AFRICAN AMERICAN MILLENNIAL COLLEGE STUDENTS’ APPRAISAL OF FAILED ATTEMPTS AT PURSUING STUDENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty in the Educational Leadership Program of Tift College of Education at Mercer University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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DEDICATION

“For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.”

-Kahlil Gibran

I must dedicate this dissertation to my wife and son. Ronda, for the last three years, you have supported me on this journey that has altered our lives tremendously. There have been so many times that we have been ships passing in the night because of my crazy schedule at Morehouse and the 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. nights at home working on my studies. Thank you for being patient and loving me unconditionally. You have let me know when I needed to rest. You have let me know when I needed to work harder. You have always enhanced me with your love, while ensuring that I removed things out of my life that was dangerous to me and dangerous to us. I guess Kahlil Gibran is describing love in a way that is like landscaping. A good landscaper inspires good growth and prunes away the bad. So, thank you for landscaping my life. I love you for this.

You have birthed our son. I pray that he continues to be healthy and that he is useful to the world. As Kanye West said, “If you can be used . . . then you’re useless.” I am sure that you (Ronda) will serve beside me as we landscape his life. Michael “Tripp” Gary III, daddy will always work hard for you and mommy. My hope for you is that you are as Kanye West stated (I know two Kanye quotes, but hey, I am a fan) “specifically talented at learning.” Your smile is the equivalent of pure happiness.
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“I can’t stress enough the importance of surrounding yourself with energy that supports your goals. . . . There have been times when I’ve had to separate myself from certain family members, childhood friends, and people in general who brought negative energy into my life.”

-Kanye West

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ABSTRACT

MICHAEL GARY, JR
AFRICAN AMERICAN MILLENNIAL COLLEGE STUDENTS’ APPRAISAL OF FAILED ATTEMPTS AT PURSUING STUDENT LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
Under the direction of ELAINE M. ARTMAN, Ed.D.

Millennials college students report more mental health problems. Research about Millennial college students often neglects the experiences of Millennials college students of color. African American Millennial college students’ experience mental health issues as their third major cause of death by suicide, with the leading predictor being depression. The study explored the lived experiences and coping responses of African American Millennial college students who have faced failed attempts at obtaining student leadership positions, as well as the appraisal processes students utilize while going through this experience.

The researcher employed a qualitative method to explore this phenomenon by conducting a thematic analysis using data collected via a semistructured interview questionnaire to determine (a) In what way do African American Millennial college students appraise the lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position? and (b) How do African American Millennial college students at one Historically Black College or University describe their coping responses to a failed attempt at a pursuing a student leadership position?
The researcher inquired about Millennials' (a) Character and Desire to Achieve; (b) Experience and Reaction to Not Being Selected; (c) Reaction about Process and Purpose for Student Leadership Roles; (d) Personal Retrospect: Ability to Cope and Express Oneself; (e) Reaction/Response to Loss or Failure; (d) Actualization and Self-Evaluation; and (f) Emotional Support and Closure.

The themes that emerged were: (a) Passionate, Outgoing, and Persistent; (b) Disappointed and Self-Deprecating; (c) Desire to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence; (d) Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged; (e) Copes Reclusively in Order to Refocus and Move-On; (f) Self-Actualization Leads to Evaluation, Expression, and Blame; and (g) Lacks Emotional Support and Desires Closure.

The students were passionate about pursuing leadership positions, yet ended up with feelings of anger, hurt, disappointment, incapability, and sadness. Nonetheless, the students did not convey behaviors of entitlement. Participants reported working to resolve feelings of depression and anxiety by withdrawing from campus life (avoidance coping) to gain perspective regarding their failed attempt, which suggests anxiety and depression are prominent among African American Millennial college students.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The study explored the lived experiences and coping responses of African American Millennial college students who have faced failed attempts at obtaining student leadership positions. Further, the study examined the appraisal processes students utilize while going through this experience. The researcher sought to address one aspect of the growing rates of depression, anxiety, and stress of college students.

A survey of college counseling directors documented a growing number of students coping with significant emotional problems (Barr, Rando, Krylowicz, & Winfield, 2010). These students are entering colleges and universities with issues that negatively impact their success in college and compromise their ability to graduate in four years. One alarming fact is the United States now has the highest college dropout rate in the industrialized world (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). Bettinger, Boatman, and Long (2013) posited less than 60% of students graduate from four-year institutions in six years or less. Dropout rates for minority students depict a far worse situation: “Only 30 percent of African Americans and less than 20 percent of Latinos have an associate’s degree or higher” (Symonds et al., 2011, p. 6). Subsequently, the Lumina Foundation (2015b) explained numerous stressors and a lack of support challenge students.
One area where support is lacking is financial aid. The cost of higher education paid by students and their families has increased at large rates (Reindl, 2007). According to Lucca, Nadauld, and Shen (2015), the average cost of tuition rose 46% between 2001 and 2012.

More than half of currently enrolled college students are financially independent, and approximately 42% of first-year students live near or below the poverty line; therefore, these students are struggling to subsist (Lumina Foundation, 2015b). For example, students with financial obligations drop out of school at a rate of 38% as compared to 16% of students who do not have the same responsibilities (Lumina Foundation, 2015a). The experiences of minority students also tell a story of financial hardship, since the likelihood of coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds is greater than that of their White counterparts (White & Lowenthal, 2011). Consequently, even though a college degree is very important, it comes with an extremely expensive cost (United States Department of Education, 2015).

Another area of concern is the academic preparedness of students. White and Lowenthal (2011) cited academic literacy as an essential component of collegiate success. However, 21st century high school graduates are deficient in “oral and written communication and critical thinking skills” (Symonds et al., 2011, p. 4). Further, many students enter college underprepared to tackle course material, as evidenced by approximately 40% of freshmen enrolled in remedial courses (Bettinger et al., 2013).
This lack of college preparedness is also present in community colleges, as many entering students are not ready for college level work (Boggs, 2011).

A final example of a critical area of concern regarding today’s college students, and the overall focus of this study, is their mental health. Colleges report large increases in the presence and severity of students with mental health conditions (Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012). Pryor, Hurtado, DeAngelo, Blake, and Tran (2010) contended the fall 2010 cohort of college freshmen, self-reported in the CIRP College Student Senior Survey, had the lowest ratings of emotional health.

Similarly, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) (2014) documented that one in ten college seniors revealed feeling frequently depressed. HERI (2014) posited that approximately 55% of men and 69% of women college seniors who reported feeling frequently depressed sought out counseling services, which supports Misner’s (2014) documentation of a rapid increase in demand by students for counseling services. In addition, the 2014 cohort of freshmen college students reported feeling depressed at higher rates (HERI, 2015).

The mental health experiences of minority teenagers and young adults suggest that they warrant attention. The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) (2016) highlighted a major connection between suicide and depression, stating that over 50% of people who commit suicide suffer from depression. Furthermore, “Suicide was the second leading cause of death for adults between the ages of 10 and 34 in the United States” (AFSP, 2016, line 8.). In the case of African American young adults, there is similarity with the national averages, for suicide is the third leading cause of death for
this cohort of people (Wang, Nyutu, & Tran, 2012). Concurrent with the rest of the U.S. population, the major predictor of suicide for African Americans is depression (Wang et al., 2012).

Reynolds (2013) argued the mental health of college students is not only the responsibility of counseling services. It is important for higher education professionals to be prepared to provide holistic academic and personal development to meet the needs of these students who enter college with mental health conditions (Reynolds, 2013). The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (2004) supported this claim, charging higher education professionals to challenge ideas about conventional teaching and learning. ACPA and NASPA (2004) also questioned whether current practices support teaching and learning for 21st century college students.

The traditional college student of the 21st century (18-24 years old) belongs to the Millennial generation (Wilson & Gerber, 2008), born between 1981 and 2009 (Alexander & Sysko, 2012; Johnson, 2010; Wilson & Gerber, 2008). The Pew Research Center (2010b) declared Millennials will account for more than half of the U. S. workforce in the next decade. Castro (2010) argued that there is much popularity and public fascination with the Millennial generation, as there exists series of books, websites, and newsletters dedicated to the discussion of this cohort.

Patten and Fry (2015) suggested that there has been a change in the racial makeup of the country, and this change is highly evident in the Millennial generation. The Millennial generation is more racially diverse than their predecessors are (Coomes &
Debard 2004; Debard, 2004; Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenberg, 2012). Patten and Fry (2015) argued Millennials are more likely to be racial minorities than members of the silent generation are, in which 57% of Millennials in 2014 were non-Hispanic Whites as compared to 78% of the silent generation. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Census Bureau (2013) reported a 20% increase in minorities ages 15 to 34 between the years of 1980 and 2012.

![Figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Race and ethnic groups, 15-34 year-olds between 1980 and 2012. Adapted with permission from America’s Families and Living Arrangements: 2013: Adults (A Table Series), U.S. Census Bureau, 2013. Vopyright 2013 by U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Strayhorn (2011) maintained that the diversity of Millennial college students comes with its opportunities and challenges. Strayhorn (2011) further asserted, “Racial . . . minority Millennials warrant special attention” (p. 26). Dungy (2011) supported these assertions, affirming that Millennial college students from different
cultures have different experiences while in college. Additionally, Mattai, Wagle, and Williams (2010) claimed, “Few articles discuss the special needs of students who are not regarded as mainstream students in American schooling—those who are culturally and linguistically different (CLD)” (p. 26).

Yet, it is important to focus on those students who are culturally different in order to reduce their chance of school failure (Mattai et al., 2010). Concomitantly, the most culturally neglected student cohort has been the African American student (Mattai et al., 2010). Parallel to this argument, studies related to resiliency typically omit African American Millennials (Burley, Barnard-Brak, Marbley, & Deason, 2010). Moreover, African American Millennial students are likely to come from homes with lower incomes and experience a lack in academic preparedness (Bettinger et al., 2013; Burley et al., 2010; Symonds et al., 2011). Although African American Millennial college students lack representation in resiliency or appraisal research, they experience those factors that contribute to negative impacts on their success in college; namely mental health issues. Consequently, African American Millennial college students are the focus of this study.

Millennials possess attributes critiqued by scholars and nonscholars alike (Hoover, 2009). One characteristic of this generation is they feel that they warrant special attention (defined as being special) (Howe & Strauss, 1991, 2009; Wilson & Gerber, 2008); in other words, Millennials feel entitled (Monaco & Martin, 2007; Thompson & Gregory, 2012), which is the negative face of the special characteristic (Wilson & Gerber, 2008). Millennials feel they are special as a result of the strong
relationship with their parents and being taught that they are all *winners* just for participating (Monaco & Martin, 2007; Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

Thompson and Gregory (2012) contributed that the popular press has numerous stories about the sense of entitlement in Millennials. Twenge (2010) defined entitlement as an “expectation of receiving something for doing nothing” (p. 206). There exist questions left unexplored about Millennial college students. For example, what happens when Millennial college students do not receive what they feel is their entitlement? What are the experiences of these students? Does leadership in higher education focus student development on those who do not receive what they feel is their entitlement or concentrate on how students appraise challenging events? While college students believe leadership is limited to select individuals, little exists beyond this knowledge regarding their thoughts about leadership (Caza & Rosch, 2014). Considering these questions relate to the sense of entitlement in Millennials, the mental health issues faced by this cohort of college students, and the need for more research that focuses on African American Millennial college students, this study explored African American Millennial college students’ appraisal of a potentially challenging event and their coping responses.

**Problem Statement**

The problem focus of this study was the escalating rate of anxiety and depression experienced by college students (specifically the Millennial generation) that has reached the designation of crisis, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012). More specifically, the study targeted African American college students whose stress experiences include additional and unique layers of cultural and historical
trauma (Bentley-Edwards & Stevenson, 2016; Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012). Research about the Millennial Generation often does not speak to the nuances associated with Millennials of different race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011). Further, research documents that levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress, amongst other mental health issues, have increased in today’s college students (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Soet & Sevig, 2006). This study addressed this problem by exploring the lived experiences of African American Millennial college students who were unsuccessful in their attempts to secure student leadership positions.

Background of the Problem

Reynolds (2013) posited, “The increased presence and severity of mental health issues on college campuses has dominated both public discourse and academic scholarship in recent years” (p. 98). Likewise, Watkins et al. (2012) maintained, “Consecutive generations of diverse Millennial students report more mental health problems even when gender composition, region, and decreases in defensive responding are controlled” (p. 3). Moreover, studies have illustrated an increase in levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress, amongst other mental health issues, plaguing college students (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Soet & Sevig, 2006).

The 2014 National College Health Assessment, conducted by the College Health Association, reported nearly 90% of college students indicated they frequently feel “exhausted” or “overwhelmed” (see Figure 2).
Figure 2. What goes through a typical college student’s mind over a 12-month period? Adapted with permission from National College Health Assessment II: Spring 2014 Reference Group Executive Summary, American College Health Association, 2014. Copyright 2014 by ACHA.

Figure 3 represents analysis conducted by Novotney (2014) of the American Psychological Association, documenting increases of mental health issues affecting college students.

Figure 3. Increases in mental health concerns of college students. Adapted with permission from “Students under Pressure,” by A. Novotney, (2014), Monitor on Psychology, 45(8), p. 36. Copyright 2014 by the American Psychological Association.
In their study about the increased demand for mental health services on college campus, Watkins and colleagues (2012) found that characteristics associated with Millennials potentially impact their mental health. The characteristic *pressured* reflects that Millennials are motivated to meet the pressures and expectations of family members (Cabrera, 2014). The pressure does not end with the family, since higher education applies pressure on Millennial college students to be successful. One instance of this is the challenge faced by colleges and universities to integrate and embrace learning in the form of out-of-classroom experiences (Keeling, 2006). One-way learning to accomplish this integration is through student leadership programs. Posner (2014) asserted student leadership development as “an integral part of the educational program of most college students” (p. 21). Student leadership programs exist in the form of cocurricular activities like student government, fraternity and sorority life, and residential government (Council for the Advancement of of Standards in Higher Education [CAS], 2009). Unfortunately, not all students have the opportunity to participate in student leadership opportunities (CAS, 2009).

Nevertheless, research of the Millennial Generation often does not speak to the diversity of experiences of Millennials that differ in race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011). Additional research is necessary to understand the experiences of Millennial college students of color (Strayhorn, 2011). One example of an experience of Millennial college students of color is the suicide rate of African American young adults. The third major cause of death for African American young adults is suicide, with the leading predictor of suicide for this cohort being depression.
Historically, social failure and social alienation relate to reasons for depression resulting in suicide (Boskoff, 1982). Joiner (2009) supported Boskoff’s assertion by contending that social alienation has implications for suicidal behavior. Considering African American Millennial college students’ experiences with suicide, coupled with the higher education pressure for Millennials to be student leaders, the problem focus of this study was colleges and universities do not yet know the mental health implications for African American Millennial college students as a result of their appraisal of failed attempts at pursuing student leadership opportunities.

Theoretical Framework

Appraisal theory served as the theoretical framework of the study. The thematic approach to appraisal theory seeks to identify elicited emotions linked to a pattern of outcomes related to a specific event (Scherer, 1999). Further, appraisal theory describes a process that explains the nuances associated with emotions (Silva, 2005). The theoretical framework assumes the position that individuals’ subjective evaluation of the significance of an event produces emotions (Scherer, 1999).

\[
\text{Significant Event} \quad + \quad \text{Impact: Self-Evaluation (Actualization) of Event} \quad = \quad \text{Emotion(s)} \quad = \quad \text{Conscious or Unconscious Reaction(s)}
\]

Subjective Evaluation

Figure 4. Appraisal Theory Self-Evaluation Appraisal Process
Lazarus and Folkman’s (1988) appraisal theory provided a lens by which the researcher studied how African American Millennial college students evaluated their experiences, along with their conscious or unconscious reactions, expressed via coping responses to the potentially challenging event of not being selected for a sought student leadership position. Appraisal theory also provided the framework for addressing the problem. Lastly, the theoretical framework assisted in explaining the findings of the study.

Purpose of the Study

Bearing in mind the arguments presented by Dungy (2011) and Strayhorn (2011), the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of African American Millennial college students’ perception of failed attempts at student leadership opportunities. Further, the study examined the appraisal processes students utilize while going through this experience. The research sought to confront one potential determinant of the increase in the rates of depression, anxiety, and stress of college students. The phenomenological themes provided insight into how students experience and understand (interpret) unsuccessful attempts to attain campus leadership positions.

Research Questions

This following two research questions guided this study:

1. In what ways do African American Millennial college students appraise the lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position?
2. How do African American Millennial college students at one Historically Black College or University describe their coping responses to a failed attempt at pursuing a student leadership position?

Procedures

Crotty (1998) contended that sound qualitative research identifies the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and the methods used to conduct the study. The epistemological stance adopted in this study that informed its theoretical perspective of interpretivism is constructivism. Using phenomenological methodology, the research collected data using semistructured interviews (Creswell, 2013). In order to mitigate bias, the researcher bracketed his experiences utilizing a subjectivity statement (Creswell, 2013). The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews in order to gain an understanding of African American Millennial college students’ perceptions of failed attempts at student leadership opportunities and their subsequent coping responses.

Sample

The sample included African American Millennial college students who vied for student leadership positions (i.e. SGA, Fraternity/Sorority, Campus King/Queen) and did not get selected. After gaining IRB approval, the researcher identified the sample by sending an invitation letter to the student activities office at the study site, which subsequently solicited students who met the criteria of an African American Millennial college student who sought out a student leadership position and failed to be selected. Identified participants completed the survey, How Millennial Are You?, provided by the
Pew Research Center. The survey considered those participants who achieved a score of at least 73 as a Millennial, and they were a part of the final sample.

