

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MALE GENERATION Z COLLEGIANS:
TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to examine the academic experiences of 11 male Generation Z born between 1995-2012 and describe their undergraduate collegiate experiences by exploring their thoughts and perceptions. The central question is: What are the academic experiences of male undergraduate Generation Z college students? Intrinsic and extrinsic factors are sinuous in the lives of Generation Z males; therefore, sub-questions investigated the views of participants regarding the implications of generational shifts, motivations, societal trends, and technology within higher education. Purposive, criterion, and snowball sampling were used to select 11 participants. The educational theories of constructivism, sociocultural, and self-determination guided this study in understanding current generations in the college environment. A qualitative phenomenology model was used in data collection through the compilation of interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts to gain depth of understanding of perspectives. Data analysis was conducted using transcendental phenomenological approach through epoche', reduction, imaginative variation, and meaning synthesizing. Systematic coding, triangulation, and description were employed. The study attempted to discover psychological phenomenology which is focused on the description of the essence of Northern Virginia male college experience. Effective examination was required to extract the data essential to create curriculum to meet this evolving need.

Keywords: Generation Z, college academia, motivations, societal trends, technology

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my God who led me on this journey and to my family who walked it with me.

Acknowledgments

First, I want to acknowledge the influence of my family on this educational trail. I am eternally appreciative of my parents and their sacrifices for my education. Additionally, I would like to thank my siblings who have spurred me to reach for the brass ring. Thank you.

Next, I would like to recognize my first husband Joseph and the impact he had on my life. Although he has been deceased for over 20 years, his zest for living inspired me to seize goals and adventures a little more ardently. Through his passing, I learned to appreciate my loved ones and to embrace each moment. Thank you.

I also acknowledge my sons Caleb and Nathaniel. They have been a source of joy and focus since the day they were born. I am honored to be their mom. I love you. Thank you for being my people.

Finally, I offer admiration to my last husband Kevin. He has been my life partner on this educational expedition. He has been my biggest encourager, advocate, and supporter on this journey to velvet sleeves. I love you. I am forever grateful.

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List of Abbreviations

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

Internet Generation (iGen)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

United States Census Bureau (USCB)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Chapter One provides an introductory framework of this transcendental phenomenological study describing the lived academic experiences of male college students born between 1995 and 2012. Women have outpaced men by significant margins in college completion since 1981 (Pew Research, 2019). Generations, society, stimulus, and learning trends can produce themes related to higher education, motivation, and learning (Mannheim, 1952, Ryan & Deci, 2017). The theoretical framework of constructivism, sociocultural, and self-determined principles were employed to connect the holistic view of Generation Z men (Dewey, 1938; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). The data collection methods included individual interviews, focus groups, and prompted written responses from 11 participants about their lived experiences in higher education. The purpose of this section is to provide the overview for this study which describes male Generation Z college experiences. This chapter explores the background of the study through historical, social, and theoretical context. Additionally, situation of self, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and research plan will be provided.

Background

The population born between 1995 and 2012, known as Gen Z, exceeds 25% of the current population comprising 74 million Americans (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Twenge, 2017). Generations, like cultures, have their own beliefs, social norms, and behaviors. Generation Z face social and academic challenges that are intermingled; however, cataloging and comprehending the actual lived experiences requires continual investigation (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; White, 2017). Higher education is an experience to enhance abilities

concerning informed decisions in life, yet enrollment is not equal amongst genders (Buchman et al., 2008). In 2020, the sum total of undergraduate enrollment included 16.8 million students of which female students made up 57.5% and male students made up 42.5% (NCES, 2017). Male enrollment has declined by 429,000 since 2010 (NCES, 2017). Culture is changing and educational design needs to acknowledge the identity of students' transformation to adjust curriculum structure in an effort to meet the evolving academic dynamic (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). Environment and social aspects influence the human approach to education (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). This study focused on describing male Gen Z college participants lived educational experience. The summary of historical, social, and theoretical background contexts is provided to present the framework of the study.

Historical Context

In 1981, more women than men received bachelor's degrees by .3% with the gender difference exponentially growing to 18% by 2020 (NCES, 2017). The gender disparity trend continues with a steady decrease of male Gen Z college enrollment (Pew Research, 2019). Collegiate scholars often relate the entirety of their academic success on the experiential nature of a series of scholastic encounters; therefore, it could be beneficial for all students (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). From Boomers to Generation X to Millennials and now with Generation Z, there exists a variation of academic identity distinctive to each group through social reforms, and cultural shifts, which are historically established by the uniqueness of each generation (Buahene & Kovary, 2003). This foundational base can be transferred to their academic engagement. From societal and technological progression, iGen's life experiences are fundamentally distinct from their predecessors (Twenge, 2018). Historically, Colonel Francis Parker began the progressive educational reform through identifying students as individuals and by bringing society into the

classroom (Gutek, 2011). This belief transformed classical philosophical teaching into a more sensible and practical experience; thus, culture and society were intermingled in educational programs (Gutek, 2011). Pragmatic constructivism saw human beings and their interactions with their surroundings as malleable and in constant need of reappraisal (Dewey, 1897). Pragmatic philosophers saw ideas as hypotheses to be tested in the reality of experience; thus, the skill of learning becomes the hypothesis and the need for evaluation of curricula is continual (Gutek, 2011). As societal and generational culture have evolved, so have educational theories and collegiate purpose; however, practical education is prevalent amongst current educators. College has traditionally utilized critical thinking through pedagogy and andragogy; subsequently, students would profit from cognitive practices of intrinsic adult-learning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When people function autonomously pursuing intrinsic aspirations, maturity through self-realization is a related interaction with the environment (Dewey, 1938; Ryan & Deci, 2017). An attempt to remain current within the academic domain is essential to educational relevance in the future.

Generational and cultural shifts should remain at the forefront of curriculum development (Firth et al., 2019). The relationship between society and education requires an integration of culture into the course structure of collegiate studies (Clark et al., 2017). As current students are members of the current populace, it is a vital factor to academically incorporate earlier life and societal experiences with new educational knowledge to offer opportunities for personal growth through complex queries and intellectual organization (Dewey, 1938). American society has celebrated individualism for all genders; however, male student enrollment is waning (Buchman et al., 2013). It is projected that 59% of undergraduate enrollment will be women and 41% will

be men by 2020 (NCES, 2017). This shift of 18% less men attending and completing college could affect societal attitudes and culture in the future.

Social Context

Factors such as geographic upbringing, education, family, peers, culture, and experience shape the way an individual views the world, but persons born between 1995 and 2012 have undergone a distinct trend (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; White, 2017). Generation Z has been bombarded by neurological stimulation through the many hours spent on technology, including social media, text messages, and gaming (Twenge, 2018). Digital natives have information at their fingertips and their ability to find information through Google has changed the culture of learning (Rickes, 2016; Turner, 2015). Education is no longer a straightforward pedagogy; therefore, the question of fulfilling the demands of its students becomes ambiguous (Firth et al., 2019). The construct of how youth understand, concentrate, and reflect has shifted from a linear pattern to a disjointed manner (Rickes, 2016; Turner, 2015). Current young adults are less likely to venture from their parents, date, drive, or work; therefore, the critical nature of educational andragogy and heutagogy should stay abreast of the learning pedagogies to challenge and encourage cognitive growth (Twenge, 2018). Society demands higher education to be at the vanguard of the educational curve through a comprehensive curriculum to aid all students in life after education (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). History, culture, technology, and humanity have all altered students and their learning abilities; consequently, the significance of educational prospectus remaining congruent to each generation becomes essential (Rickes, 2016; Twenge, 2018). Higher education should prepare IGen digital natives for the world outside of the scholastic domain by fostering cognitive and critical thinking; however, with the gender disparity

and male enrollment declining, the same opportunity for all students is not contextually evident (Prensky, 2001).

Even though education developed into a student-centered learning forum, education became linked to school and society (Dewey, 1897). This concept encouraged students to come together as a group to resolve difficulties with the common goal of achieving a solution, yet males are not as visible to this revision in today's culture. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, female enrollment is projected to increase 4%, but male enrollment is only projected to increase by only 2% in the coming year (NCES, 2017). This reflection of the student body populace may have cultural and societal implications. Higher learning should prepare all young adults to become productive members of society; however, schools are preparing students for more school and not for real life (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). Students are unique individuals, and they will continually change as their way of life and environment evolves; therefore, educators should be aware of their male and female students' viewpoint to adjust accordingly (Firth et al., 2019). The internet allows Generation Z to live in a virtual and a physical reality with flexibility and accessibility; for that reason, an understanding of patterns should be understood (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Knowledge is the goal of academia and not simply the transmission of information; thereby, the internet offers a plethora of new avenues for its users to gain and create knowledge (Gutek, 2011). Generation Z encompasses 26% of the United States population of 330,000,000 people; therefore, an acknowledgment of generational swings needs to be studied in order to obtain new knowledge for the reason that where iGen goes, so goes the culture (Twenge, 2017; U.S.C.S., 2020). College academia should reach all genders; therefore, the trend of more women and less men enrolling and graduating from college could reshape the landscape of American education and culture.

As society has altered through the centuries socially, so has the purpose of higher learning; in this manner, obtaining a bachelor's degree has become a crucial facet within the labor market. Over 81% of Generation Z students believe college is critical to their career and 72% say they want a customized experience in higher learning (Loveland, 2017). Curriculum within a uniform culture may not meet the needs of current trends (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019). Digital natives who are accustomed to technological advances are bored with much of today's education (Prensky, 2001). As current college students expect personalized experiences through interactive engagement, higher learning institutions need to reassess interest and modify curriculum to adapt to this age group for career development (Loveland, 2017; Rosemond & Owens, 2018). Employing a continuum that incorporates current technologies, ideals, and trends to stimulate innovation could propel each generational gender towards a productive and fulfilling place in society (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Theoretical Context

The focus of this study is on academic experiences of male Generation Z; therefore, in order to gain a holistic view of the male emerging adult, a blending of constructivist sociocultural and self-determined learning theory was most appropriate. The theoretical framework provided by constructivist sociocultural theory places importance on scaffolding development and learning in a social environment (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). As the demographic of college campuses adjusts to a new generation and predominantly one gender, educators should recognize the future of the culture (Firth et al., 2019). Individuals and society evolve with time; therefore, an analysis of learning trends is needed. People are significantly influenced by the socio-historical environment of their youth; thus, through shared experiences and events an evolution of beliefs may occur (Mannheim, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). As society

progresses, so do students; therefore, motivations and communal processes may affect a dynamic shift amongst college students (Rickes, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Collegians are young adults; consequently, this study was also guided by the recognition of emerging adulthood self-determination principles which are a distinguishing period in life characterized by such life choices as career, life partner, and worldviews (Arnett, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Self-determination theory (SDT) is understanding the motivation of self-direction through autonomy, competence, and relatedness inspired by social settings (Deci et al., 1991). Self-determination and self-regulation are key components in adult learning since college students are essentially responsible for their own life and should be taught at a more mature level (Knowles, 1988; Ryan & Deci, 2017). As student entities evolve, the educational realm requires a natural swing to accommodate them in curriculum and instruction (Buchmann et al., 2008). Students' age and learning trends are essential components towards curriculum development (Knowles, 1988). Sociocultural constructivism and self-determined theories were combined to create a rich view of the Generation Z student and their college experience.

Situation to Self

As a college instructor for over ten years, I have seen a general college enrollment shift to a more feminine populace and the rationale for this trend is perplexing. Knowing who I am and where I come from is an important part of this study; therefore, a recognition of generational movements and the design of society is necessary. In the 1950s, my dad sacrificed his education to help sustain his family and nine siblings. Although he was never able to finish his schooling, he knew learning was a key to change. Remembering my dad's stories of poverty and triumph ingrained in me a sense of focus, drive, and a recognition of the importance of education. I am a first-generation college graduate, and my two sons are second-generation college graduates. My

motivation for this study is an acknowledgement that generations, culture, and society evolve; therefore, there is a need for research into educational socio-cultural adjustments in gender and motivational differences in regard to higher learning. Socio-cultural and self-determined theories through generational trends within the role of education is a foundational basis of this study.

As a researcher who believes in the social constructivism paradigm, my hope was to gain an understanding of the world in which my students live. Constructivism has the premise that the human world is varied from the physical world; thus, it must be studied exclusively (Guba & Lincoln, 1990). Through cultural constructs, humans have proceeded to interpret their own world of human perception (Patton, 2002). There is a lack of data of male Generation Z college students; therefore, their perceptions and lived experiences need to be explored. My experiences and viewpoint were different from participants as I am neither male nor born between 1995-2012. By providing a forum for participants to construct their own knowledge about their collegiate experience, then accumulating data on individuals' understanding with societal conjectural, a deeper grasp of the phenomenon was explored.

I conducted semi-structured interviews; therefore, the philosophical assumptions of epistemological wherein the researcher relies on subjective evidence from participants and axiological where the researcher acknowledges value-laden are present in this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the primary philosophical assumption of ontological social constructivism was employed for this research. Since I reported different perspectives as themes developed, ontology, which is generally characterized as reality seen through many views, was utilized (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Describing numerous viewpoints was the goal of this study; therefore, the interpretive framework of social constructivism paradigm with an ontological assumption allowed for multiple realities to be built through the qualitative lived experiences of

each participant and their interaction with others (Patton, 2002). When individuals described their experiences from a constructivist viewpoint discovered through reflection, different perspectives fostered a richer study (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). I sought to grasp the meaning of experience as a process of intentionality to uncover the meanings of phenomena to move them toward an inclusive of mindfulness (Moustakas, 1994). Since phenomenology reflection is based on a past lived experience it is a retrospective viewpoint (Van Manen, 1990). A focus on a descriptive common premise through interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts from male Generation Z who lived the collegiate experience resulted in a study of themes conducted. Thus, the social constructivism concept sought an understanding of the world through various meanings through broad and general interactions with participants through open-ended questions (Patton, 2002).

Problem Statement

The problem to be addressed in this study is the insight of the lived experience of male Generation Z collegians to further understand the downward trend of male college enrollment and graduation. According to the United States Census Bureau (2020), females are 50.8% of the population while men consist of 49.2%, but the male college enrollment is on a downward trend. College enrollment statistics from 2017 state 56% of the enrollees were female and only 44% were male (NCES, 2017). Higher education is for all mankind, but it is not reaching both genders equally. Data needed to be gathered to research the qualitative effect of today's college environment and perceived effects of iGen. Society and the workforce environment are fluid; therefore, higher education must endeavor to stay consistent with evolving academic requirements. Generation Z comprises 26% of the United States population which is larger than

the Millennial age group by 1 million people; therefore, it is essential for research to expound on trends in higher education (UPCEA, 2018).

Students born between 1995 and 2012 have been profoundly shaped by their environment and male college enrollment has decreased. The advancement of technology, violence, economy, and social justice movements have caused deep seated beliefs which alter their expectations for their future (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z views the world through a smartphone with multiple apps running simultaneously (Loveland, 2017). Although they are more globally minded, constant access to information has altered their world viewpoint, learning styles, and maturity. Contextual factors from constant information have had positive impacts such as linking to social justice within the diverse world, but it has also instilled fear (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Generation Z students have been exposed to digital data their entire lives (Hawkins, 2015; Prensky, 2001). Because information is readily available, a learning shift has occurred (Kuh et al., 2017). Data demonstrated that 26% of Generation Z spend eight or more hours on screen time (Barna Group, 2018). This age group has a shortened attention span, insomuch as it has reduced to a mere eight seconds (Cameron & Parnattaro, 2017). Not only does Generation Z deal with an overlapping thought processes, but they also have pressure to appear happy, which fosters a non-authenticate persona (Freitas, 2017). Generation Z is dissimilar from previous generations through numerous characteristics of thought processes (Katz, 2019). The pressure to perform and the constant self-monitoring causes higher emotional and psychological consequences (Freitas, 2017). Diminished attention spans, as well as emotional facets, could alter students and their learning; thus, designing course structure to reach all students can be a complicated task through this stage of development. There is a perceived failure of current collegiate educational environments to challenge today's generation (Vrba & Mitchell, 2019).

Additional data may aid to rigorously evaluate the condition with sustained research into the existence of phenomenological experiences. This study identified male student perceptions of college academia to gather data for twenty-first century higher learning preparation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to identify and describe common themes from the lived college academic experiences of 11 Northern Virginia male Generation Z students born between 1995 and 2012. The central phenomenon of male perspectives is generally defined as beliefs, motivations, and perceptions of male Generation Z members regarding college experiences. Because this generation was born into a world of technology, digital natives are defined as a distinct cohort from previous generations through behavior, opinions, worldview, and attitudes as their life experiences are fundamentally diverse from their predecessors (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Twenge, 2017). Personal perceptions have developed through generational, cultural, societal, and personal interactions; therefore, holistically describing male iGen's evolving experience could offer better insight into designing curricula for future students of higher learning and increased student retention.

The first theory guiding this study is constructivism sociocultural (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural learning reinforces the belief of the commingled school and society to create an interconnected forum for learning (Dewey, 1938). Through social constructivism, I endeavored to describe interviewed collegians experiential context to understand the historical, generational, and cultural influences on their academic experience (Mannheim, 1952; Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky, 1978). The second theory guiding this study was self-determined theory which is supported by intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-

being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As college students are emerging adults, maturity and rationales may shift from extrinsic to intrinsic approaches (Arnett, 2000; Knowles, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2017). As society has affected developing adults, a blend of sociocultural and self-determination theories was appropriate for this study (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978).

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is to identify themes or essences of a lived experience from Generation Z perspectives in a concerted effort to recognize the encounters and challenges of male college students. This study was designed to explore male Generation Z beliefs and motives ascribed through their college experiences, in an attempt to identify shared themes. There is a need for pragmatic research regarding gender differences in undergraduate students (Sheppard, 2018). A phenomenological study has the potential value to help close the information gap in developments and common themes amongst male college populace. Understanding the current movement of less men enrolling in higher learning institutions could offer insight for future curricula development.

Empirical Significance

This inquiry may help advance the study of issues related to the male Generation Z collegiate populace. By using an ontological philosophical assumption, reality is seen through multiple views; thus, the college program design may shift in order to meet the needs of current society (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pedagogies within the college curriculum need to be re-examined to meet the needs of college students (Flynn et al., 2017). Empirical data gathered from a phenomenological approach involves a return to explanations to provide a structural analysis to represent the essence (Moustakas, 1994). Few studies exist that examine primarily

Generation Z men; therefore, this data could foster a deeper understanding of this populace to foster new course layout and design.

Theoretical Significance

This study is connected to society by chronicling voices of male Generation Z. Educational philosophy, to include social intelligence within course design, is crucial; therefore, recognition of foundational aspects to warrant a dynamic education for all students is advantageous (Dewey, 1897). Reaching all college students in forward thinking prospectus is key to designing effective methods. Sociocultural constructivism is a tool to understand current students and their rationales (Vygotsky, 1962). Additionally, adult-learning theory of intrinsic motivations is valuable in understanding theoretical implications (Deci, 1975; Knowles, 1988). Cognitive adult learning needs to shift from teacher driven extrinsic environment pedagogy towards an empowering andragogy, leading to the style of self-learning heutagogy (Fornaciari & Dean, 2013; Hase & Kenyon, 2013; Tinning & Bailey, 2009). This study may help advance constructivist and adult learning theories.

Practical Significance

This study may assist curriculum designers to improve collegiate curriculum in an effort to engage all undergraduates. As the demographic of college populace shifts, so must the educational design to accommodate evolving challenges within curriculum and instruction (Flynn et al., 2017). Teaching a challenging curriculum to adult male learners in a globalized society necessitates emerging data in an effort to stay current. As students continue to construct perceptions of new material, they learn in a sociocultural environment (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). As young adults continue to mature, identifying self-determination and motivations could benefit future educators, administrators, parents, and students to understand the phenomenon of

male Generation Z (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This research could be significant to understanding the trend of lower male college enrollment and resilience.

Research Questions

Qualitative inquiry aims to systematically gather data from open-ended questions (Patton, 2002). Open-ended questioning and informal conversations offer flexibility, spontaneity, and responses as communication deepens (Patton, 2002). Through constructivism sociocultural theories a holistic understanding of personal experiences may be identified (Dewey, 1938, Vygotsky, 1974). Developing adults frequently have a shift in basic psychological needs in motivation and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This transcendental phenomenological study seeks to give a voice to male Generation Z college students as they describe their experiences through their senses (Husserl, 1963).

Central Question: How do male undergraduate Generation Z students describe their lived academic collegiate experience?

Several studies exist on the challenges of Generation Z; however, few studies focus directly on the male perspective (Barna Report, 2018; Elmore, 2019; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Twenge, 2017; White, 2017).

Sub-question One

How do undergraduate male Generation Z students describe their lived experience of motivation towards academic goals?

The concept of intrinsic and extrinsic goals is a key concept to understanding behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Students born between 1995 and 2012 have been profoundly shaped by their environments through the advancement of technology, economy, and social justice movements (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z anticipate higher education to be applicable

and relevant (Vrba & Mitchell, 2019). Capturing the essence of collegiate Generation Z men to represent the current trends in academic enrollment to educational opportunities for self-direction and social exploration will cultivate cognitive skills (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019). College academia should remain diligent in contemporary methods to reaching generational shifts.

Sub-question Two

How do undergraduate male Generation Z students describe the contemporary social trends in regard to their lived collegiate education experience?

Combining natural development and social-historical development is an important concept in understanding Generation Z (Vygotsky, 1978). Generation Z is concerned for all mankind; therefore, they have a "we" centered attitude around the well-being of everyone (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z is interconnected through their immersion of global awareness (Kirchmayer & Fraticova, 2019). Consequently, their perceptions will reflect the world in which they live. Generation Z are motivated to help and please others by advocating for something they believe, but some researchers question the real-world preparation for collegiate students (Loveland, 2017; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019).

Sub-question Three

How do undergraduate male Generation Z students describe their lived academic experience in regard to technology trends?

Socio-historical influences include tools that have made changes in society (Vygotsky, 1978). Media influences, gaming, and constant access to a global community of information affects student's perception of higher education that may differ from their professors. Over 95% of U.S. teens have access to a smartphone and 45% are online continuously (Firth et al., 2019). These "digital natives" or "screenagers" cannot remember a time before the internet and have

spent so much time with technology that it has changed the way young adults process information (Prensky, 2001). Generation Z are bombarded by neurological stimulation through social media, video games, and the Google culture of learning which has modified the manner by which young adults concentrate, write, and reflect (Turner, 2015).

Definitions

1. *Andragogy* - Teaching principles toward power and responsibility towards student ownership (Fornaciari & Dean, 2013).
2. *Boomers* - Individual born from 1946 and 1964 (Twenge, 2017).
3. *Digital natives* - Generation born from 1995 and 2012. Individuals who have been shaped by the internet (Prensky, 2001)
4. *Generation X* - Individuals born from 1965 and 1979 (Twenge, 2017).
5. *Generation Z* - Individuals born from 1995 and 2012 (Twenge, 2017).
6. *Heutagogy* - Teaching principle that encourages learner-centered education towards self-determined, self-directed, and self-guided learning (Hase & Kenyon, 2013).
7. *iGen* - Internet generation. Individuals born from 1995-2012 (Twenge, 2017).
8. *Millennials* - Individuals born from 1980-1994 (Twenge, 2017).
9. *Net Generation* - Individuals born from 1995-2012 who have been exposed to the internet their entire lives (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).
10. *Pedagogy* - Teaching principles where the learner is dependent upon a teacher-driving the subject. Most students are under 18 with extrinsic motivation (Tinning & Bailey, 2009).
11. *Smartphones*- mobile phone with internet access to the world wide web (Barna Report, 2018).

