections that emerged.

Reflective Journaling

To bring reflexivity into human consciousness, a reflective diary was used to write down thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. This process allowed the reexamination of my position when issues were raised that might affect the research process.

Participants' responses were recorded in a journal. This record allowed close attention to the details of the personal lived experiences of the participants. Intellectual thought was concentrated and focused, allowing me to be fully engaged in the descriptions of participants' lived experiences.

Utilizing these strategies ensured credibility and trustworthiness, and questions were asked to ensure that attention was properly given to any biases. Data was collected and analyzed, and then reflective meditation was applied. Data was then documented through reflective journaling:

- Did I put aside prior knowledge, experiences, prejudgments, and assumptions and embrace a new perspective regarding the phenomenon?
- Did I have a clear understanding of the research topic to justify its significance after developing the literature reviews?
- Were the interview questions open-ended?
- Did the questions allow the participants to present issues that I had not previously considered?
- Were the interview questions relate to the study's research questions?

- Did the interpretation of the data represent the participants' responses and experiences?

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview and justification of the phenomenological research methods used as data was gathered and analyzed. Also discussed in this chapter were the potential strategies used to promote trustworthiness as explored in the lived experiences of African American female completers and exiters of an undergraduate health care program while attending HBCUs within the USG. The proposed sampling process identified the sites, and participants were furthermore identified and explained. The HBCUs within the USG were selected and access was gained to six participants using purposeful sampling. Every effort was made to protect the identity of the participants and the sites and to maintain confidentiality. A protocol for the interviews was established. Immediately after the approval of the dissertation proposal, the usability of the interview questions was pilot tested (see Appendix B). Justification of changes was noted for any necessary changes to the protocol.

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS

The goal of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of African American female students who enrolled and completed or exited an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU within the USG.

The first chapters of this dissertation presented an introduction of the lived experiences and the common perceptions of African American female students. Also presented were background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables that may influence African American female completers and African American exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs. The literature review provided information on defining the nontraditional student, understanding the barriers faced by African American female students, the history of the HBCU, and the conceptual framework of Bean and Metzner's nontraditional undergraduate student attrition model (1985).

This chapter features the results of the analysis of narrative responses of a total of six African-American female students and is divided into two parts. Part A includes those participants who enrolled and exited a health care program while attending an HBCU (exiters). Part B includes those who enrolled and completed a health care program while attending an HBCU (completers). Their lived experiences were collected using Seidman's Three-Step Interview Series (2006). Part A includes the life histories of

Katie, Linda, and Missy and is primary to experiences of exiting the health care program. Part B includes the life histories of Angel, Sandra, and Rebecca and the primary experiences focused on completing the health care program. Their individual stories were used as the back drop on which the themes emerged from their personal experiences. All participants offered personal details of their high school experiences, family support, academic challenges, families or outside responsibilities, and social participation, self-sacrifice, race, gender, identify, and awareness.

This phenomenon was explored from individual interviews conducted with participants that addressed the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the lived experiences of African American female completers and African American female exiters of undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?
- RQ2: What are African American female completers' and African American female exiters' common perceptions regarding their academic experiences?
- RQ3: How do background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables influence African American female completers and African American female exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?

Research Question 1 was developed to gain understanding of the lived experiences of African American female completers and exiters and to comprehend how they found meaning from these experiences while participating in a health care program at an HBCU. All six participants shared memorable stories that they described as

important situations and events. They valued these experiences as important and meaningful.

Research Question 2 focused on common perceptions of African American female completers and exiters of a health care program. Participants were asked questions that focused on common perceptions they encountered throughout their academic journey in the health care program and enrolled in college. All three participants in Part A shared some of the same key phrases, ideas, and themes, which focused on their race, gender, identity, and awareness as African American female exiters of an undergraduate health care program.

Research Question 3 focused on variables that influenced the decision of intent to leave an academic program or to drop out of college altogether. These variables affected the student's ability to succeed academically. Defining variables, academic variables, and social variables all had to do with activities on the college campus, while environmental variables had to do with activities away from the campus

Results of Interviews Part A Exiters

All three participants in Part A shared negative stories that included setting no educational goals and a lack of family support that related to their not completing an academic degree. All three participants in Part A noted several of the same barriers (or variables) that inhibited African American females from degree completion. To maintain privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were given to study participants. Three African American female students who enrolled and exited an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU participated in the face-to-face interviews. These participants were all identified as part-time students, were commuters or residential students, and

worked either part or fulltime jobs while enrolled. Each of the participants were unique in their personalities and experiences. All participants attended an HBCU within the USG.

The data analysis included reviewing all memos and notes taken during the study, critically reflecting on data, listening and re-listening carefully to all audiotapes, and analyzing the transcription of the interviews. Identification of categories were analyzed and placed into themes. Descriptive profiles were developed for each of the three student participants.

Table 1

Description of Participants

Participant	Age	School	Part-Time (PT) or Full-Time (FT)	Commuter or Residential	Completer or Exiter
Katie	34 yr.	HBCU	PT	Residential	Exiter
Linda	50 yr.	HBCU	PT	Commuter	Exiter
Missy	51 yr.	HBCU	PT	Commuter	Exiter

Note: HBCU = Historically Black College University

Profiles of Participants

Missy

Missy is a 51-year-old African American female, and she juggles many roles: mother, full-time employee, caregiver, faith activist, and community service leader. She lives in Southwest Georgia and is raising her two teenage boys as a single mother. Missy considers herself as living well below lower class. She resides in a two-bedroom one-bathroom apartment, and many families in the same apartment complex are in similar and stressful economic situations. Her home is decorated in an African motif, because she

wants her children to understand their African heritage. She loves exotic animal print decors and has pictures of African culture proudly displayed on the walls all over her house. As we settled in for the interview, Missy was energetic, animated, smiling, and laughing. She was quick to speak her mind without hesitation and had an eclectic and charming personality.

Missy was born and raised in Southwest Georgia. She is the youngest of three children (i.e., two girls and a boy), and she was raised by her parents in a traditional family household. She expressed how her family life was not a happy one, as she recalled many days of seeing her mother struggle as a parent. Her father often left for many months to find work at odd jobs across Georgia and surrounding areas. Missy recalled her father as a strong man who could not read or write but would often speak his mind no matter who he offended. She felt he was the type of man that compensated for his illiteracy by having a bad temper. Missy described her mother as the exact opposite of her father. Missy's mother was kind, gentle, caring, and loving, and she had a thirst for education. This thirst for knowledge was in direct conflict with her father's aggressive temper and his inability to read or write. Missy's mother decided it was time for her to fulfill her dream of going to school to become a nurse, and she enrolled at the local community college. Her mother relayed this information to her father, and the situation escalated to domestic violence.

Missy shared,

My mother would listen to her lectures on a tape recorder at the kitchen table

while I played under that table by her feet. One day my father came in and saw her listening to the lectures. I watched my father take her recorder and throw it across the room and it shattered. Then he took her books and burned them.

Missy's father was the bread winner, and the entire family was dependent on him.

However, her mother felt to be truly free, education was the only way out. Missy reflected on growing up as a witness to this type of exposure of financial dependence and the road to independence through the power of knowledge. Missy knew she needed to have an education, but her mother was in no situation to assist her.

Missy said,

I never really thought that I was going to go to college because no one in my family directly talked to me about it. I was in a situation that I just observed what was happening to my mother at the hands of my father. I felt I was a good student, and it didn't take me long to catch on to things in the classroom.

Missy's primary educational experiences were at a catholic private school. She always knew that she was a good student throughout elementary and middle school. The difficulties at home witnessing the downfall of her parent's marriage made it hard for her to concentrate in the classroom. Missy was one of two other African American students enrolled at the private school. The two other African American students enrolled were Missy's older sister and brother. She was often bullied by not only the students, but also the nuns who were her teachers. She recalled a memorable story of a nun hitting her in a bathroom, an experience that continued to haunt her. Missy shared another time when she was seven or eight years old being abused by a nun in a school bathroom. She took the abuse and never told a soul. She especially did not want to tell mother her mother

about the incident. Missy felt like she had to be a protector of her mother's emotions and mental stability. She felt like she could not put any more pressure on her mother: "My mother couldn't be maternal, because she was too busy getting her ass beat," she said. "She was busy trying to survive." Missy was not able to talk to anyone about what she was exposed to at home nor the abuse she was experiencing at school. Her mentality started to be affected. As she put it, "I fell into a deep depression. A depression so deep I thought being dead would be better than my life, but I continued on."

As the years progressed, Missy had to face another life change and reality. By this time, her parents had divorced, and her mother could not raise the children alone and maintain her nursing school obligations at the same time. Her mother decided to send Missy and her siblings to live with her grandmother and aunts. Her grandmother and aunts were unhappy with the arrangement, but they went ahead and took the children in. They often treated the children with animosity, and would constantly threaten foster care if they did not do as they were told. Her grandmother's home was already filled to the brim with other family members, and she was often forced to sleep on the floor or in a room with her cousins where there were no bedroom or bathroom doors for privacy. She was often verbally, physically, and sexually abused. Her situation went from bad to worse, as she explained feelings of fear, anxiety, and abandonment. She would often awaken to her brother and sister missing, overhearing family members describe how they had run away in the night. Missy felt abandoned by everyone often wondering why her siblings left her. Missy recalled asking her siblings why they would often abandon her. Missy said, "They said I was too little, and I would slow them down. I couldn't understand that response because they were going through the same thing I was going

through. I thought we were a team.” Missy felt like this gave her an abandonment or rejection complex because she felt that everyone who was supposed to care and protect her always ended up leaving her.

Missy went to a public high school, and she experienced more freedom there than she did at her primary catholic private school. Going to a public high school was eye opening to Missy as she saw how other African American female students behaved with confidence, assurance, and freedom. She observed how they identified with who they were, what they wanted to do with their future, and how were they going to get there. Missy compared the behaviors of the female students she interacted with on a day-to-day basis to her own behavior and how she viewed her future. She discussed the restrictions she had at home: “My grandmother did not let me go out.” On a few occasions, her grandmother did let her go and spend time with other friends by allowing sleepovers, and this allowance was a defining moment for Missy’s educational goals:

Missy said,

When they did let me spend the night at a friend’s house, I saw how their family members would treat them with love and kindness and acknowledge their educational goals. Their parents would encourage excelling in school, so they could go to college, get a job, and have some type of quality of life. Their parents would talk to them about saving money, owning property, land, and even possibly owning a home one day. By the time I made it back home to my eternal hell of dysfunction I realized that I had no one looking out for me or my future.

Missy understood she was going to take matters into her own hands and knew education was the only way to independence. Missy started focusing on making good

grades and being engaged in high school activities to increase her chances to get into college. The adults in her family household believed what Missy was doing was a waste of time and that her focus should not be on education.

Missy was met with much resistance and said,

I did not have support from family to go to college. My family thought school was a waste of time. My grandmother didn't have the finances nor the understanding of going to college. She thought that a high school diploma was enough, and as soon as I graduated from high-school I needed to find a job and get out of her house.

Despite those hardships and lack of family support, Missy graduated from high school with honors. The first thing she did after graduation was move out of her grandmother's house, and she stayed with friends until she could find a job.

Years passed, and Missy found a home of her own, a job, and a new role as a first-time mother. She fell in love with a boyfriend, but things did not work out, and they decided to go their separate ways. Her focus was now on providing a good life for her son. Missy started working more and more, and she was able to save a little more money. At this point, she decided it was a good time to enroll in college as a part-time student. She believed her chances for success would be better if she enrolled at an HBCU. Missy based this decision on the belief that she would get more support from a Black school: Missy said,

I chose an HBCU, because I saw a Black school as my saving grace and as my road in a pathway to freedom. I read a lot as a youngster, so I knew why Black colleges and universities were created. When we were slaves, we were not

allowed to learn to read or write. I felt that by me being African American and attending an HBCU, they would understand the issues, hardships, and negative circumstances I bring into the classroom with me.

Missy explained her decision on choosing an HBCU,

Guidance was what I so desperately needed, and I never had this in my life. I so desperately wanted to be directed personally, and I felt that choosing a college like this, I would be steered in the right direction for success.

Missy admitted that being enrolled as a nontraditional student was a significant factor in her not being prepared for the academic obligations:

Missy explained,

I was an older student, and college was different for me than it was for the younger students. I wasn't prepared for the academic work, and I was still behaving like I was in high school many years ago.

Missy was being pulled from academic duties and family responsibilities with her children. Missy also began to feel guilty about choosing her parental commitments over school duties: "I reflected on the chaotic schedules that I had to keep and the request for so much assistance that I asked from my family." The decision to choose family obligations and responsibilities over academic duties negatively affected Missy's grades.

Missy stated,

As a parent I felt like I was supposed to be there for my child. It was difficult keeping up with so many priorities and responsibilities. Family obligations took away time I should have been investing in my education. I started feeling extremely guilty leaving my child all the time with family.

With her family support system stretched to the limit, Missy believed forming a bond with the faculty and other students would foster the supplemental support she needed. She knew participating in clubs and memberships and making new friends would be beneficial to her understanding the courses and the health care industry. Soon, she realized she could not meet the requirements of participation as a part-time student, a full-time mother, and an employee at two part-time jobs. Missy shared the difficulty with the faculty, whom she stated were not sympathetic to her. Regarding making friends, Missy said, "I was being pulled from one direction to another. I was not able to make the school events and activities going on at the campus, let alone any make new friends." Missy felt like her outside engagements and responsibilities affected her ability to make friends: "As an adult student with responsibilities, I didn't connect with the other students, and I didn't believe they connected with me." She believed her age played a factor: "The other students were much younger than I was, and I believe many of them were still living at home with their parents. I had children, and I was old enough to be some of those kid's mother."

Missy made the decision to exit the program due to the difficult circumstances of not being able to solely commit to her academic responsibilities or interact socially. She felt it was critical to concentrate on her obligations as a parent rather than to focus on her academic responsibilities as a student. She said, "I may have put school on hold, but I didn't give up. I decided to give love instead. I had a baby." Missy believed that she made the right decision at the time and stressed to her children the importance of not giving up on their dreams, "Don't give up on your goals and aspirations no matter how old they are or how hold you are."

Missy believed her experiences in life shared common situations and conditions for African American female students. She felt that the pain, suffering, hardship, consequences, and outcomes she had to deal with in her life were detrimentally impacting her sense of herself. Missy reflected how her past experiences had a direct relationship to who she presently was at the time of the interview and who she planned on being in the future:

Missy said,

Black women have no choice but to continuously go back in the past and think about the good and the bad and try not to make those same mistakes again. Every decision that I've made has been made based on reflection of my experiences. I'm constantly reflecting about my experiences. My experiences made me the person I am today. I am more focused, determined, confident, and a down right better human being because of them.

Missy declared, "Despite everything that I've been through, I am somebody, and I am already a success."