Creswell (2013) recommended the conducting of interviews with a minimum of five and a maximum of 25 participants. Additionally, the researcher considered the findings of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), who suggested that data saturation occurs when the generation of new codes or themes increases with less frequency. As the codes and themes began decreasing at five participants, the researcher continued collecting data and realized a sample size of seven.

Definition of Terms

The terms defined in this section represent terminology that may not be readily understood by the general reader:

*Appraisal* is an evaluation of situations and events (Garrin, 2013).

*Coping* is “a process whereby an individual attempts to manage, through cognitive or behavioral efforts, external and internal demands that are assessed as exceeding one’s resources” (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000, p. 79).

*Coping responses* are mechanisms by which people understand, reframe, or react to a particular experience (Museus, Sariñana, & Ryan, 2015).

*Millennial generation* are those who were born between 1981-2009 (Alexander & Sysko, 2012; Johnson, 2010; Wilson & Gerber, 2008).

*Stereotype threat* is “being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797).
Student leadership position is defined in this study as Student Government, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Campus King or Queen, Resident Advisor, Orientation Leader (CAS, 2009).

Limitations

This study did not assess whether the participants suffered from anxiety or depression. Therefore, there is no formal psychological control that accounts for coping strategies, as defined by Langlois (2013), that is transferrable regarding the avoidance coping strategies of college students in general. Likewise, the study only focused on one student demographic and institution type; thus, the findings of this study may be limited to only African-America students at a Historically Black College or University. Lastly, while this study examined how students persisted after their failed attempt at a student leadership role, the study was not longitudinal and did not explore the levels of resiliency of the participants in order to draw a psychological conclusion regarding the full impact that the disruption (failed attempt) had on the students’ college career (Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 2002).

Delimitations

The study design restricted the sample to those students who identified themselves as African American or Black and attended a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). The reasons for this delimitation were additional research is necessary to understand the experiences of Millennial college students of color (Strayhorn, 2011) and elimination of the limitation of stereotype threat associated with African American college students. “Stereotype threat is being at risk of confirming, as a
self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). As HBCUs provide a racially homogenous environment, African American students have “academic counter-spaces” (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000, p. 70) that allow them to foster their own learning in a supportive environment, thus countering stereotype threat. Third, the study was delimited to Millennial college students. Focusing only on college students that belong to the Millennial generation could provide results that only reflect attributes associated with members of the Millennial generation and impact transferability. Fourth, the sample was delimited to those African American Millennial college students who sought out student leadership positions and were not selected. Delimiting the study to those students who were unsuccessful at obtaining selection for student leadership positions only provides the perception one event experienced by the participants and therefore may influence the transferability of results.

Significance of the Study

Through this study, student affairs leadership may gain a sense of the perceptions and coping strategies of African American Millennial college students who encounter potentially challenging events. Focusing on specific student experiences and issues can provide student affairs leadership the opportunity to better “promote and support” the “emotional and personal well-being” of students (HERI, 2014, p.3). Moreover, student affairs leadership will learn about the importance of disregarding inefficient, “one-size-fits-all” (Deggs, 2011, p. 1550) approaches to address student issues. Another possible benefit of this study is student affairs leadership could gain insight to potential protocols for helping students to develop positive and safe coping strategies.
Summary

There has been an increase in the presence and severity of mental health issues on college campuses with today’s traditional college student (18-24 years old) (Wilson & Gerber, 2008). This phenomenological study sought to explore the research questions of “In what way do African American Millennial college students perceive not being selected for a student leadership position?” and “How do African American Millennial college students at one Historically Black University describe their coping responses to not being selected for a student leadership position?” to learn if African American Millennial college students report mental health issues as a result of student-campus experiences. The study also sought to investigate and describe how these students use coping responses to respond to potentially challenging events. The results of this study may provide the information that student affairs leadership may need to engage and promote the success of Millennial college students who experience social failure.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In recent years, the increase in mental health issues has been a popular topic in research and public discourse (Reynolds, 2013). Studies (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Soet & Sevig, 2006) indicate an increase in levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress amongst other mental health issues plaguing today’s college students. Concurrently, today’s traditional college students (18-24 years old), members of the Millennial generation (Wilson & Gerber, 2008), are reporting more mental health problems (Watkins, Hunt, & Eisenburg, 2012). Conversely, the research about Millennial college students does not often describe the experiences of Millennials in marginalized demographics, in particular, Millennial college students of color (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011).

African American Millennial college students are also experiencing mental health issues. For example, the third major cause of death in African American young adults is suicide, with the leading predictor of suicide being depression (Wang, Nyutu, & Tran, 2012). Historical research about depression suggests suicide relates to social failure (Boskoff, 1982). Research targets the struggles faced by colleges and universities to identify mental health issues with which African American Millennial college students are coping (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011). Students who are unsuccessful at attaining
elective leadership positions due to lack of knowledge of students’ thoughts regarding student leadership receives particular attention (Caza & Rosch, 2014). This literature review further explores these topics through reviewing the published research in the following six areas: The Millennial generation; Millennial attitudes/entitlement; African American Millennials; Mental health of Millennials; Appraisal Theory, coping responses; and student leadership.

The Millennial Generation

Elam, Stratton, and Gibson (2007) described Millennials as hardworking; engaged in academic, extracurricular and service activities; and generous and practical. Conversely, Millennials have aggressively protective parents, described by Padilla-Walker and Nelson (2012) as “helicopter parents” (p. 1177), shortened attention spans, sheltered, and pressured to succeed (Elam et al., 2007). Morrison (2009) and Strauss and Howe (2003) noted Millennials are team-oriented, pressured, and conventional. Elam and colleagues (2007) provided suggestions for working with this cohort. Some of their suggestions included using positive reinforcement as a motivator, carefully prepared policies to build trust, and ensuring a safe and secure campus environment.

Howe and Strauss (1991), known for writing about generations, described America’s history as a sequence of generational biographies by which the behavior dynamics of each generation participate in social change. Additionally, Howe and Strauss (1991) provided an anecdotal timeline of major historical events beginning in 1854 and discussed how those events are responsible for the characteristics associated
with each generation. Criticized for not being social scientists (Hoover, 2009), Strauss and Howe (2003) made themselves popular by writing books about Millennials in which they presented seven core characteristics associated with this generation and provided implications for institutions of higher education. These characteristics included achieving, sheltered, confident, special, team-oriented, pressured, and conventional (Strauss & Howe, 2003). While Hoover (2009) argued that authors like Strauss and Howe often make assertions about Millennials without supporting empirical data, many educational institutions and organizations utilize their material as the major source of information about this student cohort.

Millennial College Students

Institutions of higher education face challenges with the Millennial generation. Stewart and Bernhardt (2010) found that Millennial students are entering college with lower academic assets and higher narcissistic tendencies. Knowlton (2013) claimed that most professors argue that the egos of Millennial students get in the way of learning. Stewart and Bernhardt’s (2010) posited that there is a change in the expectations of students and the responsibilities and duties of colleges and universities. For example, Millennial students who experience dissatisfaction with their college or university are likely to complain using various methods (Pinto & Mansfield, 2013). Subsequently, Pinto and Mansfield (2013) recommended that college and universities determine the source of dissatisfaction to manage relationships with this cohort. Thus, Millennials expect their needs to be met, or they are going to complain. They may complain to their parents, via social networks, or by through formal channels (Pinto & Mansfield, 2013).
Research has uncovered that this generation influences pedagogy, resulting in the development of various teaching models that have different outcomes with Millennial students. For example, Wilson and Gerber (2008) recommended four pedagogical adaptations to the Millennial personality, which included clarity in course structure and assignments; student participation in course design; measures to reduce stress; and attention to the ethics of learning. Additionally, Roehling, Kooi, Dykema, Quisenberry, and Vandlen (2010) concluded professors’ attitudes, ability to facilitate discussion, and classroom atmosphere have a major impact on the level of engagement of Millennial students. Therefore, educators must understand the values and boundaries of Millennials in the classroom (Espinoza, 2012) and provide a healthy balance between challenging and supporting Millennial students (Stewart, 2009). In addition, support services must cater to their needs (Pullan, 2009).

Millennial Attitudes/Entitlement Behavior

While the previously mentioned studies focused on the experiences of Millennials in the classroom and their impact on higher education, there also exists research that concentrates on their attitudes. The literature addresses Millennial attitudes towards communication, relationship building, and motivation (Elam et al., 2007; Morrison, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 2003). For example, communication between generations has been an area of contention for quite some time. According to Payne, Summers, and Stewart (1973), issues with communication and relationship building are rather germane to the relationships between younger and older generations. Likewise, Branscum and Sciaraffa (2013) found that Millennials have negative attitudes towards adults. Consequently,
Millennials are not connecting with their professors or supervisors (Branscum & Sciaraffa, 2013).

While Strauss and Howe (2003) described Millennials as special and confident, particular areas of research view these attributes through the lens of entitlement. Alexander and Sysko (2009, 2012) examined the entitlement mentality of Generation Y (Millennials). In the first part of their three-part study, Alexander and Sysko (2009) conducted focus group interviews and discovered cognitive, behavioral, and affective influences on Millennials’ entitlement behavior. Subsequently, the second part of Alexander’s and Sysko’s (2012) study, which included a quantitative analysis that measured cognitive, behavioral, and affective antecedents that lead to entitlement mentality, supported the findings from the first part of their study.

Additionally, Stewart and Brenhardt (2010) maintained that Millennials have narcissistic and entitled behaviors that may have a negative impact of their academic performance. Expectations of reward and lack of patience accompany their entitled behaviors (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Thompson and Gregory (2012) concluded that entitlement behaviors exhibited by Millennials are the result of parenting practices. Ironically, those who criticize this behavior are often responsible for the development of this Millennial characteristic (Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

Furthermore, DeBard (2004) claimed the confidence of Millennials comes with the expectation to receive good news, for Millennials are typically optimistic. However, this optimism and self-confidence only remain when Millennials experience beneficial outcomes (DeBard, 2004). Monaco and Martin (2007) supported this assertion, stating
that Millennials become frustrated when they do not achieve high grades in their college courses. While research has reported the attributes of the Millennial generation and the associated attitudes of Millennials, there exist a lack of focus on Millennials of color, namely African Americans and other marginalized groups (Bonner, 2010a).

African American Millennial College Students

According to Dungy (2011), Millennial college students from different cultures have different experiences while in college. Dungy (2011) advised for consideration of the many identities that characterize students and how these identities intersect. Smith and Clark (2011) emphasized the importance of focusing on the cultural differences of the Millennial generation. Additionally, Dungy (2011) recommended the necessity for research to explore how students of color relate to their respective college, and Strayhorn (2011) advocated for additional research to understand the experiences of Millennial college students of color and racial minority Millennials. Concurrently, few articles focus on the special needs of nonmainstream students (Mattai, Wagle, & Williams, 2010). Mattai et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of giving attention to those students who are culturally different to reduce the chance of school failure.

As reported by Mattai et al. (2010), the most neglected cultural student is the African American student. For instance, studies related to resiliency generally exclude African American Millennials (Burley, Barnard-Brak, Marbley, & Deason, 2010). In addition, African American Millennial students arrive at college burdened with major barriers to success. They are likely to come from homes with lower incomes and a lack of academic preparedness resulting from their P-12 educational experiences (Bettinger,
Boatman, & Long, 2013; Burley et al., 2010; Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011). Strayhorn (2011) analyzed National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) data and found that African American Millennials reported lower educational aspirations than their White counterparts did. Strayhorn (2011) added that the educational aspirations of African American Millennials are lower than the aspirations of African Americans of previous generations. This finding is not present in the aggregate research about Millennials (Strayhorn, 2011).

Further, literature questions the applicability of the “Millennial generation” definition to African Americans (Bonner, 2010a, b; Bonner, Lewis, Bowman-Perott, Hill-Jackson, & James, 2009; Dungy, 2011, Henry, 2008, Strayhorn, 2011). Strayhorn (2011) detailed most of the empirical data on Millennial college students as a uniform group. Consequently, Bonner and colleagues (2009) challenged the seven characteristics of Millennials (achiever, confident, conventional, pressured, sheltered, special, and team-oriented) provided by Strauss and Howe (2003) used to describe Millennials, arguing these descriptions focus primarily on majority populations. Bonner, Robinson, and Byrd (2012) recommended treating these characteristics individually and contextually for African Americans. There is also a call for more research that focuses on the P-16 educational experiences of African American males and the misalignment of the African American male experience with the Millennial generation framework as described by Strauss and Howe. For example, Symonds et al. (2011) stated that the educational outcomes for African Americans are bleak, since only 30% of this demographic have an associate degree or higher.
Another recommended area for research to investigate is the role of pop culture in the identity development of the Millennial generation (Bonner, 2010b). Henry (2008) shared similar thoughts when citing the importance of the distinct hip-hop culture of the Millennial generation. Moreover, disaggregating African Americans from the Millennial generation devalues the general description of this generation (Bonner et al., 2009). Bonner et al. (2012) also inquired about the contextual experiences of African American male Millennial students who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Ibrahim, Schick, Makkawi, and Foster (2013) considered the Millennial generation as the most ethnically and racially diverse generation. Additionally, the values and expectations of Millennials differ when disaggregating the generation by gender, race, and year of study in college (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Ibrahim and colleagues (2013) conducted a quantitative study that assessed the values that influence students’ selection of college courses. The study included 282 African American students who represented 88% of the sample. All study participants attended a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). The findings of the study indicated that African American Millennials are more concerned with class outcomes than skill development in nonquantitative majors, such as English, art history, and criminal justice (Ibrahim et al., 2013). These findings support the argument that speaks to the importance of exploring the experiences of the African American Millennial college student cohort.

Millennial College Students’ Mental Health

Duncan (1999) declared that mental health problems for college students have been problematic for years. Concurrent with Duncan’s assertion, multiple studies
acknowledge a continuing increase in the presence and severity of mental health issues on college campuses with today’s traditional college student (18-24 years old) (Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012; HERI, 2014, 2015; Wilson & Gerber, 2008; Winger & Olson, 2015). The most prevailing mental health issues experienced by Millennial college students are anxiety and depression (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2015; Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012; HERI, 2014, 2015; Peters, 2007; Winger & Olson, 2015). In the 2014 annual report provided by the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (CCMH) (2015), 55.1% of clients’ reported anxiety, and 45.26% reported depression. In the same report, students echoed similar findings, with anxiety as the most pressing concern at 19.6% and depression, a close second, at 15% as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1

Students under Pressure: College and University Trends by School Year among Students Already Receiving Services at Counseling Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Students</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended counseling for mental health concerns</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken a medication for mental health concerns</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been hospitalized for mental health concerns</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposefully injured yourself without suicide attempt (e.g. cutting, hitting, burning, hair pulling)</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriously considered attempting suicide</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made a suicide attempt</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered seriously hurting another person</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally caused seriously injury to another person</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. In 2012-13 the answer format was changed for all items except prior counseling/meditation. This change may have partially accounted for some of the increases, but because rates changed differentially, it is clearly more than that. For a more detailed explanation of changes, see the Center for Collegiate Mental Health 2013 Annual Report. Adapted from 2014 Annual Report, by Center for Collegiate Mental Health, p. 20. Copyright 2015 by CCMH. Reprinted with permission.

Gruttadaro and Crudo (2012) also conducted a study about the experiences of college students living with mental health issues. The study included data from 765 survey responses collected from August 2011 until November 2011. Approximately 78% of the survey respondents belonged to the Millennial generation. In this national survey of college students, Gruttadaro and Crudo (2012) found depression and bipolar disorder represented the most frequently reported mental illness at 27% and 24% respectively. Anxiety represented the fourth most frequently reported mental illness at 11%. In 2015, Winger and Olson supported Gruttadaro and Crudo’s (2012) findings with the results of their phenomenological study that involved interviewing 10 faculty members and 10 student affairs professionals at a Midwestern university in the U.S who had significant experience dealing with students who exhibit concerning behaviors. Winger and Olson’s (2015) findings indicated an increase in anxiety and depression as compared to previous years.

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) (2015) conducted an annual freshmen survey that included data from 153,015 full-time freshmen entering 227 four-year U.S. colleges and universities. In the 2014 Freshman Survey, HERI (2015) reported a drop in the emotional health of college students from the previous year of 2.3 percent. Additionally, the amount of students who reported feeling frequently depressed rose to 9.5 percent. Furthermore, students who felt depressed frequently reported disengaging behaviors as a coping response (HERI, 2015). Moreover, these students reported being
less satisfied with college and struggling to find a sense of belonging. Lastly, campuses reported record number of visits and increased waiting times in counseling centers (HERI, 2015).

The HERI (2015) survey results support Misner’s (2014) findings that highlighted an increase in demand for counseling services at colleges and universities. Citing a survey conducted in 2013 by the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors, Misner (2014) reported that a third of colleges have a waiting list at their counseling centers. Misner (2014) added that the lists are getting longer as the number of students on wait lists at institutions with more than 25,000 students nearly doubled from 35 to 62 between the years of 2010 and 2012.