Summary

Chapter One provided an overview of the proposed study and the research that suggested a need for a qualitative phenomenological study of male Generation Z collegians to identify common ideas and themes within lived college experiences. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of how Northern Virginia male college students born between 1995 and 2012 described their encounters in the academic collegiate environment. The findings provided a foundation for identifying paradigms and influences across the exposure and or duration of their undergraduate studies. By identifying and investigating perceptions of male Generation Z college academic experience, data could assist the development of curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the literature relating to young adult men and their holistic experiences up to and including the college level. Although many books have been printed about Generation Z, much of the data is primarily from a feminine viewpoint. There is not enough research about the education of this group to allow for definitive development of pedagogy and instructional strategies for them (Sheppard, 2018). As college students are considered emerging adults, an understanding of human development, which is characterized by the interrelationship between emotional, social, and intellectual growth, is needed (Arnett, 2015; Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1970; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Research indicated there were many factors that could potentially influence male collegians.

This chapter begins with the theoretical framework of constructivist sociocultural development theory and self-determination theory in an effort to comprehend the masculine viewpoint followed by a review of literature pertaining to Generation Z and instructional practices (Deci et al., 1991; Dewey, 1897; Mannheim, 1952; Vygotsky, 1987). Understanding the masculine perspective in the higher learning institution could alter course design and curriculum structure to meet the demands of all students. Relatively few studies have focused specifically on Generation Z college men; thus, an exploration of literature found on these students follows. The interests of curriculum, pedagogical challenges, and practical methods to engage all students are included.

Theoretical Framework

The ontological assumption of the researcher that reality is seen through many views is evident through a constructivist paradigm used to guide this research (Knight, 2006).

Perceptions, conceptions, actions, and relevance blend into a plurality of meaning (Geniusas, 2020). Humans trust their own experiences which produce assertions of reality; thus, they adapt ontological assurances without modifying overall certainty of existence (Geniusas, 2020). From the natural viewpoint, researchers should not doubt experiences, but accept experiences as they are perceived (Schutz, 1962). Educational pragmatic constructivism is the context of humans and their connections as adaptable; therefore, the complete view of adult students through more than one theory is necessary (Dewey, 1897). Through the recognition of plurality and holistic acceptance, cognitive development of collegians is a process which led to three primary theoretical perspectives. Dewey's (1938) theory, which emphasized cognitive development through a constructive experience, blended with Vygotsky's (1978) natural development and sociocultural development, in addition to Deci's (1980) self-determination theory, offered an understanding of emerging young adults and their motivations for higher education.

Constructivist Sociocultural Theory

Constructivist theorists place an emphasis on the learner's information process as a central cause of individuals' scaffold knowledge through a collaborative act of the inter-psychological/social and the intra-psychological/individual (Turuk, 2008). Constructivism places the learner at the center of the learning experience and allows multiple perspectives to emerge (Dewey, 1938; Patton, 2002; Vygotsky, 1978). Without intellectual stimuli, critical analysis, and personal growth decline; therefore, interacting with a group towards a common goal is an effective manner in the cognitive process (Pointe, 2018). Constructivism is a process of how social, developmental, and instructional factors influence mental processes; therefore, constructivism cannot be subjective but rather it is perspectives on social and cultural interactions (Dewey, 1938; Reich, 2020; Schunk, 2016). Previous experience and prior

knowledge are an aspect of developmental understanding; therefore, a framework of education develops (Dewey, 1938). Pragmatism identifies human beings and their interactions with their surroundings as malleable and in constant need of reappraisal; thus, self-realization is the goal in individual encounters (Dewey, 1938).

Constructivist theory developed into a student-centered learning forum; thus, as students are individuals who are affected by their culture and environment, educational practices should accommodate (Dewey, 1938). As education progresses, the goal of academia is not simply the transmission of information, but the forum to create knowledge and to prepare students for future responsibilities (Dewey, 1938). As student entities evolve, new knowledge is constructed through separate development and social interactions; therefore, constructivism is not a single viewpoint but rather has a plethora of diverse perspectives (Patton, 2002; Schunk, 2016). Since pragmatism's constructivism basic principle is learning by doing, contextual learning, democracy in learning with interaction, and constructing new knowledge is circumstantial (Dewey, 1938; Reich, 2007). There is not just one central truth, but rather a collection of realities (Dewey, 1938). Constructivist is a philosophical explanation of the nature of learning; thus, no particular version is assumed to be more acceptable than another (Simpson, 2002). Through the plurality and diversity of society, each version of reality constitutes individual perspectives; therefore, understanding student's cultures, communities, pursuits, and employment goals encourages a holistic academic experience (Bohonos, 2013; Reich, 2007). Education through constructivism and sociocultural aspects must be considered when understanding adult students (Vygotsky, 1962).

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory places prominence on social environment as a catalyst for developmental learning through a holistic view (Vygotsky, 1962). The interaction of

environment and consciousness is a factor in human development; thereby, learners' cultures are critical aspects of understanding learning and development. (Vygotsky, 1962). The interaction of interpersonal, cultural-historical, and distinct factors is prevalent in human progression; thereby collaborations promote unifying cognitive advancement within the student (Vygotsky, 1962). When there is a comingling of the student and the world where they exist, learning is created (Vygotsky, 1978). This theory places importance on what each learner brings to the learning environment as an active member and problem-solver (Williams & Burden, 1997). Each student offers their distinctive meaning to the environment. Sociocultural theory surmises that knowledge is (a) constructed between two or more people; (b) self-regulation is developed through internalization; (c) human development occurs through cultural tools; (d) language is the most critical tool; and (e) the zone of proximal development is the difference between dependency and independency on learning in order to promote cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1962; Meece, 2002).

The sociocultural aspect of Vygotsky's theory illustrated development is contextual; therefore, learning cannot be separated from the circumstantial concepts (Gredler, 2009). The social environment through objects, language, and social institutions are closely related to development of the individual (Schunk, 2016). Cultural values may factor into a student's collectivistic values towards education (Gore et al., 2016). Through cultural and social interactions, a type of internalization and intellectual perception emerges (Bruning et al., 2011). All higher mental functions originated from the social environment; therefore, it is critical to master cultural progress (Vygotsky, 1962). Once a learner comprehended this dictum, they could self-regulate thoughts and actions (Vygotsky, 1962). The zone of proximal development is the zone focused between instruction and development which is an important moment in the process

of development (Vygotsky, 1978). As the student matures, the zone of proximal development provides an opportunity for imitation and independent performance (Chaiklin, 2003). This progressive nature occurs through a scaffolding and support (Vygotsky, 1978). The essential assumption is that imitation is a part of the development; thus, intellectual and psychological functions interact towards autonomy (Chaiklin, 2003). Through imitation, the maturing mental functions may indicate maturation (Chaiklin, 2003). Blended intrinsic natural development and extrinsic social-historical influences facilitate this process (Vygotsky, 1978).

Constructivist sociocultural theory have basic beliefs of self-regulated learning which include intrinsic motivation, understanding, mental representation, progressive levels of understanding, reflection, and reconstruction (Schunk, 2016). Self-regulated learning coordinates memory, planning, synthesis, and valuation; therefore, learners use the tools of the culture (Schunk, 2016). The key to self-regulatory learning is internalizing (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Maturity of psychological and intellect may promote motivations away from extrinsic to more intrinsically (Henderson & Cunningham, 1994). Applied theory of constructivist sociocultural theories provides rich experiences which use student activity, interaction, and authenticity (Illeris, 2018).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self Determination Theory (SDT) is primarily a psychological theory and is concerned with nature, structure, and personal action of engagement with interpretation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The theory is integrative and conditional which requires social support for people to satisfy the basic needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As young people emerge into adult situations, this distinctive era is a period characterized by change and exploration as they examine life possibilities and choices (Arnett, 2015). This stage of their

lives has been described as a limbo between childhood and adulthood which may be confusing and conflicting (Hymowitz, 2011). This period of time between adolescence and adulthood allows time to gain self-sufficiency (Faherty et al., 2020). This phase in growth is a transitional time; therefore, self-determination theory is a useful concept. When acting with autonomy, behaviors are congruent with personal choices rather than regulated by external premises (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Competency is a feeling of efficacy and relatedness is being socially connected (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Emerging adults may engage this theory towards maturation.

Self-determination theory supports intrinsic and natural tendencies of innermost resources towards self-regulation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory attempts to understand growth and innate psychological needs for the basis of self-motivation to nurture processes to set the stage for motivational inquiry (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Intrinsic motivation is the human need to be competent and self-determined in relation to the environment which regenerates a desire to satisfy needs (Deci, 1980). Inherent motivation represents internally controlled behavior that is autonomous and is driven by natural interest and satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Motivation affects all aspects of activation and intention and is the core of biological, cognitive, and social regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Motivation is theorized as a continuum which anchors the ends and the middle in behaviors extrinsically established but have become internalized and are now self-determined (Schunk, 2016).

Several mini theories have evolved from the study of self-determination theory. Autonomy and self are two central interconnected concepts in self-determination theory through inference (Ryan & Deci, 2017). An additional second mini theory under self-determination theory is cognitive evaluation theory which is focused on intrinsic motivation and how social contexts of interpersonal climate aid or impede basic psychological motivation (Ryan & Deci,

2017). A third organismic integration theory is focused on various forms of extrinsic motivation and their causes and consequences (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Causality orientations theory is the fourth mini theory which is centered on social-contextual impacts on intrinsic and motivation and the internalization of extrinsic purpose (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The fifth mini theory derived through self-determination theory concerns people's goals; thus, it is aptly named, goal contents theory. Life goals fall into two categories that have been labeled intrinsic and extrinsic ambitions (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). The sixth mini theory is relationships motivation theory which focuses on characteristics and close relationships and effects (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Two of the primary mini theories this study will focus on is organismic and goals content theory. The organismic integration theory (OIT) of self-determination describes people's inherent tendencies toward assimilating and integrating social regulations (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The OIT view accentuates the internationalization of social values that may have begun extrinsically but have been internalized to become a core part of self-regulation (Schunk, 2016). Internalizing extrinsic regulations promotes personal growth and coherence in society through civil expressions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Self-determination theory leans toward the natural propensities for growth and integration for constructive social development and well-being; therefore, it explores the social environments in direct relation with motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The goal contents mini theory (GCT) of self-determination theory is focused on aspirations and motivations. This facet answers the "what" of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Intrinsic desires and extrinsic objectives were compared through differentiating goals of personal growth and gaining wealth or fame (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). Through the emerging adult premise aspirations will change and as motivations change so does well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Studies indicate that as people become more intrinsically motivated, their well-being increased;

however, if they became more extrinsically focused, their well-being decreased (Kasser et al., 2004).

Self-determination is a psychological view of personal aspirations and motivations; thus, identities are descriptive of roles, behaviors, passions, and self-concepts that people hold and employ during their life (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As adolescents become agents in their own lives, they build choice-making, problem-solving, and goal setting foundations (Erwin et al., 2016). Through the maturation process, identities and roles shift; thus, they may integrate to an authentic, autonomous psychological need and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Within self-determination theory, people develop into greater autonomy, relatedness, and self-regulation through environmental and social aids. Self-determination cultivates optimistic academic, social, and cognitive decision-making skills; therefore, it is a foundational theory for this study (Fowler et al., 2007).

Related Literature

Women outnumber men among recent college graduates in most industrialized countries (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). As genders of college students have shifted, the study of Generation Z males is an underrepresented focus in research. No principle asserts gender equality in education nor guarantees economic success; however, males who are engaged in school may yield social and economic benefits (Sommers, 2013). An introduction to a holistic view of male Generation Z with societal, cultural, media, parental, previous education, and emotional influences with learning trends in college and related curriculum development practices are provided in this section.

Holistic View of Generation Z

The holistic approach is understanding the whole and not just a part of a bigger picture; thus, historical, social, and personal contexts of an individual are important elements in understanding the depth of adult students; thereby, this approach was used generally and specifically (Miller, 2019). The holistic approach was used generally as it pertains to the whole of the study and specifically as it is applicable to each individual participant through the arrangement of collection and analysis which aims to combine relevance for the purpose of this research (Saleem et al., 2014). Conceptualizing the multiple layers of an individual includes investigating the layers which may influence a developing adult (Agger et al., 2018). The advancement of technology, economy, and social justice movements have caused deep seated beliefs which have profoundly shaped all generations; thus, their expectations for their future have altered (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Twenge, 2018). Through sociocultural and personal experiences including parental, emotional, previous educational experience, media, and society, Generation Z students may have various viewpoints from previous generations in their educational perspective.

Societal and Cultural Influences. Society and culture have shaped experiences within all generations. Certain events impact almost every group in society regardless of age (Buahene & Kovary, 2003). Generation Z is considered one of the most significant generations in Western history (White, 2017). Through monumental laws, social trends, acts of terror, family dynamics, and the accessibility of information through wi-fi, people have been exposed to societal and cultural influences that could have a direct influence on perceptions, values, and opinions (Buahene & Kovary, 2003; Twenge, 2018). Historical, societal, technological, and global awareness could have an impact on male Generation Z perceptions of academia.

Historical Societal Influences, Americans have seen many changes in family dynamics, economics, and society in the past five decades (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Gordon, 2004). Understanding parental foundational ideologies may build on the understanding of their children dubbed Generation Z. Many life-defining moments happened in the lives of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) who parent many iGen. Women's liberation, personal computers, Challenger disaster, and Operation Desert Storm could have impacted Generation X attitudes, identity, and mindset (Buahene & Kovary, 2003). The primary events that affected Generation Y (born between 198 and 2000) were the Oklahoma City bombing, the digital age, and the terrorist attack on 9/11 (Buahene & Kovary, 2003). These occurrences altered their values to be independent, pragmatic, skeptical, yet informal (Buahene & Kovary, 2003; Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Parents foundational influence plus the invention of Facebook, terrorist attacks, standardized testing, failing economy, reality tv, and text-messaging have caused significant impacts in the lives of Generation Z (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Twenge, 2018; White, 2017).

Societal expectations of gender roles and fluidity have also evolved (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Zell et al., 2015). The women's liberation movement occurred in the late 1960's and through this legal movement, the traditional roles of sexes were challenged to equality; and although the movement brought about necessary change, it also brought on new ideas and gender roles (Hymowitz, 2011; Sommers, 2013). Through feminism, women have taken a more modern educated role in society; however, men are still expected to demonstrate intelligence, courage, and mastery of necessary skills, even though the traditional qualities of men are now considered obsolete (Hymowitz, 2011). As male students lag behind female students on many scholastic studies, one such justification was that men avoid effort and the

appearance of intellect as it was associated with femininity (Buchmann et al., 2008; Heyder & Kessels, 2017). The role of masculinity has changed in the past few decades through a profound reversal of the sexual hierarchy (Hymowitz, 2011). Boundaries and gender identities have shifted; thus, contemporary meanings of masculinity may have blurred levels (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; NCES, 2012). As women have increased their education, they have also increased their earnings (Fry & Cohen, 2010). Men are increasingly expected to care for their children and participate in domestic chores (Gottzen & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012). The view of masculinity has shifted into a contemporary fluid view of gender expectations (Munsch & Gruys, 2018). This shift in society may prove to be a challenge for young men and their educational goals.

One additional historical and societal facet of Generation Z includes the 2020 global coronavirus pandemic which caused closures worldwide and impacted most Americans (Center, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic restructured the country's social, political, and economic landscape (Pew Research, 2020). The outbreak necessitated social distancing and quarantine for control which affected many characteristics of humanity (McKee & Stuckler, 2020). In March 2020, 50% of 18-to-23-year-old young adults reported they, or someone in their household, had lost a job or had taken a pay cut; therefore, Generation Z may view their future as ambiguous and uncertain (Pew Research, 2020). The international economic downturn affected young adults more than other age groups. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, an increase in young adults who moved back in with their parents and family members was observed (Pew Research, 2020). At the end of the Great Depression in 1940, 48% of young adults lived with their parents; likewise, in July 2020, 52% of young adults, both male and female, lived with their parents (Pew Research, 2020). From February 2020 to July 2020, the percentage of young men living with

their parents in the U.S. grew five percent to reach 55% (Pew Research, 2020). Generation Z was the most likely age group to lose their jobs from the economic downturn (Fry et al, 2020).

Among the young adults who moved home, 23% conveyed they moved back in with their family because their college campus was closed; additionally, 18% stated it was for financial reasons (Fry et al., 2020). Fear was the overwhelming atmosphere during the coronavirus outbreak; therefore, the pandemic influenced human function emotionally, cognitively, and creatively (Karwowski et al., 2020). Research has shown that men's performance was impeded after being exposed to information about the coronavirus both motivationally and cognitively (Karwowski et al., 2020). In the future, the pandemic and the public effects will be actualized from the increased vulnerability of the global economy and from the magnitude of societal standards (McKee & Stuckler, 2020).

Media Influences. Generation Z has been exposed to excessive data. Generation Z is mobile and may view the world through a small screen with numerous apps running concurrently by spending nine hours a day engrossed with media (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Loveland, 2017; White, 2017). These digitally aware students have been subjected to a barrage of data and are not only natives to technology but have never known a world without smart devices (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Hawkins, 2015). The relative rate of change is frantic, and Generation Z is considered the impulse society (Roberts, 2015). With the development of information technology, especially internet-based forums, the ways of interpersonal communication and entertainment have drastically changed (Smith & Anderson, 2018; Stone & Wang, 2018; Twenge, 2018). Because of the widespread trend of social media usage and gaming practices, iGen teens spend more time on electronic devices than previous generations (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Twenge, 2018).

Social media is defined as a set of internet websites that help collaboration, community, and sharing, but the usage of these networks have caused a dynamic shift in academic performance (Junco et al., 2010; Phulpoto, 2017). Social media forums such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, House Party Chat have all transformed the method of communicating (Twenge, 2018). In 2015, it was reported that 87% of young women used social media sites almost every day compared to 77% of men (Twenge, 2018). Studies have shown a correlation of decreased life satisfaction with usage of social media which is contingent to gender (Orben, et al., 2019). Additional studies linked social media usage with perceived social isolation and concluded that the more time spent online in a social fashion, the lonelier participants felt (Primack et al., 2017).

Gaming is another form of media which may influence young adults (Alshehri & Mohemen, 2019). Gaming online has become one of the most popular media forums among adolescents and has shown negative and positive outcomes (Alshehri & Mohamen, 2019; Glass et al., 2019; Robbins, 2017). The optimistic effects boost decision-making and visual skills through strategy and cognitive flexibility if the game design relied on logic, probability, geometry, and coding (Glass et al., 2019; Robbins, 2017). First person video games have shown a propensity to boost judgment-making and graphic abilities (Glass et al., 2019). Although gaming may improve engagement and positive health by promoting knowledge, long hours of playing online games may have negative long-term effects and promote addictive behaviors (Alshehri & Mohamed, 2019; Saab et al., 2018; Twenge, 2018). Studies have indicated anxiety and depression are common among those young adults who are addicted to video games (Andreassen et al., 2016). Additional studies have also shown high correlations with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCD) to those

who spend an exorbitant amount of time with gaming (Andreassen et al., 2016). Overall, studies have concluded that electronic gaming has a negative relation with health, social relationships, and physical activity (Alshehri & Mohamed, 2019). Technology has far reaching facets in personal well-being, communication, and learning processes (Elmore & McPeak, 2017).

Generation Z has grown up post-September 11, 2001, so the access of smartphones not only offers access to social forums, gaming, and information, but it may also perpetuate fear and distrust (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2017). They have observed economic issues, public shootings, violence, and terrorism abroad and in the U.S. The internet and social media have perpetrated the specific details of these events; thus, an instilled fear and concern is part of college students (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z is intimately aware of tragedies and trauma within their family and around the world through instant access to information through technology (White, 2017). They see the real world as an unsafe place; therefore, they remain behind the screens of their phones (Seemiller & Grace, 2017; Twenge, 2018). Because electronic forums are their norm, young adults seek affirmation and reliance from social media; thus, they are highly influenced by others' opinions (White, 2017). As the world streams through a screen to students, their world viewpoint, learning styles, and awareness develop (Twenge, 2018).

Multi-cultural Influences. As the world economy has become interdependent, geographical global communication and political integration has materialized (Altbach & Reisberg, 2018). As the international knowledge continues to produce and transmit information on a global stage, culture, and development merge into another aspect of influence (Altbach & Reisberg, 2018). Global worldviews have been readily available through the internet to current

college students, and this exposure has altered their perceptions and expectations (Twenge, 2018).

Generation Z see the societal issues as much bigger than just themselves (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). This generation is concerned for all men and it is evident in the "we"- centered attitude in which the predominance centers around the well-being of everyone rather than solely themselves (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z are also considered "we-centric", and they are motivated to help and please others; therefore, they desire to advocate and work on behalf of something in which they believe (Loveland, 2017). Generation Z have a raised awareness of inequality; thus, studies show they strive to have an equal footing (Twenge, 2018). Generation Z were born into an interconnected global world; as a result, they yearn to revel in their work for a cause (Kirchmayer & Fratricova, 2019). Generation Z considers themselves influential, open-minded, and socially aware and have idealistic beliefs about the world (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Loveland, 2017). During their era, social justice issues have been prominent in the news through the legalization of same-sex marriage, immigration reform, transgender rights, women's rights, and religious freedom (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z has been inundated and influenced by the media culture to strive for human rights and equality for all mankind (Seemiller & Grace 2017).

Through the internet and constant immersion of global awareness, students of Generation Z are more social and globally aware; thus, they want to create an improved humanity (Loveland, 2017). Justice, human rights, tolerance, and cultural diversity are key components in today's classroom (Grau & Garcia-Raga, 2017). They defend diversity and equality and yearn to correct injustices based on identity and ally to construct space to fight for equality (Clark et al., 2017; Katz, 2019). The social multicultural atmosphere is prevalent in their world and they

expect the same within their education with overlapping dimensions (Clark et al., 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017).

Family and Identity. Families are a central element in the developmental context of educational outcomes; thus, perceptions of family and views of societal position relate to educational aspirations (Agger et al., 2018). Parental influences, emotional health, and previous educational experience are building blocks of higher education paths (Gore et al., 2016). The role of self and personal identity are internal beliefs; therefore, having a familial foundation gives a sense of belonging and may shape students' perception of college implementation (Bowman & Felix, 2017; Elliott, 2009). Social support is the sense that others provide material, psychological, and emotional support; thereby offering a student an identity of relevancy (Elliot, 2009). Students who have a supportive family and feel connected to their educational experience have stronger positive outcomes than students who do not (Gaskell, 2008; Sidelinger & Booth-Butterfield, 2010).