Katie

Katie is a 34-year-old African American female participant. She is a loving mother of a daughter and a working professional, and she called herself a woman of God. She was a lifetime resident of Georgia and considered herself to have a passion to serve others and succeed. She resided in a two-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment in a quiet community. Many of the residents were the friends and family she grew up with and shared the same economic hardships. Katie painted vivid pictures with her responses and gave several animated examples throughout the interviews.

Katie was born and raised in Southeast Georgia to a single mother, and she is the youngest of three children. Katie explained that her mother was a teacher, but she did not have a university or college degree. Katie believed she was more like an assistant teacher or para-professional. She has an older sister and brother, and her grandparents played a key role in her life as a child. She expressed growing up in a home with a mother who enforced discipline in the household. Katie said, “My mother was very hard on us and didn’t take any shit from her kids. My mother was like a military drill sergeant with the way she pushed my siblings and I.” Katie recalled her mother not allowing her to be a failure and discussed a family of strong women who had values and high regard for self-esteem.

Katie enjoyed going to school and described herself as being prepared for the academic work early on. Katie stated, “I wanted to make good grades, so I could be successful in life.” Katie’s perception of school growing up was a positive one, and she did not see school as a burden, but rather as a stepping stone in the right direction. She recalled always having a book in her hand and reading aloud in her bedroom. Katie reflected on how she saw her family members and community in need of medical attention and education. She had a gentle and compassionate heart and understood this need provided her a defining moment and an introduction to the field of health care. Katie shared having a sick relative and visiting her in the nursing home. She was influenced by the health care staff, which had a major impact on her and on her relatives’ health. She was influenced by the clean white uniforms they wore and the respect they were given while interacting with doctors.

It did not take long for Katie to graduate from high school with honors, and her priority was to immediately enroll in a college that would help her achieve her academic goals. She enrolled in an HBCU initially to go to the same school as her boyfriend. Katie confessed that she was following him to get out of her mother's house, and this just was the perfect way to do it. She noted that she was glad she did go to an HBCU, because she gained a wealth of knowledge about her culture, which she believed she would not have received at a non-HBCU.

As a college student, Katie described the workload as having the same assignments and projects due as everyone else did. Katie believed that she was experienced in prioritizing her time for academic work. She had good academic work ethics and gave credit to her mother, as she said in our interview discussions. Once enrolled in college, Katie believed she was academically disciplined from her experiences at home with her mother. She was competent and disciplined regarding academic tasks and duty completions. She often felt like she was not getting the assistance needed from the advisers at the college, as she revealed that her experience with the advising center was "a joke." Katie noted that the advisers were supposed to be there to help students understand their short- and long-term academic goals and guide them to achieve those goals. Katie revealed that she never talked to an academic adviser during the time of her enrollment.

Katie also reflected on her outside responsibilities and duties and how they took priority over her academics. Katie fell in love with a young man and got pregnant. Her mother wanted her to have an abortion, and the baby's father was not able to give her the support she needed, as he was also a college student. Katie described the difficulties of

not have enough money and found herself needing to continuously ask her uncle to assist her financially; she further shared that she needed the extra money to buy groceries, clothes, and personal or household products. Katie made the difficult choice to exit the school, because she knew she would not be able to continue her education while maintaining her family responsibilities. Her doctors' appointments, absenteeism from class, and not being able to participate in campus social events made her feel less than a person.

Katie felt she did everything she could to prevent herself from dropping out of school. Once she became pregnant, she had to leave the campus and ended up staying with a friend. Moving off campus distanced Katie from other students, friends, and faculty. This distance limited her participation in social events, and she never participated in clubs or memberships because at that time she was working a part-time job. Any money she made had to be saved for necessities, and she did not have a car. Katie explained her desire to be engaged in campus culture. She believed that if she were able to participate on the campus with the clubs and hold memberships, she would have been successful and would not have gotten pregnant. She knew that being involved on the campus would have helped her achieve her academic goals. Katie decided to make her daughter the priority, and therefore she exited the program.

Katie believed her experiences in life are common situations and conditions to all African American female students. She felt that the pain, suffering, hardship, consequences, and outcomes she dealt with in her life were detrimental to who she became and planned on being in the future.

Linda

Linda is a 50-year-old hard-working and loving woman. She is the mother of three children, one girl, and two boys and was raising them as a single parent. She lived modestly with her mother and worked a full-time and part-time job. She lived in the same community she grew up in as a child and had family and friends located all over the state of Georgia. She had a strong will to succeed, and her hobbies were fishing, crocheting, and spending time with her children. She often chaperoned her children to their sport practices, dance rehearsals, and other extracurricular activities.

Linda never believed that she would go to college, because it seemed impossible. She believed the cost of college was too high, but it was something that Linda wanted to do. Linda described herself as a good student and found school exciting, something she enjoyed. Linda decided the time had come for her to get serious about her lifetime goal of college and enrolled in an HBCU as a part-time student. Linda reflected that she opted for an HBCU when choosing a college, because she was an African American student. She believed that while enrolled at an HBCU, she would get the personal support she needed.

Once Linda enrolled in college, she quickly became overwhelmed and did not understand how to academically succeed at the college level. She had no training ground of preparation by being a first-generation college student and felt like this status hindered her. Linda described how she knew nothing about the freedom of being away from home because she had so much responsibility. Away from home, Linda did not harbor the commitment of chores and running errands.

Linda explained,

Please remember I'm an older student so I felt out of place at first. I kept wondering why I felt so free and realized it was because I was not around my children and my mother. It was like I went back to be a teenager.

Linda began to struggle with the academic duties required and she described the difficulties of being a college student as compared to a high school student:

Linda said,

You don't have teachers like you had in high school that constantly stay on you about your schoolwork. You don't have teachers that will call your mother and let her know you're struggling. You don't have teachers that will even call you. There were no parent-teacher conferences in college, and I guess I was like out of sight, out of mind.

Linda expected college life to be easier than it was and believed that she was given too much freedom in the classroom and did not have the experience of managing time to complete course work and activities. Linda had no idea how much time it took to complete an 8–10-page research paper, and she had no knowledge or understanding of how to complete research for an assignment or find academic resources to assist her.

Family commitments started to overwhelm Linda, and she found herself being pulled away from her academic duties. Linda's daughter kept getting sick, and she had to take her to the doctor for her allergy shots. Linda's son started having behavioral problems in school, and he later admitted to her that he was being bullied. Linda was not readily available at times to fix them healthy meals, and this lack of availability made her feel guilty. Linda described how everyone in the house started to break down, and she just could not keep up with the responsibilities. Her support network of friends and

family could not always be there to pick up her kids after school or to provide transportation for them to and from rehearsals or practices. It did not take long for Linda's support network to disappear. Linda explained, "My support network needed my support."

Linda knew that reaching out to the faculty and advisers could help, but she was met with resistance. She said, "The faculty would talk to me like I already knew what they were talking about. They would talk to me like I had experience in college work, and I just didn't have that foundation of knowledge." Linda believed that the advisers could have done much more:

Linda shared,

During my advisement appointment, the adviser would pretty much just pull up my information on the computer and look at my grades from the previous semesters or look at the classes I'm currently taking. All they would do then was pull out a sheet of paper with all the classes I needed to complete to graduate, and my appointment session was over. I didn't have time to ask any questions because you only were allowed 15 minutes to speak to your adviser. During these 15 minutes, they did mostly all the talking.

Linda knew participating in clubs and memberships would strengthen her chances of academic success. She felt this contact was necessary and would assist in supplemental support system she desperately needed. Linda had several problems making time to participate in these activities. Most of the time, these activities took place during the day and in the middle of the week. She described times when events were on the weekends, but she had to commit to her children's activities. The events would take

at least four to five hours and could go on to last eight hours. Linda had to work every other weekend, and it would have been very difficult to find a replacement for her at work. Her supervisor allowed her to miss work once, but he said that her job came first, and school came afterwards. Linda knew that she was easily replaceable, and she needed the job to support her family.

Linda knew her grades had dropped, and, that if the drop continued, she would eventually have a problem with her financial aid. She understood that the financial aid office was not going to award her any money to assist with tuition for failing classes. She regretted her first year of college and felt like she should have done more than what she did. Linda explained that college completion takes work, dedication, diligence, motivation, support, and an undying burning passion to finish. Linda stated, “I should have prepared myself for college early in my pre-college years.” She believed that if she would have been more attentive, proactive, and organized with her high school adviser, these steps would have been a great benefit to her. She stated she should have been more vocal about what she needed regarding educational assistance and learning resources on the HBCU campus. She should have engaged more in participating in the campus social life, made more of an attempt to form social bonds with other students, and have faculty contact. Linda stated, “I should have worked harder, been more organized, and not given up so easy.”

Linda stated,

Black women are constantly struggling, whether it be at home, in the workplace, or at school. We are portrayed as being unprepared, overwhelmed, burdened, and behaviorally aggressive in comparison to other female ethnic groups. Our

background plays an important key role in why we are who we are. I want to be a light of encouragement and not discouragement. I plan on returning to finish my undergraduate health care degree in the future. I am not a quitter. I just needed more guidance, preparation, and support. With these things in place, I can show you and myself how high I can fly.

Results of Interviews Part B Completers

All three participants in Part B shared positive stories that included educational goals and family support that related to degree completion. All three participants in Part B noted several of the same barriers (or variables) that inhibited African American females from degree completion. To maintain privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were given to study participants.

Table 2

Description of Participants

Participant	Age	School	Part-Time (PT) or Full-Time (FT)	Commuter or Residential	Completer or Exiter
Angel	26 yr.	HBCU	FT	Commuter	Completer
Rebecca	39 yr.	HBCU	FT	Residential	Completer
Sandra	37 yr.	HBCU	FT	Residential	Completer

Note: HBCU = Historically Black College University

Profiles of Participants

Angel

Angel is a 26-year-old full-time commuter student who completed an undergraduate program while attending an HBCU. She is currently living in Southwest

Georgia, is single with no dependents, and considers herself a beautiful, bold, and ambitious individual. She was the oldest daughter in her family and had younger sisters as her stepsiblings. Her lifelong goal was to be an entertainer, and she reflected on how she had always imagined her name in lights on the big and little screen. She was fond of singing and rapping, and she considered herself always knowing that she was going to be a super star.

Angel explained the difficulties of dealing with how she often felt misplaced during her high school experiences:

Angel shared,

It was tough for me, and to be honest I hated going to school. I was not the type of person that really enjoyed going to school. I often played sick a lot to get out of going to school. When I did go to school, I would find myself cutting classes or hopping in a car with one of my older friends and driving to the mall to hang out.

Angel had several trying times with her childhood as she reflected on the memories of her mother and how she wanted a better life for her daughter.

Angel said,

My mother often would tell me that she understood that she failed me as a mother. Even though my mother was a heroin addict, I still loved her. It hurt me because she couldn't raise me properly, and that was when she made the decision to let my grandfather raise me.

Angel expressed many times that she was considered by many to be a rebel.

Angel reflected that she was a "wild child" and that she could not be tamed. She revealed

she always saw herself as being more than what she was and would not let anyone take that away from her. She knew she had to get away from the small town she lived in, because she felt that if she stayed, she would be trapped. She felt like the people in her neighborhood were stuck there to be unemployed, no access to a quality life, and poverty. The neighborhood she lived in was crime infested, illiterate, and hopeless, according to Angel. She stated that she was not going to settle for what the neighborhood had to offer her, and she was not going to be trapped like everyone else. Angel shared that even though she never let anything stop her from her dreams of being an actress or a singer, she would often think about what her grandfather wanted regarding her educational goals. Angel said,

My grandfather was the first African American meteorologist in the county he grew up in. He always felt education was important. My grandfather's brother is a dentist, and my grandmother was a teacher. I had no intention of going to college, because I love to sing, rap, dance, and act. My plan was to leave home and go off somewhere to be famous. My grandfather didn't like my plans and always stressed that my education should come first.

When asked about why she enrolled at an HBCU, Angel said,

I felt it was important to my grandfather, and the importance of the historical value to my race. What encouraged me to enroll was my family history and the stories that my grandfather told me about.

Angel reminisced on those very experiences when she decided to choose health care as her major. Angel shared further thoughts on choosing her major:

Angel said,

I would say I chose health care as my major, because I had a couple of very sick relatives in my family, and I did not like or maybe I just did not understand the poor health care they were receiving. I wanted to learn as much as I could, so I could help my family.

Angel often felt like she was wasting her time in college, but she tried to make the best of it, as she confirmed her academic experiences were mostly good:

Angel explained,

Teachers at the HBCU were always willing to have their doors open for me.

Being the talkative and social person that I am, many times they would allow me to come into their office not just only to talk about my grades but to talk about life, politics, and even my dreams after college.

Angel felt like if she was going to be a college student, she might as well use the opportunity to hone her “inner entertainer” skills.

She explained,

I didn't have a problem taking charge. While I was a student in college, the teachers would often call on me to lead a group in a class activity. They knew I liked to talk and had no problem telling people what to do. When it came time for my group to do something, everyone would always look at me, and I would take the lead on conversations. I'm never intimidated by an audience. I was born for the spotlight.

Angel felt like these traits and social skills would eventually help her in the long run. She worked hard academically and reflected on the stressful situations she believed every first-time student must deal with.

Angel responded,

Did I have stressful situations? Yes, I had several stressful situations in college. Most of my problems had to deal with me understanding how to organize and prioritize. The fun things I wanted to do I should've put last on the list but instead I put them first.

Angel explained the difficulties she had regarding her declining GPA,

When I first started college, I didn't put my all into it until I started seeing my GPA decline. I started slipping academically, and I didn't like how that felt. I knew that if my GPA fell to a low level, this would prevent me from graduating. I was so relaxed in high school when it came to completing schoolwork. I really didn't care at first about my grades until I realized they were directly affecting my GPA, which would directly affect me graduating. I didn't want to be looked down upon because the teachers didn't think I could cut it. I knew I wasn't trying hard enough.

Since Angel was a nontraditional student, she decided to get more actively involved and engaged on the college campus. She felt she needed that type of support among her peers and believed that she would form long-lasting relationships that would help her through some trying times as a student. "I decided to make friends while I was in college,"

Angel recalled,

These friends were a different type of friends than I was exposed to while attending high school. These friends understood the childhood that I came from because many of them had the same type of demons they were struggling with.

They also wanted to get out and talk with others about having a relationship with their real father. They wanted to talk about having a family member on drugs and having a family member in prison.

Angel found meaning in all her past experiences, and she felt it had a direct relationship with who she presently is today and who she plans on being in the future. Angel understood that sometimes dreams must be put on hold for the sake of accepting the wisdom of one's elders. She said, "I put my dreams on hold for a man that put his life on hold for me." Angel was proud that she grew to understand her values, beliefs, and attitudes and how these factors intertwine with her identity and awareness as an African American woman. She explained, "I want others to understand we, as black women, can turn any problem, any circumstance, any set-back into something great. Turn our experiences into something beautiful and necessary for society and for our world." Angel wants the voice of any person that has been quieted or disenfranchised or maybe even had their dream deferred because of others to be heard.