HERI (2014) provided findings from the 2014 College Senior Survey administered by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) that suggest that colleges and universities are experiencing increasing student demand for psychological and emotional support. The survey generated data from 13,301 seniors, who were graduating from 74 colleges and universities in the United States. The findings further suggested a need to increase the counseling staff of U.S. colleges and universities (HERI, 2014).

Additionally, the survey denoted major differences in the emotional health and well-being of men and women. HERI (2014) reported 96% of women felt overwhelmed in their senior year as compared to 87.2% of men. The data also indicated students struggling with depression, with 61% of women and 53.6% of men feeling depressed at some point of their college career. HERI (2014) declared that understanding specific
issues that students face can help pinpoint campus-level changes that are necessary to support and promote students’ emotional and personal well-being.

The mental health experiences of minority teenagers and young adults suggest that they warrant attention. Although African American Millennial college students are not often solely represented in the Millennial college student research about mental health (Wang et al., 2012), they also experience mental health issues that contribute to negative impacts on their success in college. Duncan (1999) examined the relationship between life events, religious orientation, coping, and depression for African American college students. The quantitative study included a sample of 251 African American college students (180 females and 71 males). Duncan (1999) concluded that the complex relationships of the investigated variables contributed to depressive symptoms in African American college students. These findings are significant because, according to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (2016), more than half of the people who commit suicide suffer experience depression.

Walker, Lester, and Joe (2006) contended that the African American community believes that Black families have immunized their youth from suicidal behavior. However, an unprecedented growth in Black suicide from 1970 to 1990 (Walker et al., 2006) is proof otherwise. Conversely, suicide rates for this group of people have been low, despite the high presence of suicidal factors in the Black community (e.g., marginalization, stress, economic strain) (Walker et al., 2006). The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) (2013) published a fact sheet that summarized data and research on suicidal behavior amongst African Americans. As illustrated in Figure 5, the data
denoted that African Americans commit suicide at rates that are much lower than the rates of their White counterparts.

However, an examination of the suicide rates for Blacks as an aggregate cohort reveals alarming findings. In the case of African American male and female young adults, suicide is the third leading cause of death, similar with the national averages (Wang et al., 2012). According to the Center for Disease Control (2016), since 1999, suicide has been the third leading cause of death for Blacks ages 15-24. Additionally, during the year 2014, this age range represents the age group where suicide is highest for Blacks (CDC, 2016). Black adults and youth also have thoughts of suicide at rates nearly equal to the total U.S. population, as illustrated in Table 2 (S.P.C., 2013). Concurrent
with the rest of the U.S. population, depression is the major predictor of suicide for African Americans (Wang et al., 2012).

Table 2

*Results of 2011 National Survey of Drug Use and Health*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In the Past Have You:</th>
<th>Blacks</th>
<th>Total U.S. Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had serious thoughts of suicide</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made suicide plans</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted suicide</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotten medical attention for a suicide attempt</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Reprinted with permission from “Suicide among Racial/Ethnic Populations in the U.S.: Blacks,” by Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2013, p. 2. Copyright 2013 by the Education Development Center, Inc.

In a study that focused on the mental health experiences and outcomes for African American Millennials, Wang et al. (2012) also cited suicide as the third leading cause of death for African American teenagers and young adults. Wang and colleagues (2012) investigated the reasons for living and coping that protect against suicidal behaviors. Their quantitative study included a sample consisting of 361 students who self-identified as African American. Using the *Suicidal Behaviors Questionnaire-Revised* developed by Osman et al. (2001) to collect data, the researchers found that emotion-based coping mediated suicidal activity, while avoidance-based coping protected from it. Wang et al. (2012) stated coping acts as the mediator between stressful events and psychological distress. Emotion-oriented coping focuses on reducing emotional distress coming from
the stressful event. Avoidance-oriented coping temporarily distracts a person from stressful situations (Wang et al., 2012). As emotion is a part of the coping process, the following section presents a discussion of Lazarus and Folkman’s (1988) appraisal theory, which describes the nuances associated with emotions and emotional experiences.

Appraisal Theory

According to Silva (2005), an essential query of emotional psychology addresses the reasons people become emotional. Appraisal theory provides a dynamic framework for explaining the nuances associated with emotions and emotional experiences (Silva, 2005). Scherer (1999) claimed that appraisal theory posits that the production and differentiation of emotions have basis in a person’s subjective evaluation of the significance of an event.

The History of Appraisal Theory

The history of appraisal as an idea began with the aim of the concept explaining elicitation of differentiated emotions (Scherer, 1999). According to Garrin (2013), Lazarus and Folkman advanced the early research of Arnold (1960) by observing that emotional responses were the result of evaluating situations and events. Three dimensions describe the appraisal of events: beneficial vs. harmful, presence vs. absence of some object, and relative difficulty to approach or avoid some object (Scherer, 1999). Richard Lazarus, who postulated that stress and emotion are the result of a two-stage process of appraisal, had the greatest influence on appraisal theory (Scherer, 1999).

The first stage, primary appraisal, focuses on the evaluation of the significance of an event for an individual’s well-being. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) cited the three
features of primary appraisal: goal relevance, goal congruence, and ego-involvement. Goal relevance focuses on the degree to which a situation touches on an individual’s goals and is necessary for experiencing an emotion (Lazarus & Smith, 1988). Goal congruence results in positive or negative emotions, determined by an event’s level of equivalence to an individual’s goals (Lazarus & Smith, 1988). Lastly, ego-involvement refers to whether an individual’s self-esteem is assaulted or enhanced (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003).

Secondary appraisal, the second stage, refers to the individual’s resources that can assist with coping with the consequences of a situation (Scherer, 1999). Lazarus and Smith (1988) provided four cognitive components of this stage: accountability, problem-focused coping potential, emotion-focused coping potential, and future expectancy. Accountability refers to an individual’s knowledge of who is responsible or in control of an event. Problem-focused coping potential focuses on a person’s evaluation of whether he or she can manage an encounter (Lazarus & Smith, 1988). “Emotion-focused coping potential has to do with the prospects of regulating the emotional state, which harmful or threatening consequences generate” (Lazarus & Smith, 1988, p. 290). Lastly, future expectancy refers to possible changes in a situation that could impact the goal congruence (Lazarus & Smith, 1988).

Silva (2005) and Scherer (2001) supported the position of Lazarus and Smith (1988) in their description of the appraisal structure of anger. The appraisal structure of anger includes “(1) appraising an event as relevant to a goal; (2) appraising the event as
incongruent with the goal; (3) judging a threat to one’s social- or self-esteem; and (4) blaming someone for the threat” (Silva, 2006, p. 56).

Blascovich and Mendes (2000) expanded the appraisal process from consisting only of primary and secondary appraisals as described above to include demand appraisal and resource appraisals. Demand appraisals consist of “the perception of danger, uncertainty, and required effort” inherent in a situation (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000, p. 63). Successively, resource appraisals “involve the perception or assessment of knowledge and skills relevant to situational performance” (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000, p. 63). Like primary and secondary appraisals, demand and resource appraisal interact with each other.

Approaches to Appraisal Theory

According to Scherer, Appraisal Theory is distinguished in four primary types of theoretical approach: criteria, attributions, themes, and meanings. The criteria approach to appraisal theory maintains that individuals use a set of criteria when assessing an event that is happening to them (Scherer, 1999). Four classes comprise the criteria approach: (1) intrinsic characteristics of events; (2) how significant an event is to an individual’s goals; (3) an individual’s ability to cope with the outcomes of the event; and (4) lastly, “the compatibility of the event with social or personal standards norms or values” (Scherer, 1999, p. 638).

The attribution approach to appraisal theory focuses on the causal nature of the attributions involved in the appraisal of an event (Scherer, 1999). Weiner (1986) described the motivational nature of attribution, in which the internal vs. external
The thematic approach to appraisal theory seeks to identify elicited emotions that link to a pattern of outcomes related to a specific event (Scherer, 1999). Lazarus (1991), adding to the abstract criteria of the goal significance described in the criteria approach to appraisal theory, proposed core-relational themes. Further, a two-stage model proposed by Smith and Lazarus (1993) combines appraisal criteria and relational themes where relational themes summarize the patterns in terms of the appraisal criteria associated with an emotion. Overall, the thematic approach focuses on the implications of the evaluations of significant events for an individual and his or her subsequent goals (Scherer, 1999).

The meanings approach to appraisal theory focuses on the underlying reason for the use of terms related to specific emotions and their definition (Scherer, 1999). This approach seeks to identify what causes an individual to describe a state of being by using a specific emotion base word. Overall, the literature describes the appraisal structure of emotions as a set of “elemental appraisal components” (Silva, 2005, p. 121).

Appraisal Theory Described Empirically

According to Scherer (1999), the most popular empirical method used to demonstrate the relationship between the outcomes of appraisals and emotional reactions is to ask study participants to recall specific experiences and question them about the evaluation process. Likewise, in studies assessing appraisal, utilization of questionnaires
that focus on recent experience is frequent (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Another method provided by Scherer (1999) involves using naturally occurring events while soliciting reports about the appraisal process. A third example of empirically illustrating the relationship between appraisal results and subsequent emotional reactions incorporates judging emotion-based words with regard to appraisal implications. The last approach involves researchers asking study participants to describe emotional reactions to scenarios (Scherer, 1999). Lazarus and Smith (1988) asserted that the phenomenological approach via the acquisition of reports of emotional encounters provides the best potential for studying the appraisal process. Moreover, Scherer (1999) revealed that appraisal theorists suggest accompanying the previously listed methods with other approaches.

Assumptions

The emotional process begins with an appraisal of an event or situation in terms of its significance to an individual’s well-being (Lazarus & Smith, 1988; Silva, 2005; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). In other words, appraisal is about personal meaning. Lazarus and Smith (1988) stated that an important feature of appraisal is that personal meaning associated with an emotional reaction highlights a relationship or connection between the individual and the environment. Lazarus and Smith (1988) provided this example:

When a person has a personal stake in a transaction, if that person's coping resources are evaluated as adequate to manage the potential threat, or if the person believes that somehow things will work out, then the encounter will be appraised as benign or beneficial, and a positive emotional reaction is more likely than a
negative one. If, however, the person is uncertain about the possibilities of coping effectively, the encounter will be appraised as a threat and an emotion relevant to this appraisal, for example, anxiety, will ensue. And if coping resources suggest helplessness or hopelessness in the face of threat, the resulting emotion will accord with this evaluation, as in, for example, sadness or depression. (pp. 284-285)

Silva (2005) asserted the subjectivity of appraisal theory enables the theoretical framework the ability to explain “why an event evokes different emotions in different people” (p. 121). As such, the overarching goal of appraisal theory is to explain why individuals respond with different emotions to the same experiences (Scherer, 1999; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Scherer (1999) suggested that unconscious or noncognitive factors generate emotions. Additionally, appraisals vary according to whether they are self-conscious or conscious (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000).

Silva (2005) claimed it is possible to interpret the appraisal approach as the cognitive approach to emotions, since emotions are connected to the evaluation of events and experiences. For instance, individuals can make conscious appraisals, while not being aware that they are actively participating in the appraisal process (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000). Lazarus and Smith (1988) delineated two types of cognition: knowledge and appraisal. Consequently, there exists a historical sense of confusion between the two because, even though both types of cognition are used interchangeably, they are different in the way they influence emotions (Lazarus & Smith, 1988). Knowledge “consists of cognitions about the way things are and how they work. On the other hand, appraisal is a
form of personal meaning consisting of evaluations of the significance of this knowledge for well-being” (Lazarus & Smith, 1988, p. 282). While knowledge is necessary for appraisal, it does not generate emotion. The process of appraisal is necessary for cognition since it assesses whether an event is harmful or beneficial (Lazarus & Smith, 1988; Scherer, 1999).

Consequently, two issues regarding the relationship between cognition and emotion originate from a debate amongst theorists. One issue includes “the target of appraisal theory predictions and the meaning of cognition, evaluation, or appraisal” (Scherer, 1999, p. 646). Scherer’s (1999) replied, “Appraisal theory does not attempt to explain all types of affective phenomenon” (p. 646). The assumption made by this theory is events stimulate or elicit emotions that individuals evaluate. Parallel to this assumption, appraisal theory focuses on significant events that impact an individual’s equilibrium or the relationship between an individual and the environment (Scherer, 1999). In regards to the second issue, the definition and nuances of the concepts of appraisal and emotion dominate the debate about the relationship between cognition and emotion (Scherer, 1999).

Scherer (1999) considered the debate meaningless when assuming that much of the appraisal process happens unconsciously and, as such, offers levels of processing appraisal approach. This approach, provided by Leventhal and Scherer (1987), specifies the mechanisms that underlie appraisal. While many theorists posit that emotions exist in a static state, Scherer (1999) suggested that emotions are characterized by episodes that are continuously changing within the underlying appraisal and reaction process. Thus,
such an attempt to explain a static emotion with a single term speaks to “the complexity of the underlying mechanism” (Scherer, 1999, p. 648). Therefore, the appraisal process and the components of emotion need to be further explored.

Appraisal Theory in the Context of Culture

The appraisal process has context as it relates to culture. As noted by Scherer (1999), a shortcoming of appraisal theory is the neglect of the social context of appraisals and subsequent emotional responses. Clark, Anderson, Clark, and Williams (1999) contended that stress responses closely relate to an individual’s perception of stress. As such, Sutton and Wheatley (2003) argued that appraisal theory is central to the understanding of the relationship between culture and emotion. In the case of African Americans disproportionately exposed to environments that act as stimulators of stress, their perception of stress elicits exaggerated stress responses (Clark et al., 1999). Subsequently, researchers propose emotions are part of cultural structures (Scherer, 1999). Therefore, even when considering the concept of emotion as a universal mechanism, cultural differences have an impact on emotional reactions to similar events (Scherer, 1999). Hence, Scherer (1999) submitted that the appraisal mechanism seems universal, due to the existence of similarities across the plethora of diverse countries that were a part of appraisal profile studies for the major emotions. However, the data also reflect “cultural differences in the appraisal patterns” (Scherer, 1999, p. 651).

Appraisal Theory and College Students

Garrin (2013) approached the appraisal process used by college students through the lens of social change, alleging that the appraisal framework has social change
implications. For example, in the primary appraisal stage, individuals evaluate social change issues regarding their connection to the objectives of the greater good. The secondary appraisal stage presents an evaluation of who is accountable for the social change issue, the coping potential, and the likelihood of the issue ever changing (Garrin, 2013). Garrin (2013) further advocated for the applicability of appraisal theory to social change because of its functionality in perception research, research on stress, and “factors related to change readiness” (p. 44).

For instance, self-efficacy is linked to appraisals that encourage confidence in college students (Garrin, 2013). Given this assertion, perceptions of stress are linked to the level of self-efficacy in college students. Garrin (2013) purported that” research on stress coping patterns in college students reveals significant correlations between neuroticism, avoidance coping, and maladaptive emotion-focused coping (p. 46), which supports the proposed connection “between neuroticism, depression, and anxiety in college students” (p. 46). Further, Garrin (2013) cited research that indicated the coping responses and behavioral outcomes of college students “have social change implications” (Garrin, 2013, p. 46). These implications refer to

(a) the extent to which stress response mediates the choice to approach or avoid challenges, (b) how maladaptive coping responses (e.g. stress-induced alcohol consumption) mediate the capacity to be transformative, and (c) the extent to which college cultural norms (e.g., social acceptability of excess alcohol consumption) mediate social change motivations in students. (Garrin, 2013, p. 46)
Garrin (2013) provided the following questions to consider for educators who are seeking the implications of appraisal on social change skills:

- To what extent do students acknowledge the link between their emotions and their appraisals?
- To what extent do students feel that they can accurately identify whether it is a stressor is relevant to or congruent with their objectives?
- Do students believe that they possess an adaptive inventory of coping resources?
- In general, do students acknowledge their accountability in a given stressful circumstance?
- Are students aware of their emotion-focused or problem focused coping potentials?
- Based on their capacity to cope with a given stressor, to what extent does the student feel that they can manage the stressor again in the future?
- To what extent do students feel they can effectively self-regulate their stress level? (p. 50)

Coping Responses

The coping process is presented as a classic issue in personality research (McCrae, 1984). More recently, research has reported similar findings. According to Kuo (2011), “Stress and coping research is one of the most intensively studied areas within health, social, and psychological research, because of its broad implications for understanding human well-being and adaptation” (p. 1084). Bippus and Young (2012)
concluded that people with poorer mental health tend to have more stress and deal with stress in maladaptive ways. Further, a large amount of scholars who explore coping as it relates to hurt use an appraisal theory framework when conducting their research (Bippus & Young, 2012). Appraisal theory suggests that an individual’s assessment of an event or situation stimulates emotions. Therefore, appraisal theory has its basis on the assumptions that emotions are adaptive, as well as the cognitive processing of experiences (Bippus & Young, 2012).

The cognitive appraisal process consists of primary and secondary appraisals. According to Lazarus (1991), the terms primary and secondary have no chronological implications, since they are interdependent parts of the same process. Primary appraisal is the assessment of a situation by an individual to determine if he/she faces a challenge or threat. Secondary appraisal involves a self-assessment of resources necessary to cope with the challenge or threat (Museus, Sariñana, & Ryan, 2015). Following these two stages, the individual has the information needed in order to determine how to cope with the stressful circumstance (Museus et al., 2015). Numerous factors influence the information needed to determine the coping response. For example, Lazarus’ and Folkman’ (1984) thesis on stress and coping delineated a person’s values, beliefs, and norms affect the appraisal of stress and the corresponding coping response.