Parental Influences. Generational concepts establish people who are significantly influenced by the social historical environment of their youth; as a result, the shared experience may shape future interactions, perspectives, and attitudes (Howe & Strauss, 1991; Mannheim, 1952). Previous generations established the atmosphere their children were raised; therefore, it is beneficial to understand earlier generations who set the stage to create Generation Z. Many parents of Generation Z are from Generation X and were born between 1965 and 1980. They grew up with the norm of both parents working; thus, this generation was viewed as "latchkey kids" which led them to be independent at a young age (Buahene & Kovary, 2003). Parents of Generation X divorce rates peaked around 1980, and researchers speculate the rising female labor force caused the increase of failed marriages (Rotz, 2016). Although there was a rise in

divorce rates during their childhood, two-thirds of Generation X are married and have children (Metlife, 2013).

Generation X was raised with a higher level of self-sufficiency which created a distinctive moment for them to create their own families (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). As Generation X parented Generation Z, a dynamic within the family structure shifted (Twenge, 2018). As Generation X grew up being independent and alone, they placed great value on balancing family time and work (Buahene & Kovary, 2003). Consequently, Generation X parents continued to influence their children's lives into adulthood and autonomy (Love et al., 2020). As family became a central focus, the boundaries of healthy relationships between parents and children may have blurred (Faherty et al., 2020).

According to self-determination theory, parents have the capability to promote or demote environments to facilitate internalization of autonomy (Faherty et al., 2020). Positive parental involvement and support have a significant influence on academic goals and achievements by providing a forum for students to process fears; however, anxieties and insecurities may be exacerbated through overinvolvement (Gore et al., 2015). Emerging adults require parental support and involvement as they become independent, but there are no clear lines distinguishing duties (Faherty et., al 2020). The relationship between a parent and their emerging adult child may prove to be complicated (Love et al., 2020). Studies have shown that indulgent parenting practices reflect three-dimensional parenting behavior in material, relational, and behavioral indulgence in social context (Clarke et al., 2014; Cui et al., 2016; Fletcher et al., 2019; Kindlon, 2001).

Overindulgent parenting that does not dissolve with age affects emerging adults in overinvolvement and overprotection; likewise, this behavior is labeled as "helicopter parenting"

(Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Helicopter parenting is considered excessively involved, overly controlling, and developmentally inappropriate (Love et al., 2020). These parents struggle to let their children become mature adults to make personal choices and gain self-efficacy (Faherty et al., 2020). Parental psychological controls were directly and indirectly related to emerging adults and their feelings of self-efficacy; thus, delaying maturation (Burke et al., 2018; Faherty et al., 2020). Helicopter parenting may be linked to emerging adults' self-control and higher education goals by not fostering a sense of independence, but rather, dependence (Love et al., 2020). Research conveyed a link between indulgent helicopter parenting and emerging adult's self-efficacy deficiency with increased anxiety and depression (Bayer et al., 2006; Cui et al., 2019; Gar & Hudson, 2008). Over involved parents deprive their children's need for sovereignty and autonomy (Love et al., 2020). Emerging adults may feel lost in discovering their identity and may experience feelings of self-doubt; therefore, a supportive situation fosters growth in adulting and self-governing (Faherty et al., 2020).

If parents prove to be overbearing and overinvolved, young adults struggle to gain self-efficacy and make adult decisions (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). College students who have been raised by an overinvolved parent may not develop the self-control skills to acclimate to the challenges of the college environment (Love et al., 2020). Research revealed conditions that supported independence and competency facilitated development, whereas, conditions that controlled behavior, hindered growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Young adults must adjust to increased independence and self-regulation; therefore, the need for self-determination that is consistent between intrinsic and extrinsic is crucial for autonomy (Burke et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Humans are endowed with intrinsic motivational tendencies and they require

reassuring conditions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Environmental factors can hinder self-motivation, social functioning, and personal well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Parental academic expectations are another influential factor in young adults (Davis & Otto, 2016). Young adults' perceptions of family responsibility and higher learning expectations were related to increased educational aspirations (Agger et al., 2018). Parental expectations for college studies were higher for girls compared to boys; therefore, leading researchers to believe parental expectations may be a reason why women have surpassed men in educational achievement (Child Trends Data Bank, 2012). Maternal anticipations were not associated with emerging adults' educational adjustment; however, paternal expectations were associated with poor college adjustment (Love et al., 2020). Studies show that parents expect independent and assertive roles for males during their adolescence, yet this does not explain the lack of college aspiration (Davies & Lindsay, 2004).

Emotional Identity Influences. Contextual conditions may accelerate or thwart the natural process of self-motivation and psychological development; thereby, a student's identity through personal motivations and behaviors may be related to college involvement and commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Tinto, 1993). Undergraduates with a stronger identity centrality may be likely to interact with fellow students and staff and become more committed in attending and remaining in college (Bowman & Felix, 2018). As emerging adults internalize personal beliefs and identities, self-regulation, and academic mindsets surface to an autonomous nature (Arnett, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Essential elements to college persistence are the ability to adapt scholastically, socially, and relationally (First et al., 2018; Kuh, 2006).

As college students transition into young adulthood, they learn to balance social, personal, and academic pressures (Thompson et al., 2019). Pre-adulthood is a time of stepping

forward, but it is also a time of role confusion, emotional turmoil, and identity conflict filled with uncertainty and angst (Hymowitz, 2011). Through this season, many college students experience psychological distress which may lead to anxiety disorders (Pedrelli et al., 2015; Twenge, 2018). In a national survey, 55.1% of college students stated anxiety was their ultimate concern in life (First et al., 2018). Psychological distress has an important relationship with student's educational and career development and can negatively affect academic performance and achievement and college drop-out rates (Thompson et al., 2019). Over 60% of current college students have reported clinical levels of stress (Stallman, 2016). Correlations between technology and student well-being have been discovered through variables such as preferred communication style, hours of technology, anxiety, and depression (Winger, 2016). Technology affects the manner that students interact with others; thereby affecting their physical and mental health (Ferraro et al., 2012). The internet promotes a relentless positivity in the trend of individualism causing additional stress on a personal level (Twenge, 2018). Researchers suggested the more screen time and less social human interaction, the more likely the user is isolated and or depressed (Twenge, 2018).

The environment on college campuses is considered fast-paced, ever-changing, and linked to increasingly high levels of stress for students (Brewer et al., 2019). Pressure exacts a toll on health and mental well-being of college undergraduates (Thompson et al., 2019). Many college students seek counseling at universities and 61% specified anxiety was their primary concern (Jones et al., 2018). Although boys experienced a depressive period, it was at a slower rate as it went from 4.5% in 2011 to 6.4% in 2016 (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019). Depression, anxiety, social nervousness, and sleep-related problems were reported in the Center for Collegiate Mental Health (Elmore & McPeak, 2018; Jones et al., 2018). Although drugs and

alcohol are issues, statistics indicate a decline; however, a more alarming facet of emotional well-being is the rise of suicidal thoughts (Rickes, 2016). College students experience numerous stressors as they learn to balance academic, social, and personal demands (Pedrelli et al., 2015). In addition, studies speculate that the increased mental health issues may simply be caused by decreased resiliency among current collegians (Garza et al., 2014).

Previous Educational Experience

Previous experience and prior knowledge contribute to the development of new understanding and learning (Dewey, 1938). Constructivist theories are a process of scaffolding knowledge; thus, previous experiences will influence future choices (Dewey, 1938; Turuk, 2008). Studies which follow children's progress through school years indicate by third grade, a child has established a pattern of learning which shapes the course of his or her entire school career (Alexander et al., 1988). Achievement in elementary and secondary school is linked to educational achievement attainment (Buchmann et al., 2008). Nonetheless, grade school is primarily a feminine domain populated by mostly female teachers and administration; therefore, there is a lack of gender modeling or understanding (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Most children start kindergarten at the age of five, but approximately 10% of boys begin formal education a year later (Buchmann et al., 2008). Boys are 60% of delayed starters and 66% of those boys will repeat kindergarten (Malone et al., 2006). Boys are also more likely to be retained from passing a grade level (Entwisle et al., 2007). Statistically boys are less apt to succeed from the very beginning of their formal education experience (Buchmann et al., 2008).

Yet another caveat for early learning, kindergarten teachers factor good behavior into grades; thus, boys' test scores do not line up with non-cognitive ones such as self-control, attentiveness, organization and sitting still (Cornwell, 2013). Teachers may have lower

expectations of boys and their learning styles; thus, teachers' evaluations of students' skills and behaviors could prove to be gender stereotyping (Catsambis et al., 2012). Females tend to earn higher grades, yet males tend to score higher on standardized tests (Davis & Otto, 2016; Duckworth & Seligman, 2006). Gender differences in kindergarten reading placement indicated boys were overrepresented in low reading groups compared to girls of similar social background (Buchmann et al., 2008; Catsambis et al., 2012). An additional difficulty, at an early age in elementary school, boys do not feel as valued in the predominantly female leadership learning atmosphere (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Another concern is that boys represent 73% of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) for children ages four to seventeen (CDC, 2007). When a person is labeled, it could cause a looping effect and become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Schellack et al., 2019; Tsou, 2007); therefore, previous educational experiences may have provided negative influences on men's educational goals.

Blending theoretical and personal experiences forms a dynamic recognition of the uniqueness of male Generation Z. By studying the contextual meanings within a person's lifetime, an understanding of the individual may occur (Moustakas, 1994). From historical, societal, familial, emotional, and previous educational scaffolding a fuller image of emerging adult men is formed as they mature into self-determined individuals (Dewey, 1938; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978).

Expectations from College Curriculum

Current Generation Z students are distinctively diverse from previous generations; thus, an inquiry into practicing theories to match contemporary emerging adults is necessary (Buskirk-Cohen et al., 2016). Learning has significant social and cognitive dimensions through activity, context, and culture (Brown et al., 1989). As they have grown acclimated to apps and instant

information and are able to move seamlessly into cyberspace, students expect the same in college through interactive course structure; therefore, students expect more than just one-way lectures from their college experience (Katz, 2019). Generation Z anticipate higher education to be applicable, authentic, current, and relevant (Vrba & Mitchell, 2019; Cameron & Parnattaro, 2017). Not only has the generation shifted its focus, but additionally adult learners contribute an added element to the collegiate arena with life experiences; therefore, a college classroom may contain a plethora of capabilities, perspectives, morals, and viewpoints (Knowles et al., 2015).

Learning Expectations and Trends. Generation Z continues their quest for knowledge, but how they learn, and study has shifted (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). Technology has affected memory, attention spans, reading habits and sleep cycles (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). Decreased sleep time can intensify depression (Twenge, 2018). Between 2012 and 2015, a substantial number of teens received less than seven hours of rest; consequently, students may struggle to learn because their mind is not fresh (Phulpoto, 2017; Twenge, 2018). One of the outcomes from lack of sleep could be attention spans have dwindled to a mere eight seconds; thus, their ability to focus for extended periods of time has become challenging (Cameron & Parnattaro, 2017; Elmore & McPeak, 2019). Not only does Generation Z have reduced attention spans, but their information literacy comprehension skills have become a subject which needs to be taught within the classroom (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Taylor & Dalal, 2017). College students of both genders have concerns towards assessing information resources (Taylor & Dalal, 2017). An additional outcome for short attention spans is also the expectation for an engaging class with valuable experiences instantly (Cameron & Parnattaro, 2017). Instant information and constant data have challenged iGen and the advancement of established knowledge because they have developed a bias toward technological preponderance as truth (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). From

the rapid access of online information, internal memory and cognitive thought processes have altered the transactive structures of learning (Firth et al., 2019).

Contemporary students expect relevance, and they expect to be at the cusp of technological trends (Flynn et al., 2017). Within the past two years, 90% of online content was generated (IBM, 2015). Since technology and innovation are common themes within the current news cycle, collegians expect education to prepare them for their future careers (Flynn et al., 2017). Generation Z are more technologically advanced and self-directed; thus, educators should reinforce critical thinking tendency (Mosca et al, 2019). Currently, there are nearly 120 million students in higher education; therefore, the impact of enhanced technology in the learning environment is crucial to society (UNESCO, 2018). Students' motivation rises when the learning material is relevant to their lives during this critical time of their lives; consequently, colleges should create a learning environment curriculum which is student-centered and authentic for applicability (Flynn et al., 2017). College curriculum should be technologically savvy and appropriate for the fluid society (Flynn et al., 2017).

Yet another component on college campuses is idealism and activism; therefore, an emphasis on relevance in occupational training with opportunity for exploration of oneself and exposure to diverse theories is valuable (Pisarik & Whelchel, 2018). Generation Z aspires to feel a sense of commitment to equity and cultural relevance; consequently, the college classroom should be a model of global awareness and technological viability (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). By creating a culture of coexistence with democratizing motivational strategies, a relevant and sustainable class evolves (Pisarik & Whelchel, 2018). Academia should meld the real world with authentic experiences into collegiate programs (Dewey, 1938). Generation Z is quite distinct from previous generations and it is necessary to analyze theories and practices to best meet the

characteristics of emerging adults (Buskirk-Cohen et al., 2016). Since adult students want independence and applicability, when curriculum lacks autonomy and relevance, students will disengage (Pisarik & Whelchel, 2018). Studies have shown higher levels of external regulation or stricter models are associated with higher levels of cynicism which is linked to disconnection (Pisarik & Whelchel, 2018). Current college students need to comprehend the objective of the subject before they will allow themselves to fully engage; therefore, a course with autonomy for innovation, design, development, and implementation will not only involve the learner but will create purpose for learning (Knowles et al., 2017; Vrba & Mitchell, 2019). Generation Z longs for opportunities to design new knowledge on their own terms (Vrba & Mitchell, 2019).

Generation Z has a particularity on their stance on intrapersonal relationships (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). The previous generation of Millennials approached learning with a team-work and collaborative viewpoint; however, Generation Z prefer individualized assignments where they can focus and work at their own pace and comprehend the material on their own first before engaging with others (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Although they may like to discover concepts individually, iGen students value input, approval, and guidance through peer group experiences more than previous generations (Loveland, 2017). While digital natives like to learn alone, they also enjoy learning with others; thereby, course designs fostering emotional connections could be valuable (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017). The human connection cultivated through learning social competencies in group interactions aided self-efficacy (Grau & Garcia-Raga, 2017). Through building independence, self-sufficiency, with a certain amount of liberty to work with others, emerging adult student's education takes on a more autonomous yet interpersonal approach (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Contemporary campus atmospheres have been designed for preceding generations; hence, they may not meet the needs of iGen (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019). The current college populace responds to informal learning environments which incorporates multiple forms of media and relevance to the real world; therefore, effective teaching should comprise an intersection of technology and creativity (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017; Rickes, 2016). Students prefer hands-on interaction to obtain the most information (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017; Rickes, 2016). A diversity of methods and interactions is most effective to reach all students. Generation Z students are first observers who like to monitor someone else accomplish the task before they apply it themselves (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). These students have matured with constant availability of videos online (Twenge, 2018). In order to be effective in this pedagogy, college professors should demonstrate and model important concepts before expecting students to perform (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017). This age group has learned the valuable resource of watching others; consequently, they need the same in course curriculum (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Generation Z expects instant answers to their questions so access to teaching and trends in a video format may be expected (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017). Contemporary students appreciate practical life application and experience through hands-on application and internships within their piloted curriculum (Loveland, 2017). Collegiate students yearn to know the broader concepts and the importance of its usage in everyday settings (Loveland, 2017). Because the students are technologically literate, the professors' focus should bring subject material into the authenticity of real-life situations (Loveland, 2017). Students have viewed much of their life on screens, so they are looking for legitimate and authentic experiences (Elmore & McPeak, 2019).

Teaching Methodologies: Pedagogy, Andragogy, and Heutagogy. The science of teaching has been described as pedagogy, but this term refers to teaching a particular subject or

skill and not necessarily teaching mature cognitive learning (Tinning & Bailey, 2009). Pedagogy is primarily a learner dependent atmosphere with the teacher-driving the subject: most of these students are under 18 and have extrinsic factors for motivation (Ozuah, 2016). The young learner brings little life experience to the learning experience, on the contrary, as adult learners gain experience in life, so do their expectations in the scholastic arena (Knowles, 1988). Adult learners are more independent and have more intrinsic motivation (Knowles, 1988; Ozuah, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Collegians are adults who have a deep psychological need to be self-directed; thus, the role of the learner has shifted towards more independence (Knowles et al., 2015). The instructor provides guidance within an established curriculum which is based on a student in a subject-centered stance (Ozuah, 2016). Andragogy principles emphasize power, responsibility, and motivation toward the learner; thus, the decision-making of learning outcomes is a shared ownership between students and instructor (Fornaciari & Dean, 2013; Knowles, 1988). When the learner chooses to gain new information, the motivation becomes intrinsic; thus, a new ownership of knowledge progresses to the next learning style (Knowles, 1985; Knowles et al., 2015).

Andragogy was a spinoff from pedagogy, heutagogy takes andragogy a step further into a learner-centered self-determined prominence (Knowles et al., 2015). Students no longer want a sage professor, but one of basic support that allows their creativity to flow naturally (Knowles et al., 2015). Heutagogy is a mature learning process which is self-directed and self-guided (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). Heutagogy shifts the focus from what is being taught to how the learner wants to learn, thus the main difference is learners gain full ownership of their learning path and they lead the process (Bali & Caines, 2018). This theory of teaching is a learner-centered environment where the educator takes the role of facilitator or coach in the process (Hase & Kenyon, 2013).

Intrinsic learning takes the student to a new direction, a new motivation, and a new purpose through reflective learning (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The art of heutagogy encourages students to be interdependent, so the exercise of working together in a peer related capacity benefits student relevance and knowledge attainment (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). Through developing problem-solving and self-directed learning skills, the student deepens personal knowledge and develops connections (Rico & Ertmer, 2015). The learning focus modifies to a proactive and problem-solving scenario where self-efficacy is the driving force (Meyer et al., 2016). Student-centered approaches embed the curriculum with problem-based learning and the instructor becomes a facilitator rather than an instructor (Rico & Ertmer, 2015). Students may take ownership of their education through a sense of independent learning (Meyer et al., 2016).

Essential elements of heutagogy include critical questioning of one's assumptions to participate in a free discourse (Mezirow, 2009). Heutagogy opens the door to unprecedented learning potential with a proactive, problem-solving style (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). This teaching self-efficacy fundamental suits Generation Z as its core is self-determined learning (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Hase & Kenyon, 2013). This practice offers opportunities for the student to create and to explore areas of interest (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). Heutagogy foundational principles are humanism constructivism through self-determination with double loop learning which encourages self-reflection on the learning process (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). The non-linear design and learning style may reach Generation Z as they explore new methods of search learning (Peters, 2010; Prensky, 2001).

Adult-Teaching Practices. Learning should be one of the most satisfying experiences in life, yet traditional college courses limit cognitive thinking through lecture-based courses

(Knowles, 1995; Winger, 2016). As learning principles are abstract, they become concrete when students apply them to outcomes (Dewey, 1938). Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) conceptually explained the primary elements of learning from knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation and the importance of attaining higher learning in the collegiate realm. Curriculum design is crucial to maximizing the learning experience; thus, a focus on teamwork, skill development, and authentic real-life scenarios help link theory practically (Nixon & Williams, 2014). Because learning new information is a transformational experience, a multi-faceted approach which applies to real life enhances learning; therefore, the practical application of professors' progression to meet the needs of the everchanging student body is ongoing (Aiken et al., 2016; Ozuah, 2016). Generation Z's understanding of course material is illustrated through creative and diverse approaches of comprehension (Williams, 2017). Adult learners bring experiences, challenges, and general knowledge which enrich the learning process; therefore, professors should encourage autonomy in conjunction with cooperative methods (Knowles et al., 2015).

Constructivism led to the popularity of designing experiential learning and reducing teacher centric learning and replacing the focus on students and their learning experience. With the increased use of internet and mobile learning, traditional learning approaches are no longer effective (Boe et al., 2017; Dewey, 1938; Hase & Kenyon, 2015). The traditional lecture is a passive activity and a less authentic manner for students to practice application of knowledge, skills, and values within the classroom (Reynolds & Kearns, 2017). Educational interactive constructivism blends social, cultural, and interpretive opinions in a network of interrelated perceptions; thereby, merging styles and designs could be beneficial (Reich, 2020). Faculty can integrate diverse learning styles by intermingling techniques to create an interactive environment

(Hennessey & Evans, 2006). Coaching allows team members to obtain new understanding and skills to aid the entire group (Gorrell & Hoover, 2009).

Sensory learning through a visual, auditory, and kinesthetic unified education program, would benefit Generation Z with diversity in studying (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017). Spatial techniques such as videos, PowerPoints, and props are all effective means to reach the student who is more visually wired (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017). Auditory tools may be music or sound bites from clips reinforce concepts for auditorily equipped students (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017). Lastly, tactile learning may include games, props, electronic quizzes, and role playing (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017). Teaching new material through multiple senses may reach all students; thereby, teachers should modernize instruction techniques to meet student learning preferences (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017).

Another beneficial learning tool is interpersonal and social skills (Savitz-Romer et al., 2015). Through a social learning environment, the concept of community creates a framework for individuals and groups to analyze as a communal process (Masika & Jones, 2016). Skills such as listening, speaking, and observing through a recognition of various personalities and viewpoints develops communication abilities (Donahoe, 2017). Listening to understand is essentially intercultural encounters and requires mutual efforts to acknowledge understanding and take responsibility for perspectives, stances, and actions (Knefelkamp, 2006). Knowledge is achieved through dynamic engagement between participants who listen and respond to other's ideas; therefore, small groups through dialogue requires humility and the need to accept differing perspectives (Boe et al., 2017).

Through collaboration in a peer community, students increase confidence, sense of belonging, and connectedness (Masika & Jones, 2016). Connectedness is the sense of belonging

and acceptance which is the foundation of relationships (Rovai, 2002). Studies indicate an association between classroom community and perceived cognitive learning (Rovai, 2002). Small groups encourage accountability through a diversity of voices and experiences through a give and take dialogue (Donahoe, 2017). Reflecting in a community of learners through dialogue, facilitates a metacognitive awareness of connections between theories, values, and practices (Bali & Caines, 2018). When professors employ small group experiences, students are able to negotiate and create their own relationships within the consortium which offers them an opportunity for cooperative learning (Hennessey & Evans, 2006). Not only does a sense of belonging occur, but studies have indicated that small group learning increases self-esteem and those who only participate in traditional lecture style settings decrease in self-esteem measures (Aronson et al., 1977). In-class groups have been shown to improve achievement and attitudes toward the college experience (Hung et al., 2017). When students are able to understand other viewpoints, they recognize that knowledge exists in countless places, they recognize their own narrow views and through this interchange, they build community with their fellow learners (Shaffer et al., 2017).