Angel said,

I have big dreams, dreams too big for simple surroundings, and I am not looking at my color to stop me. I want others to look at more than my color, and most importantly, I want you to look at me. If the world would only look at color, we wouldn't have such great creativity and diversity. We *all* have something to offer. I am my color, and I'm more than what you believe. I also have something great to contribute. If I won't let my color stop me, what makes you think I will let you?

Sandra

Sandra is a 37-year-old full-time residential student who completed an undergraduate program while attending an HBCU. At the time of the interview, Sandra was living in Southwest Georgia, was single with no dependents, and considered herself to be a kind and loving person needed in the field of health care. Sandra was the middle child in her family and had an older and younger sister. Sandra shared that her hobbies were educating and serving a community in need of health promotion and education. She had a passion for helping women fighting cancer, as she was a breast cancer survivor. She felt that education and support were missing in many other black communities and was thankful for the one she was raised in as a child: "I still live in the community that I was raised, and we all know and look out for each other." Sandra lived in a two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment and had a love for the outdoors: "It is a quiet and caring community, and that is why I'm still here." She reflected on the peace of feeling safe and loved hearing the children play outside her window.

Sandra said,

I love kids, and I love baking. I'm not able to have any children, but God has blessed me with all the neighborhood kids who often come over to eat my cookies, brownies, and cupcakes.

Sandra shared fond memories of the history of her high school experiences and explained her educational goals, "High school was easy and fun. I had excellent teachers who invested in my future. Whenever I needed assistance, they were there as mentors." Sandra grew up establishing her educational goals early on and shared her thoughts. She said, "A bad grade to me was anything less than an 'A' or less than excellent." Sandra

further emphasized the importance of having educational goals: “All of my friends and I had long-term goals of being successful, whether that meant we were going to go off to college or join the military. Everyone I hung around had future long-term goals.”

Sandra had a family support system in place that taught her strong values in self-awareness and how one should exhibit these strong traits to themselves and to others when it comes to successful goal attainment and achievement.

Sandra said,

My family often told me that successful people had hung around successful people. If I wanted to be successful and excel in life, then I should hang around the same people that had the same type of goals. I went to a school where they encouraged students to be actively engaged in and out of the classroom.

Sandra revealed how she saw school differently than did some students at the time: “I did not see school as a burden. I saw school as a steppingstone in getting me to where I wanted it to be.”

Sandra had no problem graduating from high school with honors and decided it was time to enroll in college but ran into a life-changing situation that postponed her early college career. She shared, “My mother got sick, so I decided to take a year or two off because she needed someone to take care of her.” Sandra reflected that during these times of taking care of family members, she decided to major in health care: “I ended up being the family caretaker. I loved every minute of it.” Sandra revealed that after a few years of taking care of family members, the time came to start to take care of herself, and she made the decision of which college and type of college to attend. Sandra disclosed

childhood memories of how her family educated her on the historical context of African Americans and the purpose of the HBCU:

Sandra explained,

It was an historical decision for me to attend this type of school. As a young African-American female growing up in a family that encouraged strength, I had no fear, and attending an HBCU was my only choice.

Sandra reflected on the stories her family told her as a child and shared,

The African and African American history my family told me was a history of oppression, social injustice, and incivility. I knew that we were on the right track towards a quality post-secondary education because my ancestors created black colleges and universities. I knew my African ancestral history.

Sandra decided to attend an HBCU mostly due to the history but also because of her family's constant encouragement:

Sandra stated,

I knew how powerful my race could be if we joined together, learned from each other, and advanced as one, that we could do anything. That was just the way my family brought me up as a young child.

Sandra's first year enrolled in college was not difficult because she felt like she had prepared for it her entire life. She soon realized that certain things she could never have prepared for and that she needed to experience them. Sandra said, "It was surprisingly difficult at first. At the beginning, I would go to school and sit in the classroom feeling extremely drained and exhausted." Sandra felt like something was not right, because she found herself unable to concentrate and often felt drained.

She recalled,

I knew something wasn't right, and I had to come home and see a doctor. That is when I got the breast cancer diagnosis. I was scared, and I fell back on my family's love and support. They talked to me, motivated me, and they believed in me. After the pep talk, my family didn't treat me any different or special. Once I knew I had my family's support, I knew there wasn't nothing I couldn't do.

Sandra shared that on top of dealing with her cancer diagnosis and treatment, she also had to deal with her academic responsibilities.

Sandra said,

It was important for me to focus on my classwork. Even when I had my chemotherapy treatments, I would take my schoolwork with me to the hospital. It was important for me to stay on track, and I was not going to use my illness as an excuse to not do my schoolwork.

Sandra described the issues she had that did not relate to school and found a way to manage these issues. Sandra did not want them to prevent her from her educational goal of graduating.

She stated,

I knew that the more I used excuses, the less likely I would succeed. I had several problems that did not have to do with school like finding a way to come up with money I didn't have, trying to take care of my health so I could remain in remission, limiting distractions like going to parties and other things that didn't have to do with me being a full-time college student. This was difficult, but I knew that it was a small sacrifice that I had just to make.

Sandra defined meaning in her life as it related to these experiences, and she reflected on her life and described how it shaped her identity:

Sandra said,

All my life experiences are factors that contributed to my ability to succeed. I think we should introduce young Black girls to strong, positive, and powerful role models like I was early on. We should familiarize them with problem solving skills, decision making skills, and goal attainment. By doing and knowing this as young black girls, we will be able to perform these skills effectively as a black woman.

Sandra said her experiences growing up as an African American female, the strength of her support network from family, the early breast cancer diagnosis at such a young age, and the difficulties of her academic responsibilities and outside duties have all made her the success she is today.

Sandra said,

I knew that I was destined to be great because my family told me that at such a young age. If you continuously tell a young person of color that they are going to do something great, deep down inside of their mentality they will feel like they must try a little harder. People of color will feel they must push a little further and dig a little deeper because they got to make sure that prophecy happens. They must do everything they can to make it happen. I am a *survivor* in every sense of the word.

Rebecca

Rebecca is a 39-year-old full-time residential student who completed an undergraduate program while attending an HBCU. At the time of the interview, she was living in Southwest Georgia, was single with no dependents, and considered herself a caring and compassion person who was born to work in the field of health care. She was soft spoken and a little shy but loved to be around people. She would quietly giggle to herself during the interview and often said, “Once I get to know you, then I will let my guard down a little. I need to see what I’m working with first.” Rebecca is the youngest in her family, with one older sister. She considered herself a natural dreamer, believing that there is good in all people and that opportunity is available for a person who knows how to prepare for it. Rebecca lived in a small one-bedroom one-bathroom apartment with her long-time canine companion, Molly.

Rebecca said,

I have had Molly since she was a six-week-old puppy, and now, she is eight years old. She has been with me from the beginning of my journey, and I have shared many experiences with her. I couldn’t live in this world without a more faithful friend.

Rebecca focused on her high school experiences and shared memorable stories that had brought her meaning. Her education was very important to her mother, and she made sure she had experiences that would help her be successful academically as a child.

Rebecca shared,

My mom would take us to the library, and I was able to go to get my work done there. If I couldn't get it done there, my mother would make us stay after school.

My mother was the very push behind making sure I did what I needed to do.

Rebecca had always enjoyed the world of education and enjoyed the school she went to. She said her mother was her main cheerleader for setting her educational goals and stressed her support early on.

Rebecca said,

My mother was very supportive and always made sure we had the necessary tools to continuously improve and made sure our work was done and submitted on time. During that time growing up, we didn't have the internet like kids have now, but that didn't stop my mother from making every moment meaningful in education.

Rebecca shared,

I was truly fortunate because I went to a good school where the teachers and staff enjoyed what they did and took their job as educational leaders serious. I believe educational goals was embedded in their curriculum. The teachers were always available to ensure that we (myself along with other classmates) filled out college applications. They would take out time to help along with the counselors.

Rebecca reflected on the importance of preparation in high school and having teachers involved in one's educational future: "Many of my teachers organized trips for the college tours for particular groups and made sure that we took our SAT's or PSAT's on time." Rebecca believed it was always in her future to go to college.

Rebecca said,

I always knew that I would go to college, so I had to make sure that I did everything possible so that I could get into college. I didn't mind staying up late at night or getting up early in the morning to make sure I took advantage of the opportunity.

Rebecca did everything should could to prepare herself for college, but also shared a personal story of a life issue she did not see coming.

Rebecca said,

Throughout all that preparation, I was in a situation that I had to make the decision of what was the right thing to do. My grandmother got sick, and my mother was already overwhelmed and needed help taking care of her. Money was often short in our household, and I was the only one available to help. My sister was too overwhelmed with her own family issues. I decided to delay school and get a job to help my mother take care of my grandmother.

Rebecca continued to take care of her grandmother until the day she died. She reflected on one moment that changed her way of thinking regarding personal goals. Rebecca said, "I recall my grandmother telling me to never give up on college. She told me the worst thing I could do was give up on my dream of education. Deep down inside, I always knew she was absolutely right."

After her grandmother died, Rebecca made the decision of what college to attend and shared, "I decided to attend an HBCU because of the history of the education of Africans and African American and the encouragement of my mother and grandmother." Rebecca felt like her cultural heritage had much to do with her decision.

Rebecca insisted,

It was important to my mother and grandmother, which made it important to me. Who better to help me understand who I am as an African American woman and prepare for future challenges in the field that I love than a HBCU?

As Rebecca explained,

I made the right choice because the HBCU could relate to where I come from and where I wanted to go. I wanted to be with people that looked like me, thought like me, and pretty much had the same goals that I had. I saw teachers, staff, and other African-American employees assisting students by making sure that they get the necessary educational guidance to them versus going to a college that is not an HBCU.

Rebecca revealed her reasoning for choosing health care as a major:

I fell in love with health care when I was part of the HOSA club in high school. We went to visit nursing homes, we did canned food drives, and we help with blood drives, and did several events to help the community. The outreach program got me involved in the community and in health care. That was my first introduction to health care, and I was hooked.

She also recalled her experiences taking care of her grandmother. Rebecca said, “Because I had taken the role to be my grandmother’s caretaker. I had learned a lot about our medical health issues and the limited access we have to it.”

Rebecca was excited when she first enrolled in college as a nontraditional student, but she did not expect some of the difficulties that arose for her: “I had been out of school for a long time, and it was not easy. You have to train yourself and prioritize your time,

because if you don't, there is no way possible you will succeed." Rebecca believed she was just like any normal college student who had difficulties adapting to the many academic responsibilities one would have.

Rebecca stressed,

If you come to the college in the frame of mind that I'm going to focus and do everything I can to stay on track, then you must do it. No one in my family came and stayed at the college with me. No one in my family was sat in the classroom with me and no one in my family took any tests for me. No one in my family did the required internships and community service projects. So, at the end of the day if I don't complete the program because I failed, who do I blame?

Rebecca had outside responsibilities that made her education difficult because on many occasions she needed transportation that she did not have. She struggled to travel from one place to another and often had to ride the bus or ask people for a ride. Rebecca remembered, "It was hard. I needed to get to places off campus that our teachers would make as an assignment." Rebecca wanted to emphasize the evidence of allowing outside activities take priority over school:

Rebecca stated,

I saw many of my friends drop out of college because they got jobs that took up their time. Some of them got pregnant and had to go back home and take care of their child. Some of them ended up spending their financial aid on everything beside school. I worked too hard to end up like that.

Rebecca believed that interaction on campus was important to her academic success because she believed these relationships offered new opportunities and helped her stay committed to completing her academic journey:

She said,

There is no way any student can be fully successful without the proactive assistance of peers, faculty, staff, and college administration. For me, it was vital to build these relationships. College administration must look at their jobs as life coaches, mentors, advisers, psychologists, doctors, and as a student's mother and or father.

Rebecca also said, "Talking to the faculty, joining the clubs, and doing the community service projects with other students helped my future industry opportunities. You never know what opportunity for your future health career is waiting for you."

Rebecca additionally gave useful advice regarding social participation:

Whether students understand it or not, talking with faculty and joining clubs like the health care administration club helped decrease stress. Before you know it, these people have calmed your nerves and fears and helped you see that you are not alone. You realize you can indeed do this.

Rebecca believed her meaningful experiences shared common situations and conditions for African American female students and that all such students are all able to overcome these unique situations.

Rebecca explained,

I want people to know as an African American female I feel that I can do anything if I set my mind to it. I reflect on the experiences of completing my

undergraduate health care degree at an HBCU, and it tells me that I have the support of family that is currently alive and well and family that are not. I can have a plan, follow through on that plan, and eventually I can complete the plan.

Rebecca explained she found meaning in those experiences:

It means that we should not run from our problems but figure out a way to solve them. We should not try to avoid the difficulties because sometimes they are put in your path as a teaching moment. Those experiences help me formulate what it means to advance, what it means to forge onward and upward, and what it means progress. It means improvement for me, and I reflect this as a testament to all African American females.

Chapter V

RESULTS

PART A: EXITERS

Discussion of Identified Student Exiters Participant Themes

Educational Experiences

The exiters who participated in the research study explained that one of the main challenges they faced was that they did not have a clear understanding of setting educational goals after high school. The participants reported not spending time with high school academic advisers and family not assisting or preparing them for post-secondary education. All three exiters explained they were not prepared for college and did not feel like they had the foundation to succeed. They believed that if they were introduced to the concept of being a college student early on and educated on what to expect, they would have prepared themselves for college entrance and completion. Bean and Metzner (1985) believed that a student's high school educational experiences and educational goals all influenced the way a student interacts with the college or university they chose to attend.

Educational goals are short- or long-term objectives set by the student before or during high-school. Participants listed as exiters described that they had few if not any short- or long-term educational goals. Many suffered from negative experiences before or during high school.

Educational Goals

Missy never had any educational goals and therefore never believed she was going to college.

Missy stated,

I never really thought that I was going to go to college, because no one in my family that I was raised with talked about it. My mother often said she was not going to be financially able to send me to college.

Missy was raised in a household where no one had ever gone to college. Missy revealed that she did not experience parents talking to their children about college or setting long term goals until she went on sleepovers to her friend's house.

Missy said,

My grandmother did not let me go out and be with my friends, and when she did it was very special to me. When they did let me spend the night at a friend's house, I saw how their family members would treat them with love and kindness and acknowledge their educational goals. I realized that I had no one looking out for me and my future.

Katie shared memories in stories or reflected on meaningful accounts of her school experiences.

Katie said,

I hated going to the 'normal' classes, as I was an honor student. The teachers didn't seem like they cared about the students, and they didn't seem to care about their job. You could tell they didn't care about their jobs, and this didn't help students learn anything in the classroom. The teachers in the honor classes talked

about preparing us for college or asked us about setting educational goals. When I took regular classes, the teachers didn't do this. They treated all of us like we were idiots.