According to Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, and Cancelli (2000) coping is an individual’s attempt “to manage through cognitive or behavioral efforts, external and internal demands that are assessed as exceeding one’s resources” (p. 79). Brennan, Holland, Schutte, and Moos (2012), and later Museus et al. (2015), concluded that the
way in which people appraise their stressors has an impact on their coping response, and the type of stressor may influence coping responses. Brennan and colleagues (2012) describe two types of coping strategies: avoidance coping and approach coping strategies. Avoidance coping refers to efforts or practices that assist in avoiding or managing emotions in stressful situations. Langlois (2013) suggested that avoidance coping responses are associated with intensified experiences of stressors in anxiety disorders. Additionally, these maladaptive responses increase the impact of stressors related to depression. Moreover, prolonged usage of avoidance coping increases the risk of severe forms of depression (Langlois, 2013). Approach coping involves efforts to change stressful situations (Brennan et al., 2012).

Kuo (2011) proposed that members of different cultures might exhibit different coping responses to stressors. For example, Sheu and Sedlacek (2004) conducted a quantitative study investigating the help-seeking behaviors of 2,678 participants who were first-year incoming students at a large midAtlantic university. The sample was comprised of 77% White American (2,062), 13% Asian American (348), and 10% African American (268) with 53% of the participants identifying as male. Sheu and Sedlacek (2004) found that African American students adopt less-wishful thinking as a coping mechanism in contrast to Asian American and White students. Additionally, African American students used avoidance coping less than Asian American Students (Sheu & Sedlacek, 2004).

In a similar study, Chiang, Hunter, and Yeh (2004) found that African American and Latino American college students identified family and religion as significant sources
of help and coping. In addition, the African American college students found engaging in religious activities more important than the Latino American college students did (Chiang et al., 2004). A study conducted by Constantine, Alleyne, Caldwell, McRae, and Suzuki (2005) corroborated the findings of Chiang et al. (2004). Constantine and colleagues explored how Asian, Black, and Latino/Latina Americans living in New York coped with the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks. They also found Blacks used more religious coping mechanisms than employed by the other participants (Constantine et al., 2005).

Pressure to Participate in Student Leadership

According to Cabrera (2014), family members are one of the most influential factors on a young adult’s academic outcomes. However, families of traditional students have different expectations than families of first-generation students. In this case, attending college is the normal thing to do after high school for traditional students, whereas this is not often the case for first-generation students (Cabrera, 2014). While first generation college students may not view college as the normal thing to do after college, there is still encouragement and support to attend college by their families (Cabrera, 2014). Another influence on a person’s decision to attend college is culture. Those with a collectivistic approach to culture are motivated to meet the pressures and expectations of family members (Cabrera, 2014). This assertion supports the description of Millennial college students as “pressured” (Elam et al., 2007; Morrison, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 2003).
The pressure for Millennials to attend college does not end there. Millennial college students also experience pressure to be successful in college. Success in college manifests itself in many ways: good grades, graduating in four-years, and participation in cocurricular experiences via student leadership. Additionally, colleges and universities face challenges to integrate and embrace learning via out-of-classroom experiences (Keeling, 2006). Consequently, institutions of higher education are expected to have student learning outcomes that reflect membership in student organizations, service learning opportunities, and student leadership opportunities (e.g., Student Government, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Residence Hall Government, Orientation Leaders) (Keeling, 2006). One reason for such expectations of higher education is that student leadership development supplies students with opportunities to enhance and illustrate leadership abilities while in college.

Student leadership development “is an integral part of the educational program of most college students” (Posner, 2014, p. 21). Matthews (2015) endorsed Posner’s assertion by arguing that leadership education is a critical element of student development. Higher education has provided resources dedicated to the development of student leadership programs (Caza & Rosch, 2014; Owen, 2012). The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) defined student leadership programs as “programs that recognize the need to make intentional leadership development opportunities available to all students through coordinated campus-wide efforts” (CAS, 2009, p. 3). Subsequently, examples of student leadership positions include Student Government, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Residence Hall Government,
The academy offers courses related to leadership, as well as cocurricular programs, such as fraternities and sororities, athletics, student government, and campus kings and queens sponsored by student affairs offices (Posner, 2014). Further, research has spent much time developing theory-based approaches to student leadership. The following section provides a discussion of one example of a theory based approach to student leadership—the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM) created by Astin and Astin (1996).

Origin of the Social Change Model of Leadership

Komives, Wagner, and Associates (2009) declared, “Contemporary times require a collaborative approach to leadership that can bring the talent of all members of a group to their shared process (p. xi).” This statement refers to the work performed in 1993 by Helen and Alexander Astin. Working through the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California Los Angeles and a grant from the federal Eisenhower Leadership Development program, the Astins put together a group of 10 leadership specialists and student affairs professionals from across the country to develop a model of leadership development for undergraduate college students (Wagner, 1996). This team of educators, who had worked extensively with students, realized that, “like a good jazz ensemble” (p. xiv), every contribution by each member of the group was essential, thus named themselves “The Working Ensemble” (Komives et al., 2009, p. xiv).

The ensemble had some concerns about college students, their civic values, and the conventional paradigms of leadership. They worried college students needed to value
working with others in responsible ways and maintain a goal of social change. The other concern was current leadership theory only focused on leadership positions and not the leadership process (Komives et al., 2009). da Cruz, Nunes, and Pinheiro (2011) perceived leadership as a process that uses noncoercive influence to drive the activities of a group and as a characteristic that is a set of qualities of those who use a certain influence successfully. Subsequently, the ensemble developed a values-based model that focused on an individual’s ability to work with others towards shared social concerns (Komives et al., 2009). The ensemble developed the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM) using a process that took two years to complete. Astin and Astin (1996) communicated that the model is in constant revision and currently on its third version.

Goals of the Social Change Model of Leadership

Resting on the assumptions that leadership has a social responsibility, is collaborative, and is a process, the Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM) has two major goals. The first goal seeks to enhance student learning and development in the areas of self-knowledge and leadership competence (Komives et al., 2009). The first goal targets building human capital and motivation. The second goal aims to facilitate positive social change in the organization or community by using techniques that will assist the organization or community to function more humanely and efficiently (Komives et al., 2009).

The major components of the SCM perceive leadership development from three different viewpoints. The first of three is the Individual, which considers the personal qualities leaders seek to develop for those who participate in leadership development
programs and which of those qualities are the most supportive of positive social change and group performance (Komives et al., 2009). The second perspective is of the Group. This perspective questions how the collaborative process can affect positive social change. Lastly, the perspective of the Community investigates the effect the leadership development activity has on society and what activities motivate the group and develop the individual.

The 7 C’s of Change

Providing a framework that engages Individuals, Groups, and the Community in leadership for social change, the SCM describes an exchange between seven values that individuals, groups, and communities should aim toward to create social change (Komives et al., 2009). The seven critical values include Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Common Purpose, Controversy with Civility, and Citizenship. These values all revolve around the 8th “C”—Change, where change serves as the intended outcome (Astin & Astin, 1996).

Astin and Astin (1996) and Komives et al. (2009) supplied comprehensive definitions for each of the 7 C’s of Change. The ultimate goal of the SCM is Change, included as an 8th C and not considered a value. Change denotes an improvement in the status quo, having a positive impact on society, and a comfort with transition and ambiguity during the process (Astin & Astin, 1996; Komives et al., 2009). The first value, Citizenship, demonstrates active community engagement. This value speaks to work that seeks to provide change through care, service, and social responsibility. Achieving the value of citizenship requires trust amongst the group or community
members and solving conflicts while integrating them into the common purpose (Astin & Astin, 1996; Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009). Common Purpose as value represents shared responsibility, achieved when all members share in the vision and collectively articulate the goal of the current task. Groups with a common purpose engage in collective analysis of issues and tasks. Collaboration illustrates leadership as a group process, where there exist collective contributions and use of the strengths and diversity of the relationships of those involved in creating change (Astin & Astin, 1996; Komives et al., 2009). Using open discourse and honest dialogue to achieve positive social change reflects the Controversy with Civility value. Differences will exist in groups; however, using those differences to develop solutions is a critical part of the leadership process. This value requires the understanding and integration of multiple values to bring significance to a group. Self-awareness of the necessary components that motivate an individual to act represents the Consciousness of Self value. To develop consciousness in others, there must be an understanding of personal values, beliefs, and emotions (Astin & Astin, 1996; Komives et al., 2009). Congruence takes the Consciousness of Self value and puts it to action. The congruent person has integrity in thought and in action. Finally, the Commitment value speaks to the passion and energy involved in taking action. Self-reflection and follow-through are necessary components of this value, which defines the obligation that exists during the social change process (Astin & Astin, 1996; Komives et al., 2009). Overall, “The Social Change Model calls for leadership directed toward a purpose greater than self for a societal end” (Komives et
The values of individuals, groups, and society work together to create social change (Wagner, 1996), as illustrated in Figure 6.


**Summary**

The Social Change Model provides an example of the energy put in to student leadership theory, higher education’s focus on outcomes related to student leadership, and the importance of students being involved in student leadership opportunities.

However, not all students will have an opportunity to realize such outcomes, regardless
of the amount of focus or pressure a college or university places on student involvement in student leadership opportunities. Caza and Rosch (2014) cited a study in which college students believed that leadership is limited to select individuals. Subsequently, little is known about the thoughts of college students about leadership. What are the mental health implications for Millennial college students who are pressured by their parents and higher education to demonstrate college success via student leadership opportunities and not able to do so? Current literature does not explore these questions nor does it explore such student experiences. Owen (2012) declared that more research on the student leadership experience for diverse groups of students is necessary. Owen (2012) also argued for the exploration of “the design and delivery of leadership programs” for students (p. 20). Thus, the phenomenon explored in this dissertation is African American Millennial college students who experienced a failed attempt at a student leadership opportunity.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Today, colleges and universities have experienced an increase in the presence and severity of mental health issues with traditional college students (18-24 years old) who are members of the Millennial Generation (Wilson & Gerber, 2008). Research investigations of the Millennial Generation often does not speak to the nuances associated with Millennials of different race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011). Further, research has found that levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress amongst other mental health issues have increased in today’s college students (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Soet & Sevig, 2006). Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African American Millennial college students’ failed attempts at pursuing a student leadership position and their coping responses. The researcher conducted a qualitative study using a phenomenological methodology to provide findings for the research questions. The results of this study may provide the information that student affairs leadership may need to be prepared to engage African American Millennial college students who experience failed attempts at student leadership opportunities to mitigate their coping responses and increase their chances for success.

This chapter explains in detail the research design used to conduct the study. The chapter begins with an introduction of the research questions. Secondly, the researcher
presents and explains the research design. Next is a detailed description of the sample, along with an explanation of how the sample was developed. Following the description of the sample is a discussion of the participants in the study. Next, the researcher specifies the methodology to provide an explanation of the methods used in the study. Sixth, the researcher’s subjectivity statement is included. The data collection procedures including the IRB process are also included in this chapter. Finally, the data analysis plan is discussed with the chapter ending with a summarization of the overall methodology.

Research Questions Reiterated

There are two research questions that the study explored. The research questions include:

1. In what ways do African American Millennial college students appraise the lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position?
2. How do African American Millennial college students at one Historically Black College or University describe their coping responses to a failed attempt at a pursuing a student leadership position?

Research Design

The researcher conducted a phenomenological study on African American college students’ appraisals of failed attempts at pursuing a student leadership position at a Historical Black University. As this study utilized a qualitative approach, the subjectivity of the participants was valued. Considering the value placed on subjectivity, the study
employed a phenomenological methodology to explore the lived experiences of the participants scientifically (Applebaum, 2012). Phenomenology suggests that new meaning emerges, resulting from revisiting immediate experiences of events or phenomena (Crotty, 1998). Applebaum (2012) reflected on the four assumptions encountered when conducting the phenomenological research method as described by Giorgi (1970). These assumptions include:

1) That the meaning of “science” is exhausted by empirical science, and therefore qualitative research, even if termed “human science,” is more akin to literature or art than methodical, scientific inquiry;

2) That as a primarily aesthetic, poetic enterprise human scientific psychology need not attempt to achieve a degree of rigor and epistemological clarity analogous (while not equivalent) to that pursued by natural scientists;

3) That “objectivity” is a concept belonging to natural science, and therefore human science ought not to strive for objectivity because this would require “objectivizing” the human being;

4) That qualitative research must always adopt an “interpretive” approach, description being seen as merely a mode of interpretation. (Applebaum, 2012, p. 36)

As such, the phenomenological methodology allows for the discovery of the meaning of life through reasoning (Applebaum, 2012). Applebaum (2012) suggested that phenomenology is intended to combat the pervasive view “that reason no longer has
'anything to say’ with respect to the burning questions of who and what we are” (p. 37). Moreover, qualitative research must be thorough and seek scientific status (Giorgi, 1970).

Crotty (1998) posited that there are four questions that need to be answered when conducting research directed towards defining the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods used to collect data. As such, the epistemology informs the theoretical perspective; theoretical perspective informs the methodology; and the methodology informs the method used to collect data (Crotty, 1998).

As the study explored the appraisal of a particular experience, the constructivist approach served as the epistemological stance adopted by the researcher. The constructivist approach contends that due to interactions with others, individuals learn to understand the world and form subjective meanings in response to their experiences (Crotty, 1998). Via interviews, the participants of the study discussed their subjective understanding of their failed attempts at pursuing a student leadership opportunity. Through this discussion, participants could speak to their “unique experience” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Because the participants reported their unique experiences, the researcher employed a theoretical perspective that explains the participants’ understanding of their experience.

Therefore, interpretivism was the theoretical perspective for this study. Crotty (1998) explained that interpretivism is concerned with understanding. The researcher asked the participants in the study to expound upon their understanding of experiencing a failed attempt at pursuing a student leadership opportunity. Consequently, phenomenology served as the methodology, as the study focused on the lived experiences
(Crotty, 1998) of African American Millennial college students’ appraisals of failed attempts at pursuing student leadership opportunities.

The phenomenological methodology calls for researchers to cast aside previous thoughts regarding a phenomenon and seek new meaning or “witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning” (Crotty, 1998, p. 78). The philosophy of phenomenology stems from the writings of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, who stated, “The world is always already there” (as cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 44). The researcher used the six-step, descriptive, phenomenological, psychological method provided by Giorgi (2009).

First, the research assumed the correct attitude, which involved showing sensitivity to the phenomenon, by bracketing his experiences to ensure that the data only reflect the participants’ experiences (Giorgi, 2009). Second, the researcher read the data to gain a full understanding of the whole experience, to promote accurate data analysis. In the third step, the researcher created meaning units. To complete this step, the researcher reread the data, sought transitions in meaning, made notations of these transitions, and separated data into manageable parts (Giorgi, 2009). In the fourth step, there is “the transformation of participants’ everyday expressions into more sensitive psychological expressions with emphasis on the phenomenon of a pivotal moment of change in therapy” (Giorgi, 2011, p. 71). During this step, the researcher connected the data to the theoretical framework (Appraisal Theory). Fifth, the researcher synthesized the transformed meaning units into structures that represented the core meaning or essence of the phenomena present in the data (Giorgi, 2011). In the last step, the
researcher determined if the structures developed in the fifth step adequately represented all the data. If this was not the case, the researcher created a different structure inclusive of all data (Giorgi, 2011).

McCracken (1988) suggested that the purpose of qualitative research is to gain access to cultural assumptions by taking the researcher into “the minds and lives of the respondents” (p. 10). Using interviews as a method of data collection provided the researcher with the opportunity to capture the participants’ experiences (McCracken, 1988). Likewise, the researcher utilized semistructured one-on-one interviews as the method of collecting data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher conducted the semistructured interviews using the twelve-step approach to phenomenological interviewing as provided by Kvale and Brinkman (2009), discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

The researcher submitted for IRB approval from Mercer University after the successful defense of the research proposal. After Mercer University granted approval, the researcher moved forward with contacting the study site. The researcher contacted the study site via phone and learned that it would be necessary to complete their IRB form to conduct research on the campus. As per the instructions provided by the host institution, the researcher applied over the Internet and received IRB approval from the site institution (see Appendix C).

Sample

The researcher used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) to develop the sample. Creswell (2013) posited three considerations when using a purposeful sampling
approach. First, the researcher is to decide who will participate in the study. In this study, the sample included African American Millennial college students who sought out a student leader position (e.g. Student Government Association [SGA], Fraternity/Sorority, Campus King/Queen) at a Historically Black University (HBCU), yet failed to be selected. In other words, those in the sample must have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

The second consideration is the sampling strategy. Creswell (2013) stated that researchers select participants in qualitative research who can provide an “understanding of the research problem and the phenomenon” (p. 156). As described above, members of the sample must have met the following criteria: (a) African American; (b) of the Millennial generation; (c) sought out a student leadership position and were not selected; (d) and attended the HBCU study site. The reason the study focused on the Millennial generation is colleges are reporting large increases in the presence and severity of students with mental health conditions (Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012). Additionally, African American Millennial college students’ experiences were studied because they represent the most culturally neglected student cohort (Mattai, Wagle, & Williams, 2010) and lack representation in resiliency studies (Burley, Barnard-Brak, Marbley, & Deason, 2010).