Collaboration, communication, and open discussion within a peer community increased student confidence and belonging (Gore et al., 2016). High-impact practices are developmentally effective within the classroom and should be used in a variety of opportunities; thus, integrative, and collaborative learning experiences are beneficial (Kuh et al., 2017). Action learning is an exploratory educational process where small groups meet regularly to help each other plan activities and learn from their experience (Hase & Kenyon, 2015). By employing the collaboration model, students take possession of their learning and the professor takes the role of trainer; thereby, the students have a psychological ownership and are more likely to internalize

cognitive skills (Aiken et al., 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017). When students develop a sense of commonality and a feeling of connectedness, a higher sense of engagement occurs (Hung et al., 2017). Through redesigning curriculum to develop a connection between the learner and the subject through collaborative learning, problem-solving, initiative, creativity, ideas, social skills, and negotiation all develop (Nixon & Williams, 2014). Students who feel connected to their college show optimistic academic outcomes through retention and graduation (Gore et al., 2016). Students with increased self-concept and motivation reduce dropout rates; thus, small groups may offer a positive avenue for building community in the classroom (Tinto, 1998). As students feel less isolated, a positive integration of connectedness occurs with higher student fortitude and impetus (Wilson & Gore, 2013).

Another documented method to reach Generation Z is service learning (McElravy et al., 2018). Service learning enhances learning through student engagement in community service areas (McElravy et al., 2018). Experiential teaching and learning can link course content to direct real-life scenarios (McElravy et al., 2018). Offering opportunities to students to become capable in their fields negotiates a deeper understanding of personal and educational comprehension. By connecting elements of service-learning to competence, efficacy, and confidence, an engaged situation occurs (McElravy et al., 2018). Through making connections with others, studies have shown there are improved perceptions of students within the community and of their learning experience which increases learning and concept application (Masika & Jones, 2016). Sociality practices both in the class and in the public offer new confidence and positive reactions to education (McElravy et al., 2018). Service volunteering is meaningful because it serves the community by offering a forum for practical learning principles that benefit both society and students (Fleming & Grace, 2016). As abstract ideas become a concrete reality of experience,

education may occur (Dewey, 1938). Exposure to differing experiences offers opportunities to flourish and impact their world which is one of the primary concerns of Generation Z (Aiken et al., 2016).

Connected learning produces a framework for learning with technologies, equal opportunities for participation, social connections, and personal interest engagement (Ito et al., 2013). Promoting social constructivism within a learning context provides opportunities for social interactions and cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). By networking knowledge through relevant connections, an individual transformative understanding may occur (Siemens, 2013). Practical, yet impactful avenues to achieve engaged Generation Z learning should include seminars, intensive, research, diversity and global learning, service learning, internships, community-centered, projects and portfolio (Kuh et al., 2017). Additional practical learning tools could also include tiered practicums to internship to a capstone presentation (Meyer et al., 2016).

By engaging undergraduates in real-world interactions, a vision of applicability learning occurs; thus, internships showed a positive relationship to degree attainment and have had a positive influence on college students (Andrews, 2018). By integrating student engagement principles, and creating content relevance via individualized skills opportunities, Generation Z may become connected to their education and create a learning community of students (Aiken et al., 2016; Reynolds & Kearns, 2017). Through the integrative approaches and bridging the gap between tasks and practices within the class towards real career paths, students gain a new understanding of their field of study (Rosemond & Owens, 2018). Through developing personal identity and career paths, adult collegians bring richer and additional learning connections to the classroom (Hennessey & Evans, 2006).

Unique adult learning communities begin with the understanding of the relevance and meaningfulness within each course (Williams, 2017). As students grasp the authentic nature of the subject, their willingness to observe the relevance and significance of the course increases (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As students understand professors' pedagogical choices, it offers a base of transparency which increases incentive to learn each specific subject (Hoops, 2017). Generation Z wants to know the purpose of instruction and the reasoning of assignments (Loveland, 2017). Past research has shown that although educators, administrators, and policy makers take a beneficial position of specific academics, the message of relevancy is not making it to the students (Pisarik & Whelchel, 2017). When professors clearly state the importance of subject matter, students report a greater value in competence (Pisarik & Whelchel, 2017). Relevance and the understanding of the importance of this specific topic is a key for student engagement (Loveland, 2017).

In addition to using multi-modal teaching methods and collaborative techniques, the relationship between professor and student should be built on a pedagogy of care (Miller & Mills, 2019). Teachers are servants to humanity ensuring the right to social development; thus, an educational leader should set the example of civility and society (Dewey, 1938). Although there are generational differences between the professor and the student, the importance of communicating care to students is still a noticeable attribute of a positive learning environment (Miller & Mills, 2019). In higher education, the importance of teacher's care for students has been established; consequently, in a nurturing environment, students are more engaged with teachers, peers, and the intellectual content of their course (Bonet & Walters, 2016; Meyers, 2009; Slate et al., 2011). Research demonstrates when college students perceive teachers care about them, their engagement and motivation increase (Chory & Offstein, 2017; Finn et al.,

2009; Slate, 2011). Through mentoring structures and consistent interchanges, a sense of relationship and persistence develop (Aikens et al., 2017). Caring was demonstrated through empathy, relatability, and approachability with an enthusiasm for their learning (Miller & Mills, 2019). Students want to matter to others through social community in a spirit of cohesion, trust, safety, interdependencies to align with educational goals (Elliot, 2009; Rovai, 2002).

Summary

The theoretical framework of constructivist sociocultural theory offers the building blocks of knowledge in an ideology of social interaction with cognition and an instructional combination (Schunk, 2016). Through constructivist theory, the student is the center of learning and is directly affected by culture and environment (Dewey, 1938). Sociocultural theory places importance on the social learning environment as a mechanism to develop interpersonal, cultural-historical, and collaborate cognitive and critical thinking skills (Vygotsky, 1962). Through a holistic view of young adults through blending societal trends, home life, and school life, a unique and individualized image materializes; thus, as emerging adults develop, their motivations may change from extrinsic to intrinsic (Henderson & Cunningham, 1994). Self-determination theory explores the innermost reasonings towards self-regulation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Self-determination theory is a view of personal aspirations and motivations as young adults become agents of their own lives through behaviors, roles, and self-concepts (Erwin et al., 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Through the foundational belief that identity and educational motivations are built on a collaboration of psychological and social and the intra-psychological individual, the constructivist sociocultural and self-determination theories are most appropriate for this study (Dewey, 1938; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Turuk, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978).

The holistic view of the student recognizes the many factors that may influence each adult student. Societal, cultural, historical, media, multicultural, parental, emotional, and past educational experiences impact perceptions to challenge life choices. Emerging adults develop and explore their educational aspirations as well as their place in society through maturation (Arnett, 2015; Agger et al., 2018). Education is a harmony of principles which is genuine through maturity and growth (Dewey, 1938). As each student constructs individual perspectives through experiences, the theoretical framework of constructivist sociocultural and self-determined learning theory evolves (Dewey, 1938, Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978).

College education should provide the forum for today's students to share their ideals of the world they understand with others to develop practical strategies to guide their future (Knowles et al., 2015). College curriculum developers and professors need to be relevant in the classroom; therefore, a constant awareness of trends and methods should be used to address current developments within the working world (Elmore & McPeak, 2018; Twenge, 2018). By utilizing the learning potential to a non-linear facet, the student may become proactive. Self-determined theory develops cognitive recognition by urging students to create, not just regurgitate (Hase & Kenyon, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Course redesign demonstrates a positive influence on perceptions and motivation (Fedesco, et al., 2017). Multimodal forums and integration of technology should be an integral part of college experience (Shaffer et al., 2017).

Challenging, yet practical with interactive relevant course design, proves to be most effective for learning and perceptions of education. Pragmatic learning through functional interactions cultivates learning in current students (Dewey, 1938). With adult collegians, pedagogies focused on heutagogy aspects foster the learner to be independent yet also interdependent to create an engaging learning environment (Hase & Kenyon, 2013). Generation

Z should be nurtured through self-efficacy and problem-oriented learning; therefore, the college student not only engages with social aspects but also brings about the betterment of society (Knowles et al., 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Twenge, 2017). The practical value of gathering the perspectives of young men and their academic collegiate experience may prove invaluable for future teaching trends.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to gain a deeper understanding by exploration of Generation Z male college students' lived experiences in the academic collegiate environment. Through phenomenological methods, the meanings and essences were derived not assumed through data collection (Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental phenomenology model research design supports the natural form of inquiry through discovery of the participant's lived experience; therefore, it allowed male Generation Z an opportunity to have a voice (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology relies on first-person accounts of experience through formal and informal interviews (Moustakas, 1994). By attaining the comprehensive data through a personal investigation, acknowledgement of generational shifts should continue for the growth of academia relevance (Mannheim, 1952; Moustakas, 1994). Chapter Three provides an overview of research design and rationale for this study. It also provides information regarding the site, participant description, and data collection and data analysis methods. Ethical considerations are presented to ensure trustworthiness.

Research Design

Qualitative research concentrates on interpretative natural approach in an attempt to comprehend the depth or meaning of the lived experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The nature of qualitative inquiry originates from sincerity and candor by advocating the participants' perspective through careful attention to detail and context (Patton, 2002). Because this study attempts to understand the lived experience of male Generation Z in a Northern Virginia setting, the qualitative approach is appropriate. Phenomenological consideration is retrospective; thus, it focuses on a lived experience (Van Manen 1990).

Qualitative research emphasizes and fosters a rich and holistic understanding of a specific phenomenon (Gay et al., 2006). Inquiry research is accomplished by talking with people alone or in groups to allow them to express their feelings and tell their stories in a natural setting to gain a better understanding of their perceptions in order to interpret essences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Employing this approach supported the development of understanding trends, associations, relationships, and motivations related to higher education from the masculine perspective.

Qualitative transcendental phenomenology is a systematic study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as they are perceived in the consciousness (Husserl, 1962). The framework of phenomenology adheres to what is discovered through personal reflection and claims the only thing that is certain is what appears in consciousness thereby the collection of students' lived experience and representations align (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is the pursuit of insight into the lived experience; thus, the phenomenon is directly tied to the lived understanding (van Manen, 2017). Through this form of qualitative inquiry, science discovers the external perception of natural objects and internal perceptions by affording knowledge of elements (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology follows the principle that knowledge begins with experience and is transcendental because it observes the discovered reflection on acts (Husserl, 1962; Moustakas, 1994). All objects of knowledge must follow experience; therefore, knowledge resides in the subjective sources of self (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology is bound to perception and is regarded as the primary source of knowledge; thereby, its logical assertion as it appears in the consciousness is guaranteed to be objective (Husserl, 1962; Moustakas, 1994). Logical concepts originate from intuition and are founded on experiences (Husserl, 1970).

The phenomenological method returns to original data of the experience to obtain comprehensive descriptions in an attempt to grasp the enigma of life experience (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2017). Authentic and genuine phenomenological inquiry focuses on the rich details, depths, and complexities to obtain insight into the lived experience (van Manen, 2017). That being said, the lived experience will be directly affected through the society in which the participant resides. For a transcendental phenomenologist, the reduction of researcher bias is a principle that is possible because Husserl (1970) affirms that the mind and body are separate entities. Biological sources of behavior and social conditions through human activity are a functional system which represents interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Social aspects alter behavior; thereby, basic responses are integrated and connected to the whole structure of a process (Vygotsky, 1978). Language, words, devices, and nonverbal signs are illustrated to explain the human adaptation, thereby, an ontological framework was most applicable (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Another foundational key concept is the emphasis on how human beings change through culture and history (Mannheim, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). Recognition and accommodation that humans have the fundamental aspect of altering through the course of time is necessary to remain effective in the educational prospectus. The phenomenological method returns to original data of the experience in descriptions; thus, it does not offer explanations or analysis (Moustakas, 1994).

The transcendental phenomenology research design was a direct exploration of the learners' experience to achieve an understanding of higher academic experiences to uncover any tinctures (Husserl, 1962). Transcendental phenomenology is tied to intentionality of the internal experience; thus, the act of consciousness and the object of consciousness were closely enmeshed (Moustakas, 1994). Education is a communal experience that is psychological and

sociological founded; therefore, I attempted to develop a better understanding of how male students think and feel relating to the experiences of college academia through consideration of descriptions of their lived experience through emotional and communal aspects (Dewey, 1897). The phenomenology design was appropriate for the study of male Generation Z collegians because I endeavored to uncover the overall essence of the lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). By building on data from numerous research questions, data analysis through significant phrases and sentences were noted in an effort to gather data of the lived experience of Generation Z. Qualitative research places an emphasis on the humanity of each participant (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). This research method includes: (a) exploring a number of participants with a common experience, and (b) generating a report through horizontalization and cluster of meanings describing the essence of how Generation Z males experienced college (Moustakas, 1994).

By way of gathering data for the lived experience, themes were discovered to decipher a common phenomenon to gain an overall concept. Phenomenology is focused on the whole man through investigation of perspectives and viewpoints to better understand the particular experience (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Van Manen, 1990). As humanity transforms, so should research; by this means the focus on the description of the experience of each participant is essential (Moustakas, 1994). I set aside prejudices and preconceptions regarding phenomenon and relied on universal structure to acquire a theme amongst transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Understanding meanings and essences without preconceived notions takes self-reflection through consciousness; subsequently, the essence may be discovered through clear descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). This study assembled lived experiences of Generation Z collegiate males to gain a deeper understanding of themes which present the phenomena of

current generations; therefore, this conceptual framework was appropriate. The qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach endeavored to answer the following research questions.

Research Questions

Central research question

What are the lived collegiate academic experiences of male undergraduate Generation Z students?

Sub-question One

What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students in motivation towards academic goals?

Sub-Question Two

What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students in regard to social trends in their collegiate education understanding?

Sub-Question Three

What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students towards academic college experience and technology trends?

Setting

The study will be conducted in Loudoun County and Fairfax County of the Northern Virginia region of the United States. A larger population of Northern Virginia high school graduates attend college which offers a broader base for participation. Studies calculate that 93.5% of the population in Loudoun County have high school diplomas or higher and Fairfax County has 92.1%. Additionally, Loudoun County asserts 60.8% of the populace over 25 have a minimum of a bachelor's degree, and Fairfax has 61.1% over 25 with a bachelor's degree or

higher (U.S.C.S., 2020). Virginia ranks 11th in the United States for percentage of college graduates which provides a considerable sampling populace for data collection (Virginia Performs, 2019). Virginia includes over 80 accredited colleges and universities. Criteria for site selection is based upon 79.6% of high school graduates attending college within 16 months of graduating high school in the Northern Virginia area, whereas, in the Eastern region of the state only 59.6% attend college within 16 months after graduation (Virginia Performs, 2019). Studies show that male college enrollment has declined substantially (Buchmann et al., 2008; NSCRC, 2019).

The rationale for this selection is there are no known studies that have examined the emerging adult educational college experience in Loudoun County and Fairfax County, Virginia. In the United States during the fall semester of 2019, 11.3 million college enrollees were female and 8.6 million were male and the number for enrolling men continues to decline (NSCRC, 2019). Across all sectors of college including public, private, nonprofit, for profit and two-year public, men's college enrollment dropped 2.8%, whereas women only had a .8% decrease in 2019 (NSCRC, 2019). Virginia dropped 3.6% in college enrollment since Spring 2017 (NSCRC, 2019). The numbers within Northern Virginia are reflective of the entirety of the American college populace. Pseudonyms for institutions are provided to protect privacy.

Participants

Three varieties of sampling were utilized for this study: purposive, snowball, and criterion. From the purposeful base, a snowball sampling was conducted to select a minimum of 14 participants for this study to offer information and understanding of the research inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting rich cases to enlighten the research questions (Patton, 2002). Using purposeful sampling by conducting a snowball chain

approach through locating information-rich participants offered a broadened view by converging on a select number of cases (Edmonds, 2019; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research provokes the researcher to build and identify the sample throughout fieldwork through discussions with participants (Patton, 2002). The final step of selecting participants through age, gender, and college experience characterized the phenomena and provided quality assurance (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Each participant was required to be at least 18 years of age and had lived the experience of college. Because 18-year-olds are considered adults, they do not need parental approval for participating in this study.

I recruited individuals through networking and public online communities to identify potential participants. I interviewed college-aged men who reside in the Loudoun County and Fairfax County region who attended college either locally or elsewhere. Loudoun County and Fairfax County have a median income between \$125,000- \$142,000 with 61.3% - 61.6% of the population having a bachelor's degree (USCS, 2020). The participants of interest were those who are: (a) Generation Z 18 years or older (born between 1995 and 2012), (b) male, (c) have college experience with a minimum of one semester in college, either community or undergraduate, (d) reside in the Loudoun County or Fairfax County Virginia region, and (e) no longer attend undergraduate college. Essential to the selection of contributors was the ability to provide true accounts of their lived experiences related to the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Participants of the study understood, (a) the college course structure, (b) the social learning environment, and (c) perceptions of the college scholastic learning environment. I interviewed individuals who attended college for a minimum of one semester. All participants were given a pseudonym to protect privacy.

Procedures

The first step taken was to attain permission for the study from Liberty University Institutional Review Board. Once this was attained, I recruited participants through networking and online communities. I sent invitations via email to each participant. The letter sent to each possible participant stated the purpose of the study and the expectations of the study's participants. The letter also asked potential participants to pass along the letter to associates that may be interested in participating. The letter also stated that the participant must have at least one semester completed in college. The procedures portion is structured through the logical outlining steps necessary to conduct this transcendental phenomenological study. The research focused on subjective experiences from participants as collective voices (Moustakas, 1994). The procedures included Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, eliciting participants for the study, gathering data, and recording procedures.

IRB Approval

In order to conduct the phenomenological study of Generation Z male college experience, I first secured Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Protocols to protect human rights from any violations were obtained based on institutional requirements (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Proper steps were taken to complete the IRB application for Liberty University. After successful proposal defense and completed application to assigned dissertation chair, I followed the ethical mandates for human rights.

Eliciting Participants

Qualitative research is investigation into the human factor through in-depth inquiry (Patton, 2002). I elicited participants for the study through a purposive, snowball, and criterion sampling. In order to recruit participants, I networked through online communities such as

Instagram and Facebook to attain a group of interested individuals who met the criterion and identified potential participants. I targeted, screened, and offered incentives to possible participants. Once at least 14 participants were identified, I emailed participatory consent forms which included the purpose and expectations of the study's willing participants. The letter also asked prospective participants to pass along the letter to acquaintances that may be interested in contributing to this study. Before the initial Zoom interview, I collected written consent forms. Once the forms were signed and returned, the interview process, online focus group discussions, and written responses to essay prompts began.

Gathering Data

I followed through with the interview investigation and audio recorded through Zoom each interaction. The interview took place online in the forum of Zoom with a transcription service. Upon completion of the interviews, I conducted focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2002). Two focus groups of three participants each formed the virtual focus group. The focus group utilized the online Zoom platform. Next, I collected participant writing responses of two paragraphs for each prompt. Written responses to prompts were sent to the researcher through email. The subjective evidence was gathered through personal views; therefore, the studies were conducted where the participants lived and worked (Moustakas, 1994).

Recording Data

All interviews, focus groups, and written responses were transcribed and provided to participants for review and modification. Once completed, I cross-validated data through interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts by organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing (Moustakas, 1994). The audio files and transcriptions of each interaction provided an accurate data record. I utilized a reflective journal for self-analysis and to gather common themes and

essence amongst the participants. I developed individual, textural, and structural descriptions to integrate the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant received a \$100.00 Amazon gift card.

The Researcher's Role

As a human instrument conducting research in an ontological stance in the data collection, I sought to gather rich subjective evidence from participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since followed transcendental phenomenology, I consciously considered the experiences of an individual person; therefore, the scientific study of appearance of things as they emerged in the consciousness through participants' perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Intentional experiences are a combination of the outward appearance and how it is perceived through memory, image, and meaning; thus, perception is the primary source of knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Since the primary goal was describing the essence of male Generation Z collegian experiences through individual perceptions, research was conducted through developing a relational bond of trust during the interview process (Patton, 2002). I was acquainted with some of the participants, but not in an instructional, authoritarian, coercive, or leadership role.

Having an undergraduate degree and graduate degree in English Education has presented opportunities of exposure and interaction with students born between 1995 and 2012. As a college professor and as a mother of two male college graduates, I have observed situations of perplexing choices in academic insight and experience. Identifying my personal biases requires a heightened consciousness of predisposition. I employed a reflective journal to remain transparent within this qualitative study. In an attempt to stay aware of my personal predilection, I explicated it from my own intentional consciousness; thereby, I used a self-reflective format for my journal (Moustakas, 1994). A reflective diary may identify the theoretic viewpoint of the researcher of

self-recognition to benefit the research (Ortlipp, 2008). The process of blending the present, the imagined, and the potential significance of the genuine and the ideal is the goal (Moustakas, 1994). I practiced honest self-awareness of my sphere of consciousness to offer critical insight through copious recording. The emphasis was on perceptions in male Generation Z participants of the lived college experiences. At the time of this study, the researcher lived and worked in Loudoun county, but had no authority over any of the participants.

Data Collection

This study is qualitative in nature and uses transcendental phenomenological methods to describe male Generation Z observations of their college experiences. This qualitative research is a study of context and sought to obtain data on the unique lived experiences of participants using interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts in an effort to discover the tenet of the lived experiences of male Generation Z collegians (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The use of multiple methods of evidence was the primary strategy of this qualitative research. In transcendental phenomenology, interviewing participants is the most common method of gaining the essence of personal experiences; however, several data sources were used in this study to warrant credibility and fidelity of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Focus groups, interviews, and short essay prompts were used with men who have experienced college for a minimum of one semester. All interviews were audio recorded through Zoom transcription to provide a record of data.

Understanding the essence of Generation Z male college experiences was conducted through developing an interpersonal tie of confidence during the interview process (Patton, 2002). Social constructivism is an approach to understanding and explaining phenomena; thus, the constructivist view is negotiated socially and historically by means of interaction with others

(Vygotsky, 1978). Communal context in multiple realities were assembled (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Multiple realities are unified through a field of consciousness within the horizon by embracing all other realities as the participant knows it (Geniusas, 2020). Through collecting data and generating themes, a textual description ensued to uncover the essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative data was analyzed inductively and deductively via complex reasoning through building themes logically (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gay et al., 2006; Patton, 2002).

As the researcher, I identified and cataloged responses from interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts to discover the phenomena of the lived experience. I cross-verified as a form of evaluation to work back and forth between patterns and categories using complex reasoning skills. The researcher was an instrument to collect, utilize, and ferret out varying perspectives (Mills, 2007). The strength of research is to obtain a complete picture of what is being studied as gathering information in many ways (Guba, 1985). Criterion methods were used: credibility through accounting for complexities, transferability through context, dependability through stability of data, and confirmability through neutrality of data is the standards for validity of data collection (Guba, 1985). The researcher kept a reflective journal to chronicle field notes in order to identify theoretical memos, perceptions, and acuties.

Interviews

The focus in qualitative research is the individual; therefore, person-to-person interaction is valuable in obtaining data (Patton, 2002). In transcendental phenomenological research, the individual interview that involves informal, interactive, and open-ended questions is most efficient and took place through the Zoom online forum (Moustakas, 1994). An interview was most appropriate for asking open-ended questions that could flexible and adaptable to each

participant (Gay et al., 2006). In an effort to attain personal insight and data from individuals, an informal interface dialogue was valuable in this qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Knowledge was constructed through the interactive nature of the interviewee and the interviewer (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Upon receiving consent from the interviewee to participate, semi-structured and unstructured individual interviews were held virtually in a distraction-free comfortable setting with audio recording for future transcription (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the male population enrolled in college has been on the decline for decades, an understanding of perceptions was a necessary component for future educational understanding. Each question was grounded in research literature.