Linda reflected on her high school experience through sharing memorable stories. She stated that she did not have great experiences pre-college because of the hostile environments of being bullied, "Going to school I was often bullied." Linda explained how her mother did stress the importance of obtaining a college degree, but she did not put her money where her mouth was.

Linda explained,

Even though my mom talked a good talk when it came to me getting my education, she did not exhibit that in her actions as far as making that a priority in the household. On many weekends, I would find myself driving to the grocery store, picking up grandma to take her to doctors' appointments, or picking up medication at the pharmacy. I was totally exhausted, and by the time I realized it was Monday, and time for me to go back to school. I had made plans to catch up on schoolwork, but it just never happened. When I did have free time to myself, all I felt like I could do was sleep because my body was truly exhausted.

Linda felt like more structure at home should have been set for her to set her educational goals:

Linda stated,

It was like home was a fulltime job, because I had to do work, chores, and run so many errands. This left very little time for me to rest and get my mind right for me to concentrate, study, focus, and sustain any new knowledge that I could. I

could not bear to see my mother struggle so much in carrying on all those tasks and responsibilities.

Family Support

Family support and parental involvement were helpful to academic success and encouraged the pursuit and success in higher education. Family support was critical to persistence in completing college, especially if the student was the first in their family to go to college. According to Foster and Tillman (2009), a direct link existed between family support and parental involvement to the success of students.

Lack Support Availability

Missy stated she had absolutely no family support:

I did not have support from family or friends to go to college. My family thought it was a waste of time. I was raised by my grandmother, and she didn't have the finances nor the understanding of going to college. She thought that a high school diploma was enough, and as soon as I graduated from high-school, I needed to find a job and get out of her house. If I had chosen to go to college, I would be on my own because I was not going to receive any assistance from them.

Missy went on to say how her brother and sister could no longer put up with the conditions in the household and decided to leave.

Missy said,

My older brother and sister had already dropped out of high school and found jobs, so I believed my grandmother was just ready for me to leave. My grandmother didn't want better for me. My grandmother just wanted me out of her house.

Katie's only support system was her mother, and she shared stories of how their relationship became toxic as she could no longer rely on her mother:

Katie said,

My mother was the biggest stressor in my life, and she did her best to break me down. I had absolutely no support from her. My family was the type of people that really wasn't rooting for you. If you called them, they automatically thought you wanted money from them. Sometimes I just needed someone to talk to.

Linda shared,

My grandmother and aunties did not want me spending time doing school work because it took me away from my duties at home. I was not able to babysit my cousins and I was not able to cook meals.

Linda stated that times were different back then and that families did what they had to do to survive. They depended on each other and did not see school as necessary for survival. Linda shared, "During these times, it was normal for everyone in the house to lend a helping hand because of need. These were times that I felt like helping my family was more important than helping myself."

Academic Responsibilities

On Bean and Metzner's (1985) model, academic variables directly influenced academic outcomes such as GPA, which can lead to poor academic outcomes and eventually cause for involuntary academic dismissal. This variable can lead to great psychological outcomes such as stress, decreased sense of utility, or weakened academic goal commitment. Academic variables (study hours, study skills, academic advising,

absenteeism, major and job certainty, and course availability) could work indirectly through psychological outcomes.

Lack of Study Skills and Lack of Hours

Missy was overwhelmed with the responsibilities of a college student: “I took over 15 credit hours of classes. The professors were not resourceful, I felt lost, and I was drowning. They were not helpful.” Missy needed guidance from an adviser, and she shared a story about her seeking academic guidance with the male faculty of her class: Missy said,

I had a question and asked if I could walk with him to his office and when we got into his office, he shut the door. I started asking for clarity regarding assignment instruction, and he explained to me gibberish in very short phrases that did not help me. I wasn’t prepared for the academic work. I was still behaving like I was in high school many years ago.

Katie noted during the interview that she started to party too much, and this influenced her academic studies. As she explained, “I did find myself procrastinating with my school work and I could have used that time more effectively by studying for test. I shouldn’t have been chasing after my boyfriend.”

Katie said,

I just wanted out of my mother’s house, and I knew how to study, and I knew how much time it would take, but I just didn’t feel like my soul was in it. As a college student you should be in college because you want to be there. Not because you just don’t want to return from where you come from.

Linda shared,

My instructors showed no mercy. I was enrolled in a college where classes were offered mostly during the daytime Monday–Friday, offering only a couple of classes in the evening. The major health care administration courses were offered mostly face-to-face, and assignments were weekly, and I just couldn't keep up. By the time I posted to a discussion board, it was time for me to submit a paper. By the time I submitted the paper, it was time for me to post to the discussion board again.

Linda was a student who spent too much time interacting and partying with friends not associated with her peers in college. Linda said she was the type of person who enjoyed her fun, and she felt that being away from her responsibilities at home granted her a certain amount of freedom:

Linda also explained,

I liked having fun, and I like being away from my responsibilities at home. At first, I felt guilty, but then I thought that I really needed it, this time away from them, and I was going to enjoy it. I just didn't have a grip on how much time I was spending away from studying until it was a little too late.

Linda felt that her first year should have been made a priority:

After my first year I realize that I should not have used my freshman year as a vacation. It should have been a period of understanding what resources were available for first-time students, older students, and how to obtain and utilize this information.

Lack of Academic Advising

Lack of academic advising includes faculty counsel in career advising, academic advising, membership and club advising, and general advising (Bean and Metzner, 1985).

Missy said that she believed academic advisers should take their jobs more seriously, as they are laying out the pathway to the success of all future leaders enrolled in that college. She recalled her experience as rushed and uninformative.

Missy said,

They never seemed to take their eyes off the computer, and if I had a question, they would answer it dry, or in an extremely short phrase. This is not good for someone who has been out of school for as long as I have.

Katie recalled her experience with academic advising as being comical:

Katie explained,

Academic advising was a joke. The experiences were terrible because half the time they were not in their office, and the lines of students would be wrapped around the buildings during advisement period. I witnessed students sleeping in hallways because they waited so long to see their adviser.

Regarding academic advising Katie said,

While attending my HBCU, I never talked to an academic adviser. No lie. I never had an advisement hold, and I believe a friend just showed me how to schedule classes on the computer, and I continued to enroll myself. I didn't have a problem doing it because it came easy to me. All I did was follow the outline of the program of study and made sure I enrolled in the correct class. It is sad that I never

saw an adviser because I would have like to discuss any opportunities and my academic goals of college completion.

Regarding her academic advising experiences Linda expressed,

They didn't have much time to spend with you and put a time limit on each student's head. The adviser made out a schedule that was not suited for a nontraditional student. No one should include a schedule that has math, accounting, and chemistry in the morning and in the same semester.

Linda also said,

I tried to contact her, but she said whatever questions I had to send it to her in an email. I did what she said, and she never responded to my emails. Advisers need to understand that as first-time students, we are nervous, anxious, and possibly scared for what the future holds and are counting on them to lead and the way.

Regarding advisers Linda reflected,

Advisers sign you up for classes and don't even explain what they are about to do or what you need to do to prepare yourself. I had no idea what type of classes I would be taking or when I would eventually graduate. Normally, I was out of the advisor's office in 5–10 minutes. I often left with absolutely no answers.

Absenteeism

Missy missed several days of school due to her children's priorities:

Missy said,

I had two children, and I just could not understand how I could leave my children and focus solely on school. My children kept needing me for one thing or another, and I didn't have accountable childcare, so I had to miss class often.

Katie said because of her unintended pregnancy, she started missing classes, and she had one instructor tell her that these absences were unacceptable.

Katie said,

I had one instructor tell me that being pregnant is not a disease or illness that requires preferential treatment. Pregnancy is a condition, and that's all. I still had to submit the work, participate in group assignments, go to class, and do everything else that was required from a regular student. My pregnancy prevented me from being in attendance because I was often sick with high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and constant vomiting. I had no choice but to miss class.

Linda stated that her health began to become a problem, and she started missing classes.

Linda shared,

Between my support network falling apart, having very little money, and my children turning into people I didn't recognize anymore, I started to fail classes. After my hair fell out and I constantly would break out in hives, I realized I wasn't going to last enrolled in school much longer. Sometimes I would miss class because I was physically ill, and sometimes, I would miss classes because I needed a mental break.

Academic Support Availability

Missy shared that her drive to utilize the academic support was strong, but the actual support at the HBCU was minimal and weak. Missy said, "I didn't understand the

concept of utilizing student resources or tutoring.” Missy elaborated on how she reached out to her fellow classmates in trying to understand what exactly to study for a class.

Missy shared,

I was often lost in class and on class assignments. When I did learn about the resources in college, I was shocked to see how poorly staffed the learning center or academic support was. There were maybe two people working in there, and they both were never there at the same time, and I often walked away more confused than ever before. When I did talk with someone in academic support, I couldn’t get clear answers from them and was often given minimal suggestions and left on my own. I did not get the support I needed from learning center.

Katie reflected on the weak academic support at the school she was attending: “The experiences were terrible because half the time academic support was not in their office, and the lines of students would be wrapped around the building.”

Katie stated,

The instructors did not go out of their way to help us. They would pretty much just repeat what they had already said in the classroom and added nothing more. It was like they wanted us to fail, and peer tutoring was just as bad. Peer tutoring did not know how to explain the concepts we were learning effectively because they were students and not teachers. My grades did not improve at all.

Linda knew she needed academic support, but she said she never had the time to find out what was available to students and that the teachers were no help at all to her academic needs. When Linda did find out about learning resources and support, she said

that there were so many students in the room that she left without even seeing anyone:

“They really needed to hire more people in academic support, and why should I bother?”

Outside College Campus Obligations

Bean and Metzner (1985) believed for the nontraditional student, environmental factors played an important part in determining the academic outcome of the decision to depart the academic institution. Finances, hours of employment, family responsibilities, opportunity to transfer, and weak academic support all played a part in the nontraditional student’s day-to-day life. Even though these were nonacademic factors, for the nontraditional student they can still result in low levels of academic success.

Environmental factors occur off campus for the nontraditional student, but they still influence what is occurring on campus.

Lack of Finances

Missy discussed the hardships of being a single parent: “I was a single parent working two part-time jobs at the time, and I had a family to feed.” Missy stated that her family depended on her even more when she enrolled in college, and being a single parent made the situation even worse.

Missy shared,

I had bills, and I never seemed to have enough money for my finances. I did have financial problems, and financial aid was there and available for me to help pay for my classes and only some of my textbooks. I was always short.

Missy said the cost of textbooks really hurt her:

Textbooks were very expensive. Sometimes the textbooks ranged from \$150–\$200 apiece. On many occasions, I had to purchase two or three textbooks at a

time and was often unable to financially get my classes handled. The college administration cannot give me the money that I needed to put food on the table and clothes on my child's back. They cannot put money in my bank account to pay my child-care bills. I needed extra money in my pocket for things like groceries and Pampers.

Katie's pregnancy brought her unexpected financial difficulties. She had to go to doctor's appointments, and she needed bus or taxi fare and money for groceries.

As Katie put it,

Money was short and tight when I got pregnant. When I had my baby, it got even shorter and tighter. I experienced that once big life events like that come your way, at some point you must make a choice.

Linda said,

It is impossible to believe that money had nothing to do with obtaining my college degree. Unfortunately, college is not free like it is in some other countries. Many minority students had to depend on grants and loans to go to college. Many times, financial aid is not enough because some classes require you to purchase software, access codes, and supplemental reading material. You still need money to operate your household and take care of your family. Where is that extra money supposed to come from?

Hours of Employment

Missy stated that she was absent too many days from work due to school activities and that her employer was not supportive.

Missy said,

Unfortunately, I had to exit the program due to work, family, and financial obligations. If I lost my job, then I couldn't take care of my children. I was a single parent working two jobs, and I had a family to feed.

Regarding employment Katie shared,

Everything seemed to be falling apart quite quickly. At first, my supervisor was supportive of me needing to be off on certain days or work certain hours because of school. Then, my supervisor became not so supportive, and the fact that I was pregnant didn't help my situation.

Linda stated,

I was working a full time and part-time job and still struggled. As a single parent raising two boys, my job was necessary, and I didn't have the type of supervisor that supported education." Linda also shared her thoughts of keeping her job and said, "Money was always on my mind, with many sleepless nights trying to figure out how I was going to be able to support my family and pay for school. I just couldn't lose my job over school.

Family/Outside Responsibilities

Missy reflected on her family responsibilities:

I got pregnant and had a hard time keeping up because I was so sick. I kept missing class, and I fell behind. I had a chaotic schedule and requested so much assistance from my family. It was difficult keeping up with so many things, especially outside of school. Those things took away from my education, and I

also started feeling extremely guilty leaving my child all the time with family.

My son was only a baby, and I couldn't afford full-time childcare.

Katie got pregnant also, and this pregnancy disrupted her college educational goals:

When I got pregnant, it wasn't because I didn't know about birth control. I knew the risks. I really needed that love from my boyfriend, and when I found out I was pregnant, I believed that I will have the family I always wanted. It was never a thought of me getting rid of my baby through an abortion like my mother wanted. I saw my pregnancy as a blessing. I agree that it was not a good time to get pregnant, but I had to deal with what was happening at that moment. I was going to have the baby, and school was just going to have to be put on hold.

Linda shared,

My adult life as a mother and care taker had taken over my life as a college student. The main thing was that I didn't know that I had to make commitments in the undergraduate program that were outside the classroom. My children needed so much attention, and I was their mother. I just made myself available to too many activities off campus, and that took me away from my school responsibilities.

Limited Social Participation Integration

Upon testing their model, Bean and Metzner (1985) found social integration variables lacked importance because these students were nontraditional students and did not have a direct relationship with the departure decision, although indirect relationships were found. Environmental and background variables were also found not to have direct relationships with the departure decision. Social interaction variables include

memberships to clubs, school friends, and faculty contacts. Psychological outcomes were found to have direct effects on neither the dropout decision nor the intent to leave.

Lack of Participation in Clubs and Memberships

Missy felt that participation in clubs and memberships and making new friends would be beneficial to her understanding of the health care industry. Being a part time student, being a fulltime mother, and working two part-time jobs, Missy could not meet the requirements for participation. Missy shared, “I was being pulled from one direction to another. I was not able to make the events and activities going on at the school; therefore, I was not able to engage in campus activities.”

Katie shared how she had neither the time nor the extra money to participate in clubs and memberships on campus.

Katie said,

I wasn't involved in any clubs, organizations, or memberships because I didn't have the extra money to pay for any of them. I had a family, bills, and other adult responsibilities, and I didn't feel like being in a club was important at that time. I feel like if I would have been more engaged on campus, and I would have been more aware.