Further, using a HBCU as the study site eliminated the limitation of stereotype threat. “Stereotype threat is being at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). HBCUs provide a racially homogenous environment where African American students have a
supportive environment that allows them to foster their own learning; thus, countering stereotype threat (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Lastly, the sample included those who were interested in student leadership as described as an integral part of higher education experience (Posner, 2014). However, not all students have the opportunity to serve as leaders. According to Caza and Rosch (2014), college students believe that leadership is limited to select individuals and little is known about the thoughts of college students about leadership. After gaining IRB approval (see Appendix A), the researcher sent out an invitation to specific departments in the Division of Student Affairs who manage student leadership positions to establish a point of contact for developing the sample. The purpose of this tactic was to gain entry into the setting where the study would take place (Bryant, 2004).

The third step involved determining the sample size (Creswell, 2013). The researcher used Creswell’s (2013) recommended parameters for determining sample size (5-25 participants). Additionally, the researcher considered the findings of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), who determined saturation of data occurs when the generation of new codes or themes increases with less frequency. The sample size for this study was seven.

Participants

Via an invitation created by the researcher (see Appendix D) and sent to the Director of Student Activities, the researcher contacted the participants who constituted the sample. To be a part of the sample, respondents must have identified as African American, a Millennial, attempted to serve in a leadership position and failed to be
selected, and enrolled full-time at the research site. The research site was a small, public, four-year Historically Black College or University located in the rural south. The enrollment for the institution was approximately 4,000, and 90% of the students enrolled were Black or African American. The reason for these criteria was the researcher wanted to identify subjects knowledgeable of the phenomenon (through experience) who could provide “data rich in detail that will give an adequate base for analysis” (Bryant, 2004, p. 106). After the researcher identified the initial sample, respondents completed the survey, How Millennial Are You?, provided by the Pew Research Center (2010b).

The How Millennial Are You? survey is a 15-question generational analysis that generates scores for an individual based on the individual’s predicted probability of being in the Millennial age group (currently ages 18-29) (Pew Research Center, 2010a). A score of 51 or higher means the chances are better than 50-50 that in the values, attitudes, and behaviors, an individual resembles the typical Millennial. Data from the Pew Research Center’s 2010 Millennial Survey were subjected to a multiple-stage statistical analysis to identify the best predictors of being a Millennial and then create the optimal way to combine the questions, in order to achieve the most accurate prediction (Pew Research Center, 2010a). The statistical (generational) analysis of responses regarding attitudes, values, behaviors, and lifestyles, determined a score of 73 as the optimal threshold by which to consider an individual a Millennial (Pew Research Center, 2010a). Thus, the guidelines presented in the survey considered those who achieve a score of at least 73 as a Millennial and eligible to become a participant in the study.
Validation and Trustworthiness

To mitigate bias, the researcher used member checking and bracketing (Creswell, 2013). Lincoln and Guba (1985) declared that member checking is the most important component of establishing data credibility. Member checking is a technique that allows participants to verify the researcher’s interpretation of the data and enhance the credibility of the study (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal of member checking is to ensure the accuracy of the data collected during the research interview (Harper & Cole, 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher restated the data collected at the end of each interview and offered an opportunity for the participants to validate their responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If the participants affirmed the data collected, the data were determined credible (Harper & Cole, 2012).

Bracketing is the process in which the researcher highlights past experiences that may impact the researcher’s approach to the study. Grbich (2013) argued that bracketing enables “a state of pure consciousness to emerge which will clarify our vision of the essence of the phenomenon and enable us to explore the structures and truths that constitute it” (p. 86). The researcher bracketed his bias through journaling during the data analysis process.

In addition to mitigating bias, the researcher established trustworthiness of the data by ensuring data credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability through providing rich thick descriptions of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined credibility as ensuring the findings of the data are credible. After the participants verified their responses at the end of each interview and for the
interview transcripts sent to them via email, the researcher determined the data were credible. Data transferability provides the reasonable expectation that the same results would exist from samples with similar dynamics (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher achieved data transferability by providing a detailed description of the participants and setting of the study (Grbich, 2013). Data are considered dependable when it derives from the merging of a time and setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The extent to which the study results are based upon the data collected and not the bias of the researcher describes data confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data confirmability was ensured using a subjectivity statement that identified and bracketed the researcher’s bias to detail past experiences that might potentially influence the findings of the study. The bracketing process included the following four steps as described by Grbich (2013), who described phenomenological reduction:

1. Identification of the phenomenon.
2. Use of the subjectivity statement to identify how the phenomenon appears to the researcher.
3. Use features of the experiences present in the subjectivity statement, develop variations on aspects of this bracketed experience, and delete from the object.
4. Repeat steps one through three until the essence of the phenomenon is reached.

Subjectivity Statement

Because this study was of a qualitative design, the researcher was aware he possessed biases that may affect the outcome of this study. The researcher understood
that it was necessary to take steps to reduce the impact of bias on the study. At the time of this study, the researcher was a student affairs professional who had served the last six of his eleven years of his career as an Assistant Director of Student Life. In this role, the researcher was responsible for managing student leadership positions. Furthermore, the research was an African American male member of the Millennial generation. The researcher understood that his views on masculinity and experiences as a Millennial might have an impact on the study. To mitigate bias, the researcher bracketed his assumptions (Creswell, 2013) by memoing throughout data collection and analysis in order to allow the researcher to explore personal feelings about the data (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Data Collection

The data collection process involved seven steps, as described by Bryant (2004). First, the researcher identified participants who experienced the phenomenon using the sample criteria. Second, the researcher sent invitations via email to the institution to gain entry into the place where the study took place (Bryant, 2004). Third, each of the participants received an informed consent letter that detailed the study, related how the data would be used, and ensured confidentiality (see Appendix B). After selecting the sample and receiving completed informed consent forms, the researcher sent a confirmation letter and the link to the How Millennial Are You? survey. The confirmation letter included instructions to take a picture of their final score from the survey and email it to the researcher.
Next, the interviews took place via video conference, so that the researcher had adequate exposure to the field (Bryant, 2004). The fifth step involved asking probing questions (Bryant, 2004). As suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the researcher used the twelve-step approach to conducting phenomenological interviews:

- sought to learn about the participants’ Life World or the world that interviewees’ experience every day;
- asked questions that seek Meaning about the participants “lived world”;
- kept the nature of the interview Qualitative by seeking knowledge from the responses provided by the participant about their life world;
- encouraged the participants to be as Descriptive as possible about their experiences with the phenomenon;
- used questions that solicited Specific accounts of experiencing the phenomenon and not general opinions;
- exhibited a Deliberate Naiveté to new phenomenon and remained as inclusive as possible of the important themes connected to the participant’s life world;
- used open-ended questions that Focus on the topic of research;
- clarified any statements that appear to be Ambiguous;
- considered that the questions could Change the description and attitude towards a theme;
- ensured the level of Sensitivity to the phenomenon being studied is equal for all participants (the How Millennial Are You? survey administered to the participants provided a guideline by which the researcher was able to
determine how sensitive the participants are to being an African American Millennial college student who experienced a failed attempt at a student leadership opportunity);

- worked towards a deep understanding of the *Interpersonal Situation* presented via the interview. The researcher addressed any interpersonal dynamics presented in the interview; and

- worked to ensure that each participant had a *Positive* experience.

The sixth step of Bryant’s (2004) data collection process involved “strategizing how to build on existing data” (p. 99). The researcher asked all participants the same initial questions, as well as follow-up questions that would assist with building data (see Appendix E). In the last step of the data collection process, the researcher ensured that the data were recorded properly (Bryant, 2004). The interview script used for the study was as follows:

1. **Background**
   a. Tell me about yourself.
   b. What student leadership position did you seek out?

2. **Millennial attitudes/behaviors**
   a. Tell me some the characteristics that describe you?
   b. How do you respond to achieving your goals?
   c. How do you respond to not achieving your goals?

3. **Appraisal Theory**
   a. Primary appraisal
i. What did the application or election process entail?

ii. What were your initial thoughts about the outcome of the application process or election?

1. How do you feel that not being selected impacted your goals?

2. Can you describe how this opportunity was connected to your goals?

3. How did you feel about yourself after this experience?

b. Secondary appraisal

i. What were your feelings with not being selected for the student leadership position?

ii. How did you manage these feelings associated with not being selected for the student leadership position?

1. Did you feel that you had the ability to manage these feelings?

2. How did you express your feelings?

3. What do you think you could have done differently?

iii. Who did you share your feelings with?

iv. Who do you feel is responsible for you not being selected?

v. Were there any services provided to you to help with your experience?

1. What would have been helpful?
Data Analysis

The researcher used Giorgi’s (2012) five-step descriptive phenomenological psychological method for data analysis. Giorgi (2012) purported that the researcher must have the correct attitude before employing this method. Giorgi (2012) contended the researcher must focus only on the phenomenon and only report about the phenomenon based upon what the data provided. Next, the researcher must adopt a “psychological attitude to the data” (p. 5). Finally, the researcher must be sensitive to the phenomenon that is the subject of study (Giorgi, 2012).

In the first step of the descriptive phenomenological psychological method, the researcher gained an understanding of what the participants reported by reading the data. Secondly, the researcher reread the subjectivity statement and noted any transitioning of meaning from the written description of the researcher’s attitude (Giorgi, 2012). Next, the researcher coded the data using coding that was more explicit for the phenomenon being studied (Giorgi, 2012). Fourth, the researcher organized the codes and created themes connected to the experience expressed by the participants (Giorgi, 2012). Lastly, the researcher used the themes to interpret the raw data (Giorgi, 2012). The reported results reflected raw data collected in the form of narrative quotes from the interviews. The researcher used tables when applicable to create a synoptic readable format that provided a condensed picture of the data (Shaw, 2016). The results were presented grouped together according to themes that emerged from the data.
Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the appraisals and coping responses of African American Millennial college students who attempted to serve in some capacity of student leadership but were not selected. The researcher provided his subjectivity statement to identify his bias and illustrate how he would reduce it. The sample was comprised of African American Millennial college students who sought out a student leader position but were not selected. The researcher developed the sample using purposeful sampling to solicit participants who could speak to the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2013).

The researcher submitted for IRB approval after successful defending of the research proposal. After approval was granted, the researcher sent a letter of invitation to Offices of Student Activities and Student Leadership asking the directors of those departments to solicit participation in the study from students who met the specified criteria. The reported results reflected raw data collected in the form of quotes from the interviews. Chapter 4 presents the findings and results in narrative and tables according to themes that emerged from the data.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Research investigating the Millennial Generation often does not speak to the subtle differences associated with Millennials of different race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011). Today’s college students are experiencing increased levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress, amongst other mental health issues (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Soet & Sevig, 2006). The purpose of this study was to explore African American Millennial college students’ perception of their lived experiences with failed attempts at student leadership opportunities, as well as how they cope with such failed attempts. Further, the study examined the appraisal processes students utilized while going through this experience.

The researcher sought to determine potential factors that lead to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and stress of college students. Through this study, student affairs leadership may gain a sense of the perceptions and coping strategies of African American Millennial college students who encounter potentially challenging events. Another potential benefit of this study is student affairs leadership could gain insight regarding potential protocols for helping students to develop positive and safe coping strategies. The researcher conducted a phenomenological study on African American college
students’ appraisals of their lived experiences of and coping responses to failed attempts at pursuing a student leadership position at a Historical Black University.

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The first section provides the summary of the methodology used to conduct the study, as well as criteria used for data collection. Secondly, the chapter provides a description of the sample and presents the findings of the study. The chapter ends with a summary of the major findings of the study to provide a synopsis of the results.

Summary of Methodology

The researcher conducted a phenomenological study on African American college students’ appraisals of their lived experiences of, and coping responses to, failed attempts at pursuing a student leadership position at a Historical Black University. As the researcher approached this study qualitatively, the subjectivity of the participants was valued. Considering the value placed on subjectivity, the study employed a phenomenology as the research design in order to explore the lived experiences of the participants scientifically (Applebaum, 2012). Phenomenologists suggest that new meaning emerges as a result of revisiting immediate experiences of events or phenomena (Crotty, 1998).

Crotty (1998) posited that there are four questions necessary to answer when conducting research directed towards defining: (a) the epistemology, (b) theoretical perspective, (c) methodology, and (d) methods used to collect data. Subsequently, the epistemology informs the theoretical perspective; theoretical perspective informs the
methodology; and, methodology informs the method used to collect data (Crotty, 1998). As the study explored the appraisal of a particular experience, the constructivist approach served as the epistemological stance adopted by the researcher.

Constructivists argue that, because of interactions with others, individuals learn to understand the world and form subjective meanings in response to their experiences (Crotty, 1998). The researcher interviewed the participants of the study and asked them to discuss their subjective understanding of their failed attempts at pursuing a student leadership opportunity. Through this discussion, participants were able to speak about their “unique experience” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). The researcher employed appraisal theory as the theoretical framework in order to gain an understanding of the participants’ understanding of their unique experiences.

The researcher used the six-step descriptive qualitative method of phenomenological psychology provided by Giorgi (2009) to understand the participants’ unique experiences:

1. The research assumed the correct attitude; showing sensitivity to the phenomenon. The researcher then assumed the correct attitude by bracketing his experiences in order to ensure that the data only reflects the participants’ experiences (Giorgi, 2009).

2. The researcher read the data in order to gain a full understanding of the whole experience and ensure correct analysis of the data.
3. The researcher created *meaning units*. In order to complete this step, the researcher reread the data and sought transitions in meaning. Notations of these transitions were made so that the data were broken into manageable parts (Giorgi, 2009).

4. There was “the transformation of participants’ everyday expressions into more sensitive psychological expressions with emphasis on the phenomenon of a pivotal moment of change in therapy” (Giorgi, 2011, p. 71). During this step, the researcher connected the data to the theoretical framework (Appraisal Theory).

5. The researcher synthesized the transformed meaning units into structures that represents the core meaning or essence of the phenomena present in the data (Giorgi, 2011).

6. The researcher determined if the structures developed in the fifth step adequately represented all of the data. If this was not the case, the researcher created a different structure inclusive of all of the data (Giorgi, 2011).

In implementing the six-step descriptive qualitative method of phenomenological psychology process, the researcher utilized interviews to collect data. McCracken (1988) suggested that the purpose of qualitative research is to gain access to cultural assumptions by taking the researcher into “the minds and lives of the respondents” (p. 10). Therefore, using interviews as a method of data collection provided the researcher with the opportunity to capture the participants’ experiences (McCracken, 1988). Consequently,
semistructured, one-on-one interviews served as the method of collecting data (Creswell, 2013).

Research Questions Revisited

1. In what ways do African American Millennial college students appraise the lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position?

2. How do African American Millennial college students at one Historically Black College or University describe their coping responses to a failed attempt at a pursuing a student leadership position?

Sample

The researcher used purposeful sampling for this study. Creswell (2013) posited three considerations when using a purposeful sampling approach. First, the researcher decided who would participate in the study. The sample included African American Millennial college students who sought out a student leader position (e.g. Student Government Association [SGA], Fraternity/Sorority, Campus King/Queen) at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU); however, they failed to be selected.

Secondly, the researcher selected participants who could provide an “understanding of the research problem and the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). As described above, members of the sample met the following criteria: (a) being African American; (b) being a Millennial—as determined by the Pew Generational Index; (c) having sought out a student leadership position, but not selected; and (d) attending the HBCU study site. The study focused on the Millennial generation because colleges are reporting large increases in the presence and severity of students with mental health
conditions (Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012). Additionally, African American Millennial college students’ experiences were studied because they represent the most culturally neglected student cohort (Mattai, Wagle, & Williams, 2010); and, they have been left out of studies related to resiliency (Burley, Barnard-Brak, Marbley, & Deason, 2010).

Lastly, the researcher used Creswell’s (2013) suggestive parameters for determining sample size (5-25 participants). The researcher selected seven students who met all of the outlined criteria outlined to participate in this study. Additionally, the researcher considered the findings Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), who suggested that the data saturation occurs when the generation of new codes or themes increases with less frequency. As reflected in Table 4, the frequency in common responses became less frequent; thus, the data began to be saturated at five participants. Likewise, the researcher did not intend to generalize the findings of the study, but aimed to illuminate the specific (Creswell, 2013).

Research Site and Participant Profiles

The research site was a small, public four-year Historically Black University located in the rural south. The enrollment for the institution was approximately 4,000, of which 90% of the students enrolled are Black or African American. Following the process of identifying the initial sample, the chosen respondents completed the survey, How Millennial Are You?, provided by the Pew Research Center (2010a). Those who achieved a score of at least 73 qualified as a Millennial, according to the generation scale (i.e. Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) presented in the Pew Research Center survey, and eligibility to participant in the study. Table 3 provides a profile of
each participant, including their corresponding Millennial score according to the Pew Research Center survey.

Table 3

*Participant Profiles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Home State</th>
<th>Pew Millennial Score</th>
<th>SLR (Student Leadership Role) Sought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>SGA President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayme</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>Miss Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>SGA Vice President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Resident Asst.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>Campus King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffany</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>Campus Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>Campus Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Southeast (Georgia)</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant 1: George

George was a 22-year old senior political science major/Spanish minor from Augusta, GA. Interested in politics, George planned to attend law school. George scored 87 on the How Millennial Are You? survey. The leadership position he sought was Student Government Association President. He described himself as observant, passionate, confident, and eager. He responded that he achieved his goals through self-assurance and setting more goals. He stated that not achieving his goals did not feel good, but he continued to strive for higher achievements and attempted to keep himself busy.
Participant 2: Jayme

Jayme was a 21-year old transfer student from Warner Robins, GA who scored 98 on the How Millennial Are You? survey. The leadership position she sought was Miss Freshman. She described herself as outgoing, passionate, funny, personable, kind, caring, creative, and athletic. She reported that achieving her goals made her feel happy and made her feel positive about herself. She described that not achieving her goals brings about disappointment, sadness, understanding, and optimism. She also shared that she thinks about why she did not achieve the goal and maybe she can try again in the future.