Open-Ended Interview Questions:

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Please describe your experience with elementary education. Tell me about your middle school education. Can you describe your experience during your high school years? Can you describe how education played a role in your life? What stands out?
3. Of your educational experiences, which would you say were the most significant in your life choices of education? Why?
4. Please describe what motivated you to attend college.
5. Explain whether your parents or society's view of college affected your viewpoint? How?
6. Tell me about the struggles you have experienced-- since graduating high school-- as you have worked out your life choices.
7. How would you describe your college classes? Were any of them more enjoyable than others? Did you think you attained more knowledge in them? If you do think you learned

more in some classes than others, why do you think you learned more in the specific class?

8. Please describe your feelings on specific professors or topics- why were they memorable or not. Did they challenge you, and if they did, how?
9. Please describe if and how technology played a role in your collegiate experience. Did technology challenge you or inhibit growth? Why do you think that way? How do you define technology?
10. Tell me about your college major or degree. Can you tell me why you chose that area to study?
11. What would you change about your experience? How could the educational design become more effective?
12. Reflecting on your college experience, what advice would you give to teenagers when they are considering attending college?
13. Please describe your thoughts on how colleges are doing in reaching the needs of all students. What else would you like to tell me about your college experience?

Qualitative data collection is open-ended because research often unfolds during the course of the interview (Mills, 2007; Patton, 2002). In an effort to obtain objective, yet rich data, the questions vacillate between structured and semi-structured questions in order for the interviewee to explain the responses to the structured queries (Gay et al., 2006; Patton, 2002). The interview moved forward to investigate additional layered data.

Questions one and two were designed to begin building a connection with participants by obtaining background information. According to Twenge (2017), iGen is the most ethnically diverse generation in American history; therefore, each co-researcher will have a distinct

background. These foundational questions are non-threatening and were adjusted for each participant.

Question three and four encouraged participants to reflect on personal development. Generation Z's were over-exposed to information far too early and have less first-hand experience far later than they are ready (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Twenge, 2017; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019). Students have been subjected to a virtual world but have been overprotected from reality; therefore, it has possibly impeded educational development (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). These questions urge participants to reflect on motivations and perceptions. Interviews should clearly ask for beliefs and opinions (Patton, 2002). Gen Z students are more practical than previous generations as they are focused on getting a well-paid job and less focused on getting a general education (Twenge, 2017). Students' motivations for higher education have possibly shifted from previous generations.

Question five urged the participant to reflect and state their college experience perspective in relation to parental influence and to recognize their individualized essence (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018). Generation X parents of Generation Z students are frequently helicopter parents who cause a deficiency in autonomy (Love et al., 2020; Schiffrin et al., 2019). There are differences in relationships between parenting and emerging adults with gender intensification differentiation during adolescence (Burke et al., 2018; Kouros et al., 2017). As questions became more intimate and thought-provoking, a rapport between the interviewer and interviewee transpired.

Question six offered the participant an opportunity to reflect on challenges since high school. Growing political, social, and inner turmoil may challenge young adults in making life choices (Elmore & McPeak, 2019). This question invited participants to share factors that may

have altered their perspectives. Life experiences are fundamentally different from previous generations; therefore, each participant is distinctive in their perspective (Twenge, 2017; White, 2017). Family dynamics, socioeconomic status, gender, culture, and society have all been vital roles within the exclusivity of each participant. I was attentive to personal struggles within the participant encounters.

Question seven and eight address teaching and classroom dynamics. Professors should recognize the importance of interaction that encompass the generational identity. Adult learning andragogy should shift to heutagogy to utilize the self-efficacy concept to cognitive learning (Hase & Kenyon, 2013).

Questions nine and 10 implored participants to decipher courses and technology in relation to curriculum material which has an impact on online interactions in brain cognitive function and communication (Firth et al., 2019). Students raised with a computer and internet may develop a hypertext mind with a style of web-surfing processes for cognition (Prensky, 2001). The Internet could affect brain function through attention change, knowledge, and social awareness causing a new path for education (Firth et al., 2019). Previous generation learning was linear which can impede learning for Generation Z (Prensky, 2001). Technology and the Internet have changed how Generation Z creates and sustains friendships through different networks, apps, dating sites, and more (Seemiller & Grace, 2016). Social interactions now involve social media messaging, online polling, group texting, and face-to-face connections. Technology has designed new methods of community engagement and social subtleties through spreading interests and views through various forms of media (Seemiller & Grace, 2016).

Questions 11 presented the contributor an opportunity to look through another's viewpoint in an effort to give the participant freedom to add their experience to future

generations (Rickes, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2016). These questions allowed participants to talk in-depth about the phenomenon of their college experiences and become a co-researcher. The final questions offered a forum for students to engage in their experiences as one with wisdom and history. I maintained a place of thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and continued accordingly throughout the interview process (Gay et al., 2006).

Questions 12 and 13 were designed to offer an opportunity for the participant to reflect on their college path. Honest self-review elicited participants to think more deeply of their choices and reasoning. Generation Z struggle making decisions because their parents protected them from experiencing consequences, so adult educational choices may be uncharted territory for this generation (Elmore & McPeak, 2019; Love et al., 2020).

Focus Groups

Two focus groups, of three participants each, participated in a Zoom online forum. Focus group open-ended interviews are groups of five to eight who focus on particular issues and took place in a Zoom online platform (Patton, 2002). Focus groups are a group interview where the researcher can collect shared awareness from several individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interaction between three participants in two focus groups lead to a shared understanding. I enlisted focus group participants after personal interviews. I also ensured that four to six participants had a voice in the group-sharing activity through structured and semi-structured questions to stimulate responses from each participant in an online forum (Mills, 2007).

Focus Group open-ended questions:

1. Tell me about your high point in your college experience.
2. Tell me about your low point in your college experience.
3. What was your perception of the college curriculum?

4. Tell me about your experience with technology in your education?
5. Tell me about your college environment?
6. Tell me about your socialization in college?
7. What challenges have you experienced in higher education?
8. What is your opinion of the college culture?
9. What kinds of suggestions do you have for future college curriculum developers?

Each focus group question was worded to elicit responses from each participant.

Question one was worded as an icebreaker to begin to build rapport. A form of free word association or stimulus word/ response were employed to break the ice with the group. Getting the group interview off in a positive manner was essential to gathering rich evidence of a phenomena (Gay et al., 2006). Questions two through four offered a forum for focus group members to share their perceptions of college. When conducting a focus group, the interaction between participants lead to a shared and deeper understanding of the essence (Mills, 2007). Questions five through eight asked participants to share specific interactions within the college environment (Patton, 2002). Question nine was for participants to look through others' viewpoints and offer suggestions for potential change.

Writing Prompts

Participants were asked to respond to three writing prompts for the purpose of securing ruminations and explanations of data received during interviews and focus groups. Collecting various forms of expression to gain a richer description of the essence of the experience was vital (Moustakas, 1994). The writing prompts have open-ended questions through self-reported data in order for the participants to explain in a private informal setting without the distractions of the interviewer or focus group members. Self-reflective practices are frequently expressed in the

form of writing. The parameters for this study required each participant to respond in one to two paragraphs to each prompt. The questions followed this general format. Writing Prompt

Questions:

1. What challenges did you encounter while going to college?
2. Describe your opinions and thoughts of the college environment.
3. Describe your perspective of the professors, course work, technology, and social aspects of your lived experience.

For this qualitative inquiry, these three questions allowed an opportunity for participants to reflect and clarify in an open-ended response format. Data collection for a phenomenological study involves varied sources of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In inquiry of thoughts, the interview openly asked for beliefs, not feelings (Patton, 2002). Through writing, participants identified a richer description of the phenomenon.

Data Analysis

The goal of this study's data analysis was to identify themes related to a phenomenon that emerged from interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts. I triangulated all data collected to ensure validity. Transcendental phenomenology is what appears in the consciousness as an absolute reality; therefore, this scientific research is the study of appearance of things as the essence of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative phenomenology data evaluation required multiple steps in order to fully realize the brevity of fullness (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002).

I analyzed all data using phenomenological reductionism because it was an effective methodology for bracketing out my own biases (Moustakas, 1994). I set aside my own educational encounters in order to approach this study without preconceived notions or

judgments through a reflective journal following the guidelines of epoche (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenological reduction is a contemplative step probing back to consciousness (Husserl, 1962). This step is one where the researcher should put personal tendencies to the side and look at accumulated data as if it were the first time (Moustakas, 1994). I looked at each experience in its singularity with the description given of essential constituents, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors, and shapes; thereby, deriving a textural description of the meanings as explained by imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994). Pondering on the textural language becomes an internal act of consciousness; thus, a familiarity of participant experiences ensued (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative analysis is an iterative approach through a repetitive thought process (Patton, 2002). Through lingering on data, the researcher gained a new understanding of the phenomenon. Reduction includes, bracketing, horizontalization, delimited horizons, invariant qualities, individual textural descriptors, and composite textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). After this process, a theme was identified through synthesis. I focused on the participants' interpretations of their experiences. I used three instruments to collect data from the participants: interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts.

Interviews

At the conclusion of data collection, I stepped away from the data for a suitable amount of time. Virtual interviews were recorded electronically and transcribed to ensure accuracy of data to be analyzed. I listened and read each interview multiple times to familiarize myself with the content to obtain the fundamental nature of the experience. I used phenomenological reductions for bracketing out my own biases. During the bracketing stage, I had an honest reflection and bracketed out my personal predispositions through an inter-subjectivity among data. I also used memoing in which I wrote down the evolution of the process through open and

selective coding. I highlighted words, phrases, or themes through inductively reviewing transcripts and documents for significant codes that exemplified specific concepts or encapsulated the depth of the experience. I evolved from coding, to categorizing, to identifying themes and concepts. I used color coordination during the open coding process to refine the data into smaller categories to identify themes of the phenomenon. Patterns were characterized by similarity, differences, frequency, sequence, correspondence, or interconnection (Saldana, 2013). I then reduced the amount of data without losing the meaning through eliminating information that did not capture the experience. Next, I validated each invariant constituent and theme and then constructed an individual textural description also known as a narrative description which detailed insight into the meaning of the experience from the transcribed interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I then constructed an individual structural description to synthesize the meanings and essences of the experience. Throughout the process of data analysis, a precise portrayal of the phenomenon was layered in textures and meanings. I developed good textural descriptions which was a vital step in transcendental phenomenological research. I maintained copious notes to follow the phenomenological path to offer insights into the enigma of participants' life experiences of this study (van Manen, 2017). As new themes emerged, I modified the coding. I created charts to exhibit each recurring phrase or link of participants. I anticipated a holistic approach to the specific phenomenon. After analysis and synthesis of themes and patterns, I created a graphic to identify themes of the lived experiences.

Focus Groups

The two groups of three who met during an online format were analyzed thoroughly. Focus groups were conducted through a Zoom virtual platform electronically and transcribed to ensure accuracy of data. I read each interchange multiple times to become familiar with the

content and the essence of the experience through their conversation. I highlighted through color coding and graphing words, phrases, or themes through inductively reviewing transcripts and documents for significant codes that may exemplify specific concepts or encapsulate the depth of the experience. I bracketed personal predispositions; therefore, research concentrated on the subject matter. I maintained a reflective journal in an endeavor to remain open-minded to refrain from judgment to hear the participants' reflection on their experiences to analyze themes.

Deciphering is the primary focus of the study; thus, when statements were considered irrelevant to the primary research question, they were discarded to leave only the textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon. The horizons (textural meanings) were clustered into themes and organized into a comprehensible depiction of the phenomenon. By looking at the data a second time through horizontalization, the process of repetitive views of the data could possibly discover a new perspective (Moustakas, 1994). I organized and underscored specific statements and quotes with color coding so clusters of meanings could develop (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I anticipated that some themes may be revealed through non-repetitional and non-overlapping to cluster into topics (Moustakas, 1994). I incorporated a description of themes of each research participant to integrate textural constituents and the group textural description to identify themes that materialized as individuals and as a group. I created a visual graphic to organize recurring themes.

Writing Prompts

Since writing prompts were collected via email, I had a record of written data submitted for collection. I bracketed my own bias to isolate any prejudgment from reading their viewpoints. I read each writing prompt several times to obtain the essence of the experience. I looked for meanings that could be clustered into themes. I color coded any repetitive phrases or themes. I

created a chart to identify emerging themes. I also looked for the structural essences to identify a synthesis of meanings and experiences within the phenomenon. Through developing a textural and structural description answering the questions 'what' and 'how', the essence of the experience became a composite description. Once the description was identified, I coded through to discover a word or short phrase that was quintessence at capturing a pattern and/or regularity. I open coded to look for responses which illuminated patterns and then used selective coding to identify overlapping or irrelevant data. After noting significant patterns and delimiting unrelated data, I clustered and labeled themes as the core concepts of the insight. From open coding to selective coding, I identified recurring themes. Through the triangulated analysis of all sets of data including interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts, themes and patterns were color coded and charted in an attempt to capture the essence of the lived experiences. When the common themes were identified, I synthesized them within the larger theoretical framework and conveyed the essence in relation to the central research question of how male undergraduate Generation Z described their lived academic collegiate experiences.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, validity is the justification to defend the accuracy and credibility of the study (Gay et al., 2006). A transcendental phenomenological research is focused on describing the essence of the experience; therefore, it is necessary to utilize means in which to ensure trustworthiness (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher's findings should accurately describe the participants experiences; thereby, an assurance of authenticity is needed (Patton, 2002). A validation process for accuracy is the best practice with triangulation practiced (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By addressing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, trustworthiness should ensue (Guba, 1981).

Credibility

Credibility is the confidence in the 'truth' of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher must provide a clear representation of participant's experiences. Working with contributors as a collaborating team elevates the credibility of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To establish credibility, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer examination, case evaluation, and member-checking were employed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation will corroborate results through more than one form of data to test for authenticity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Investigative research should embed four types of triangulation to enable a deeper understanding through ensuring the comprehensive data is rich: methods, sources, analyst, and theory/perspective (Denzin, 1978; & Patton, 1999). I cross validated and collaborated with participants.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability is the stability of data in the similar rationale (Patton, 2002). I enhanced dependability through coding and recoding data while I triangulated accumulated information (Guba, 1981). With overlapping methods, by using two or data compilations, to establish an external review path and by procuring a process to have a peer analyze information collection, analysis, and interpretation offers a path of valid set of data (Guba, 1981). External auditing to examine the process and the product of the study offered fidelity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I maintained interview transcripts, focus group notes, and writing prompts in order to obtain a better understanding of their experiences through more than two methods of data collection in order to cross-validate. The confirmability or neutrality of the data was necessary for data to achieve objectivity; therefore, the researcher practiced triangulation and reflexivity (Guba, 1981). I practiced reflexivity, which is revealing underlying assumptions, through allowing

various investigators to examine (Guba, 1981). I also maintained a reflective journal and a report to recognize my own preconceptions, beliefs, values, assumptions, and opinions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The introspective journal to record presumptions to address the objectivity of information fostered reflexivity.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research means that the data is context bound and that the goal is to not develop generalized truth statements that can apply to a larger populace (Guba, 1981). This is a thick description to account for a valid phenomenon in ample details (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I collected and developed descriptive data in the manner of the framework, so the phenomenon was transferable through contextual patterns.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were utilized to safeguard participants in this study. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained before the beginning of the study. Participants were notified of the purpose of the study and were given informed consent forms to sign and were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). All participants were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time and understood their participation was voluntary. The researcher bracketed herself by journaling to reduce bias. All data collected were digitally stored and password protected and then will be destroyed after three years (Patton, 2002, Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

Chapter Three provides an overview of research design, research questions, site, procedures, participants, instruments, collection methods, and data analysis with attention to trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological

study was to gain a richer insight of the described experiences of male Generation Z college students and their encounters in the academic collegiate environment. The site, sample selection, and instruments through data sources of interviews, focus groups, and writing prompts were included. All three instruments were detailed in the data collection and the data analysis section. Collection methods and data analysis followed Moustakas' (1994) steps in reducing the data into themes by clustering phrases and central themes. The transcendental phenomenology model research design's primary steps for analyzing data were examined and placed into the fundamental methods of data evaluation from open coding to selective coding (Moustakas, 1994; Saldana, 2013). Trustworthiness and ethical considerations defined through credibility, dependability and transferability were investigated in light of this study to maintain proper institutional and IRB mandates.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this research was to identify common themes from the lived experiences of male Northern Virginia Generation Z in relation to their undergraduate academic collegiate experience. The holistic view of research includes motivation towards academic goals, social trends, and technology developments within social and academic experience. The technique of contemplation which occurs throughout a phenomenological approach provides a logical, methodical, and comprehensible resource (Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental phenomenological approach was used for this study as it allowed the researcher to set aside predispositions and investigate the shared lived academic experiences of male Generation Z through their personal perspectives (Husserl, 1963; Moustakas, 1994). Chapter Four presents the findings of this research. The data collection and data analysis took place over a four-month period. This chapter provides a detailed narrative about individual participants and themes revealed through common experiences. Chapter Four identifies and describes the three themes discovered by this research and answers the research questions used to guide this research. Three emergent themes include:

1. College Motivations and Challenges
2. College Environment and Technology
3. College Professors and Course Work

Participants

A narrative analysis of each of the 11 participants in this study follows. Three of the eleven participants are first generation college students. Of the 11 participants, eight had achieved either an associates or bachelor's degree; one was on an educational break; one had

failed to achieve the minimum standards; and one quit college after his second year. Of the 11 participants, 10 participants had married parents and one participant's parents were divorced and remarried. These narratives focus on memoirs to interpret lived academic experience to reveal patterns through the lens of individual experiences (Patton, 2002). Participants were identified as eligible for this study through meeting the following criteria: (a) male who was 18 years of age or older and born between 1995 and 2012, (b) lived Northern Virginia, either Loudoun County or Fairfax County, (c) A minimum of one semester of college experience; and (d) not a current undergraduate student. Once identified, participants volunteered for the study through an email exchange with the researcher. In order to capture the male perspective, a detailed evaluation was effective for qualitative analysis (Moustakas, 1994). All research was conducted virtually through email and Zoom. From interview transcripts, focus groups transcripts, and writing prompts, the researcher constructed narratives to analyze their personal perspectives of the educational experience. Six participants agreed to engage in two focus groups; however, two participants failed to connect to the Zoom meeting for the agreed time. Although my intention was to have three participants in two focus groups only two participants contributed to each group; however, there was enough evidence from the other two instruments to identify and triangulate data of the lived experience. Pseudonyms were used to provide anonymity for all participants. Table 1 includes the demographics of each participant.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Parental Marital Status and Nationality	College Progress
Harrison	25	Married American College degree	Attended a state university, but left after the second year
Robert	19	Married American College degree	Started college, took a one-year break. He is attending an Ivy League university in fall.
Nikolai	20	Married Immigrated from Asia and Caribbean College degree	Achieved a two-year degree at a community college. He plans to attend a state university.
Isaac	23	Married American College degree	Achieved trade school certifications. He has no plans of continuing his education.
Edwin	20	Married American	Achieved an associate degree in community college
Nathaniel	24	Married American	Achieved a bachelor's degree in state university
Owen	26	Married American College degree	Attended college but failed to meet standards during his second year and failed out.
Ahmed	24	Married Immigrated from Middle East College degree	Achieved a bachelor's degree from a large public university.
Vincent	24	Married Immigrated from Southeast Asia College degree	Achieved a bachelor's degree from a state university
Caleb	25	Married American	Achieved a bachelor's degree from a state university
Alfonso	25	Divorced -remarried. Immigrated from South America	Achieved a bachelor's degree from a state university

Harrison

Harrison is a twenty-four-year-old who graduated from a public high school. While in high school Harrison played football; thus, he was expected to not only attend college but to play college ball. Both of his parents had college degrees and his mother was raised in International Embassies. He completed two years of university but decided to quit higher education and college football pursuits for a career in the electrical trade. He is settled in his career path and knows he did the right thing for himself; however, his parents were disappointed in his choices. In review of his past, in elementary and middle school, he experienced trouble academically and socially, but assumed it was a part of growing up. He always enjoyed his science classes and environmental studies. Sports and football were a part of his identity in high school and continued through until young adulthood. He never wanted to go to college, but his parents did not give him an option of going and expected him to attend. His father was able to get him a position on a university football team. He enjoyed instructors who had "passion" about their subject matter. He felt "strong armed into the college route ... and failure was not far." He believed that "the college environment was toxic for a young impressionable person like me." He commented he knew from the start college was not for him. He noted that the "picturesque perfect image" that was created was not the one he found in the reality of college life. Harrison noted the purpose of college was to "find yourself" and realized "the more I learned about myself, I did not see myself sitting in an office and I do not see myself as a businessperson" so he removed himself from college. Harrison knew from the beginning of college "it was not for me." Harrison played sports in college and "hated it every second but stayed" because the sport had become "intertwined in life." When he finally did quit college, he asserted "it was like giving up part of my identity." When he told his parents that he was dropping out of college, his mom

cried and his dad looked him "in the eye and said, you are not making the right decision." He felt as though college prepared the student for more college and not the real world as apprenticeships. He felt as though working through hands-on experience was the most beneficial. Harrison believes social media adds a "heightened stress level . . . and you are constantly thinking about what someone says or is doing." His advice for future students was to focus on personal issues because "effort is the only thing you can control."

Robert

Robert is a nineteen-year-old who graduated as the valedictorian from an affluent public high school. His father graduated from an esteemed university and expected him to attain a college education. He was a successful freshman in college; however, he is currently taking a break and is not currently attending college in order to help financially support his family during the pandemic. His original plan was to be a part of a State Department program and live abroad for a year; however, COVID-19 canceled all plans and international travel.

In elementary school, the local school system suspected him of having a learning disability. He repeated kindergarten and participated in a special needs class. After, his parents sent him to a private school. He alleged elementary education "was not a great social situation." He claimed many of the elementary teachers "were not great with kids. . . and probably were not meant to be teachers." In middle school he enjoyed all his subjects and his teachers. He felt like students were "sort of shuffling along" in their education. He played sports in high school and became class president which enhanced him in a social context. He was naturally gifted in math and languages; therefore, he recognized the integration of technology in education but considered it a distraction from social connections.

He noted that "college is a strange mix of dedicated students and people forced by their parents." He considers technology as an "important tool" for learning. He thinks college prepares students for more college and not for the workforce. Because his year abroad was canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions, after he struggled with getting a job. He feels people looked down on him because he was not attending college. He wants to study language/ etymology to understand how it "interacts with culture." He plans on going back to an ivy league college to study linguistics to teach in the future. His advice for future college attendees would be to get their financial affairs in order.