Linda believed club and membership participation was important, but she did not participate:

Linda explained,

The health care club required active participation that I just didn't have time for. Some activities the health care club was involved in included health fairs, blood drives, toy drives, and/or visiting high schools on college day. I just

couldn't participate with my jobs. I was an adult student who had adult issues that had nothing to do with school but affected every aspect of school.

Lack of Friends

Missy felt like her outside engagements and responsibilities affected her ability to make friends: "I didn't connect with the other students." Missy also felt like she was in no condition to make friends: "I had no time to make friends in college. I barely had time to go to class, let alone make friends. I wasn't interested in making friends, with the problems I was having."

Katie stressed that she had no time to make friends and that her pregnancy prevented her from gaining opportunities to bond with other peers, since she had to move off-campus. Of her time with other females in her dorm.

Katie recalled,

It was different because you had the one female roommate that was so sexually promiscuous that she would bring home a different man every night to have sex with. Those girls didn't have the home training that I had. My mother wouldn't have played that; I would have gotten my ass beaten!

Linda said,

I was the awkward black girl, and I was not used to having friends in my life and felt very awkward talking to other females. They couldn't relate to me, and I couldn't relate to them. So, I chose to not have a relationship.

Linda shared how she believed her age hindered her from making friends on campus: "There were not many people my age in the classes, and during this time, I sought safety, familiarity, and security with my older friends off campus."

Lack of Faculty Contact

Missy shared how she limited her faculty contact due to what was happening at the time with the campus culture.

Missy said,

One of my abuses was sexual in nature, and I did not believe that I would still be running into this issue at the university level with young men. I would go as far in saying the male teachers were just like the young males on campus, and I believed it was just part of the campus culture. I did not have a family nowhere near me at that university. I didn't have high school friends that followed me to the university, and I felt truly alone. I didn't trust the faculty, so I didn't bother talking with them.

Katie said,

Faculty is not going to be easy on you just because you are pregnant. I felt like faculty didn't have my best interest in academic success at the time. They treated my pregnancy with resentment. They were not quick to assist me when I need help with being behind on assignments. They talked down to me just because I was pregnant. That experience left a bitter taste in my mouth regarding faculty relationships with their students.

Linda's relationship with faculty was not good. She explained,

Some of the faculty at HBCUs were extremely snobbish. They act like they have never been a student before. I think they wanted many students to 'kiss up' to them, and I just refused to do that for a grade. I wanted to get by on my own merit and not by saying nice things or bringing gifts to faculty at HBCUs. I had a

difficult relationship with faculty because I would not stop asking questions after the half-assed answers I received. The faculty didn't like me for being that type of student.

Personal Dreams Deferred

Some of the areas of substantial motivation for females were pure desire to complete their degree to secure a better life for family, the desire to attain a pay increase to support themselves and family, the desire for promotion, the desire for new career opportunities, and the influence of a spouse or significant other. All participants discussed making a sacrifice in one way or another as an African American female college student. Females were significantly more likely to enroll in higher education as a sacrifice for their children or as a role model for their children (Kimmel et al., 2014). The exact opposite happened for those participants listed as exiters. Exiters frequently expressed how the individual needs of their children took precedence over their lives, meaning that they could not personally focus on their academic needs.

Self-Sacrifice

Missy reflected on her decision,

While I was pregnant, it was very difficult for me to understand my priorities. I decided I was going to have my baby and love it, even if it meant my dreams would have to be put on hold.

Katie said, “My choice was to put my education on hold for the sake of having a healthy baby, and that’s just what I did.” She reflected on the timing of her pregnancy:

Katie said,

I knew that I would not be able to continue my education for a while, but that was fine with me. I had my daughter now as my priority. I knew the importance of starting out as a good mother will be necessary for her success. I knew that I would not be able to continue my education for a while, but that was fine with me. I had my daughter, and now she was my priority, and I knew the importance of starting out as a good mother was necessary for us.

Linda said she knew that going to college was going to be a challenge, and she made sure to talk to her family about it, who seemed very supportive at the time. She said, “I didn't go to college immediately after high school because I started to have children and I wanted to concentrate on them. My children and my family were very happy and encouraging.” Linda goes on to discuss how her children accepted her new position as a college student at the beginning.

Linda shared,

They made a point to tell me they were going to help me by doing their part, and then reality sunk in. My children never got in trouble in school and rarely got sick. Of course, when I enrolled in college, my son started struggling in class, and his teacher called weekly. It had gotten so bad that the school was about to suspend him indefinitely. I had to address this problem, and I addressed it by leaving school.

Race, Gender, Identity, and Awareness

Certain distinctive variables occurred early on to influence a nontraditional student's decision to complete or exit an academic program or college enrollment. Defining factors like the student's race, gender, and identity all influenced the way a student interacted with the college or university they chose to attend. Because of these factors, the emphasis was placed squarely on interactions directly related to being on campus and not being off campus (Bean & Metzner, 1985). African American women encountered racism, sexism, and social bias early in life, and those experiences hindered the academic and professional advancement of these women (Britton, 2013; Lichtenstein & Johnson, 2009; Lin, 2016). Awareness to an individual focused on the value reflects a participant's attitudes, beliefs, and his or her perspectives or worldview. Value brought importance to a person's principles and ideas and clarified the meaning of what they felt important to themselves. African American students benefited positively in the classroom when teachers and administrators were aware of their circumstances, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs (Morales, 2010).

Race

Missy bore witness to seeing so many family members struggle and suffer because of their race. Missy expressed how she saw poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment in her neighborhood. She also shared how she saw access to success in other neighborhoods that were not predominantly black. Missy said, "I saw the difference of what being educated, and African American could do compared to not being educated. I couldn't do anything about being African American, but I could do something about my education."

Katie shared several memories of when her race played a major role in meaningful experiences:

Katie said,

I felt Black woman don't have the luxury of betting our life on the possibility of creating a billion-dollar business. Black women have always been burdened down. Black women still do what we had to do and know when we must do it. We must make this a part of our daily conversation for our children to understand success as an African American is within their grasp if they make the effort.

Linda reflected upon how important her race was when formulating meaningful experiences:

Linda expressed,

My ancestors were depending on me to be successful in school. I went to an HBCU to honor that and to seek support. African Americans are not looking for charity. I was looking for support and direction like many other black students.

Gender

Missy had many meaningful experiences and reflected on these life experiences. Missy reflected on watching many of her female family members suffer from racism or sexism at the hands of their loved ones and she revealed how she carried these memories with her as a college student.

Missy said,

I mentally restrained and segregated myself from opportunities. My past of either watching or being exposed to so much abuse as a black woman took a toll on my

intellect in college. I did not know how to accept this type of treatment as a black woman, and it got in the way of my academics and social relationships.

Katie made a point to say,

Many people wonder why black women may have attitudes or be aggressive compared to women of other races. I believe it is because we must struggle in silence. We have no choice but to go through it. We don't have the support, money, or means to do what women of other races can do. We can't allow ourselves to be so depressed that we don't go to work, and we don't know anyone who can lend us money because they are in the same situation also. As an African American female, I believe we are vulnerable. Inside of every black woman lies a type of hurt and pain.

Linda shared her thoughts and said,

You would think that at this day and age we would be treated with dignity, respect, and allowed to take opportunities. I also believe we are not given opportunities because we are women. It is not a privilege but our right to have the respect we deserve.

Linda also explained,

As a black woman, and growing up with black women, it was not a secret of the struggles I was going through and did encounter. I watched my mother and her sisters struggle to find their way to independence. I saw them be strong and watch how they conquered some of their demons. But I also saw them grow extremely weak from the struggle.

Identity

Missy revealed her thoughts of the pain she had inside and said,

Like many other Black women, I didn't talk about the abuse. I didn't talk about the violence, and I didn't talk about the mental illness. So, what do we do? We suffer in secret. By suffering in secret, we don't show we are helpless and weak. We want everyone to believe we must fake identify of being invincible. Like we are strong and can do anything. We chose to let others believe we have super human strength. We are internally dying a slow and painful death inside.

Katie reflected on identity and said,

I believe every black child should experience going to a black school. I remember one time I was at the HBCU, I was taking a class on African history, and this was the first time that I heard how rich the country was. I didn't know that because I could only identify with what the media shows us and tells us about Africa. I always saw Africa as being a country riddled in famine, disease, and poverty. I didn't know Africa was my land, and I didn't know I came from royalty. I didn't know Africa was one of the richest continents on this planet. The continent that cradled man. How do you know who you are unless you know where you come from?

Linda felt that understanding one's identity as an African American has been problematic for a long time:

Linda said,

I guess because as African Americans we don't know our history, because we were taken away from the richest continent in the world and sold like animals into

slavery. We don't know that we come from kings and queens, and we are heirs to the throne. The worst thing that could have happen to us as a race is to steal our identity. They wanted to wipe our rich existence off the face of world history.

Awareness

The participants discussed how easy it was for people to categorize all black women as having the same characteristics and traits in behavior. They all reflected on the necessity of staff, faculty, and college administrators to be aware of the educational goals, academic hardships, past educational history, personal, and professional attitudes they bring into the classroom.

Missy felt like teachers had already put her in a stereotypical category of the black woman, and she desired teachers and administrators to be aware of what she brought into the classroom:

Missy stated,

I wish teachers would understand that just because you are a Black woman and attend a HBCU, I'm not trying to be babied or expect to have it easy. I understand that I must work hard if not harder at a HBCU, and I was willing to do the work. Some teachers understand the struggles, and some don't. It's the ones that don't that make the experience a living hell that you will never forget.

Katie reflected her desires and shared,

I wish everyone understood that I am who I am because this is who I'm supposed to be. If people have a problem with that, then that's their problem. You think that I am a difficult Black woman with too many babies at home, but I am not.

She wanted teachers to grade her on her own merit: “Our experiences are unique and made us who we are, and I realize that as an adult today. We wouldn’t learn anything if nothing bad ever happened to us.” She clearly reiterated that she wanted teachers to be aware of her passion for learning: “I want them to know that at every point in my life all I can do is learn.

Linda revealed what she would like staff, faculty, and college administration to be aware of in the classroom.

Linda stated,

I would like health care program directors and the teachers to understand African American females don’t ask for these things to happen to us, and we try very hard for college completion. I am more than ‘where’ I am.

Conclusion

This section concludes Part A. These were the participants who enrolled and exited a health care program while attending an HBCU (exiters). The next section starts Part B and includes those participants who were enrolled and completed a health care program while attending an HBCU (completers).

PART B: COMPLETERS

Discussion of Completers Participant Themes

Educational Experiences

The completers who participated in the research study explained that one of the main challenges when they initially enrolled was the fact they did not have a clear understanding of setting educational goals high school. The participants reported spending time with high school academic advisers and having a strong family support system assisting or preparing them for post-secondary education. All three completers explained that they believed they were prepared for college because they were introduced to the concept of being a college student during these crucial years and educated early about what to expect. The participants believed they prepared themselves for college entrance and completion. Bean and Metzner (1985) believed that a student's high school educational experiences and educational goals all influenced the way a student interacted with the college or university they chose to attend.

Educational Goals

Angel said, regarding her educational goals,

What made me start taking my grades seriously in high school was my grandfather. I realized that the older I got, the less opportunities that I was finding for myself in entertainment, and that I did needed to finish high school. I knew that if I didn't finish high school, I would not be able to find a job to help me support my real dream. He is the one who helped me understand early educational goals were important to have.

Sandra stated,

The high school experiences I had was that I was around people that had the high educational and lifetime goals as I had. I didn't like facing my mother with anything less than an 'A' because I knew that she would expect nothing less from me. She knew I was better than a bad grade, and I felt responsible for that. She was my education role model helped me understand the importance of setting educational goals early.

Sandra also shared, "It was very common for my mother to know more about my school work and the assignments than I did. This is the type of environment that supports academic success and advancement for a child in the black family."

Rebecca had a mother who was deeply engaged in helping her set educational goals early in her life.

Rebecca said,

I made sure I took advantage of every opportunity in high school that would help my chances get into college. I always knew that I must get a college education, so I can work in a field that will appreciate my knowledge and eagerness to implement new ideas. All of this was important to me in high school.

Family Support

Family support and parental involvement were helpful to academic success and were encouraged in the pursuit of academic success. Family support was critical to persistence in completing college, especially if the student was the first in their family to go to college. According to Foster and Tillman (2009), a direct link existed between family support and parental involvement and the success of students.

Support Network Availability

Angel confessed,

As I look back, my mother giving me up to be raised by my grandfather was the best thing she could have ever done for me. My grandfather supported me the entire time I was in high school and in college. For some reason, my grandfather didn't see any wrong in me. I felt betrayed by everyone in the world but him, and I never would have finished high school or college if it wasn't for him.

Sandra reflected on her supportive family and shared,

A supportive family is the type of learning environment that is crucial in setting the foundation of higher learning. Moving forward pass high school in my household with automatic. My family supported me in college whole heartedly before my cancer diagnosis and after my treatment. I could not have done it alone and never would have finished college without their support.

Rebecca expressed,

My mother and my grandmother were my back bones and my support networks. Black women in my family taught me whatever I put my mind to I can do it and that there was nothing to be afraid of. If I got to a stumbling block, I must keep pushing forward, and they were very instrumental on that part. The support from my family and my own personal drive to succeed and accomplish my goals were my driving factors. It was all about working with the end in mind and doing what I had to do to get there. Everyone in my family was supportive.

Academic Responsibilities

Bean and Metzner's (1985) model identified several academic variables that directly influenced academic outcomes such as GPA and led to poor academic outcomes, which caused involuntary academic dismissal. This variable led to great psychological outcomes such as stress, decreased sense of utility, or weakened academic goal commitment. Academic variables (study hours, study skills, academic advising, absenteeism, major and job certainty, and course availability) could work indirectly through the psychological outcome.

Effective Study Skills and Effective Study Hours

Angel had difficulties with her academic responsibilities and admitted,

I was spending so many hours doing so much of my individual academic work. If I wasn't doing my individual school work or studying, then I was working on group projects where we had to meet in the learning center or in the library.

There was always someone or a couple of people that did not understand what they were supposed to do, or they just dropped out of the group altogether. We had to divide up their parts of the presentation, so it left very little time for myself. All I could do was sleep with the free time that was left for me.

Angel realized that she did not want to have poor study skills and habits, so she made a point of prioritizing what was important in driving her educational goals forward.

Angel said,

I buckled down and spent as much time in the library. I did this to get away from distractions and other people, and I knew once I got home, I wouldn't do much studying. At the library I was able to concentrate and stay focused. At the

library, I could ask for help if I had a problem and get a lot of work done. This is how I overcame the struggles of my academic responsibilities.

Sandra stated,

Teachers were not easy on me just because I had breast cancer, and to be honest, I believe they treated me even more aggressively. They saw me as being weak-minded rather than physically, emotionally, and spiritually weak from chemotherapy. I had a family that didn't baby me, so I was not expecting to be babied in the classroom. I was working and cramming for my final exams. I was operating off two-hour sleep and deadlines for completion of term papers.