Participant 3: Victoria

Victoria was a 20-year old criminal justice major from Alabama who resided in Georgia. She had plans of attending law school in order to become a defense attorney. She also has dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur and having her own garden. Victoria scored 87 on the How Millennial Are You? survey. The leadership position she attempted to achieve was as Student Government Association Vice-President. She described herself as ambitious, outgoing, free-spirited, and conscious. Victoria stated, “I . . . stand up for my beliefs, and I don’t take much lying down, and I put my heart in to all that I do.” She responded to achieving her goals with feelings of relief and looking towards bigger goals. She also viewed the accomplishment of being selected as a candidate as a “stepping stone” and a realization of where she needs to be. She contributed that she was hard on herself and her own worst enemy when she did not achieve her goals. She also stated that losing felt terrible and that she let herself down.
Participant 4: Martin

Martin was a 19-year old sophomore education major from Dawson, GA and scored 92 on the How Millennial Are You? survey. The leadership position he sought was Resident Advisor. He described himself as funny, intelligent, caring, quiet and punctual. He shared that he liked to help people and see them do better. He responded to achieving his goals through reflection and pride. He reported that not achieving his goals brings about feelings of disappointment and reflection.

Participant 5: Kevin

Kevin was a 22-year old senior biology major from Florida who was raised in Atlanta, GA in a single-parent home. He scored 93 on the How Millennial Are You? survey. The leadership position he sought was Campus King. The characteristics he used to describe himself were outgoing, hesitant, cool, nice, kind, and friendly. He responded to achieving his goals with positive vibes only and keeping a steady head. He also felt good about himself and accomplished. He reported that he felt defeated and optimistic when he does not achieve his goals.

Participant 6: Tiffany

Tiffany was a 22-year old junior middle grades education major. She had two older brothers and liked talking to and getting to know people. Tiffany scored 96 on the How Millennial Are You? survey. The leadership position she sought was Campus Queen. Her characteristics included loving, personable, happy, and friendly. She enjoyed sharing that she accomplished her goals with others. Tiffany did not like failure,
looking bad, or quitting. She also responded to achieving her goals through perseverance. She reported that she reaches out to her mother and seeks encouragement in response to not achieving her goals.

Participant 7: Renee

Renee was a 22-year old marketing major from Augusta, GA who loved coffee and wanted a dog. She scored 90 on the How Millennial Are You? survey. The leadership position she pursued was Campus Queen. She described herself as adventurous, very outgoing, outspoken, loving, and family oriented. She also was careful with money. When thinking about how she responded to achieving her goals she reported feelings of excitement. She loved to share her accomplishments with her family and setting a good example for her siblings and cousins. While thinking about how she responded to not achieving her goals, she realized that she never lost anything before college. She also shared that she felt weird, speechless, and surprised. However, Renee did share that she tended to look for the underlying lesson of each experience.

Findings

The information presented in this section reports the researcher’s findings regarding the potential factors that lead to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and stress of African-American Millennial college students. Tables that translate the data into visually readable formats support the findings of the study Shaw, 2016). During the data analysis process, the researcher used Giorgi’s (2012) five-step descriptive phenomenological psychological method for data analysis.
Employing the techniques of descriptive qualitative phenomenological psychological process, the researcher first gained an understanding of what was reported by reading the data. Secondly, the researcher reread the subjectivity statement and noted any transitioning of meaning from the written description of the researcher’s attitude (Giorgi, 2012). Next, the researcher coded the data using coding that was more explicit for the phenomenon being studied (Giorgi, 2012). Fourth, the researcher organized the codes from which themes derived according to the enumerated responses expressed by the participants (Giorgi, 2012). Lastly, themes emerged through interpreting the raw data based on the frequency of common threads used to categorize participant responses (Giorgi, 2012; Saldaña, 2012; Shaw, 2016).

Themes That Emerged

The researcher identified common threads that emerged from the data and organized them into 17 descriptive categories that reflected the studied phenomenon. Table 4 depicts these categories and common threads.
### Table 4

#### Common Threads and Categories Identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION TYPOLOGY (e.g. Millennial, Primary, Secondary)</th>
<th>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
<th>COMMON THREAD(S)</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIVE CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>Tell me some the characteristics that describe you?</td>
<td>Passionate, Outgoing</td>
<td>PASSIONATE AND OUTGOING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>How do you respond to achieving your goals?</td>
<td>Pursue More Goals/Continue Goal-Setting, Accomplished/ Self-Assured</td>
<td>ACCOMPLISHED AND PERSISTENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>How do you respond to not achieving your goals?</td>
<td>Reflective/Evaluative, Self-Depreciating, Disappointed, Primary Appraisal</td>
<td>DISAPPOINTED AND SELF-DEPRECATING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA1</td>
<td>What did the application or election process entail?</td>
<td>Campaign and Interview</td>
<td>CAMPAIGN AND INTERVIEW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA2</td>
<td>What were your initial thoughts about the outcome of the application process or election?</td>
<td>Upset/Defeated, Unfair Process, Inadequate</td>
<td>DEFEATED DUE TO UNFAIR PROCESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA3</td>
<td>How do you feel that not being selected impacted your goals?</td>
<td>Improve and Persist, Personal Fulfillment</td>
<td>FEELING INADEQUATE, NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA4</td>
<td>Can you describe how this opportunity was connected to your goals?</td>
<td>Advocate, To Inspire/Influence</td>
<td>DESIRE TO ADVOCATE, INSPIRE, AND INFLUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA5</td>
<td>How did you feel about yourself after this experience?</td>
<td>Accomplished and Confident, Relieved</td>
<td>DOUBTFUL/DISCOURAGED, YET ACCOMPLISHED AND RELIEVED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Categories Table continued on next page)
Using the fourth step presented in Giorgi’s (2012) model, the researcher organized the interview questions into areas of inquiry. These areas represented groups of questions that focused on a particular type of appraisal inquiry as developed by the
researcher. The areas of appraisal inquiry include: (a) Millennials’ Character and Desire to Achieve; (b) Reaction/Response to Loss or Failure in General as a Millennial; (c) Reaction about Process and Purpose for Seeking Student Leadership Role; (d) Overall Experience of Not Being Selected; (e) Personal Retrospect: Ability to Cope and Express Oneself; (f) Actualization and Self-Evaluation; and (g) Emotional Support and Closure. Using the areas of appraisal inquiry and the descriptive categories, the researcher identified themes connected to the experience expressed by the participants (Giorgi, 2012). Seven themes emerged as a result of this process:

a. Passionate, Outgoing, and Persistent
b. Disappointed and Self-Deprecating
c. Desire to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence
d. Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged
e. Copes Reclusively, Refocus, and Move on
f. Self-Evaluation, Expression, and Blame
g. Lacks Emotional Support and Closure

Table 5 illustrates the process by which categories formed, based on the areas of inquiry and/or appraisal. Additionally, Table 5 illustrates the seven major themes that emerged through clustering the categories based on the areas of inquiry.
Table 5

**Overarching Themes by Descriptive Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Typology (e.g., Millennial, Primary, Secondary)</th>
<th>Appraisal Inquiry</th>
<th>Descriptive Category</th>
<th>Overarching Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1, M2 persistent</td>
<td>Millennial character (drive) and desire to achieve</td>
<td>passionate and outgoing; accomplished and persistent</td>
<td>Passionate, Outgoing, and Persistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>reaction/response to loss or failure in general as a Millennial</td>
<td>disappointed and self-deprecating</td>
<td>Disappointed and Self-Deprecating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA1, PA4</td>
<td>reaction about process and purpose for seeking student leadership role</td>
<td>campaign and interview; desire to advocate, inspire, and influence</td>
<td>Desire to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA2, PA3, PA5, SA1 process; PA5, SA1</td>
<td>overall experience and reaction to not being selected</td>
<td>defeated due to unfair; feeling inadequate; need for improvement; doubtful/discouraged, yet accomplished and relieved felt unprepared, hurt, and angry</td>
<td>Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry</td>
<td>personal retrospect ability to cope and express oneself</td>
<td>yes, refocus and move on; became reclusive and reserved</td>
<td>Copes Reclusively, Refocus, and Move on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA2, SA3, SA4</td>
<td>actualization and self-evaluation</td>
<td>be more personable; expressed feelings to peers; blamed self and administration</td>
<td>Self-Evaluation, Expression, and Blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA5, SA6, SA7</td>
<td>emotional support and closure</td>
<td>no, no support provided; desired follow-up and advising</td>
<td>Lacks Emotional Support and Desires Closure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Passionate, outgoing, and persistent. When participants were asked questions related to their character and desire to achieve they reported being passionate, outgoing, accomplished, and persistent. The emergent theme that resulted was Passionate, Outgoing, and Persistent. For example, when George was asked to describe himself, he stated that he was “observant, passionate, confident, and eager”. Jayme described herself similarly, stating, “I'd like to say [I’m] outgoing, passionate, [and] funny.”

Participants were also asked how they react to achieving their goals. Victoria shared that she felt accomplished and “relieved. Like a stepping stone has been done. I made way to where I need to be. Every goal is just a stepping stone to complete a bigger goal.”

Some participants spoke about persistence as a being a component of achievement. Tiffany stated,

Basically, when I set a goal, I’m going to go for it, no matter what. No matter how stressed I am, I'm going to continue to build it. I don’t believe in quitting. I don't like failure. I don't like to look bad. I’m going to keep pushing even like there’s . . . [for example], I said even during my pageant time when I felt stressed and a lot was going on, I still kept going. I didn’t give up. I don’t believe in quitting and I don't like failures. I’m going to keep pushing forward, no matter what. I’ll just keep striving. I have my relationship with God. I just always pray to God, and it makes feel a little bit more easy as far as the demon goes.
Overall, participants described the process and attitude by which they both responded to and achieved their goals as being passionate, outgoing, and persistent.

Disappointed and self-deprecating. Participants expressed their feelings of disappointment in response to losing or failure in general. They also referenced feeling blamed, unworthy, and reacted in a self-deprecating manner. Thus, the theme that emerged was Disappointed and Self-Deprecating. Consequently, the participants’ responses to the question “How do you respond to not achieving your goals?” reflected negative feelings. Participants used words like disappointed, sad, felt terrible, and defeated. Kevin shared, “I do feel like I was defeated. . . . Maybe I was not meant for this.”

Victoria expressed that her feelings extended beyond defeat to what could be considered as self-blame:

I can say that I’m my worst enemy. I’m harder on myself. A lot of stuff I see as being terrible other people see as still being good, so where I feel like I let myself down, like I didn’t do what I felt like I could have done, other people feel like I did great. I just think I do good, but I’m very hard on myself, achieving goals or not achieving the goal.

Jayme provided a variety of possible feelings saying, “I could be disappointed, sometimes I could be sad. I can be understanding, if maybe it wasn’t the right time or the right place.”
Desire to advocate, inspire, and influence. When participants described their reactions about the process and their purpose for seeking the student leadership position, they conveyed that the process involved campaigning and interviewing. They also expressed a desire to be influential or set some type of example, either for siblings or peers. Five out of the seven participants spoke of wanting to support, build relationships with, and open up to others. For example, George stated, “It allowed me to open up to a lot of more people, the opportunities. It established more relationships, more connections, more networking opportunities.” Some participants directly stated their intent to influence others—even becoming a campus role model using current avenues, such as the CAAM (Center of the African American Men) mentoring program.

Martin stated,

My personal goal is to be known throughout campus as a positive role model. An RA is a positive role model, but only who’s in that hall. Because I didn’t become an RA, I joined the Cam in the community. Now, they do things around campus and CAAM does things around and outside in the community, outside the school. CAAM is Center of the African American Men. It prepares you to be a mentor for incoming freshman males or male students or high schools. I have two freshmen mentees and I have one mentee who just got out of high school.

Another example comes from Tiffany, who said, “If I win, that will be encouragement for the next girl who’s like me”. Therefore, a Desire to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence was the theme that emerged from this particular inquiry.
Feels defeated, doubtful, inadequate, and discouraged. Participants responded negatively to questions that inquired about the overall experience and reaction to not being selected for the roles for which they campaigned. Participants expressed feelings of inadequacy, discouragement, anger, and hurt. They also expressed that they felt the process was unfair. Four of the seven participants either directly stated or alluded to feelings of being inadequate. Renee even questioned herself wondering, “Would I still be useful?”

Three of the seven participants felt the process was unfair. Martin stated that he wondered, “Why didn't I get chosen? I met the requirements. I had outstanding recommendations. I have an excellent GPA.”

Jayme argued, “It’s still a popularity contest because you have to be elected into that role.” Most of the respondents felt hurt, angry, and/or sad about not being selected for the leadership position.

George described his feelings saying, “I was down. I was down for a while. Well, yeah, I was done for a while because like I said, it hurts.”

Concurrent with George’s feelings, Jayme exclaimed, “I was sad. Sad as hell!” Kevin shared his feelings of anger and bitterness.

My feelings at first were—I was little bitter and jealous when I saw people that they did choose. . . . I was bitter because I felt I had more than enough requirements to be selected. And I was jealous because people worse than me got selected.
Approximately five of the seven participants felt that they needed to improve and persist. In addition to feeling treated unfairly and inadequate, participants still argued that they were unprepared or needed to improve themselves in some respect. However, two participants stated that they actually felt accomplished and relieved. Nevertheless, the overarching theme that emerged was *Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged.*

Copes reclusively, refocus, and move on. Participants were questioned about their ability to *cope* with the negative outcomes of their respective elections. Four of the seven participants reported feeling the need to refocus and move on. Specifically, the researcher also asked participants to share how they *managed* feelings associated with not being selected for the leadership position as a means to delving further into their coping strategies.

Jayme stated, “The next day, I got drunk. I said, ‘All right. After this, we’re not going to talk about it anymore. We’re just gonna take our L to the face and move on, onto the next thing’. ”

Renee took a different approach to refocusing and moving on to the next thing. She shared,

I had to realize that, at the time, for some of the things that was going on, it wasn’t about me per say. My time to question or my time to be upset or anything, at that time, it wasn’t about me because now I’m in a position where I’m
supposed to be helping somebody else get through their reign. For once in my life, it wasn’t all about Renee.

Renee had to be able to put her feelings or anything to the side to be able to be somebody’s right hand (wo) man.

When asked how they expressed their feelings related to not being selected for the leadership position, four of the seven participants had feelings of reclusiveness. Victoria shared that she did not express her feelings. She stated,

I didn’t talk to nobody. I kind of locked myself in a confined space, dorm room to be exact. I didn’t talk to nobody. I didn’t want to talk to nobody, because I knew if I talked to people, they would ask questions about it, and I didn’t want to talk about it.

Kevin also expressed being reclusive. He shared,

I really didn’t express it [feelings]. I do have a problem expressing my feelings. . . . I think I have a problem expressing my feelings so it’s like, I don’t always talk about it. I don’t talk about it. I mainly will hold everything in because I don’t want my problems to be somebody else’s problems.

While more than half of the participants had feelings of reclusiveness when asked how they expressed their feelings related to not being selected for the leadership position, five of the seven participants felt they had the ability to manage their feelings. Martin stated,
I really didn’t talk too much about it. I just walked around thinking to myself about. I didn’t really comment to anybody how I was feeling. I just talked to myself about it. And with time, I just kind of forgot about it.

Renee also alluded to her ability to move-on came through her realization that she had to move on because what happens on campus is not focused solely on her:

I had to realize that at the time, for some of the things that was going on, it wasn’t about me per say. My time to question or my time to be upset or anything, at that time it wasn’t about me because now I’m in a position where I'm supposed to be helping somebody else get through their reign. For once in my life, it wasn’t all about Renee. Renee had to be able to put her feelings or anything to the side to be able to be somebody’s right hand man.

Overall, the questions regarding the participants’ personal retrospection of dealing with the outcomes, as well as their ability to cope and express themselves, captured responses that spoke to the participants becoming reclusive and reserved, refocusing, and moving on. Therefore, Copes Reclusively, Refocus, and Move on emerged as the theme for this area.

Self-evaluation, expression, and blame. The participants were appraised about their personal actualization and self-evaluation. Specifically, participants reflected on their need to be more personable and express feelings to peers. The participants blamed themselves and administration for not being selected for the student leadership position.
Four out of seven participants suggested that they could have been more personable when asked what they could have done differently. For example, George stated,

What could I have done differently for the whole experience? I would probably say get myself more out there. Because I will say this is definitely a growing experience and a growing opportunity because I was shocked I didn’t sell myself enough. Because I told myself I needed to break out a little bit more. I told myself I need to speak to more people. I did and I didn’t, so I’d definitely do that differently. Just being more vocal and being more visible and just more friendly. Speaking up to people, ask them how they’re doing and how they feel about this, how do they feel about that and just expressing what my personal views or... expressing with my heart more so than the money that we put into it or the fancy things that we were trying to have.

Martin stated,

In my interview, unless I was asked a question, I didn’t really speak too much. I came in, I shook his hand, and I sat down. He did ask a lot of questions. A lot of my answers were simple and dry. It was a “yes”, “yes, sir”, “no, sir” or “thank you”. I wasn’t really that open... I could have been more interactive, if you will. That probably would have made a big difference.