Nikolai

Nikolai is a twenty-year-old graduate with a two-year associates degree. He plans to return to a four-year university next year. In elementary school, he had a negative experience and "generally had poor grades and a poor ability of socializing with peers." He claimed he had difficulty focusing, interacting with others, and was emotionally and physically bullied in school and his elementary teachers did nothing to protect him. His parents moved him to a charter school to alter the environment and he alleged it became worse. His parents moved him back to public school. He was always interested in engineering and bridges through designs and considered himself a "computer nerd." By middle school, he learned to manipulate computer programs through strategy games and became academically and socially stronger. He began to enjoy chemistry and sciences but was diagnosed with anxiety and panic disorder. A male orchestra instructor encouraged and guided him towards his passions of musical accomplishments in piano and violin. Another male math educator validated his desires in learning calculus. However, in high school, Nikolai struggled with "a bout of depression" and empathized with peers who felt "demoralized" and had no interest in attending college. He stated

that depression in high school was the "overriding theme" with an overwhelming discouraging environment for the male gender. He and his male peers believed college was "meaningless" and had feelings of frustration and apathy. His parents raised him and his brothers differently because they "noticed that the ones that they raised most intensely were the least independent;" therefore, they did not helicopter parent him as much.

He claimed his decision to attend college was like "following a script" and it was expected from his parents and society. Both of his parents projected him to attend, and teachers pushed college like it "was a ticket out." Nikolai asserted while he was in college, he and "every single other guy" was "demoralized" whether they attended a community college, a university, or attended school overseas. He argued there "are certain things that motivate you beyond money" and commented an inner focus is what drives many people to higher education. However, he declared he "didn't care about the direction he was going" that he "just cared about the magnitude." He believed that many young men apply themselves to the "sort of physical and mental state of a man who gets things done." He noted the social expectation for men to build, carry, and do manual labor conflicts with the current social mantra. He declared his biggest struggle since high school has been mental health. Nikolai stated college classes fell into three categories: "interesting but not useful ...useful ... and interesting and useful." He felt he had never been in a class which was both interesting and useful. He felt the classes with group projects where humans shared information were the ones he felt as though he was learning the subject matter; however, the ones with "straight lectures" were the "worst."

As for technology in the classroom, he stated it can be useful, but "sometimes we end up coping with technologies like nuclear bombs... just cope." He mentioned technology is a rigid domain, "does not allow the individual to be independent." As for the social aspect of media, he

commented that media is global and society is "ephemeral, which is free, that you can reassign yourself. It is quite easy for new ones to appear and old ones to disappear, it becomes so ephemeral as to make your opinions and emotional attachments to it equally ephemeral." He claimed Generation Z gets upset with social injustices, but it is difficult to gauge . . . core self, family, village, and town. It is difficult to locate what is most important for you . . .because communication is so broad." He noted that since boundaries are broken down, it is challenging to figure out what is important and what is meaningful. He felt as though the technology has regulated humanity and communication down to just screen time. He too believed college did not prepare students for the workforce but perpetuated more college. Nikolai recognized society must balance our ideals with our realities; but noted men work visually; thus, students should be able to learn concepts both mentally and physically. He reinforced "hands-on application" for all course work is the most effective. His advice for the following college students is to "find confidence in yourself," "to experiment," "look at your social sphere," and "keep yourself grounded." He continued to say students should "try to apply yourself . . . with something that is physically tangible and not with something digital and fleeting" because people need "human interaction."

Isaac

Isaac is a 22-year-old who attended k-12 public school, graduated from high school, and attended vocational school; however, he did not attend traditional college. He studied the trades of welding and masonry. He was always competent while working with his hands and just did not feel as though classroom course work was right for him. He currently works for a municipality. His mother had some college courses, and his father was successful without having a college degree; therefore, he was not pushed or expected to attend. His parents did not buy him

a phone, but he had to work to purchase a flip phone as a teenager. However, his sister does attend a higher learning institution. He never got into any trouble, but realized in middle school, the school counselors were "pushing for you to figure out what you really wanted to do with your life. . . start thinking about college." He deems much of the course work unneeded and believes the school system "pushes too hard for college" and does not push vocational training. Because he studied in the trades, he felt as though traditional college students "looked down" upon his educational choices. All of his favorite and most effective teachers were male. One of his primary challenges since high school is having people take him seriously in the professional workforce. As a young man, he felt overlooked and diminished in his abilities. He was challenged by learning new trades and learned most of the stuff by "just doing hands on practice." He feels as though technology is "useful" but also makes people "distant from one another" and "dumber." He acknowledges the internet is "helpful and harmful." He feels as though college prepares students for more college and that true learning occurs when the learner "just does it." He preferred working alone rather than with people throughout his education and sees the school system not meeting the needs of all students. He feels as though more money should be "budgeted for vocational programs."

Edwin

Edwin is a twenty-year old who graduated with an associate degree in business from the local community college. He does not plan on continuing his education. His father owns a small business and he noted, "I look at my dad who never had any college experience and I see how successful his business is and how smart he is." He enjoyed his k-12 education and recognized the impact of good teachers and teaching methods. His music teachers in elementary, middle, and high school made a profound impact on his learning. He noted that boys are "really, really

energetic" and could get started off on the "wrong foot," but he was not one of those boys. His male music teachers in all three schools challenged him and most of his "positive experiences with teaching have been from men." He recalled teaching methods and relationships with teachers who inspired him through a challenging yet relaxed atmosphere within the classroom. Group work and individual assignments were effective; however, as he has aged, he appreciated working alone.

He acknowledged technology has a powerful role in learning, as it helped him "achieve the goal of succeeding in high school, but also helped me cheat from learning in high school." Edwin attended college because it was expected of him from his mom and society. As an emerging adult, he was overwhelmed with time management and responsibility, but loved the freedom of personal choice. He socially did not make many lasting friendships as a commuter student, yet he appreciated learning about "interpersonal relationships" in the business major. He felt as though college was just preparing the student for more education. He thinks the purpose of college is the ability to list it on the resume; thus, it is "relative" in this location. His advice for future students would be "apply yourself and . . . do not coast" but use "organization" and "time management."

Nathaniel

Nathaniel attended public school from k-12. He recently graduated from a state university and recently married. He is an electrical engineer who works for a government contractor. His parents did not graduate from college but instilled the importance of college degrees. The pressure of society and parental influence made him feel as though college was not just expected, but that he did not have a choice. At his fifth-grade graduation, he noted they were presented as the "class of 2020 at a chosen university, which was four years after their high school

graduation." One of the most specific educational experiences which affected his life choice of attending college to become an electrical engineer was "career day in fifth grade and an aerospace engineer guy came" and shared his love of the career with him. His earlier teachers were "stricter with punishments for the guys." However, he observed the male teachers were the most influential with an active approach in teaching. Teachers who taught "out of the box thinking" were the most memorable and effective. He remembered concepts of subjects from active hands-on-learning in all classes. He noted that phones in the classroom were a distraction from learning. He felt men were consumers on social media and women were producers; therefore, he credits social media as hurting his ability to have a casual conversation with someone.

He chose his course of study and degree strictly based on job market trends. When responding to the purpose of college, he commented it "was teaching you how to Google." He commented students went to college to either learn or seek self-actualization. He noted college was "adulthood on training wheels," and a "fake bubble" of being "independently-minded." He remarked personable professors who gave off a "blue collar vibe" were the most interesting and informative. Professors who were relatable with an open door and practical were the ones he learned from the most. He posited "professors and classes available are theoretical and lead to more school." He considers college as pushing the student towards more schooling. He considers group work as a trend in learning, because it is responsibility shared, but feels learning on his own is most efficient.

According to Nathaniel, the "college environment is either going to be competitive or collaborative" depending on if the "student can get over himself or not." He did note that college does prepare the student for the workforce with the basics of job readiness but encouraged

upcoming college students to choose their degree by choosing a career path, not just a passion. He noted many people graduate "empty handed with a bunch of knowledge that isn't applicable."

Owen

Owen is a twenty-six-year-old who "failed" out of college. Owen was raised in a military home and moved every few years to a new location. He frequently moved as a child and observed the different cultures of each state. As an elementary student, his teacher was upset over his creativity and gave him negative feedback on a coloring project. His father has a bachelor's degree and is an officer in the armed forces and encouraged college or military route for adult decisions. When he was eighteen, his parents were transferred to another country, he chose to move to Fairfax to attend college. Owen was born with a health issue which made him self-conscious of his appearance but commented he never had trouble fitting in and would make friends immediately. Although he was fairly successful in academics and football, he stated people aren't really their true selves in high school. He admitted society and his parents tried to "hammer it into you" the importance of higher education. However, when his parents left the country, he struggled to balance work and school. He is an online gamer who enjoys spending time with his friends through virtual games. Owen was attending college through the GI bill; thus, the added stress of paperwork and limited courses available caused distress. He noted that he was really disappointed with himself because he failed out and for "letting his parents down." He theorized his lack of success was due to the fact he was not "just dealing with school alone," or adulting, but his "parents were an ocean away." He noted the funding paperwork was "daunting and very time-consuming." The GI bill would not pay for many of the classes he wanted to attend, so he felt like he was being forced to attend courses, even though they were not his personal choices. He maintained a part-time job while he was in college but admits his

priorities were not in the right order. He confessed, "I don't think I was prepared." Between cost, time-management, and emerging adult decisions, he failed out of college. His self-identity as a young man in transition and he takes "responsibility for failing" and "regrets."

Another primary challenge in college for him was technology not being consistent and effective in learning. He remembered spending hours and hours in the computer lab writing research papers and working on his assignments but conjectured the noise level was not conducive to educational focus. After submitting an audio project, his professor commented he sounded like "Darth Vader or a demon." Because he was financially unable to replace his laptop, he admits to just giving up. He noted that professors were disconnected from their students, which in turn left him with a "feeling of disconnect in college which caused a sort of autopilot." He noted the social distance between the student and professor. He thought the regiments of curriculums were many times being taught from professors who "didn't believe in it themselves." Although he enjoys working in peer groups, he stated he rarely worked in groups in the college environment. From the lack of engagement, he does not remember his teachers or even the courses. He felt as though "there was no end in sight" while he was attending school and believes college just "prepares the student for more" education.

Ahmed

Ahmed attended public education from k-12. His parents were immigrants from Pakistan and were actively involved in his education. Although his family experienced racism, his parents emphasized higher education and instilled a type of devotion to learning since he was born. His father is an engineer, and his mom is an elementary school teacher, and both encouraged his love of reading. His parents pushed him to get a degree. He took advanced classes through his education and was overall supported for his diverse culture. In high school, a male teacher took

him under his wing through a mentoring style. He surrounded himself with "like-minded high achieving people." He noted that the purpose of higher education is to expand educational pursuits and personal skills by gaining life skills. Ahmed commented on the substance abuse issues in college where students are prescribed Adderall or Ritalin to study for concrete topics. He believed that college experiences depended on the "personality," and "willingness," "effort," and "love to learn" attitude that is beneficial in the workforce. He recognized that he had the support system of parents, family, and a good school system. Ahmed observed lecture-based classes were not conducive to learning, but smaller classes increased his engagement. He mentioned that group work, class discussions, and approachable professors were effective in challenging him to question norms. He remarked that he respects his father but would "rather trust a professor with two Ph.D.'s," then his dad. Technology through the internet has emphatically "played a huge role in his education" through the ability of pulling up facts from the source. However, he noted that technology "should not be a replacement for all education" but rather a tool to aid fundamental skills. He commented "one of the symptoms of pop culture," is there has not been a book to "really captured the public's attention." Social media for him improved his social life and social abilities because of the communication ease. He felt as though the only thing he would change about his college experience would be his personal choices and study habits. Ahmed felt college was a place to discover "different boundaries of your soul" try different subjects; thereby forcing changes and growth. He felt "college is a healthy way to go through implications of things that are not fair, or honest as they are in the real world, because it is a watered-down version of the real world." He believes there has been a "structural shift in society" which gives men more opportunities in the workforce than women which accounts for the discrepancy in college graduate genders achievement.

Vincent

Vincent is a 23-year-old man raised in northern Virginia but who attended private Catholic schools for his k -12 education. He felt it was a "good education . . . and he was prepared" for educational pursuits. Both of his parents have law degrees and were actively involved in his education; he considered his mother almost a helicopter parent. He felt as if he was always placed in the advanced groups in his earlier education. He noted that children who were considered troubled in the classroom were going through personal family issues and recognized the holistic nature of learning. He stated that "younger boys are more boisterous and are not given the support or the freedom that they need." He remarked male behavior was not looked down upon in his early years because he was in an all-boys school that considered "boys being boys." He had both male and female teachers who taught math and sciences who impacted his learning positively but felt as though the Catholic religion may have held him back from other perspectives. He had many teachers who were very devout to their beliefs and considered his learning very biased. He had attended a prep school which was known for excelling: therefore, college was expected. He attributes his sense of drive to his parents as a learned behavior.

His high school was only males, so he commented that college at a state university with a variety of perspectives was a culture shock. He observed that "diversity in thought and demographics were ultimately very refreshing." He considered higher education "an acknowledgement of a sort of classist structure in society." Subsequently, his guidance counselor in eleventh grade walked him through the application process of higher learning. He admitted he went to college "wanting to make a difference in the world" but after a while was unsure of his

focus. He did claim to be more engaged in group-focused courses with male instructors. He noted more focused learning occurred in classes where laptops were not allowed.

Although technology was an important aspect of his education, in some courses he felt as though "technology was shoehorned into the curriculum." Vincent believed it did not really bring much to life and noted it inhibited learning when he was bored in class. Even though social media enhanced his life, he commented it was also a distraction. He recognized when "everyone is looking at their phone, it becomes detrimental" to social life; moreover, he yearns for face-to-face connections. He claimed he had "zero complaints about college" and all of his professors were good. He considers the purpose of college as making the recipient "more attractive in the job market" and "to meet like-minded people." He studied abroad in Asia for a semester through a program focused on mobility and community. He questioned his educational degree choice and does not think colleges meet the needs of all of its students. He thought all education should be more focused "holistically" to work on "soft skills such as working out differences" with others. He recently graduated from a state university and was unable to locate a job with his degree; thus, he is currently pursuing his passion in music.

Caleb

Caleb was born and raised in Loudoun County. He graduated from a state university two years ago. He is a regional director of reaching young people through a "relationship-based" program. He attended public education from k-12 and was placed in the gifted program. He remembers his primary education with fondness with the interactive studies and fun teachers who were "out there." However, he also remembers one teacher as treating boys differently from the girls and being shamed by being forced to write in a handwriting book as punishment. In high school, Caleb took advanced placement courses and was enrolled into a Technology Center for

video production. In his recollection, male teachers who taught with "interactive lessons" were the most remembered and appreciated.

His parents expected him to attend college and were the primary reason he attended a university. He worked two jobs and was a full-time student. He wanted to be an engineer, but realized he was a hands-on-person and enjoyed building things. He believes the purpose of college is to "get a credential for a job" and "preparation" for life. During his college program, he realized his major was not beneficial; thus, he switched his concentration to web design. His favorite class was a language class with only eight people in which was interactive with "hands-on" projects. The professor was able to take them on a couple of field trips and build relationships with each of the students. In college, he was more involved with extracurricular activities. He believes technology has changed education by making life easier. He recognized the current generation thinks in "three-dimensional space" which makes their thinking different and makes "reading a book harder" because the three-dimensional plane is "second nature to them." He noted that even though information is at our fingertips, it "does not make us smarter" because "critical thinking" is not practiced. As for advice for future generations, he stated he would attend community college before attending the university in order to accrue less debt. He did not feel ready for a career and felt that many of his classes were basically useless. He felt as though he didn't really learn anything about his future career."

Alfonso

Alfonso graduated from a university with a bachelor's degree two years ago and married last year. His parents were immigrants from Brazil and encouraged him to be the first generation in their family with a college degree. He deemed his mother as a helicopter parent. He started his education in New York but moved to Virginia in his early education years and felt transitioning

from one school in one state to another was the most difficult aspect of education. He did not have any trouble academically but stated he felt unfocused and socially distant from his parents' divorce and the added responsibilities. After he moved, he was placed in lower classes, but was soon placed in the correct course work. In high school, he claimed he began blossoming socially. His parents' desire for him to attend college was one of the driving forces; moreover, society and parental pressure drove him to pursue higher education. He majored in biology and enjoyed the math and science aspects of learning. He remembered the impact of female teachers through his education who helped him communicate with people. He considers his motivation to be an "internal" need to be a "helper . . . to help people through things . . . fix problems." He recognizes he grew up with "spatial learning" and has "an innate drive to help." He observed he loves to learn and believes "knowledge is fascinating." The professors who were more engaging and dedicated and made the student feel "like there is something exciting here" were valuable in his education. He noted a "new passionate understanding for things" and emphasized the human connection and the humanization aspect of professors was the most beneficial and effective in learning. As for technology, he observed it enhanced learning because it is readily available to help him comprehend things better. He believed that a college degree offers better standings in the workforce. He remarked when professors used group work with interactive assignments, he engaged in the group. When the classroom was moved to a practical learning place new knowledge becomes useful. He posited "the practical side of engaging and allowing people to do hands on experience is the best way to teach in college." He asserted our phones are available for a person to receive "affirmation and the connection that you do feel from people, the gratification that you get from a like or from a hard work from a nice comment from somebody else." His advice for upcoming college students is to learn what they are passionate about and enjoy doing

before deciding on a major area of study. He felt as though college "coddled in a way" because students are "not doing something they will do in real life." He believed he had a great education with positive experiences.

Results

Through an in-depth analysis of individual interviews, writing prompt responses, and the discourse from two online focus groups, results and themes emerged. The participants in this study met the criteria of age, gender, college experience, and location. Through a holistic viewpoint and collection of three forms of evidence, a triangulation of data allowed for reliable and valid theme development. By checking the consistency of data generated by three data collection methods, this qualitative analysis tests the consistency of the findings a valid classification of categories was defined (Patton, 2002). The data analysis included management, organization, description, classification, assessment, and representation of accrued data to discovery of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Zoom software transcribed all interviews and focus group responses. Upon participant review, the researcher examined and assessed each transcript and written responses for common words and themes. The process of coding was an act of examining data and discarding irrelevant information. Qualitative analysis methodology required the researcher to bracket their own personal bias and experience away from the data collection (Moustakas, 1994). By adhering to qualitative analysis methodology, the researcher listed, grouped, reduced, eliminated, clustered, thematized and identified constituents; thus, validating the themes which emerged (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher connected codes central to the relevance of this study to the shared lived experiences of participants. Through familiar readings, high-lighting, color-coding, post-it notes, charts, notes, and the use of Word software, common patterns were established. Repetitive

words, phrases, and common ideas surfaced during the coding procedure. By categorizing and organizing key concepts, a description of the lived experience was presented. The researcher then identified themes related to the central research question and three sub-questions of the lived collegiate academic experiences of male undergraduate Generation Z students. By centralizing the findings to the central question and three sub-questions, a common premise emerged. The related codes through data analysis strategies proved substantial outcomes. Three themes emerged after a synthesis of materials and triangulation of data through reduction. They include: College Motivations/Challenges, College Environment /Technology, and College Professors/Course Work.

Table 2

Themes and Related Codes

Themes	Codes
Theme 1 College Motivations and Challenges	Family and Parental Involvement (dad, mom) Societal Expectations Finances (money, debt) Earlier educational experience Emerging adult Focus (balance) Mental Health (depression, demoralization, intimidation, afraid, confidence, self-identity, self-control, self-governance, personal responsibility) Work (job) Time Management Study Methods
Theme 2 College Environment and Technology	Groups (niches, clubs, football, community) Phone (technology) Peers (friends, social) Online Communities (Social media, Chat group) Freedom (culture shock)

Theme 3 College Professors and Course Work	College Resources (office staff, scheduling) Professors (personality, disconnected, encouraging, passionate, positive, negative, personable, excited) Human Connections (relationship, relational) Practical (reality, relative) Intangible skills (Soft skills, collaborative) Experience/ Experimental (Interactive learning, Hands-on, Engaged) Class Size Course work (useless, theoretical, helpful, relevant)
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By identifying codes and key words through participant usage and dialogue, common threads of lived experience emerged. Through classification and assessment, a representation of the lived experience emerged through three themes: College Motivations/Challenges, College Culture/Technology, and Professors/Teaching Style.

Table 3

Identified Themes

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
College Motivations and Challenges	College Culture and Technology	Professors Teaching Style
Motivations: Parent and Family Influence Societal Influence Career Placement	Culture: Friends College Resources	Professors: Human Connection Relatable/ Passionate
Challenges: Emerging Adult/ Mental Health/ Maturation Finances	Technology Online Community	Teaching Style Group work Individual work Relevance/Practicality

Theme Development

Theme 1: College Motivations and Challenges. A collection of previous educational experiences from elementary through high school were discovered as being primarily a positive understanding. Of the eleven participants, eight recalled having a constructive earlier education to build their foundational knowledge, but three participants had a challenging early education experience with negative experiences. Nikolai, noted his early education was probably "the worst years of my life with bullying and the inability to fit in." Isaac remembered a teacher being upset and forcing him to start over because of his color choices for a coloring project. Edwin was "suspected of having a learning disability." He later became the valedictorian of his high school. All eleven participants had parental and family involvement in their educational choices and considered their education from kindergarten through twelfth grade as being a strong and positive experience. Regardless of previous educational experiences, participants attended college for various reasons, but the primary themes were motivations and expectations.

Motivations. College attendance motivations included parental pressure, societal beliefs, and future job procurement. The overwhelming theme was parental expectations. Participants described their parental guidance through distinct defining adjectives. Parents who had immigrated from another country were more adamant about college and the participants used the word "hammered" frequently; however, participants whose parents were raised in America used the word "expected" frequently. Ahmed has a video from the day he was born of his father "actually singing a lullaby of the different colleges he wanted to send me." The word "pushed" was used by most of the participants when describing their parental involvement. Alfonso commented both of his "parents wanted me to go as well and there was a push because I would be the first one." Ahmed was raised knowing "my family's whole existence in America is based upon the idea of coming here for your education which was hammered by my dad routinely

never letting me forget." Ahmed continued "education has always been key and center in my household and about how important it is and how to push it forward." Nikolai posited his mother was "very insistent about going to college . . . with the fact she grew up in a third world country, she saw firsthand the difference between being educated and the well off and the not." Alfonso admitted "the drive was originally my mom who was a helicopter parent as well." Owen stated, "my parents really wanted me to go to college." Harrison's parents commented "you got to go to college, what else are you going to do." Isaac noted he always knew "college was expected. . . and there were "far less opportunities without going to college," moreover, "my parents really wanted me to go to college." Nathaniel noted "my family expected it and there was lots of social pressure to attend college." Owen also commented on his parents' "helicopter" tendencies in their college campaign. Harrison conjectured going to college was the "first real decision in your life and you are taking guidance of an adult who you trust, and they probably have your best intentions in mind, but they are not you, because they come from a different generation." Owen noted there was "pressure to go to school and hit those benchmarks" in life. Nikolai attributed going to college as "following a script," "like an emotion of someone fighting a battle that they have lost." Additionally, Caleb's parents were emphatic about his attending university, "you are going to go to the best college you can, that is about it." Many of the participants felt they did not have a choice, but rather an "obligation."

Moreover, to parental guidance, many participants had extended family encouragement and pressured them to attend. Ahmed's grandmother was "disappointed" he did not go to an Ivy League college. Nathaniel remarked his parents and older siblings anticipated him to "follow suit" and attend. When Nathaniel would visit his grandmother at a government employer, he was

encouraged to discuss his future educational plans with engineers. Ahmed's grandfather graduated with a Ph.D. and was expected to follow the educational example of his family.