Sandra also shared,

I'm disciplined, so when it came time to study, I formulated a plan on preparation. I carried my notes and books with me everywhere. I had several treatments that kept me at the doctor's office or in the hospital, so I took my notes, books, and laptop with me and studied wherever I was at.

Rebecca said,

I knew that I had to manage my time and organize and prioritize what was important. I was the only one that was standing in my way of success. At first, I failed plenty of quizzes, and, I failed a few tests. When I made a failing grade on an assignment, I didn't keep it to myself. I wanted my instructors to understand that I do indeed take my grades seriously, and I had to be honest as I possibly could with my excuses. If I fell asleep at the computer during a timed test and made a bad grade, I admitted this to the professor. I told my professor I would

stay focused on my study skills and monitor the hours I was studying and get enough rest, so this wouldn't happen again.

Outside College Campus Obligations

Bean and Metzner (1985) explained for the nontraditional student, environmental factors played an important part determining the academic outcome in the decision to depart the academic institution. Finances, hours of employment, family responsibilities, opportunity to transfer, and weak academic support all played a part in the nontraditional student's day-to-day life. Even though these were nonacademic factors, for the nontraditional student they still resulted in low levels of academic success.

Environmental factors occur off campus for the nontraditional student, but they still influenced what occurred on campus.

Effective Prioritization of Family/Outside Responsibilities

Angel related,

I was so busy still trying to focus on my personal dream of being a singer, rapper, dancer, and actress first. I remember that I had so much practicing to do in the studio that I put a week's worth of school work to the side. I remember that when I finally came back to the work, I was literally one month behind. My grades started to slip significantly, and I remember that I just could not let this go on or I would never graduate and get out of here.

Angel realized what she had to do and said, "Sometimes you have to make grown up decisions and put the adult things first and childhood things second."

Sandra shared her difficulties in keeping up because of her outside responsibilities and how she managed them.

Sandra said,

I had duties and obligations just like anyone else, and on top of all that I was fighting breast cancer. Yes, I still had to keep up with my school work and participate in group activities required for course assignments. The only setback that I considered a challenge was the diagnosis of breast cancer. Not school because I didn't consider school as the set back. School was temporary because all I had to do was finish and I would be done. On the other hand, breast cancer would be something I have to pay attention to for the rest of my life. I enrolled in online classes while completing treatments. God is good.

Rebecca stated,

There were times that I had commitments that did not have to do with school, and one semester I just decided I was going to make those outside responsibility a priority. I quickly realized that was a big mistake because I found myself getting behind in my classwork. Getting so behind in so much class work was a feeling of panic and anxiety and I didn't like how that felt. I had to cut many those so-called priorities loose from my life, but it was necessary. If I didn't do that I wouldn't have never graduated.

Social Circle Participation

According to Bean and Metzner (1985), upon testing their model they found social integration variables lacked importance because these students were nontraditional students and did not have a direct relationship with the departure decision, although indirect relationships were found. Environmental and background variables were also found not to have direct relationships with the departure decision. Social interaction

variables included memberships to clubs, school friends, and faculty contacts.

Psychological outcomes were found not to have direct effects on either the dropout decision or intent to leave.

Engaged in Memberships and Participation in Clubs and School Events

Angel said,

Being a member in the health care club helped me understand how much we needed each other. People may not want to admit that, but we do need each other. If only we can forget about the color of our skin, if we are rich or poor, their religion, or if they're gay or straight. If we can just focus on the fact that we are human, and we all bleed red blood, this world and everything in it would be so much more than a better place.

Angel emphasized, "Being able to socially interact with others and share what we have in common rather than what makes us different was beneficial to me. Holding memberships in student clubs helped me understand this."

Sandra shared her memories and thoughts of her experiences as a member in student organizations and clubs. She said it was a highlight of her college life because she was able to live a life-long dream of being chosen as a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Incorporated Sorority.

Sandra said,

I pledged a Greek sorority my third year in college, and I no longer felt that need to balance my personal responsibilities with my academic ones. This newfound freedom resulted in me attempting to do everything with my sorority sisters, and I

was still able to excel in my studies. Being around other people going through similar events as I was made it easier to process and proceed.

Rebecca shared her memories of her social participation in student organizations.

Rebecca said,

I found joining the student clubs and organizations extremely helpful. My advice to students is to talk to the faculty, join the clubs, and do the community service projects with other students. You never know what opportunity for your future health care career is waiting for you.

Making Friends and Building on Friendships

Angel shared,

I made many friends while I was in college. These friends were friends that understood the childhood that I came from. Many of them had the same type of demons that I was struggling with. I found making new friends like this was a supportive peer network.

Sandra enjoyed the new engaging friendships and stated,

I'm a talkative person and don't have a problem being vocal and approaching people with a handshake. I was diagnosed with breast cancer at very young age. I understood that many people cannot handle having a friend with such a serious and scary diagnosis. I realized who my true friends were, and these friends understood my struggles and offered me their friendship, love, and support.

Rebecca expressed that making friends was necessary and said,

I have been shy my entire life, but I knew it was necessary to make friends because of the field I was majoring in. I was going to be surrounded by many people in health care, and I needed to work on my communication skills.

Rebecca soon felt comfortable and familiar around new friends, and she confessed, “Even though I am a shy person by nature, I have always been the type that enjoyed company. I made many friends while enrolled at the HBCU.”

Engaged in Faculty Contact

Angel had no problem engaging in faculty contact, as she stated:

I talked and built relationships with the faculty at the HBCU, and to this very day, I talk to some of them to seek advice or just to see how they are doing. The faculty was always willing to have their doors open for me. I’m a social butterfly by nature, so talking to teachers was crucial to me being successful in school. I never had a problem talking to advisers or teachers.

Sandra said,

I had no problem going to my professor’s office to ask questions if I didn’t understand something. I often went to see my instructors for more information or detail in what was needed to complete an assignment. I’m very vocal and outgoing and enjoy talking and asking questions. I am also the type of person that can hold deep conversations with just about anyone because I am inquisitive by nature too.

Sandra explained,

In my household we talked about history, religion, politics, social needs, injustices and civil rights, and what it would take to make change for the better in this world. It was second nature to talk to faculty at school about these same issues.

Rebecca insisted,

My experiences were positive, and the administration and faculty that I came across took their jobs seriously. Faculty made a conscious effort to be available when needed. The faculty was always there with their doors open for me, and I would hold long conversations with them. I was involved in almost every club my schedule allowed and completed a lot of work collaborating with faculty. All of these were necessary relationships.

Rebecca further shared that “Some of these conversations had a lot to do with my life beyond college, and these are the ones I treasured and found meaning in the most.”

Personal Dreams Deferred

All participants discussed making personal sacrifices one way or another as African American female college students. These participants revealed they completed the program and graduated from college for the sake of sacrificing their own personal dreams. All completers revealed they finished college as a lifelong dream for someone or something else. Two completers revealed the main reason for their college completion was a request from the matriarchs in their families (mother and/or grandmother). The third completer stated that she could have easily dropped out using her health as the

excuse but decided to use her health as the excuse instead to continue completion of her education.

Self-Sacrifice

Angel shared powerful stories of the sacrifices she made in the name of her grandfather. Angel had big plan for her life, and she felt that she came out of the womb independent and had no plans of graduating from high school. Angel said, “I wouldn’t have never even finished high school if it wasn’t for my grandfather, let alone college. This was his dream, and he did so much for me that I was happy to give it to him.”

Angel said she still has her own dream to follow:

I put my dream on hold for a man that put his life on hold for me. Sometimes he would wait maybe two or three hours in the car while I sat in a face-to-face class until it was over. Now, you tell me how can I not put my dreams on hold for my grandfather? How can I not finish college for him? My mother died and didn’t get to see me graduate, but my grandfather did.

Sandra said she literally put her life on the line to complete her degree:

I went to school not feeling well from the chemotherapy treatments. I had my family telling me that I would have to make a choice and that it was my decision alone. I decided to sacrifice my physical, mental, and spiritual health to complete my college degree. I could have easily dropped out by using my health as the excuse. I decided to, instead... I used my breast cancer as the excuse to continue.

Rebecca said her degree completion was not entirely for herself but for someone much more special:

Rebecca reflected,

I enrolled and completed my education solely for my mother and grandmother.

My mother was sick at the time, and my grandmother had previously died before I decided to enroll in college. I wanted their dream to come true in seeing me graduate from college. My mother did see me graduate. She died a shortly after my graduation, but I was happy that she saw me graduate.

Race, Gender, Identity, and Awareness

Distinctive and early-life variables influenced these nontraditional students' decisions to complete or exit an academic program or college enrollment. Defining factors such as a student's race, gender, and identity all influenced the way a student interacts with the college or university they chose to attend. African American women encountered racism, sexism, and social bias early in life, and these experiences hindered the academic and professional advancement of these women (Britton, 2013; Lichtenstein & Johnson, 2009; Lin, 2016). Females were significantly more likely to be motivated to seek higher education because of encouragement from their children. These factors were important to female adult learners because they drew their motivation from the support of others, as compared to males (Kimmel et al., 2014). Understanding what attribute was important to a participant helped me to validate the participant's perception of the meaning of an experience. The awareness of an individual was focused on the value, and value reflected a participant's attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives or worldview. Value brought importance to people's principles and ideas and clarified the meaning of what

they felt was important to themselves. African American students benefited positively in the classroom when teachers and administrators were aware of their circumstances, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs (Morales, 2010).

Race

Angel believed it is important for black women to stand up and know how important their race is today. She felt like black women may believe they are not valued because of their race and felt like they must always be on edge.

Sandra said she has been a witness to the pain and suffering of African Americans, especially if they are female. She had seen many black women struggle inside and outside her family and often wondered why this is the case. Sandra revealed, “My grandmother would often say that black women suffer more than any other race. Black women must take on the burdens of so many others that they forget to look out for themselves.”

Rebecca expressed her thoughts as follows:

I would work twice as hard if not harder than anyone else, and I would do it mainly because they think that I can't. I always felt that being an African American was the underlying force that had helped me continue to be persistent and in search for more education. Being African American I am and will always be a lifelong learner. I am always searching to grow and learn new things for and my culture and for me.

Gender

Angel felt like her womanhood had helped her reach the goals she set in her life.

Angel revealed,

Because I am a woman, I am compassionate, loving, and kind. Women have always been stronger than men. We must be because they couldn't handle what a woman must go through in life. As a black woman we stay ready and don't give up easily.

Sandra said,

As a woman I realize that my family put all their hopes and dreams that they may have had for themselves in me to break the cycle of ignorance, and I knew that my main goal in life was to excel in education no matter what. If I have failed, then we all fail. On the shoulders of the women of my living relatives and the shoulders of the women of my dead ancestors I stand.

Rebecca felt being an African American woman should not hinder the learning environment or hinder opportunities in the workplace.

Rebecca expressed,

Just because I am a woman doesn't make me weak or mean that I will not succeed. Being a woman means that I could have the same if not more opportunities of anyone else. I don't believe my gender should get in the way of my success.

Identity

Angel believed from the very beginning that she identified with advancement and success. She believed she was more than her surroundings and often spoke on how she found meaning.

Angel said,

If only we as black women would understand we are queens. I identify with all things positive because no one can take that from you. It is because of what happened to my ancestors that I can move forward and identify with greatness. I am my ancestor's wildest dreams. I am young, gifted, and Black.

Sandra shared,

I come from greatness. I will be great. I don't want to be identified for just being Black because that is when you set a limitation on my abilities and on my life. I shouldn't have to show you how great I am if you allow me to have the opportunity that is rightfully mine.

Sandra believed it is important for the education system to understand African American women. She understood that black women must come to the classroom with a desire to learn and an eagerness to accomplish.

Sandra said,

I came more than just prepared to college, but I witnessed the desire be quickly shot down by other identifying a black woman with a boatload of problems, distractions, and with limitations. They already pointed their finger at that Black female student as a 'problem' who will just be ignored. I know who I am, and I

will not let them take my identity away from me by allowing me to think I anything less than excellent.

Rebecca knew early on, as a child, that she would maintain a focus of identifying only advancement towards goal achievement.

Rebecca shared,

Many people are going to try to change the way you think of yourself, but you must be strong in knowing who you are. I know who I am because when you look at me you are looking at success. Success is deep inside me, and it is different than it is for most people. Many people think that it's just about accomplishment. I believe that success is all in the mental, psychological, and spiritual self. I am not less than, and I am more than you know. You can't take something away from me that I did not give you.

Awareness

Angel believed it is important for staff, faculty, program directors, and college administrators change what they believe they already know about African American female students:

Angel shared,

I am not your average black woman, but I do believe I am unique. We all have something to offer and desire this to be acknowledged and not hidden. Don't build a wall for me to be isolated from learning and support. Help me break down barriers now so I can do the same for all of us in the future. I have something to contribute, and most importantly I am a STAR!

Sandra said,

From my experience, it is common for people to believe an African American female student does not want to work as hard for a grade, and this is a false awareness. I wanted to show them that I was willing to do as much as anyone else. That's just me being the strong Black woman that I am. I want people to stop being aware of color only in everything they do, and, in every decision, they make. We cannot change our color, so please don't focus on that. Look at what I can improve on, and that is what I'll show you I can do.

Rebecca reflected on her life history:

I want people to be aware of who I honestly am. I have never expected anything handed to me. All I ever wanted was my chance to show you even though I have issues and problems just like everyone else. I'm willing to do whatever I have to do to succeed. I am not the circumstances of my life history. I represent my experiences and turn them into the achievement of goals. I am not less than, and I am more than you know. My circumstances are necessary for improvement.

Conclusion

Chapter V featured the narrative responses of a total of six African American female students and was divided into two parts. Part A included those participants who enrolled and exited a health care program while attending an HBCU (exiters). Part B included those who enrolled and completed a health care program while attending an HBCU (completers). Their lived experiences were collected using Seidman's Three-Step Interview Series (2006). Chapter IV Part A included the life histories Katie, Linda, and Missy and was primary to experiences of exiting the health care program. Chapter IV

Part B included the life histories of Angel, Sandra, and Rebecca and collected experiences focused on completing the health care program. Their individual stories were used as the back drop for the themes that emerged from their personal experiences. All participants offered personal details of their high school experiences, family support, academic challenges, family or outside responsibilities, and social participation, self-sacrifice, race, gender, identify, and awareness.

Chapter VI

DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

A discussion of the lived experiences of African American females who completed and African American females who exited an undergraduate health care program while attending an Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) is included in this section. The study had a total of six participants, and all were nontraditional students. They were divided into two parts, namely three African American female students who exited the program (Part A) and three African American female students who completed the program (Part B).