Tiffany also thought that she could be more personable: “I wish I would’ve reached out to more people like, ‘I need your help. Can you help me with this? Can you help me with that?’ Instead of trying to do it all on my own.”
All of the participants did mention that they shared their feelings about not being selected for the leadership position with someone. At least three of the seven participants shared these feelings with friends or peers. George shared his feelings with his running mate, the candidate for Vice-President of Student Government: “The struggles of campaigning, encouraging each other, keeping each other motivated, and even when we lost, we had to express to each other, ‘Hey, this isn’t the end of the world.’”

Some form of blame also resonated with the participants for not being selected for the student leadership position. Five of the seven participants blamed themselves. Renee said, “I feel like; I guess [I blame] myself all together. I don’t ever put my things, I don’t want to say problems, but I feel responsible for what happens to me, especially the decisions.”

Victoria blamed administration, but also acknowledged that she shared some of the blame in the outcome of her election: “I was the root of what was going on, but I don’t feel like it was me alone. I feel like the administrators a lot, because there was a lot of stuff they could have handled.”

In retrospect, the majority of the participants surveyed themselves and/or their reaction to the election outcomes. They either expressed their emotions to peers or reflected within. Nonetheless, the participants blamed themselves, administration, or a flawed election process. Therefore, Self-evaluation, Expression, and Blame emerged as the theme for the students’ appraisal regarding their self-evaluation.
Lacks emotional support and desires closure. Participants were asked about campus services provided to help them with the process, as well as dealing with their election experience. Of the seven participants, George provided the most extensive account of what he expected:

I guess it would have been helpful to maybe to have a meeting with the director of student life because that’s who we were heavily engaged with to making sure that our campaigning was going right, elections were going smoothly and all that stuff. I think it would have been nice to possibly have a sit down with her. Maybe she expressed to us, ‘Hey, it’s not the end of the world.’ Because, it’s different with us working it through ourselves. But, coming from our advisor would have been . . . [better] coming from someone that we looked up to; I think it would have sunk in a little easier saying, ‘Hey, I understand you ran for this position. It’s not the end of the world. There are other positions open. There are other doors open. You can serve in other capacities.’ I believe that would have made a difference with us dealing with it internally and easing our hurt, or whatever it is we were dealing with.

Other participants shared their account of post-election follow up, or the lack thereof. Tiffany stated that she expected at least some type of reception for all of the participants:

It would have been nice to have a gathering of everyone who was in the competition. . . . We could just have the open discussion about our thoughts of
the pageant, how do we feel about the pageant, some things that we like, some things that we didn’t like, things that could have been changed, just to get a better feel of, so we know next year for the next Miss ASU pageant, we know we need to do this and that differently.

In general, participants were very vocal about not having support provided by the institution. Four of the seven participants even stated that they desired follow up and advising. The participants reported that the institution did not provide any services to assist with their experiences related to not being selected for the student leadership position. All but one participant expected some type of follow up interaction with an administrator or student leader. Accordingly, Lacks Emotional Support and Closure was not only the common response, but also the overarching theme regarding campus services provided to help them with the process and their election experience.

Summary of Results

The researcher explored African American Millennial college students’ perception of their lived experiences with failed attempts at student leadership opportunities, as well as how they coped with such failed attempts. The researcher employed a qualitative method to explore this phenomenon and collected data using a semistructured interview questionnaire intended to address the following questions:

1. In what way do African American Millennial college students appraise the lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position?
2. How do African American Millennial college students at one Historically Black College or University describe their coping responses to a failed attempt at pursuing a student leadership position?

Further, the study examined the appraisal processes participants utilized while going through the campus election experience. Specifically, the researcher inquired about Millennials’ (a) Character (Drive) and Desire to Achieve; (b) Overall Experience and Reaction to Not Being Selected; (c) Reaction about Process and Purpose for Seeking SLR (Student Leadership Role); (d) Personal Retrospect: Ability to Cope and Express Oneself; (e) Reaction/Response to Loss or Failure in General as a Millennial; (d) Actualization and Self-Evaluation; and (f) Emotional Support and Closure.

The researcher analyzed and organized the data into descriptive categories. Upon categorizing responses and performing thematic analysis, themes emerged through interpreting the raw data based on the frequency of common threads used to categorize participant responses (Giorgi, 2012; Saldaña, 2012; Shaw, 2016). The themes that emerged were: (a) Passionate, Outgoing, and Persistent; (b) Disappointed and Self-Deprecating; (c) Desire to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence; (d) Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged; (e) Copes Reclusively, Refocus, and Move on; (f) Evaluation, Expression, and Blame; and (g) Lacks Emotional Support and Closure.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 uses the results of the study presented in Chapter 4 to give meaning to the collected data. This section also juxtaposes the data presented in Chapter 4 with the research questions the study sought to explore. Presented first is a summary of the study; followed by a summary of the major findings. The researcher explains the findings of the study in response to the problem statement. The relationship between the findings and the arguments presented in the literature review are also presented in the conclusions. The researcher also discusses how the theoretical and appraisal concept are applicable to the findings. Recommendations for future research conclude this chapter.

Summary of the Study

Literature regarding the Millennial Generation typically fails to address the subtle differences among Millennials of different race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011). According to Kadison and DiGeronimo (2004), and Soet and Sevig (2006), levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress, amongst other mental health issues, have increased in today’s college students. The purpose of this study was to explore African American Millennial college students’ perceptions of their lived experiences with failed attempts at student leadership opportunities, as well as how they cope with such failed attempts. Further, the
study examined the appraisal processes students utilized while going through this experience.

The researcher sought to determine potential factors that lead to increased rates of depression, anxiety, and stress of college students. The findings of this study may present student affairs leadership with an understanding of the perceptions and coping strategies of African American Millennial college students who encounter emotionally challenging events. Another potential benefit of this study is student affairs leadership could gain insight to potential protocols for helping students to develop positive and safe coping strategies. The researcher conducted a phenomenological study on African American college students’ appraisals of their lived experiences of and coping responses to failed attempts at pursuing a student leadership position at a Historical Black University.

**Summary of Major Findings**

Employing a qualitative method to explore this phenomenon, the researcher collected data through a semistructured interview questionnaire intended to address the following research questions:

1. In what way do African American Millennial college students appraise the lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position?
2. How do African American Millennial college students at one Historically Black College or University describe their coping responses to a failed attempt at a pursuing a student leadership position?
Further, the study examined the appraisal processes students utilized while going through the campus election experience. Specifically, the researcher inquired about Millennials’ (a) Character (Drive) and Desire to Achieve; (b) Overall Experience and Reaction to Not Being Selected; (c) Reaction about Process and Purpose for Seeking SLR (Student Leadership Role); (d) Personal Retrospect: Ability to Cope and Express Oneself; (e) Reaction/Response to Loss or Failure in General as a Millennial; (d) Actualization and Self-Evaluation; and (f) Emotional Support and Closure.

The researcher analyzed and organized the data into descriptive categories. Upon categorizing responses and performing thematic analysis, themes emerged through interpreting the raw data based on the frequency of common threads used to categorize participant responses (Giorgi, 2012; Saldaña, 2012; Shaw, 2016). The seven themes that emerged were:

a. Passionate, Outgoing, and Persistent
b. Disappointed and Self-Deprecating
c. Desire to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence
d. Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged
e. Copes Reclusively, Refocus, and Move on
f. Self-Evaluation, Expression, and Blame
g. Lacks Emotional Support and Closure

The themes associated with the first research question are: (a) **Passionate, Outgoing, and Persistent**; (b) **Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged**;
and (c) *Desire to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence*. Participants provided positive descriptions of themselves. They also reported altruistic reasons for pursuing a student leadership position. However, after not being selected, participants described having a negative experience along with negative feelings.

The themes associated with the second research question are: (a) *Copes Reclusively, Refocus, and Move on*; (b) *Disappointed and Self-Deprecating*; (c) *Self-Evaluation, Expression, and Blame*; and (d) *Lacks Emotional Support and Closure*. Participants reported coping by withdrawing from campus life in order to gain perspective and move past not being selected for the student leadership position—an action that led to the fourth theme regarding feelings of disappointment and defeat. Further, they engaged in self-reflection, expression of feelings, and assessment of blame. Lastly, participants did not feel that they received institutional support while seeking closure.

**Discussion of Findings or Interpretation of Findings**

According to Silva (2005), appraisal theory provides a dynamic framework for explaining the nuances associated with emotions and emotional experiences. Appraisal theorists argues that the production and differentiation of emotions has basis in a person’s subjective evaluation of the significance of an event (Scherer, 1999). The findings of this study support the literature about appraisal theory. In primary appraisal, there is an evaluation of the significance of an event for one’s well-being. In this study, the central event presented in this study was the failed attempt at being selected for a student
leadership opportunity. The themes that reflected the primary appraisal were Desired to Advocate, Inspire, and Influence; and Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged. The secondary appraisal was the assessment of the participants’ resources and what coping mechanisms they employed.

Secondary appraisal focuses on individual resources that can assist with coping with the consequences of a situation (Scherer, 1999). The researcher asked questions that inquired about the coping mechanisms used by the participants because of their failed attempt at a student leadership position. In this study, the themes that indicated secondary appraisal were Feels Defeated, Doubtful, Inadequate, and Discouraged; Copes Reclusively, Refocus, and Move on; Self-Evaluation, Expression, and Blame; and Lacks Emotional Support and Closure.

The findings proved to be as interesting as they were rather contradictory. While the participants described themselves as passionate, outgoing, accomplished and persistent, they reacted to not being selected for a student leadership opportunity in a self-deprecating way. The participants assumed that because they were not selected, they were no longer passionate, outgoing, accomplished and persistent. Further, the participants described themselves confidently but did not exude confidence while dealing with a negative experience. In this case, the participants’ self-confidence was challenged when they were not selected, which in turn seemed to cause the adverse effect—lack of confidence.
Another contradiction identified in the findings was that the participants expressed a desire to motivate others when asked about their purpose for seeking a student leadership position, yet they expressed feelings of meagerness when asked about their experience and reaction to not being selected. The participants expressed a conviction to want to help others, but when they were not selected, they did not respond assuredly. Their *intent* to obtain a student leadership position, as well as their *descriptions* of themselves, contradicted the way they coped with not being selected for the leadership position. Overall, the participants did not conduct an accurate self-evaluation of their emotional state to consider how not being selected might impact them emotionally and psychologically. This lack of self-awareness about their true emotional state could be the reason why participants possessed such conflicting feelings between their desire to be selected for the leadership position and the actual outcome of the process.

Another unique revelation was the participants’ description of their ability to cope and express themselves. Although the participants often reported wanting to refocus and move-on, they did not manage their feelings well. Likewise, they did not express themselves in positive a way, if at all. Some participants drank and smoked marijuana, while others argued, ranted, or kept their feelings to themselves. The unique part of this was the lack of emotional support provided to the participants by the institution. Nearly all the participants reported that they expected some type of follow up or encouragement after they were not selected. Given that all the participants sought closure, one could
assume that the participants had emotions that they were unable to manage alone. The findings reflected that all the participants expected support from their administration to get help with coping.

Response to Research Inquiry

African American Millennial college students (self) appraised their lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position as one of defeat, doubt, inadequacy, and discouragement. Participants provided positive self-portrayals and reported altruistic reasons for pursuing a student leadership position. While the participants had good intentions in seeking the student leadership position, they struggled with not being selected. The participants described this struggle through feelings of anger, hurt, disappointment, incapability, and sadness.

African American Millennial college students described their coping responses to a failed attempt at pursuing a student leadership as reactions that allowed them to cope reclusively, refocus, and move-on. Participants reported coping by withdrawing from campus life to gain perspective and move past not being selected for the student leadership position. Additionally, participants felt disappointed and defeated. Further, they engaged in self-reflection, expression of feelings, and assessment of blame. Lastly, participants did not feel that they received and desired institutional support on the path toward closure. The descriptions of the participants’ coping responses to not being selected for a student leadership position suggests the need for institutional support and follow up throughout the process.
The findings of this study highlight that the participants experienced negative feelings and had negative reactions because of not being selected for a student leadership position. Additionally, the participants experienced difficulty coping with not being selected for a student leadership position. The findings suggest that the participants displayed disengaging behaviors as a coping response, along with expressions of hurt, disappointment, and defeat (see Table 6). Further, there was an indication that the participants had experiences that could lead to struggles with their mental health, as reflected in the participants’ expectation of receiving emotional support after this negative experience.
### Table 6

*Response to Research Inquiry*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Thematic Characterization</th>
<th>Response to Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: In what do African American Millennial college students appraise the lived experience of failed attempt at student leadership position?</td>
<td>(a) Millennials’ character drive to achieve: passionate, outgoing, and persistent;</td>
<td>Participants provided positive and altruistic reasons for pursuing a student leadership position. Participants had good intentions in seeking the student leadership position, but struggled with not being selected through feelings of anger, hurt, disappointment, incapability, and sadness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) overall experience and reaction to not being selected: feels defeated, doubtful, inadequate, and discouraged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) reaction about process and purpose for seeking student leadership role: desire to advocate, inspire, and influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: How do African American Millennial at one Historically Black College or University describe their coping response to a failed attempt at pursuing a student leadership position?</td>
<td>(a) personal retrospect: ability to cope and express oneself: copes reclusively, refocus, and move on</td>
<td>Participants reported coping by withdrawing from campus life in order to gain perspective and move past not being selected for student leadership role. Additionally, participants felt disappointed and defeated. Further, they engaged in self-reflection, expression of feelings, and assessment of blame. Lastly, participants did not feel that they received the desire institutional support while seeking closure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) reaction/response to loss or failure in general as a Millennial: disappointed and self-deprecating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) actualization and self-evaluation: self-evaluation, expression, and blame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) emotional support and closure: lacks emotional support and closure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions and Reflections

The African American Millennial college students who participated in the study reflected behaviors and feelings that agreed with the literature findings that describe Millennials’ character, drive, and desire to achieve. The findings of the study were inconsistent with the literature about millennial attitudes and their entitlement behavior. Monaco and Martin (2007) and Thompson and Gregory (2012) claimed that millennials held certain attitudes of entitlement; however, the participants did not report wanting something for nothing. Additionally, there appeared to be an emergence of anxiety and depression in the participants because of their use of avoidance coping. This is concurrent with the research that suggests the most prevailing mental health issues experienced by Millennial college students are anxiety and depression (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2015; Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012; HERI, 2014, 2015; Peters, 2007; Winger & Olson, 2015).

Hurt became apparent as an emotion connected to coping with not being selected for a student leadership position. As suggested by the literature (Bippus & Young, 2012), the data were analyzed using appraisal theory to explore coping related to hurt. Further, this study responds to the call by Strayhorn (2011) for more research about African American Millennial college students. Concurrent with the findings of Sheu and Sedlacek (2004), the participants (African American Millennial college students) seemed hopeless after not being selected as they often reported feelings of doubt.
Pressures to Participate in Student Leadership

The findings agree with Cabrera’s (2014) notion of the pressure experienced by Millennials to participate in student leadership activities. The researcher did not ask the participants directly about why they sought student leadership positions, nor were participants asked about the pressures of campaigning for such positions. However, the researcher asked participants to describe how the leadership opportunity connected to their goals. The participants responded with what inspired them to want to obtain a student leadership position.

Some participants described that they felt pressured to seek a student leadership opportunity, which supports Cabrera’s (2014) argument. Subsequently, based on the results of this study, an individual could further argue that Millennials are not only motivated to meet the pressures and expectations of family members, but also those of their peers. Likewise, it was evident that the challenge to integrate and embrace learning in out-of-classroom experiences, as argued by Keeling (2006), was also present on the campus of the selected site. Consistent with Posner’s (2014) claim, the participants saw these roles as integral parts of their educational experience. Unfortunately, not all students will have the opportunity to participate in student leadership opportunities, as was the case with the participants in this study (CAS, 2009).

Millennial Generation: Character, Drive, and Desire to Achieve

Morrison (2009) and Strauss and Howe (2003) described Millennial characteristics as achieving, sheltered, confident, special, team-oriented, pressured, and
conventional. The participants conveyed an interest in service activities, as well as a desire to be actively involved in campus life. Accordingly, Elam, Stratton, and Gibson (2007) claimed that Millennials were hardworking; engaged in academic, extracurricular, and service activities; generous; and practical. While this seemed to be true initially, most participants’ drive seemed to decrease because of their failed attempt to acquire a student leadership position. Nonetheless, as the themes emerged, it was evident that the participants eventually resumed these positive characteristics after progressing through their coping stage and moving-on.

Millennial Attitudes/Entitlement Behavior

The relationships between the younger and older generations depend upon communication and building connections (Payne, Summers, & Stewart, 1973). Although the literature addresses Millennial attitudes towards communication, relationship building, and motivation (Elam et al., 2007; Morrison, 2009; Strauss & Howe, 2003), the scope of this study did not explore the relationships between Millennials and other generations. Likewise, this study did not explore the relationship among students, professors, and supervisors. However, one participant did speak of a problem with connecting with the administration. Similarly, participants had a problem with the institution and the processes associated with the student leadership opportunities.

Literature regarding Millennials describes them as confident (DeBard, 2004; Monaco & Martin, 2007; Strauss & Howe, 2003; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Ironically, this confidence only remains when Millennials experience beneficial outcomes (DeBard,
The participants exhibited confident behaviors initially but displayed a loss of confidence after not being selected for the student leadership position.