In addition to family expectations, societal beliefs and educational anticipations from the school system started as early as elementary school. At the end of a fifth-grade graduation, Nathaniel indicated each student was introduced as the future high school graduate and then "gave a date of a college graduation." The earlier education schools of my participants built an expectation of higher degrees. Additionally, Nikolai affirmed "teachers were insistent, we go to college." Harrison remarked college "may be ingrained in our way of thinking." Isaac commented "society expects people to go to college and most jobs require you to have a bachelors." Owen reinforced this statement with "society expects people to go to college." Ahmed's parents would use the example of fellow family members who "did not attend college and did not make as much money" as a cautionary tale to encourage their son to consider future vocations.

Career choices are on the line in college achievements. According to Nikolai, "society's idea of going to college is the way forward to improve yourself and your income." When participants were asked the purpose of college, 10 of the 11 stated it was to qualify for career choices. Although the majority of participants identified career placement as the principal objective of attending college, Ahmed noted "the purpose of higher education should be expansion of education and your personal skill set." However, indicative of most participants, Caleb posited "going to a good college is to be able to get a good job." Nathaniel noted "college is just the door to get the job . . . it prepares you to do the job in how to learn and research." Edwin commented "college is to prepare you for a career to make you more employable." Although careers were a factor, the student-parent relationship and expectations were the

foremost reason each participant attended college. Motivation to attend college from parental pressure, societal expectations, and future career choices were key themes from data analysis.

Challenges. The primary challenge of attending college were factors of the emerging adult including mental health and financial issues. Of the eleven participants, all eleven addressed mental health concepts through the code words of depression, demoralization, intimidation, afraid, confidence, self-identity, self-control, self-governance, focus, balance, and personal responsibility. Isaac noted "people are not their true selves in high school, but college is a place to decide who you are as a person." Nikolai commented going to college made him feel "not excited" but "demoralized." Ahmed commented, college is a place for a person to "discover what kind of person you are and to identify different boundaries of your soul." Harrison observes "the whole transition was definitely the most important period in my life." Through this maturation process, 10 out of the 11 noted a type of "awkwardness" or "weirdness" during this time. Owen mentioned multiple times of being "self-conscious" which "consumed everything I did not have." Alfonso speculated much of his desires and drives were internal and that growing up in a spatial world increased his problem-solving abilities; however, he recognized the transitioning periods in his life as some of the most difficult. Nathaniel remarked college is "like adulthood on training wheels." Making friends and finding a new niche in college was a phase most participants discussed.

In the light of the pandemic and colleges maintaining social distancing with virtual learning, according to Nikolai, "many were taking pauses in their education." However, for the participants who attended college campus face-to-face, Isaac noted "dealing with school alone was basically the part that stood out to me the most. I do not think I was prepared and felt pressure balancing work with classes." He acknowledges his "priorities were not in school" and

recognized his responsibility in his educational outcome. Nikolai stated he struggled with depression. Harrison also remembered the day his parents "drove away after dropping me off at college. It was a surreal experience. It was a pit in my stomach. I am alone." Edwin discovered "change happens, do not force yourself to be something you are not because it makes learning so much harder." Harrison commented that "effort is the only thing you can control." In addition to "finding themselves," participants stated there was a lot of pressure to succeed in their given field.

There is added stress on students to achieve academically in classes. Although Edwin loved the freedom and the essence "no longer was someone breathing down your back," he recognized with freedom came responsibility for balance. Ahmed postulated "the system is designed in such a way to push students to mental, physical, and emotional extremes which is not possible for everyone." The added academic stress caused many to struggle. Ahmed observed, "substance abuse through Adderall or Ritalin was rampant because students forced themselves to study for a concrete exam through abusing their prescription medicines." The added pressure of course work, social pressure, attributed to another challenge four participants addressed which was time management.

Learning balance and focus was a skill learned during maturation. Ahmed noted "time management . . . and study methods I adopted later in college, I wish I had forced myself into doing earlier in college, but at the same time, I feel like I could not have learned those ways until I failed the first time. College forced me to grow because it was adapt or die." In the same fashion, Caleb commented that college is a "sink or swim kind of thing." However, one participant, Alfonso, considered college a place of "coddling because college is not set up like a

day-to-day employment, but rather two days a week.” The overall view of college was development and maturation in all areas. Ahmed noted,

My biggest takeaway from college is that there is pain involved, bad social times, and academic times, you fall a lot, but it is important. It is important to go through all that because sometimes those good times do not come, and you learn a lot of ways. Life is not fair to everybody, but I think college is a healthy way to work through that because the implications of things not being fair are catastrophic, they are in the real world, so it is a watered-down version of the real world.

Ten of the eleven participants speculated parental approval was a paramount determination to college attendance and achievement; thereby, when two participants felt as though they disappointed their parents through poor grades or life choices, they experienced a "sense of failure." Parental and family support during the course of educational decisions proved to be advantageous for many of the participants, but not all.

In addition to emotional maturation were financial concerns. Caleb noted "money was a constant struggle throughout college." Edwin noted "money is a huge determining factor for college," he added getting the "money in order is paramount for college because college is not only about education, but life education." Edwin believes money is a "huge determining factor" for college because it is expensive and should be more affordable. Ahmed worked at a grocery store to learn how to manage his own money. Isaac had a part-time job and struggled in course work because he was unable to purchase a laptop which ultimately led to his decision to abandon class "I couldn't afford to get a better one . . . I just gave up because I could not afford it." He noted the GI bill paid for his classes but "limited his choices." He regrets his decision and felt as though he should "have dropped the GI bill and chosen my own classes." Caleb worked two part-

time jobs in order to keep his loans down to the bare minimum. Isaac noted "higher education is just a big money scam... many people come out of college with a four-year degree, and they still don't know what they want to, and they are in \$80,000 debt." Nathaniel commented "paying for school is something that I am getting hit with now, and I knew it was coming, but I did not think about how hard." Five participants discussed the financial challenges of higher education.

Theme 2: College Culture and Technology

In addition to the student-parent facet, two further aspects of the college culture identified were technology and college resources. Although technology, social circles, and resources overlapped, participants differentiated the characteristics. All eleven participants mentioned the significance of friends with common goals; thus, the student-student relationship was a vital characteristic to succeeding in college education. Participants who created their own community were more successful in their educational pursuits. Five participants noted the initial environment of living on campus was a welcoming environment in which to live; however, Harrison noted that the college environment was "toxic for a young impressionable person." Caleb noted depending on the "groups of people you surround yourself with, there could be an unhealthy environment." The physical collegiate environment of each participant depended on the university or college they attended and choices they made. Merged with a physical climate was technology, which was used for social circumstances and education.

Technology. Technology in learning is the norm in education. All eleven participants alluded to technology as a tool which could be used for positive or negative reactions. Ahmed noted "the internet has made people more politically aware of horrible things happening all around the world." Harrison commented on the internet "it lets you know what is actually going on in the world." Edwin noted "technology has been definitely much more integrated into

learning through Google Classroom since the pandemic." Many classes were virtual for the year of 2020; therefore, some participants experienced Zoom classes and internet learning for the first time. Vincent noted "when it comes to learning on Zoom, I find it extremely difficult because I do not have the best attention span and if I am in a big class, I will just turn my camera off and not pay attention at all." Although it made class convenient, it was not always the most effective. Caleb commented "technology has advanced society to solve problems in different ways and it is faster and more innovative." Caleb continued by stating technology "changes the way we think in three-dimensional space," but acknowledges he does not "use my brain as much" and believes "critical thinking is not as strong." Harrison noted on the writing prompt, the digital age has made "it easier to skate by with the bare minimum." However, 10 of the 11 participants conjectured the medium is not always helpful in learning because the ease of multiple apps and links are a distraction. Nathaniel and Vincent remarked they learned more in classes where there was a "no laptop and no phone" rule. Several participants confessed they were frequently distracted by their phones or laptop from learning in class.

Participants recognized the ease of communicating with others through the internet through social media, chat rooms, or gaming venues, but all participants observed the positive and the negative aspects of these forums. Ahmed stated that "technology and social media definitely increased my social life and social ability because it was a tool and open source of communication for me." Alfonso, described social media as a form of human "affirmation, connection, gratification, and nurturing." Chat rooms have become a prevalent venue for students to engage with one another. Nikolai mentioned he and his friends get on "a message board at different days to talk online." Three participants spoke of the value of chat rooms with their friends; however, Harrison speculated, it brought "so many different people together in so many

different ways, but with progress, it is superficially closer." Nikolai observed "society is global now and more ephemeral so society must make emotional attachments equally ephemeral." Nikolai continued with "a lot of interaction is relegated to online or digital and it is making it superficial because there is a lack of human connection." Isaac agreed that technology is "extremely useful, but it can also put people distant from one another." With the norm of digital relationships, Nathaniel commented that social media "hurt my ability to have casual conversation with someone or talk to adults because it is weird knowing all about someone before you even meet them." Edwin observed social media made him feel "like everyone was having better lives than me" and he "felt too intimidated to talk to people" and "felt incredibly disconnected from people." On the writing prompt, Owen expressed the feeling of disconnect and loneliness. Harrison postulated "heightened stress levels occur when you are super involved in social media, because you wonder why everyone else is having so much fun."

Although the ease of social media was prevalent, Caleb recognized the importance of physically identifying with a specific group. Because this data was collected during the COVID pandemic, most colleges had greatly reduced face-to-face learning, so many group encounters were limited or nonexistent. Nikolai lamented "because of what is going on, we cannot really meet together in person." However, the participants who were able to complete their education in 2019 had different outcomes in the physical societal situation. Caleb commented "I started volunteering and just met so many good friends." Alfonso referred to the introductions into "groups who are now my closest friends." Making friends and niches were a common topic for participants who successfully achieved their associate or bachelor's degree, but the participants who did not succeed, did not discuss the friendships they had formed. As the relationship of

technology and social media are intertwined with student-student relationships and all social aspects of college, the outcome is fluid.

College Resources. College resources including business offices and libraries are meant to be supportive systems in the college climate to aid students' learning journey; unfortunately, they were rarely mentioned in data collection. Only a few participants discussed these resources, and it was with a negative tone. Alfonso surmised "the current college environment was not very helpful or efficient." Ahmed noted on the writing prompt, "support resources can be daunting, disheartening, unequal, unfair, and demoralizing" which may deter people from using them. Although Nathaniel talked about the library being a place of quietness to get assignments complete, he also noted that he did not use the services because it was easier to use Google; thereby, he would forgo library services and "just look things up on his computer." When using the computer lab, Owen noted it was "very loud and noisy so it was hard to concentrate." Owen also noted the business office at the college was "disheartening" as he spent "hours at the college trying to iron everything out - to get the paperwork straightened," unfortunately, he had the feeling of "no end in sight." Of the 11 participants, only one mentioned the library as being a place to seek help, but several other participants noted it felt overwhelming and daunting. College resources were not considered a refuge, but rather a demoralizing experience.

Theme 3: College Professors and Teaching Styles

From student-parent to student-student and now student-professor, the last theme discovered in this study is the importance of the social link between professor and students. The human connection of relational connections in conjunction with positive encouraging personalities were resounding topics amongst participants. Participants discussed the negative and positive experiences with instructors and their teaching style.

College Professors. Nikolai lamented "faculty are concerned with making streamline software programs, not encouraging lab experience." Ahmed noted one class was the "bane" of his existence because his "professor was only a lecturer and . . . was incredibly dry- this man's voice was monotone and had no emotional engagement whatsoever." Owen noted "professors have to teach curriculums they did not believe in themselves and at times they felt distant and robotic." Nathaniel noted that he had "a lot of dry professors and they were not my favorites by any means, it was usually the people that gave blue collar personalities who were personable and were relatable who were my favorite."

Although participants noted they learned from most instructors, nine out of 11 participants expressed their preference for male professors. When the professor was relatable and involved, participants admitted to trying harder. Owen commented, "Professors need to build connections with the students." Nathaniel acknowledged the professor "with the open door to help you through stuff made you think the class was easy even if it was challenging." Harrison remarked when he saw "passion in a professor's eyes, I knew I could have a conversation with this guy." Recurring comments from multiple participants were professors who were "fun," "engaged" and "excited" about their subject material, made them want to learn and try harder. Harrison recalled a professor who "was passionate, a little nutty, and crazy about rocks - he loved it." Owen commented fondly of professors who were "engaging" and made the subject "exciting;" thus students gained a "new passionate understanding for things they were learning." Nikolai further noted professors who challenged him intellectually, inspired him. Owen speculated professors who were "passionate and dedicated" to a topic change the student to want to strive more diligently because it becomes a "human connection" not just a "curriculum expectation." Most of the participants also addressed the connection they made with their

professors when they shared stories of their lives. When professors shared life stories, participants seemed to fondly reminisce the class.

Teaching Style. Lecturing, class discussions, group, and individual assignments are all part of the pedagogy in the college classroom. Several of the participants commented on the successful nature of small class sizes. Caleb noted "it was the best because there were eight people in class . . . and we were really learning stuff and applying it with each other." He additionally mentioned the field trips where the professor was able to make the subject relevant and significant. Many participants referred to professors who had fun activities in class were more enjoyable and surmised they worked harder in those courses. Alfonso noted "tactile activities" which were fun were his favorite. Alfonso noted professors who can "engage students to do something and see it as practical and useful" were the most valuable.

Learning is a personal path, and only three participants identified themselves as independent learners. Isaac stated, "I learned most of the stuff I do just by hands-on, just by doing it and just getting practice over and over. I prefer to work alone." Robert enjoyed group work but recalls learning better "on my own." Caleb enjoyed working in class "like a community" to build "social interaction" with just three or four other students. Many of the participants commented on the importance of soft skills such as working with others in a collaborative fashion. One way to achieve these skills include group work.

Nathaniel posited "college is either collaborative or competitive" and he saw the benefits in group work as a "shared responsibility . . . I would get things done more efficiently in a group, because more people are working on it." Although Harrison considers himself an introvert, he commented on the benefits of small groups because they "push new ideas a little bit harder and make you work harder." However, not all participants had the same experience, Owen

commented: "I love working in groups and was disappointed in college because there were less groups than high school." Alfonso commented in his writing prompt, college classrooms need to be "more open and engaging." Group discussions and projects were both considered effective teaching methods in the classroom. Ahmed noted "I think the biggest thing for me that helped me in most any class across both majors was class discussions across the whole class where our professor would kind of much like a basketball player throw up a layup and just throw a topic out and let it bounce around the room." Alfonso suggested "the back and forth of a repertoire is a good skill to have as an adult." Ahmed posited "I loved in class discussions . . . to just kind of take the best bits and pieces from everything to put together what I was going to say." Not only did free conversations and debates frequent data collection, but also project-based hands-on-projects. Ahmed commented he "thrived way more on project-based academics." Nathaniel acknowledged he "learned better doing experimental things" and through "hands-on projects." Harrison is a firm believer in apprenticeship and hands-on experience. Through understanding and relevancy, participants noted the reinforcement of learning principles.

Another factor of effective teaching included relevance to real life through pragmatism. All 11 participants expressed the importance of relevance and practical subject matter. Nikolai noted "when the class is largely theoretical rather than practical, it makes it more difficult to identify one's preferred course of study." Nathaniel remarked that some professors can be more "theoretical" and promote graduate school and research while some professors loved to give real world examples and promote getting a job." Unfortunately, Nathaniel speculated college graduates who take many theory classes "leave empty-handed with a bunch of knowledge that is not applicable." Caleb noted his college education "did not seem useful about halfway through" but he finished because he had started it. He considers his major degree classes "basically kind of

useless." The word "practical" was the most used word from all participants when discussing classroom effectiveness. Alfonso noted "the practical side of engaging and allowing people to have a hands-on experience is the best way to teach college." Additionally, participants revealed "practical information" was the most beneficial to learning subject material. Practical qualities of instruction and subject material were a theme that most participants reiterated. The importance of pragmatic and realistic material was considered a primary device in learning.

The participants in this study expressed a myriad of emotions and experiences concerning their college lived experience. The common theme of relationships between student-parent, student-student, and student-professor were mentioned by all eleven participants. Motivations, family dynamics, college environment, technology, professors, and course work all describe the lived experience of male Generation Z college students.

Central Research Question

What are the lived collegiate academic experiences of male undergraduate Generation Z students?

Through an in-depth narrative analysis of the phenomenon of the lived academic experiences of the male undergraduate Generation Z, a rich depiction of the experiences of participants in this study materialized. By examining the whole of experiences, a holistic understanding arose. The research sub-questions provided a structure in which emergent themes were created from their experiences.

Sub-question One Response. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students in motivation towards academic goals?

When describing their motivations for academic goals in college education, the main theme was to satisfy parental expectation. The student-parent relationship was the key reasoning

for college attendance. The influence from parents and family was mentioned ten times more than any other motivating factor. Three of the participants were first generation college students. Caleb hypothesized he did not even want to go to college, but his parents were adamant, "you are going to college and you are going to go to the best college you can and that is it." Alfonso repeated "my mom and my dad both were immigrants from Brazil, I would have been the first to actually go to college right in the family. . . I wanted to do it because I would be the first member of the family to go." Nathaniel's brothers were first generation college students, so they put pressure on him to attend. Culturally speaking, participants whose parents had immigrated from other countries put immense pressure on the furtherment of their son's educational pursuits. The words "hammered" and "pushed" were common words used when they discussed their parental guidance. Ahmed stated,

You know my family's whole existence in America is based upon the idea of coming here for education. It was hammered. My dad routinely never let me forget that and was always lecturing me. From when I was a little kid, all the way out, so when I told him I wanted to go to college, they were obviously 100% on board. They pushed me to go to college, they pushed me to get a degree.

In response to questions about motivations for attending college, parental and family guidance was mentioned by each participant. The influence of student-parent relationships was the most predominant theme in data collection; however, societal pressures were also a factor in their decisions to attend college. Nikolai noted,

Society in general as a whole, we refer to mass media or the internet or how I perceived the idea of going to college was that education was the way forward. It was

how you improved yourself and your income. There is an idea of being educated makes you also, in some way, intellectually superior.

Pressure from all areas within participants' lives encouraged and pressured them to attend college. The last theme in motivation was also the least mentioned. Career choices are present thoughts, but when discussing why they attended college, they discussed career options, but did not dwell with details. Owen simply noted, "when I first started thinking about college, it was more of a society standpoint, you know society expects people to go to college and most jobs that you know require a bachelor's degree or something." Motivations ranged from parental pressure to societal expectations to future career options and from a holistic standpoint, were woven intricately together in participant thoughts; however, some challenges which participants encountered on their journey were emerging adult aspects, mental health issues, and finances. Three participants mentioned feeling depressed during the transition of college maturation. Additionally, during these young adult years, participants processed feelings of inadequacy, self-consciousness, independence, self-actualization. Nathaniel commented,

Some of the challenges included procrastination self-governance and learning how to learn. As a male Generation Z, there were a lot of distractions going into classes including friends, watching tv, social media, and video games. I was the writer of my own life. Choosing my classes and learning how to learn was difficult once I went to my first 500+ student class. This took a while and some grit, but I had to learn.

Not only did developing adult characteristics emerge, but also the recognition of the cost to learn. Several participants worked part-time jobs in order to keep loans down and to have living expenses. Nathaniel commented "paying for school is something that I am getting hit with now and I knew it was coming, but I did not think about how hard it would be." The challenges of

maturation, mental health and finances were all issues participants addressed and clarified through data collection.

Sub-question Two Response. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students in regard to social trends in their collegiate education understanding?

When participants describe social trends, the internet and social media were synonymously woven together. All eleven participants stated face-to-face student-student connections and exchanges were the most constructive. Physical social interactions were considered the most positive experiences, but participants noted that collective social developments have been transformed by the convenience and speed of the internet. Nikolai surmised,

To say social life there is either human interaction or societal interaction and by societal, I mean the general public. Human beings that are present are physical, but the same way people unrelated to your life in the same way we can influence our sphere of influence.

We are connected with absolutely everyone, even people who are not even related to our personal lives. This has greatly enhanced and whether this is a good or bad thing, I would suggest it not the most ideal

Participants compared the ease and positive interactions with social media with many negatives as making each other "distant" and "disconnected." Many participants noted the frequent use of social media made them feel depressed. Vincent commented "when I feel more depressed and anxious, I do not think my relationship with technology is good." Although social media has made communication easier, it has also changed the way people connect. Ahmed stated during a focus group,

Because of the myriad of other factors and technology, it is an easy thing to connect.

Technology has made people for a lack of a better term flakier. They are more willing to abandon a planned event and communicate with you on a last moment's notice.

Whether virtual or face-to-face interactions, communal developments are in a transitional phase as people learn to merge the two mediums. Social trends during this COVID pandemic have been attributed to more internet virtual relationships and less face-to-face; therefore, the humanity of social situations is in a transitional season.

Sub-question Three Response. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students towards academic college experience and technology trends?

Academic pursuits and technology have worked hand-in-hand in an evolutionary fashion. As online learning has become the norm for education, technology has been the primary means to accomplish the task. Ten of the eleven participants felt technology and education work together, but the understandings of the effectiveness were divided. Edwin noted "technology definitely helped me in my learning experience, by allowing me to take zoom classes online." However, Nikolai posited,

Technology is applied in all classes to varying degrees. In my experience, it makes certain subjects easier to be broached and gone over in uniform measure but does not allow for the type of critical contemplation a professor can offer, or the sort of competitive challenge a group of peers can offer.

The student-professor relationship offered opportunities for personal growth and cognition. Although technology is a useful tool, the human element of relatability, relativity, and practicality far outweighed comments on technology. Participants noted the importance of student-student and student-professor interpersonal activities as essential in connecting to course

material. Participants discussed the classroom environment as being a place for "personal engagement" and "peer interaction." In general, participants believed more focus should be placed on the human element of education. The primary motivation for attending college was family influence; likewise, the college climate and learning features circled back to connecting with fellow humans on a personal level. Prevalent through interviews, writing responses, and focus groups was the universal belief a strong student-parent, student-student, as well as student-professor relationship was crucial for successful educational experiences.

Summary

This chapter presented a description of the lived experiences of eleven Generation Z participants who were male and born between 1995 and 2012, from northern Virginia, either Loudoun County or Fairfax County, had a minimum of one semester of the undergraduate college experience, and were not currently an undergraduate student. Comprehensive descriptions of the study's participants in a narrative format were given. Through analysis of the collected data, patterns were characterized through similarity and frequency connected three themes: College Motivations/ Challenges, College Culture/ Technology, and Professors/Teaching style. Interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, and writing prompts were the three data sources used to triangulate data to ensure reliability and validity. Through data analysis three themes were identified and supported.

The central research question and the three sub-questions were addressed in this chapter. Participants described their motivations of attending college, challenges, culture, technology, and professors. Participants expressed the importance of parental and family influence on college attendance, the frustrations of college resources, the positives as well as the negatives of social media, and the importance of professors who were approachable with relevant course material.