Overview of the Study

Unique views and ideas of program completion were provided from study participants. African American female students shared unique experiences that created barriers and challenges for degree completion. Scholarly literature was available on the topic of African Americans in higher education, but the literature was limited. Very little was available relating to African American female students who were completers and African American females who were exiters of an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU within the USG. The research on this population was necessary for understanding of their lived experience and academic improvement.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to investigate African American female students who were completers and those who were exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG. The aim was to achieve a clear understanding of how they defined meaning to their lived experiences. By gaining a clear understanding of their lived experiences, with the intention to help other academic institutions, faculty, staff, and the health care industry understand how African American females' experience influenced their ability to succeed in completing their four-year undergraduate health care degree. The research questions addressed the students' perspectives of challenges and significant issues faced during their enrollment in the health care program, as well as factors contributing to the success of those students participating in and completing the health care program. Qualitative data collected through participant interviews were used to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the lived experiences of African American female completers and African American female exiters of undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?
- RQ2: What are African American female completers' and African American female exiters' common perceptions regarding their academic experiences?
- RQ3: How do background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables influence African American female completers and African American female exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?

Review of the Methodology

Data Collection Procedures

Phenomenology was inspired by the phenomenon of human consciousness and was a reflective analysis of the life-world experiences (Husserl, 1997; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology was the recommended methodology when the goals were to comprehend the meanings of human experiences. In this study, phenomenology allowed me to reveal the true “essence” of understanding the meaning of the experience of African American female completers and exiters of an undergraduate health care administration program at an HBCUs within the USG. The intention of this study was to provide awareness of this social phenomenon. The data collection method utilized Seidman’s Three-Step Interview Series (Seidman, 2006), allowing the individuals’ behaviors to be meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them.

Three topics covered included the following:

Interview I: Questions focusing on life history,

Interview II: Details of experiences, and

Interview III: Reflection on meaning.

All three steps of Seidman’s interview process lasted 90 minutes in a safe and comfortable location. When distance was a barrier to face-to-face interviews, Skype was utilized. Using Skype allowed real time for face-to-face interactions and the ability to see and hear the participants to take note of any non-verbal body language. A total of five 90-minute interview sessions per participant was necessary. Follow-up interviews were

necessary to gain clarity on specific responses. Some of these follow-up interviews were performed via Skype or by telephone, at the participant's request.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was thoroughly explained in Chapter IV. Data analysis procedures included transcribed interviews and a constant comparison model used to sort and classify recurrent or significant themes within participants' responses. Each participant's ideas were grouped with similar ones. Each group of similar ideas were formed and received a label. Each labeled category became an overarching theme, and concept mapping was utilized to form recurring themes. These categories assisted in determining similarities and differences, with the focus being primarily on the similarities.

Findings Related to the Literature

In this research, a total of seven themes emerged from the narratives of the participants categorized as exiters and seven from those participants categorized as completers.

The themes derived from the exiters are as follows:

THEME 1: Educational experiences (negative),

THEME 2: Family support (weak),

THEME 3: Academic responsibilities,

THEME 4: Outside college campus obligations,

THEME 5: Limited social circle participation,

THEME 6: Personal dreams deferred, and

THEME 7: Proper understanding of African American female students.

The themes that emerged the completers are these:

THEME 1: Educational goals (positive),

THEME 2: Family support (strong),

THEME 3: Academic responsibilities,

THEME 4: Outside college campus obligations,

THEME 5: Engaged social circle participation,

THEME 6: Personal dreams deferred, and

THEME 7: Proper understanding of African American female students.

Understanding the experiences and perceptions of this unique group of students assisted in identifying specific areas of need that may then be used to assist those who are in danger of exiting a program. Useful information is provided for understanding the student attrition and retention of students of color in undergraduate health care programs.

Comparisons of Conclusions to Previous Research

In summary, participant themes in the previous chapters addressed research questions posed in the study. The study participants who were exiters had different perceptions than those of the completers.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of African American female completers and African American female exiters of undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?

Educational Goals

All the participants who exited the program revealed that their pre-college or high school experiences were negative and that they had minimal positive experiences in school. The exiters revealed their negative experiences came from other students,

teachers, and administrators. Exiters complained that the school lacked quality teachers, funding, and equipment related to technology and that the books were outdated. Exiters expressed a faculty that would often complain about the student population, their jobs, not making enough money, and the school itself. Exiters shared stories of not enjoying school and having no educational goals set to attend college. One exiter stated that no one in her family ever talked to her about college. Another exiter stated that her family told her as soon as she finishes high school, she would have to get a job and move out. The third exiter stated that she hated school because she was constantly bullied, and her family told her that college was a complete waste of time. The completers had several positive experiences ranging from friends that had the same high level of educational goals, positive relationships with teachers and school administrators, and active participation with school groups at the pre-college or high school level. Completers responded to having set educational goals early on in their childhood. Completers shared stories of enjoying school and looking forward to going to college. One completer stated that her mother was a teacher and that her mother's focus early in her life was preparing her to get into a good college. Another completer shared that her family talked about college almost every day and exposed her to trips that centered on higher education.

These statements of shared experiences align with the literature of the pre-college or high school experience being a key predictor in determining whether an individual will be successful or fail in college (Knoell, 1960). With positive experiences at the pre-college level, one could see how the student's goals, interests, and personality dispositions interacted with subsystems once enrolled in college and how this interaction affected other independent variables: grade performance, intellectual development, and

friendship support. These variables interacted with one another and influenced the degree to which the student was integrated into college life. According to Spady (1970), because of the pre-high school relationships with teachers and school administrators and the active engagement with social groups, grade performance was also assumed to have a direct effect on future college success. Regarding academic resiliency, school environments that remained positive and removed any, if not all, negative aspects assisted students in feeling capable and special, which facilitated and encouraged self-assurance of their abilities and helped them succeed academically (Morales, 2010).

Family Support

Family support was a constant factor throughout the responses from all six participants. Family support was critical to persistence in completing college, especially if the student was the first in their family to go to college. A direct link existed between parental involvement and support and the success of students, according to Foster and Tillman (2009). All the exiters stated they did not have the support of their family. One participant explained that her family insisted that higher education was not as important as getting a job as soon as possible to assist in the management of the household financially. One exiter stated that at the beginning of her enrollment, her family support network was positive and said they would support her. Once she was enrolled and called on that support, however, it was not available, and she ended up having to drop out of school. All the completers stated they had strong support of family and friends in pursuing their academic journey. Those participants who completed the program had a network of family support both before and after college. Completers explained the family support they received began early in life and remained constant throughout their

academic journey. Active family support influenced educational goals and the ways students interacted with the college or university they chose to attend (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Parental involvement and family support had a positive effect on academic abilities and the achievement of all students, but especially that of African American students (Morales, 2010).

RQ2: What are African American female completers' and African American female exiters' common perceptions regarding their academic experiences?

Race

Both exiters and completers shared stories that focused on their race, gender, and how they are identified by themselves and society. All participants found both strengths and weaknesses they had to deal with while enrolled in college. Race remained an issue for African American participants in this study. Participants labeled “exiters” experienced racism both within and outside of the classroom despite being African Americans enrolled in HBCUs. For completers, it was the exact opposite, as they believed that these institutions provided them with a sustained feeling of being welcomed and accepted. Completers felt HBCUs provided motivation and continually reinforced the message that they would be supported, educated, trained, and developed to succeed.

African Americans and the pursuit of higher learning has a history of discrimination that has lingered in the background of the United States. The civil rights legislation of the 1960s initiated a movement to end such injustices experienced by ethnic minorities of these areas. Today, history continues to move in the right direction by establishing and maintaining inclusive environments, as this was a complex process and

required much more than legislation. However, many minorities, especially African Americans in this study, believed we are not moving fast enough.

Gender

Gender was an important feature of enrollment, retention, and graduation. Today, more females are enrolled in postsecondary institutions but are facing more challenges than are their male counterparts. According to the research, this increase of enrollment was most likely due to the influence of the women's movement. In their recent study, females were significantly more likely to be motivated to seek higher education because of encouragement by children (Kimmel et al., 2014). All participants revealed through their responses how necessary it was for women to be educated currently. The participants revealed how they wanted to be leading examples to their families and others and to be role models of empowerment for others. Participants discussed the hardships they encountered from the barriers that are common to most women. As stated in the review of the literature, barriers that were more significant to females were numerous and included the lack of childcare, the lack of funds for childcare, acting as caregiver within the family, time away from family, time away from a job, lack of grants and scholarships, and concern about attending school with younger students.

Identity

All participants revealed they enrolled as students at an HBCU because they identified with the historical and cultural context. Participants chose an HBCU from the encouragement from family and friends or what the HBCU represented to them as far as ability for academic and workforce achievement and support. Participants who exited the program discussed how faculty called them out on their color, meaning faculty would

often exploit their color against them in believing they were not trying hard enough, not prepared for higher learning, or just not college material. One exiter voiced a feeling of being less than, inferior, or incapable of higher learning. All participants also felt they were underrepresented in the health care field they so desired to enter. Completers expressed a sense of pride, seeing faculty members as role models holding high positions at the university and establishing a sense of contentment and satisfaction in being able to identify with them because of their color.

Awareness

African American women encountered racism, sexism, and social bias early in life, and these experiences hindered the academic and professional advancement of these women (Britton, 2013; Lichtenstein & Johnson, 2009; Lin, 2016). All participants in this study indicated the importance of telling their stories and reflected on their experiences to help them better understand the meaning of their experiences and how awareness of these issues influenced their achievement. All participants in this study wanted to bring awareness to their unique situations. They discussed how easy it was for people to categorize all black women as having the same characteristics and traits in behavior. They all reflected on the necessity of staff, faculty, and college administrators to be aware of the educational goals, academic hardships, past educational history, and personal and professional attitudes they brought into the classroom. They wanted educators to understand they were a unique population but did not want to be treated as holding the entire African American human race on their shoulders. They wanted to be represented as individuals and held accountable for their own actions and not those of others just because they identify as black women. These participants all believed society tends to

hold one individual person of color responsible for the problems of all individuals of color. The participants believed they have something great to offer in the classroom and to the health care industry. They all stated they are not trying to get out of the work that is required to be successful; it is just that they bring unique issues into the academic setting from past or current experiences.

RQ3: How do background and defining variables, academic variables, environmental variables, and social integration variables influence African American female completers and African American female exiters in undergraduate health care programs at HBCUs within the USG?

Academic Responsibilities

All six students admitted to struggling with academic responsibilities, but the completers made handling these tasks a priority by seeking assistance through faculty and learning about available resources at the college. Even though all participants were nontraditional students, exiters felt one of the reasons they were not familiar or prepared for the intensity of academics was lack of familiarity with the technology, lack of understanding of academic resources, or their age. One of the completers admitted that the technology was difficult to understand; faculty expected them to already know how to use it, but they communicated verbally, and teachers directed them to the appropriate resources available on campus (i.e., library, peer tutoring, writing lab).

According to Bean and Metzner's nontraditional student attrition model (1985), academic variables directly influenced academic outcomes such as GPA, and this influence led to poor academic outcomes, which eventually caused involuntary academic dismissal. This variable led to great psychological outcomes such as stress, decreased

sense of utility, or weakened academic goal commitment. Academic variables included study hours, study skills, academic advising, absenteeism, major and job certainty, and course availability that could work indirectly through psychological outcomes.

Family and/or Outside Responsibilities

All participants in this study were categorized as nontraditional students. Both completers and exiters encountered and spoke on several of the same barriers to enrolling in higher learning, including geographic location, personal and family commitments, work- and family-related activity schedules, past college experiences, lack of adequate and consistent childcare services, financial limitations, and in some instances a general fear of returning to school. Both completers and exiters discussed the need for emotional and financial support. Many participants stated a lack of support from their employer, with many being “threatened” of being fired if they could not keep to their working schedules. This decision was difficult for one exiter, stating she needed to maintain employment to stay in school and maintain adequate childcare for her baby. A completer stated that she struggled financially because her financial aid did not cover textbooks, which could cost up to \$150–\$200 per textbook, but she found a way to budget her finances to afford the books.

Older students shared the classroom space and educational experiences with traditional students’ ages 18–24, but their developing needs, life issues, and stressors differed much from those of their younger student peers. Bean and Metzner (1985) believed that for the nontraditional student, environmental factors played an important part in the academic outcome in the decision to depart the academic institution. Finances, hours of employment, family responsibilities, opportunity to transfer, and weak academic

support all play a part in the nontraditional student's day-to-day life. Even though these are nonacademic factors, for the nontraditional student, they still will result in low levels of academic success. As stated in the literature review, environmental factors occur off campus for the nontraditional student, but they still influence what occurs on campus.

Social Participation Integration

Participants of this study who had an active social integration life academically were more successful than those students who did not. Students who were successful at completion discussed how they openly had positive faculty contact and positive relationships with academic advisers and were actively engaged with memberships and involved with social clubs. All exiters stated they did not make friends, engage in social activities on campus, nor effectively communicate with faculty. Completers expressed how having friends sharing a person's experiences provides that person with an understanding that person's problems are no different from those of others. Completers felt that they were not alone and felt that companionship helped ease the pain of being lonely and missing family.

Active engagement was a necessary factor for success in postsecondary learning; however, according to Bean and Metzner (1985), upon testing their model, they found social integration variables lacked importance because nontraditional students and did not have a direct relationship with the departure decision, despite that indirect relationships were found. Social interaction variables included memberships to clubs, school friends, and faculty contacts.

Self-Sacrifice

All participants discussed making sacrifices in some way as college students. All completers sacrificed many of their personal desires for the sake of their support systems, which were usually their mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers, or aunts and uncles. Females were significantly more likely to enroll in higher education as a sacrifice for their children or as a role model for their children (Kimmel et al., 2014). In this case, the exact opposite happened, as the exiters dropped out of college for the sake of their children. Exiters expressed how they sacrificed college completion for the sake of their children and how the needs of their children became a priority rather than the need to complete their education. None of the participants labeled as completers had children at the time they were enrolled and graduated from college.

Surprises

Surprises were unanticipated outcomes of the research study. The research does support that there is a high correlation between living in poverty, lack of education, and early childbirth from having children at a young age. Early parenting can lead to negative consequences of less education, lower earning potential, and a greater likelihood of a life of poverty (Furstenberg, 2008; Healthy Teen Network, 2008). All the exiters emphasized the needs of their children were the main reasons for withdrawal from school. It was not unexpected that the exiters' main excuse for not completing their health care program was that they sacrificed their education for their children's needs.

Completers also sacrificed their personal and social lives, but they chose to continue their education and finish the health care program graduation through to completion. All completers stated that they had personal aspirations, but they realized

the importance of a college education for the sake of family influence. Completers put their personal dreams on hold to make the dreams come true of becoming a college graduate for their families or for a family member (i.e., mother, grandfather, grandmother, aunts, and uncles). Surprisingly, all the participants who did complete the health care program and graduated did not have any children and are happily working in their health care field. At the time of this research study, all completers still did not have any children.