Millennial College Students’ Mental Health/Coping Responses

The questions regarding the *Overall Experience and Reaction to Not Being Selected* provided responses that addressed the three areas of appraisal (e.g. Millennial characteristics, the central event, and coping strategies). The results of the participants’ appraisal of the central event (the failed attempt) were feelings of doubt, defeat, inadequacy, and discouragement. Consistent with Lazarus and Smith’s (1988) claim, not being selected had a significantly negative impact on the participants’ emotional and mental well-being, which resulted in negative emotions. These feelings of doubt, defeat, inadequacy, and discouragement justify Sutton and Wheatley’s (2003) assertion that an individual’s self-esteem is assaulted from such a loss.

Langlois (2013) argued that prolonged usage of *avoidance coping* increases the risk of severe forms of depression. Thus, coping in isolation exposed the participants to severe forms of depression. Participants illustrated their struggle with not being selected through expressing feelings of anxiety and depression. One could deduce that the participants had unresolved feelings about not being selected and needed assistance with working through those feelings.

Further, the participants attempted to manage demands that exceeded their resources due to the reported lack of campus support (Utsey, Ponterotto, Reynolds, & Cancelli, 2000). Thus, coping occurred in isolation. Most of the participants struggled
with this process, since they had problems expressing their feelings and managing feelings associated with not being selected for student leadership position. Coping in isolation, along with feelings of helplessness due to the lack of emotion support, suggests that anxiety and depression were present in participants (Lazarus & Smith, 1988).

While the primary appraisal for the participants’ experience served as an assessment of their experience, the most salient connection to the literature is found in the secondary appraisal of their experience. The outcome of the participants’ secondary appraisal of their actualization and self-evaluation was blame. Most blamed themselves, but others blamed peers and campus administration. Participants appeared to understand where they fell short in the process and could accept responsibility.

Although the participants accepted responsibility for the outcome, they coped in isolation, experienced a lack of emotional support, and desired closure. It seemed that participants did not have anyone they could trust to assist them with the coping process, and they expected this assistance to come from the administration. Consequently, the lack of emotional support could be a reason for such a drop in emotional health and an increase in the need for counseling services (Misner, 2014). Moreover, the drop in the emotional health is concurrent with Duncan’s (1999) research that found that life events contributed to depressive symptoms in African American college students.

**African American Millennial College Students**

Although this study did not examine the physiological and coping responses of different ethnic backgrounds, it explored African-American students in detail. This study...
sought to address the gap in the literature that reflects the omission of African American Millennials in studies related to resiliency (Burley, Barnard-Brak, & Marbley, 2010). Bonner, Lewis, Bowman-Perrott, Hill-Jackson, and James (2009) criticized that the seven millennial characteristics provided by Strauss and Howe (2003) (achiever, confident, conventional, pressured, sheltered, special, and team-oriented) focus primarily on majority populations, yet should be applied contextually for African Americans. Although the participants’ average score on the Pew survey was 92, only three characteristics of Millennials, as described by Strauss and Howe (2003), fit the participants. This suggests that while African American Millennials exhibit characteristics similar to majority populations, research that adds context to their experiences provides a better understanding of this specific student population.

Implications for the Field of Education

This study provides student affairs leadership examples of the perceptions and coping strategies of African American Millennial college students who encounter challenging events. The findings suggest that the participants displayed disengaging behaviors as a coping response, along with expressions of hurt, disappointment, and defeat. All participants reported that the received no emotional support from student affairs leadership. The problem presented in this study spoke to the rising levels of mental health problems experienced by Millennial college students. Through focusing on the experience of not being selected for a student leadership experience, student affairs
leadership has an example of an area where they could better “promote and support the emotional and personal well-being of students” (HERI, 2014, p. 3).

Additionally, this study illustrates the importance of not using inefficient one-size-fits-all approaches to addressing student issues (Deggs, 2011). Focusing on the nuances associated with Millennials students of different race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Dungy, 2011; Strayhorn, 2011), student affairs leadership can find ways to better support and promote their emotional and personal well-being (HERI, 2014). As suggested by Reynolds (2013), student affairs leadership can engage departments outside of counseling services to assist with the increased demand for student psychological and emotional support (HERI, 2014). Moreover, concentrating on the mental health needs of African American Millennial college students could combat the negative impact on their success in college.

This study provided insight on how student affairs leadership could develop protocols for helping students to develop positive and safe coping strategies. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of African American Millennial college students’ perception of failed attempts at student leadership opportunities. Readers will develop a better understanding of the experiences of African American Millennial college students. Readers will also gain an understanding of the experiences of students who do not get the student leadership position they seek, along with the impact on their psychological and emotional health.
Application of Findings to Theoretical Framework

Appraisal theory served as the theoretical framework of this study since the researcher sought to identify elicited emotions linked to a pattern of outcomes related to a specific event (Scherer, 1999). The specific event in this study was the failed attempt by African American Millennial college students to attain a student leadership position. Additionally, appraisal theory describes the process of explaining the nuances associated with emotions (Silva, 2005). As illustrated in Figure 7, the theoretical framework assumes the position that individuals’ subjective evaluation of the significance of the event (e.g. the failed attempted at a student leadership role) produces certain emotions (Scherer, 1999).

![Figure 7. Appraisal Theory Self-Evaluation Appraisal Process]

The theoretical framework proved appropriate for addressing the research questions as it provided a subjective evaluation of the significance of an event, the subsequent emotions produced, and the subsequent coping responses. The theoretical framework was also relevant to the research design as the study sought to appraise the
lived experience of African American Millennial college students. Therefore, the lived experience of the event, the failed attempt, was best explored by conducting a qualitative study using a phenomenological research design that employed appraisal theory.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study described the lived experience of African-American Millennial students. This study also revealed coping strategies used by such students when not selected for a student leadership role. However, the study did not employ a psychological appraisal of the students’ anxiety, nor did the study formally evaluate the level of depression experienced by each student participant. Therefore, this section proposes recommendations for future studies based on those unexplored or unanswered areas regarding the experiences of Millennial students with student leadership roles in general.

Avoidance Coping

The researcher did not conduct a formal evaluation of the participants’ level of depression and anxiety; therefore, the study did not examine Langlois’ (2013) theory regarding the prolonged usage of avoidance coping. Langlois (2013) argued that such avoidance increases the risk of severe forms of depression. The findings of the study represented the participants’ self-appraisal of their characteristics, feelings, and coping responses to not being selected for a student leadership position. Future research could include a formal mental health evaluation to explore the impact of not being selected for a student leadership position on those who suffer from anxiety and depression.
Coping Mechanisms between Ethnicities

Sheu and Sedlacek (2004) postulated that a contrast in coping mechanisms exist between ethnicities. This study was limited to African American Millennial college students. Future research could contextually compare the way that college students appraise the lived experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership position by comparing students of different social economic status, gender, and ethnicity. Additionally, there could be a comparison of their coping responses to this phenomenon. Further, the setting of the study was a Historically Black University. Future research could detail the experiences of African American Millennial college students at a traditionally White institution and compare the findings with students at HBCUs.

Levels of Resiliency

Participants spoke about their desire to move past the experience of not being selected for a student leadership position; however, the study focused more on coping strategies in lieu of how resilient students were. The literature about resiliency theory describes a process where a person who is reacting to life’s events could choose consciously or unconsciously the outcomes of disruptions (Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, & Kumpfer, 1990). Resiliency theory also focuses on the “force that drives a person through adversity” (Richardson, 2002, p. 307). Future research could explore the levels of resiliency illustrated by African American Millennial college students who experienced a failed attempt at pursuing a student leadership position.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL
08 Jun 2016

Mr. Michael Gary
Mercer University
Tift College of Education - Atlanta
3001 Mercer University Dr
Atlanta, GA 30341

RE: African American Millennial College Students' Appraisal of Failed Attempts at Pursuing Student Leadership Opportunities (H1605162)

Dear Mr. Gary:

Your application entitled: African American Millennial College Students' Appraisal of Failed Attempts at Pursuing Student Leadership Opportunities (H1605162) was reviewed by this Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research in accordance with Federal Regulations 21 CFR 56.110(b) and 45 CFR 46.110(b) (for expedited review) and was approved under Category 6, 7 per 45 FR 60364.

Your application was approved for one year of study on 08-Jun-2016. The protocol expires 07-Jun-2017. If the study continues beyond one year, it must be re-evaluated by the IRB Committee.

Item(s) Approved:
New application for study using interviews to examine the appraisal processes students utilize upon failed attempts at pursuing student leadership opportunities use of surveys, interviews, and audio recordings.

Please complete the survey for the IRB and the Office of Research Compliance. To access the survey, click on the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/K7CT888

"Mercer University has adopted and agrees to conduct its clinical research studies in accordance with the International Conference on Harmonization’s (ICH) Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice."

Respectfully,

Ava Chambliss-Richardson, M.ED., CIP, CIM
Member
Institutional Review Board
Mercer University IRB & Office of Research Compliance
Phone (478) 301-4101
Fax (478) 301-2329

1501 Mercer University Dr. Macon, Georgia 31207-0001
(478) 301-4101 | FAX (478) 301-2329
Informed Consent

African American Millennial College Students' Appraisal of Failed Attempts at Pursuing Student Leadership Opportunities

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Michael Gary, M.Ed. Faculty Advisor: Dr. Elaine Artman
Department of Educational Leadership 3001 Mercer University Drive
Tift College of Education Atlanta, Georgia 30341
Mercer University 1-888-471-9922

Purpose of the Research
This research study is designed to examine the appraisal processes students utilize while going through the experience of not being selected for a student leadership position. The research seeks to address one aspect of the growing rates of depression, anxiety, and stress of college students.

Procedures
If you decide to participate you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. During the interview you will be asked questions that will seek to gain an understanding of your perception of failed attempts at student leadership opportunities and your subsequent coping responses. I believe this interview will last no more than thirty (30) minutes.

The investigators may stop the study or take you out of the study at any time they judge it is in your best interest. They may also remove you from the study for various other reasons. They can do this without your consent.
You can stop participating at any time. If you stop, you will not lose any benefits.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
I do not foresee any risks associated with the study. It is possible that recalling the past experience of a failed attempt at a student leadership opportunity during the interview could cause emotional discomfort if the documents depict negative connotations. If you experience discomfort at any time during the document review you reserve the right to discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently. There may also be other risks that I cannot predict.

Potential Benefits of the Research
You will not receive any financial benefits from this research. Through the interview, it is possible that you will better understand your appraisal of your failed attempt at a student leadership opportunity.
Through this study, student affairs leadership may gain a sense of the perceptions and coping strategies of African American Millennial college students who encounter potentially challenging events. Focusing on specific student experiences and issues can provide student affairs leadership the opportunity to better “promote and support” the “emotional and personal well-being” of students (HERI, 2014, p.3). Moreover, student affairs leadership will learn about the importance of not using inefficient one-size-fits-all approaches to addressing student issues (Deggs, 2011).

**Confidentiality and Data Storage**
I will take the following steps to keep information about you confidential, and to protect it from unauthorized disclosure, tampering, or damage:

1. Each interview will be audio recorded and saved on to a flash drive.
2. The recordings will be transcribed by a transcriptionist who will complete a confidentiality statement.
3. The recordings will only be accessed by the transcriptionist and myself.
4. The recordings and transcripts from each interview will be kept in a file cabinet in my home under lock and key.
5. After three years the transcripts and recordings will be destroyed.
6. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym during data analysis process.

**Participation and Withdrawal**
Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. You have the right to decline answering any question that makes you uncomfortable. Deciding not to participate, answer certain questions or choosing to leave the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled, and it will not harm your relationship with Albany State University.

If you wish to leave the study please send an email stating your wish to leave the study to Michael Gary Jr. at mgaryjr@gmail.com. Please Note as the data are anonymous, subjects cannot withdraw after data collection has taken place.

**Questions about the Research**
Please contact via cell Michael Gary Jr. at (267) 767-6019 or email mgaryjr@gmail.com if you have questions about the study, any problems, unexpected physical or psychological discomforts, any injuries, or think that something unusual or unexpected is happening.

You can also contact my dissertation chair Elaine Artman Ed.D, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Mercer University at ARTMAN_EM@mercer.edu or 678-547-6152 if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant.

This project has been reviewed and approved by Mercer University’s IRB. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Chair, at (478) 301-4101.

You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to your
INFORMED CONSENT
Michael Gary, Jr.

satisfaction. Your signature below indicates your voluntary agreement to participate in this research study.

KEEP SIGNATURES

______________________________________________
Signature of Research Participant                  Date

______________________________________________
Participant Name (Please Print)                    Date

______________________________________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent              Date

Rev 06/19/2010

Mercer University IRB
Approval Date 04/08/2016
Protocol Expires 06/27/2017
APPENDIX C

INSTITUTION STUDY SITE IRB
DATE: July 11, 2016

TO: Michael Gary, M.Ed.
FROM: [Redacted]

PROJECT TITLE: [922080-1] African American Millennial College Students' Appraisal of Failed Attempts at Pursuing Student Leadership Opportunities

REFERENCE #: [Redacted]
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: July 11, 2016
EXPIRATION DATE: July 10, 2017
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY:

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this committee. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this committee.

This project has been determined to be a [Redacted] project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of July 10, 2017.
Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

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

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within [redacted].
APPENDIX D

INVITATION LETTER
Dear Millennial Student,

My name is Michael Gary Jr. As a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at Mercer University, I am investigating African American millennial college students’ appraisals of failed attempts at pursuing student leadership positions. As a student who recently attempted to gain a campus leadership position, you input will provide valuable information and insights for the study.

I invite you to share your experiences by participating in a Skype or FaceTime interview in the near future. If you agree to participate, prior to the study, you will receive and sign an informed consent, which is required by Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to be provided by all investigators and researchers.

If you would be interested in participating in this study, I first need to verify that you behave and think like a typical millennial, which will be confirmed by a very brief online survey. Those students who meet the minimal score requirement as set by the research study will be contacted by email and/or phone to verify that they are 1) eligible to participate in the study and 2) willing to participate in a short online or phone interview.

To determine “How Millennial Are You” please click on the link below to take the survey. It will take less than 5 minutes. After you have completed the survey, I respectfully request that you EMAIL picture or screenshot of your score along with your full name, email address, age, and cell number at michael.gary@live.mercer.edu.

http://www.pewresearch.org/quiz/how-millennial-are-you/.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the investigator Michael Gary Jr. at XXX-XXX-XXXX or michael.gary@live.mercer.edu

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (478) 301-4101 or email at ORC_Research @Mercer.edu.

Mercer University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed study #(H1605162) and approved it on (08-Jun-2016).

Thank you in advance for your time and participation!
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
1. Background
   a. Tell me about yourself.
   b. What student leadership position did you seek out?

2. Millennial attitudes/behaviors
   a. Tell me some the characteristics that describe you?
   b. How do you respond to achieving your goals?
   c. How do you respond to not achieving your goals?

3. Appraisal Theory
   a. Primary appraisal
      i. What did the application or election process entail?
      ii. What were your initial thoughts about the outcome of the application process or election?
         1. How do you feel that not being selected impacted your goals?
         2. Can you describe how this opportunity was connected to your goals?
         3. How did you feel about yourself after this experience?
   b. Secondary appraisal
      i. What were your feelings with not being selected for the student leadership position?
ii. How did you manage these feelings associated with not being selected for the student leadership position?

1. Did you feel that you had the ability to manage these feelings?

2. How did you express your feelings?

3. What do you think you could have done differently?

iii. Who did you share your feelings with?

iv. Who do you feel is responsible for you not being selected?

v. Were there any services provided to you to help with your experience?

1. What would have been helpful?
APPENDIX F

PERMISSION TO USE DATA
Michael Gary <mgaryjr@gmail.com> Wed, Feb 8, 2017 at 12:03 AM
To: ccmh@psu.edu
Greetings,
I hope this email finds you in the highest of spirits I was hoping to use your table from your 2014 Annual Report (No. STA 1530) for my dissertation. Can you grant me permission to do so?

In the Spirit of unity,
Michael Gary Jr.

CCMH <ccmh@psu.edu> Sun, Feb 12, 2017 at 7:26 AM
ReplyTo: ccmh@psu.edu
To: Michael Gary <mgaryjr@gmail.com>
Hi Michael,
Yes, you may use tables from our Annual Reports, as long as they are cited appropriately.

Best,
Ashley
Ashley L. Stauffer, M.S.
Project Manager
Center for Collegiate Mental Health
Counseling and Psychological Services
The Pennsylvania State University
Phone: (814) 8651419
Email: ccmh@psu.edu
using SPRC's graph
2 messages

Almeida, Sarah <salmeida@edc.org>
To: "mgaryjr@gmail.com" <mgaryjr@gmail.com>

Wed, Mar 1, 2017 at 11:06 AM

Hi Michael,

Thank you so much for contacting the Suicide Prevention Resource Center’s Library. You are more than welcome to use the graph in your dissertation as long as you give the Suicide Prevention Resource Center credit. Please let us know if we can be of any more assistance to you on this exciting endeavor of your dissertation.

--Sarah

Michael Gary <mgaryjr@gmail.com>
To: "Almeida, Sarah" <salmeida@edc.org>

Wed, Mar 1, 2017 at 11:15 AM

Thank you so much for your quick response!!!
[Quoted text hidden]

In the Spirit of unity,
Michael Gary Jr.