Limitations of the Study

As with many research studies, this research study had certain limitations. This study was narrow in scope and provided only a small sample of experiences from a small number of African American female participants who completed or exited an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU. The study was limited to only African American female participants. It is understood that other races and gender may have similar experiences. There was an assumption that the participants' lived experiences were shared through the interview process in the participants' responses, and participants were honest about their experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

The intention of this study was to provide insight into the lived experiences of African American women who completed or exited a health care program while attending an HBCU. The findings have implications for future research. Since this research specifically dealt with African American women who completed or exited a health care program while attending an HBCU, further research might consider investigating African American women who completed or exited a health care program while attending non-

HBCUs. In addition, race and gender should be further explored for a deeper understanding of those issues in higher education, such as having a focus on the experiences of African American males at HBCUs or non-HBCUs. Another option for future research would be to compare the lived experiences of white students, male or female, who completed or exited a health care program while attending HBCUs. Further gains from such research could provide strategies for future students to overcome the challenges related to issues of race, implications for best practices, development and implementation for new policies and procedures. Female students having children played a large role with college enrollment and completing or exiting a program. More research is needed to determine what is necessary to mitigate the consequences a child has on the success of education completion for these students.

Further research is needed for staff, faculty, and college administrators in understanding African American females and their unique experiences, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as how they can assist these students to overcome their limitations and to help them develop their weaknesses into strengths inside the classroom and in the workforce. Studies of this nature can provide additional research concerning the pathway of students who want to be successful in completing college to enter any major industry.

Conclusion

The findings of this study broaden the understanding of the lived experiences of African American females who completed or exited an undergraduate health care program while attending an HBCU. The experiences and the willingness of those participants to share their academic journey would better prepare future students in overcoming barriers preventing degree completion. The participants also hope their

experiences will help others interested in majoring in a health care program, especially students of color. This study revealed that African American females would face difficult barriers, but success in academic achievement remains possible. The six participants shared experiences concerning educational goals, family support, self-sacrifice, academic responsibilities, family and outside responsibilities, social integration, race, gender, identity, and awareness, each of which had importance and meaning in their life. All these factors played key roles in determining whether the individual was to be successful or not in attaining their academic degrees or diplomas. There was no doubt those individuals brought unique experiences with them into the classroom and exhibited monumental faith and courage in believing their experiences had meaning. The participants hoped that their stories would help others, no matter the color or gender.

Concluding Reflection

African American female students enrolled in health care programs while attending an HBCU brought several experiences into the classroom. The study showed the importance of their history of high school and pre-college experiences, educational goals, gender, and ethnicity. The participants also gave details of their experiences, which focused on their academic and family responsibilities and their social integration. The participants gave insightful stories of their experiences, of which some were positive, and others were negative. For some participants, these interviews were the first time they had verbalized issues that they had buried deep inside their minds for years. No matter how deep they may have thought they were buried, these experiences revealed themselves as they enrolled in college and became full- or part-time student. Their beliefs on persistence and attitudes towards perseverance were only a few things that kept them moving forward. The participants who had children still found hope in the future for them. The participants who did not have children were planning for the future of their children by working in the field they love. Trying to make the academic journey from pre-college to college as smoothly as possible, whether female or male, black or white, all students hope their voice will be heard by faculty, college administrators, and HBCUs. In completing this research, I found meaning in understanding the lived experiences African American women bring to the classroom. The experience of completing this research allows me to evaluate teaching methodologies, develop new curriculum and instructional strategies, application of best practices, and improve program design to meet the needs of this unique group of students.

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Appendix A: VSU Consent to Participate

VSU Consent to Participate

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY Consent to Participate in Research

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled “The African American Female College Student: A Phenomenological Approach to the Lived Educational Experience.” This research project is being conducted by Melissa Jordan, a student in Adult and Career Education at Valdosta State University. The researcher has explained to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask the researcher any questions you have to help you understand this project and your possible participation in it. A basic explanation of the research is given below. Please read this carefully and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have. The University asks that you give your signed agreement if you wish to participate in this research project.

Purpose of the Research: This study involves research. The purpose of the study is to understand African American female experiences of completing or exiting an undergraduate healthcare administration program. Also, make recommendations to improve the design to effectively assist these students with educational achievement and career goal attainment.

Procedures: As a participant in this study, you will be involved in a three-step interview process as an African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who exits from an undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia. Participation in the interview is voluntary and if you do not participate, in no way will your grade be affected in any course.

You will be asked to participate in a three-step interview process. The time allotted for the interview is no longer than 90 minutes. There will be up to 10 open-ended questions asked to gain insight on your experiences. There are no alternatives to the experimental procedures in this study. The only alternative is to choose not to participate at all. For the interview, you will be asked (at an appointed time) to meet via Skype to conduct the interview or at Albany State University in the James Pendergrast memorial Library, Room 114. Notes of your responses will be recorded using a note pad and a tape recorder. There will be no one else present during the interview to ensure confidentiality.

Please note there are some details about the study that you are not being told in advance. When your participation is complete, the study will be explained to you in full detail, and all your questions will be answered. At that time, you can decide whether you want your information to be included in the study.

Possible Risks or Discomfort: Although there are no known risks associated with these research procedures, it is not always possible to identify all potential risks of participating

in a research study. However, the University has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize potential but unknown risks.

If the possibility of either physical or psychological injury exists, include this statement: If you [are injured/experience psychological distress] because of your participation in this study, please contact Melissa Jordan at majordan@valdosta.edu. Neither the researcher nor Valdosta State University has made special provision for services required to treat any injury/ psychological distress that results from participation in this research study. By agreeing to participate in this research project, you are not waiving any rights that you may have against Valdosta State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its researchers.

Potential Benefits: Although you may not benefit directly from this research, your participation will help the researcher gain additional understanding of the lived experiences of an African American female student who is a completer and an African American student who is an exiter of an undergraduate healthcare program and how they can improve in meeting the needs of African American female students and other colleges and universities in the future.

Costs and Compensation: There is no cost to you and there is no compensation (no money, gifts, or services) for your participation in this research project.

Assurance of Confidentiality: Valdosta State University and the researcher will keep your information confidential to the extent allowed by law. Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a university committee charged with reviewing research to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants, may be given access to your confidential information.

All identifying characteristics or personal descriptions (i.e., name, age, etc.) will be removed from the typed transcripts as well as from any presented or published accounts of the sessions, to ensure confidentiality. Participants will be identified as nontraditional student with the basic demographic information. Data collected from recorded audio will be collected and transcribed. The original notes from these transcripts and audio will be kept in a secure location for future reference in a lock cabinet; electronic data will be kept on a password protected computer with antivirus/spy ware security. After three years, audio data will be erased as will be in electronic format and files will be deleted from computer trash. All notes will be disposed of by shredder. An inaccurate portrayal of situations or participants may cause harm. You will be provided a copy of the transcripts to validate accuracy. Any risk to you will be minimal as you are only disclosing personal information that you wish to disclose, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and have your data destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate in this research project is entirely voluntary. If you agree now to participate and change your mind later, you are free to leave the study. Your decision not to participate at all or to stop participating at any time in the future will not have any effect on any rights you have or any services you are

otherwise entitled to from your academic institution. If there is a question you prefer not to answer or a comment that you do not want to include within the interview transcript, please let us know.

Information Contacts: Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Melissa Jordan at the following email: majordan@valdosta.edu. You may also contact the IRB Administrator at 229-333-7837. Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this study for the Protection of Human Research Participants.

Agreement to Participate: The research project and my role in it have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, I am indicating that I am 18 years of age or older. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I would like to receive a copy of the results of this study: _____ Yes _____ No

Mailing Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Printed Name of Participant Date

Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date

Appendix B: Interview Question Setup Protocol

<p>Introductions and clarification of study (conducted at each session as needed).</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Hello, my name is XX and I am a doctoral candidate at Valdosta State University. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. This interview will utilize a tape recorder for review analysis of responses. I am interested in understanding the lived experiences of an African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who is an exiter from an undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia.</p> <p>Through asking specific questions regarding your experiences, I hope to offer a fresh understanding of how to formulate and/or review procedures, policies, teaching methods, resources, recruitment and retention strategies for not only Historically Black Colleges and Universities, but all colleges and universities within the University System of Georgia. Hopefully this research will be affective in revealing hidden barriers that will lead to closing the gap between African American female students and your counterparts.</p> <p>Your responses will be confidential, and I will not include any personal information like your name that would identify you in any reports we write. Before we began, do you have any questions?</p>
<p>INTERVIEW I</p> <p>Topic 1: Focused Life History</p> <p>20 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe what school was like for you before college. Are there specific positive and/or negative experiences?• What memories do you have of going school (before college)? • Where you an A, B, C, D, or F student in high school based on your GPA?• Whom do you credit with helping you while in school?

INTERVIEW II

Topic 2: Details of the Experience

20 minutes

- Where do you recall receiving the most help while in school? Home? Teachers? Family? Friends?
- How do you feel about your ability to handle your academic responsibilities as they related to your past education experience?
- Did anyone in your family attend college (parents, siblings) or are you a first-generation college student?
- Describe what made you decide to go to college
- What made you choose to attend a Historically Black College and University?
- Did you have support by family or friends when you decided to enroll in college? What was it like for you?
- What made you decide to choose health care as your undergraduate major?
- What have your experiences in college been like as an African American female student?
- Can you please share a memorable story about your educational experience while participating in the undergraduate healthcare program at a Historically Black College and University?
- Are there specific positive and/or negative experiences you have had as an African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who is exiter from an undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia? Can you please elaborate?
- Describe if you experience any stressful situations in college and if so, how did you handle them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you experienced any challenges? How did you overcome these challenges? Can you please elaborate? • Does your life history have anything to do with you choosing to enroll in the undergraduate healthcare program Historically Black College and University? If so, what? • Describe your experience with academic advising. • Describe your experience with faculty. • Describe your involvement and relationship with any friends, school clubs or organizations, and memberships.
<p>INTERVIEW III</p> <p>Topic 3: Reflection on Meaning</p> <p>20 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you reflect upon your educational experience in while attending college in relation to the various factors that play a role within this context (e.g., family, college administration, work) and how have these factors helped you attain your educational goals? • What is your definition of success? • What are the factors that had a significant impact on your ability to succeed? • What are the factors that had a significant impact on your ability to exit the program? • Given what you have said about your educational experience prior to college and what you have talked about in your current experiences, how do you view your educational experience completing or exiting an undergraduate health care program while attending college a Historically Black College and University in your life? What was it like for you? • How do you see your experiences while participating in the undergraduate healthcare program and how does it develop your ability to persist? How has it shaped your goal

	<p>to attain a degree and graduate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is this college degree important? • Have you always felt a college degree was important? If so, why? • Is there anything else you would like to add in order to help me understand how or what you find meaningful from your experience as an African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who exiter from an undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia.
<p>Final Thoughts and Closing</p> <p>15 minutes</p>	<p>We have come to the end of the interview and those are all the questions I wanted to ask. Do you have any questions you would like for me to answer?</p>

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Adopted from Seidman (2006)

The interview questions are as follows:

PHASE I: Questions focusing on life history

- Describe what school was like for you before college. Are there specific positive and/or negative experiences?
- What memories do you have of going school (before college)?
- Where you an A, B, C, D, or F student in high school based on your GPA?
- Whom do you credit with helping you while in school?
- Where do you recall receiving the most help while in school? Home? Teachers? Other family members? Friends?
- How do you feel about your ability to handle your academic responsibilities as they related to your past education experience?
- Did anyone in your family attend college (parents, siblings) or are you a first-generation college student?
- Describe what made you decide to go to college
- What made you choose to attend a Historically Black College and University?
- Did you have support by family or friends when you decided to enroll in college? What was it like for you?

PHASE II: Details of the Experience

- What made you decide to choose health care as your undergraduate major?
- What have your experiences in college been like as an African American female student?

- Can you please share a memorable story about your educational experience while participating in the undergraduate healthcare program at a Historically Black College and University?
- Are there specific positive and/or negative experiences you have had as African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who is an exiter from an undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia? Can you please elaborate?
- Describe if you experience any stressful situations in college and if so, how did you handle them.
- Have you experienced any challenges? How did you overcome these challenges? Can you please elaborate?
- Does your life history have anything to do with you choosing to complete or exit the undergraduate healthcare program Historically Black College and University? If so, what?
- Describe your experience with academic advising.
- Describe your experience with faculty.
- Describe your involvement and relationship with any friends, school clubs or organizations, and memberships.

PHASE III: Reflection on the Meaning

- Can you reflect upon your educational experience in while attending college in relation to the various factors that play a role within this context (e.g., family,

college administration, work) and describe how these factors helped you attain your educational goals or exit the program?

- What is your definition of success?
- What are the factors that had a significant impact on your ability to succeed?
What are the factors that had a significant impact on your ability to exit the program?
- Given what you have said about your educational experience prior to college and what you have talked about in your current experiences, how do you view your educational experience as an African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who is an exiter from an undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia in your life?
What was it like for you?
- How do you see your experiences as an African American female student while completing and an African American female student exiting the undergraduate healthcare program? If you completed the program, how has it developed your ability to persist? How has it shaped your goal to attain a degree and graduate?
- Why is this college degree important?
- Have you always felt a college degree was important? If so, why?
- Is there anything else you would like to add to help me understand how or what you find meaningful from your experience as an African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who exiter from an

undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia.

Final thoughts and closing:

- We have come to the end of the interview and those are all the questions I wanted to ask. Do you have any questions you would like for me to answer?

The interview will conclude with me saying, “Thank you for your participation in this study of the African American female student who is a completer and an African American female student who is an exiter from an undergraduate healthcare administration program while attending Historically Black College and University within University System of Georgia.”

Appendix D: Skype Protocol

Skype Protocol

- One day prior to the Skype interview, I will Skype the student to make sure the student has access to the interview session. I will give the student ample time to log in. I will also confirm the time for the Skype session for the next day.
- Interview will be recorded for 90 minutes.
- Overview (participant will be reminded Skype session will be recorded using cell phone).
- Introductions (students will create and introduce themselves using pseudonyms). I will call and confirm students' pseudonyms before the start of the session.
- Begin interview with warm up question.

Appendix E: GOOGLE Hangout Protocol

GOOGLE Hangout Protocol

- One day prior to the GOOGLE Hangout interview, I will contact participant to make sure the participant has access to the interview session. I will give the participants instructions on how to access GOOGLE Hangout (<https://hangouts.google.com/>). I will give the participant ample time to log in. I will confirm the time for the GOOGLE Hangout interview session for the next day.
- Interview will be recorded for 90 minutes.
- Overview (participant will be reminded GOOGLE Hangout session will be recorded using cell phone).
- Introductions (participant will create and introduce themselves using pseudonyms). I will call and confirm students' pseudonyms before the start of the session.
- Start interview with warm up questions.