Class size and teaching styles of interactive groups and engaging class dialogue forums were indicative of students' success in learning. Although technology is interconnected with learning, participants praised the ease of it, but indicated its lack of effectiveness towards learning course material. The crucial component to succeeding in college described human connections through student-parent, student-student, and student-professor relationships. Participants were emerging adults who sought affirmation from family, peers, and from professors. Participants reiterated the importance of relatability and practicality of college professors and courses material and assignments throughout all data collection. In the era of virtual learning, the human element was a vital factor which participants reverberated for future student success.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

Acknowledgment of a college student's needs and experiences continues to be an area for evaluation. As society and educational standards evolve, so must teaching practices. As male college enrollment persists to decline and male college graduation rates continues the downward spiral, an understanding of the lived experience and the pitfalls was needed to comprehend the reasoning so Generation Z male students may reach their highest potential. College students are deemed emerging adults which is an awareness of human development defined by the interrelationship between emotional, social, and intellectual growth (Arnett, 2015; Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1970; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of two northern Virginia counties (Loudoun and Fairfax) male Generation Z college experiences.

The framework of sociocultural constructivist theory and self-determination guided this study in understanding the current generations in the college environment (Dewey, 1938; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Through the ontological assumption that reality is seen through many views in a constructivist paradigm (Knight, 2006). Educational pragmatic constructivism is the context of human connections through a scaffold of collaborative inter-psychological/social and the intra-psychological/ individual (Dewey, 1938; Turuk, 2008). The self-determination theory (SDT) is a consolidative and conditional aid for people to fulfill needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). College students are emerging adults in higher education who grapple with a myriad of encounters. This chapter examines the findings of this study as related to three recognized themes with the implications considering pertinent literature. This chapter offers both the methodological and practical implications of this study's

findings, an examination of the study's delimitations and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Three themes emerged from this transcendental phenomenological study of male Generation Z students and their college experience. Phenomenology focuses on the wholeness and examines the entities from many sides, and perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). The holistic examination of in-depth interviews, two focus groups, and written responses, findings were triangulated to provide a reliable and valid representation of participants' experiences (Patton, 2002). Following this reflective method, participants construct a full description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Through examination of inner perceptions, self-experience, ideas, and judgment the quest of a trend or common theme ensued (Husserl, 1965). This study concentrated around the central question of the lived collegiate academic experiences of male undergraduate Generation Z students and three sub-questions to allocate participants to reflect and offer rich detailed data to create comprehensive narratives of the participants' experiences. The following discussion clarifies how participants' responses to each of the research questions impacted the overall findings of this study.

Central Question

What are the lived collegiate academic experiences of male undergraduate Generation Z students?

Through a holistic view of three sub-questions, the lived experiences of Generation Z male college attendees emerged. An all-inclusive study of understanding the complexity of each participant as a whole was the primary goal of this study. The importance of student-parent, student-student, and student-professor rapport was essential for a successful experience.

Sub-question One. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students in motivation towards academic goals?

Participants discussed their personal motivations for attending and following through with a college education. All eleven participants mentioned parental guidance in the pursuit of higher education; however, only one remarked he was not expected to attend. Ten participants stated the primary motivation for attending college was parental influence. Many participants addressed having parents and family members push and prod them into college. Of the eleven participants, eight had received either an associate's or a bachelor's degree. Three participants left college for different reasons: (a) COVID and financial; (b) failure to meet minimum standards; and (c) personal choice to work in the trades. Family and parental pressure were the ultimate reasoning for attending and finishing college. Social pressure was a distant second for college attendance reasonings. The student-parent relationship and expectation were the deciding factor towards attendance and completion.

An additional motivating factor was for future employment. The five participants who had achieved a bachelor's degree and the two who had received an associate degree were focused on future careers and employment. The one taking a short break was determined to return to education to better his future employability. The two participants who had quit had no desire to return and planned their life career in the trades. The one participant who failed, wanted to return to college in the future so he could be more employable and have more career options. The primary discovery in this study for motivational factors was parental expectations of success in planning for future financial autonomy. Although two participants mentioned self-actualization should be reasons for attending, they said it as an afterthought and did not consider it a as major reasoning for inspiration.

Sub-question Two. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students regarding social trends in their collegiate education?

Participants indicated social trends in college are intermingled physically and virtually. All eleven participants commented on friends and discovery of a circle of friends with common interests and desires. Two community college participants noted the lack of cohesiveness within the student body through the descriptive words "dismal" and "disconnected." Nevertheless, of the six participants who had attended a university, the overall social trends of "cliques," "negativity," and a feeling of "unfriendliness" was prevalent. The social trends of the college atmosphere seemed to contend with the predominance of virtual relationships. Moreover, all participants spoke more of social media and the effects it had on friendships. They all agreed that media makes communication easier, but the negatives surpassed the positives in the use of social apps. Participants agreed the virtual aspect causes separation and aloofness in the sphere of social trends. When discussing social media, the words "distant," "artificial," "comparison," and "depressed" were used. Two participants even recognized when they feel low, they know they have been on social media too frequently.

With COVID-19 forcing students into remote learning, social trends of college cultures and climates have modified into a new norm. Five participants graduated during the pandemic in 2020; therefore, they felt the sting of not seeing their friends and graduating in person. All participants commented on the importance of face-to-face interactions and considered virtual exchanges as "fake" and "superficial." With the pandemic forcing students to engage by the use of the internet, a lack of personable connections permeated the interviewees' thoughts and explanations. Although virtual chat rooms, texts, and the internet offered participants the ability to communicate, the social trends of this study indicated that participants felt isolated and alone.

According to the participants, the student-student relational peer connection seemed to be deficient.

Sub-question Three. What are the lived experiences of undergraduate male Generation Z students towards academic college experience and technology trends?

Because the pandemic occurred in the middle of this study, it was ever present in participants' thoughts. Most classes became remote with Zoom classes and online learning. Technology enabled students to complete their degrees and course material, but participants discussed the human factor more than they did the technology component. Education and technology have become intertwined; therefore, the academic experience through the participants' view was "necessary" because of the restrictions of social distancing. None of the participants enjoyed learning online more than in person. All eleven participants enjoyed the engagement of a face-to-face class structure more than learning independently online. According to participants in regard to technology trends of college education, many courses were consumed with the "electronic" aspect and less with the subject material or actual engagement. One participant had multiple technical issues and ultimately quit his studies. Technology and learning are interconnected, and participants remarked there should be a "balance" between the two.

All participants discussed the importance of having teachers or professors who cared about their students and the course material. The word "passion" was used repeatedly to describe an effective instructor. Participants loved the convenience of online technology but noted multiple times the distraction it caused and the lack of engagement from virtual classrooms. Combining interactivity in small groups with class discussions were the most beneficial to all participants. Since learning has been remote during this past year, participants yearned from engagement through human interactions. A constructive student-professor relationship was

assessed as an important and positive feature to an effective college experience. Study participants saw a need for colleges to develop "soft skills" such as the human element of relationships. Albeit small groups and class discussions had to meet online during the pandemic, according to participants, virtual communication and intellectual interactions remain a valuable component within the community of learning.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to describe the experiences of 11 male Generation Z college students. Through descriptive means, three themes were identified. The following discussion reflects the previous literature review in Chapter Two which was divided into three sections. The first section included an overview of the theoretical framework of sociocultural constructivism and self-determination theory. The second section was the related literature of the holistic view of an emerging adult. The third section was the expectations and learning trends in college. Theoretical and empirical literature guided the initial construction of this study while the identified themes of Motivations/ Challenges, Environment/ Technology, and Professors/ Course Work. These three themes provided a focus to connections in empirical research and theories utilized to frame this study.

Empirical Literature

The participants of this study exemplified characteristics of related literature surrounding the topic of male college attendance and educational perseverance. The lived experience of contributors was synonymous with state educational trends. In order to conceptualize the layers of an individual, the holistic posture includes societal, cultural, parental, media, previous education, and emotional influences to ensure a richer understanding (Agger et al., 2018; Miller, 2019). Societal and cultural factors have affected understandings in all generations through laws,

social developments, family dynamics, and through the availability of the internet and information (Gordon, 2004).

Generation Z has been influenced through the exposure of historical, societal, technological, and global awareness which have changed their perceptions, ideals, and beliefs (Buahene & Kovary, 2003; Twenge, 2018). Societal expectations of gender roles have altered with the women's liberation movement in the late 1960's (Hymowitz, 2011; Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Sommers, 2013, & Zell et al., 2015). Through feminism, women have taken a more progressive educated role in society and the traditional qualities of men have shifted (Gottzen & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012; Hymowitz, 2011). As gender boundaries and identities have altered, the meanings of manliness have become ambiguous (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; NCES, 2012). On top of the historical societal aspects of Generation Z, social media and gaming have become a medium that some teens spend many hours a day immersed into which has, in turn, subjected them to a fusillade of information (White, 2017). Through this onslaught of data, this age group has a global viewpoint and a desire to raise awareness to inequality, human rights, and social justice issues (Loveland, 2017; Twenge, 2018).

Parental influences, emotional health, and previous educational experiences are a foundational premise of higher educational pathways (Gore et al., 2016). Family is a central element in the developmental context of educational aspirations and results (Agger et al., 2018). Positive parental support has significant influence on academic goals and achievements (Faherty et al., 2020; Gore et al., 2015). Ten of the 11 participants' parents were married which revealed a component of parental support. The counties where this study was conducted, Loudoun County and Fairfax County, have a median income between \$125,000- \$142,000 with 61.3% - 61.6% of the population being over 25 years old and holding a bachelor's degree (USCS, 2020). Although

this population appeared to have the necessary components to successfully complete college, empirical data gathered from this phenomenological approach returned to explanations of the ones who educationally succeeded and the ones who did not to provide a structural analysis to represent the essence and the common themes of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Of the 11 participants, seven successfully completed an associate or bachelor's degree. The transition of the emerging adult is a season of personal, social, and academic pressures (Thompson et al., 2019). Over 60% of college students have experienced clinical levels of stress with correlations between technology and student welfare (Stallman, 2016; Winger, 2016). Studies conjecture there is an increase in mental health issues and a decreased resiliency as the student learns to balance the demands of college and adulthood (Garza et al., 2014; Pedrelli et al., 2015). Previous educational experiences also influence the college student. Achievement in elementary and secondary school is linked to educational achievement (Buchmann et al., 2008). Boys do not feel as valued in the primarily female controlled learning atmosphere (Kindlon & Thompson, 2000). Additionally, boys represent 73% of attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD) for children ages four to seventeen (CDC, 2007). Statistically boys are less likely to achieve from the very start of their education initiation in formal education (Buchmann et al., 2008).

Expectations from a college curriculum have shifted to a desire of information in cyberspace through interactive course structure (Katz, 2019). Generation Z students are self-directed and anticipate relevancy at the cusp of technical trends; therefore, college curriculum should be shrewd, yet appropriate for the fluid society of Generation Z (Flynn et al., 2017; Mosca et al., 2019). Students expect academia to meld with idealism and activism with authentic experiences (Pisarik & Whelchel, 2018). Although digital natives like to learn alone, they consider courses that foster emotional connections through learning social competencies in

groups to be beneficial (Cameron & Pagnattaro, 2017; Grau & Garcia-Raga, 2017). Students prefer hands-on interactions in learning through focus on the broader concepts and importance of its usage in everyday settings (Loveland, 2017). Relevance in learning is crucial to knowledge attainment.

Pedagogies within the college curriculum need to be reliably assessed to ensure they meet the needs of college students (Flynn et al., 2017). The art of heutagogy urges students to be interdependent to work together in a peer related capacity through problem-solving and self-directed skills to develop human and knowledge connections (Hase & Kenyon, 2013; Rico & Ertmer, 2015). In order to create interpersonal and social skills, professors should collaborate, communicate, and create a sense of belonging to enhance cognitive development in the classroom (Gore et al., 2016; Masika & Jones, 2016; & Rovai, 2002; Savitz-Romer et al., 2015). When students have a sense of connectedness and commonality, higher engagement is likely (Hung et al., 2017). In addition to collaborative techniques, the relationship between professor and student should be one of kindness and encouragement because research denotes college student's perception of teachers' care increased engagement and motivation (Chory & Offstein, 2017; Finn et al., 2009; Miller & Mills, 2019; Slate, 2011). This study's participants demonstrated relationships built at home, in the dorms, and in the classroom are needed to achieve educational goals.

Theoretical Literature

In order to gain a holistic view of the male emerging adult, two theories guided this study. With the intention of adequately gaining an understanding in a progressive society, an intermingling of sociocultural constructivist and self-determination theories were the foundational principles for this research. Constructivists study the multiple realities generated by

individuals and the implications of those interpretations. In the disciplinary foundations of sociology, people construct reality, perceptions, worldviews, and explanations through behaviors and interactions in the world in which they live (Patton, 2017). In the same fashion, structure from a building block style of education complements autonomy and conveys feelings of connections and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2018). In addition to the social context, self-determination theory (SDT) conceptualizes motivation and behavior in situations and development (Ryan & Deci, 2018). In an attempt to grasp the intimately interrelation between self and society, two theories were essential. Sociocultural constructivist philosophy and the self-determination theory were unified to explicate the interconnection of each participant and the world in which they live.

The sociocultural constructivist philosophy places importance on scaffolding development and learning in a social atmosphere (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). College students are influenced by the socio-historical environment of their youth and shared experiences (Mannheim, 1952; Vygotsky, 1978). The phenomena understood within the constructivist context cannot be generalized from one setting to another (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). Participants acknowledged they had been influenced by parents, former teachers, professors, class structures, and society. Early learning is a framework of higher education. Most of the participants commented they had a positive elementary, middle, and high school experience with good teachers and curriculum; however, two participants stated their early education was not a safe environment and they felt ostracized in classroom structure.

The second theory guiding this study was self-determination theory which is a psychological view of motivational processes of being intrinsic and extrinsic through roles, behaviors, passions, and self-identity (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Through generational movements

and societal design students have evolved in their interpretation of the world in which they live. All participants noted the significance of familial involvement and societal pressure to succeed in college. The primary motivation was parental guidance and expectation although all participants noted the importance of a college degree for a future career. Seven participants achieved a degree of achievement, one participant plans to return to college, one failed out, and two participants chose to not finish degrees and focus their resources on trades. In an attempt to gain a complete view of the male collegiate experience, participants revealed their developmental learning encounters, parental guidance, technological, and societal influences.

This study's findings corroborate the central tenets of sociocultural constructivism and self-determination through characterizing the whole person through physical, emotional, and social viewpoints. Participants reiterated both of these theories in the light of their educational experiences and motivations. Findings of this study confirmed the theories set forth by Dewey (1938), Vygotsky (1978), Ryan and Deci (2017), by corroborating with sociocultural constructivism and self-determination theories. Holistically, emerging adults are in a transitional period of their lives; thus, family influences, societal influences, and personal choices are evident. The multiple variables inside the participants life such as familial, educational, and social facets impact the life of a male undergraduate. As emerging adults choose to further their education, an understanding of motivations and educational experiences presented a discovery of common themes. Through individual interviews, written responses, and two focus groups, the research revealed a holistic view of each participant and shared themes. College motivations, college environment, and college professors all had a human element concept emergent in this study.

Student-parent, student-student, and student-professor relationships were all substantial attributes of college success. Participants attributed the two primary motivating reasons for attending college was to please parents and for a future career ambition, but participants discussed parental guidance considerably more than intended work aspirations. Nine of the 11 participants all noted the challenges of mental health and stress, but only four mentioned financial commitments and concerns. Because this study was conducted in a higher socioeconomic area, the few who mentioned the financial aspect were the only ones who were personally responsible for the cost of college.

The second primary theme was the college environment is synonymous with technology. Since electronic devices are a prevalent part of society and the lives of all participants, the social aspect of college was fluid. Although all participants noted the importance of peer groups, social media, and chat rooms were tantamount as a place to connect. All participants observed that technology causes a certain emotional distance in relationships. Even though participants accept the fluidity of communication through electronic devices and consider them a personal extension, they recognized many relationships online are superficial. All participants stressed the importance of peer groups and a feeling of being associated with "like-minded" friends. Commuter students were at a disadvantage from participants who resided on university grounds. The students who lived on campus were forthcoming about the importance of discovering a group of peers with common interests. Friends were the settling influence, but college resources, such as the library and the business office, were considered a place of overwhelming discouragement. Participants noted student-to-student or peer-to-peer relations through face-to-face interactions were the most advantageous to personal growth.

The last theme was the importance of a personable professor in the classroom. The human connection within the class and the significance of having an instructor who was passionate, positive, and relatable was an overarching premise during data collection. All participants observed the importance of an approachable instructor. When participants felt like the professor cared, they were willing to tackle any subject and course material. Additionally, participants stated the importance of applicability and relevance of classwork with their effort towards learning. Although most participants respected the theoretical lessons, the practical lessons with hands-on exercises and real-life situations were the most valuable and beneficial.

The three themes identified in this study of motivations, environment, and classroom structure all came back to the basics of humanity. Although society played an essential role in each participant, educational motivation factors circled back to the impact of parental and family involvement. Perseverance and resilience in college attainment returned to the profound impact of feelings of connection and community amongst peers. Finally, amiable professor interactions with relevancy in the classroom offered additional advantages to the male college student. Given the hierarchy of themes in this study and the multiplicity of confirmations of empirical literature, it can be argued the human connection is the greatest motivator in attending and completing college.

Implications

This qualitative study brought to light empirical, theoretical, and practical implications. Research implications may confirm the findings are valuable for forthcoming practice, theory, and future study. Implications for parental involvement, collaborative learning communities, and teaching practices surfaced through the description of lived experiences of male Generation Z college students.

Empirical Implications

This study's findings help advance the study of issues associated with motivations, resilience, and student success. The person-to-person connections before, during, and within the college classroom is a factor all participants mentioned. The study's participant experiences support the notion that parents and family influence and inspire young adults towards educational pursuits. Additionally, peer connections, both face-to-face and through social media, played a significant part in the resilience of college achievement. Finally, the student-professor relationship of respect and care encouraged students to thrive.

The study's participants further exhibited the importance of course structure and design. The college pedagogies need to be continually reevaluated to meet the needs of generational trends to ensure relevancy and practicality. Participant experiences addressed the importance of contemporary technology, but also the significance of the person-to-person connections. As students become more technologically savvy, the classroom structure should not only have seamless virtual literacy, but also encourage collaboration between peers and professors in a mutual environment. Learning communities should be authentic and meaningful to increase incentive to learn.

Theoretical Implications

This study helps to advance the constructivist sociocultural theory and self-determination theory by adding collaboration in the attainment of knowledge through diverse perspectives (Dewey, 1938; Ryan & Deci, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978). Since pragmatism identifies humans and their interactions as pliable, individual encounters of each participant and the world in which they lived dictated their outcome. As higher education warrants higher thought processing, and the social environment is crucial in the progression of the life of a college student (Vygotsky,

1978). The participants' experiences from a collection of realities dictate learning is by doing with relevancy (Dewey, 1938). The participants were consistent with the constructivist sociocultural theory of the rudimentary beliefs of self-regulated learning includes motivation, understanding, reflection, and reconstruction (Schunk, 2016). Participants were college students and emerging adults; therefore, an understanding of their motivation to attend college through extrinsic and intrinsic factors was evident through their explanations and experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Participants noted classroom structure should shift from lecture-based learning towards a collaborative learning community; thereby, leading to the style of self-learning heutagogy (Fornaciari & Dean, 2013; Hase & Kenyon, 2013; Tinning & Bailey, 2009). Through family, previous educational experiences, societal trends, schools, and classroom dynamics, each participant was affected in various manners. This study showed the holistic view of a college student as a whole including personal views of self, family, and society in conjunction with the impact on higher learning choices and resiliency.

Practical Implications

This study helps to support educators and curriculum designers to recognize and accommodate for the needs of Generation Z to engage undergraduates. Additionally, this research supports the human element needed on the college campus and in the classroom to ensure a flourishing institutional atmosphere. As the demographic of college students shift, an educational design should accommodate the evolving challenges of students (Flynn et al., 2017). As diverse students engage within the college realm, students may build new knowledge in a sociocultural situation; thus, a fluid intermingling of subject material and social collaboration is essential to critical thinking and learning (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). This study also sheds light on the importance of family support and the motivational trends within the college

populace. Additionally, this study demonstrates to parents, educators, administrators, and curriculum designers the need for engaging and interactive human connections and collaborative course design. Educators could improve professional development to advocate for human connections in a collective and mutual perspective. Furthermore, perhaps this study can also provide impetus for a combined effort of technology and humanity in education to improve experiences in learning.

Delimitations and Limitations

Delimitations of this study were used to narrow the scope; therefore, it focused on male students born between 1995 and 2012. It was projected that by 2020, female students would make up 57.5% of the population and male students would make up 42.5% (NCES, 2020). Gender disparity trend continues to demonstrate a steady decline in male college enrollment (Pew Research, 2019). This study focused on the lived experiences of eleven male Generation Z interviewees. The participants had to live in either Loudoun County or Fairfax County in northern Virginia. The participants had to have a minimum of one semester in undergraduate college and could not have been a current student. Another delimitation to this qualitative transcendental phenomenology, was that I did not use my own experiences from the college classroom or my own family experience.

Limitations of this qualitative study decreased the generalization of this study. The findings would be altered in different locations and demographics of the country. Data would vary according to the location of the participants. This study was confined to the northern Virginia counties where the statistics state 61.3% to 61.6% of all population over 25 hold a bachelor's degree; therefore, it would not be congruent within other states in the nation (USCS, 2020). The sampling of participants from the northern Virginia counties of Loudoun and Fairfax

reduced data and thus this study could not be generalizable to other regions within the U.S. Four participants were commuters who attended a community college, whereas seven had attended universities where they resided away from their family during their education, and this could be considered a constraint on data. Another limitation is this study, included participants were not currently attending college; thus, perspectives may have softened or faded with time.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are still significant gaps in the research on male college students not covered by this study. Because so few studies have been performed to identify why male college enrollment is on a downward spiral, more data needs to be collected both qualitatively and quantitatively. Although participants exhibited and shared their experiences, there is still a need for a broader scope of experiences to be discovered. Future studies should expand upon the participant pool to include current students. Educational statistical data needs to be collected through a variety of studies to expand knowledge of males and their educational endeavors. More studies are needed to account for various geographical regions, urban, and rural areas in relation to parental, peer, and professor relationship effects. An additional study to explore the motivational forces at play for students who strive for a higher education degree is also needed. Parental and family influences, both culturally and regionally, would be a dynamic study in which to engage.

Another gap in research exists concerning the technology and human connection element. Because social media and online gaming is relatively new in the past two decades, a study to identify the impact of their role on social interaction and college success would be relative. Additionally, a study in heutagogy in realistic terms within the college class with outcomes would be beneficial for future educators to advance prospectus development. Educator gender relations within the classroom are void in research as well, and an investigative inquiry would

aid understanding. Lastly, a study focusing on student-professor mutual educational relationships on the college campus would fill a void of knowledge. Research studies that are both qualitative in nature and quantitative in statistics would be valuable to future investigation.

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of how northern Virginia male college students born between 1995 and 2012 describe their encounters in the academic collegiate environment. Implications for parental involvement, collaborative learning communities, and teaching practices surfaced through the description of lived experiences of male Generation Z college students. The holistic viewpoint of the participants motivations, classroom experience, peer relations, and professor relationships provided an understanding of the phenomenon. The connotations of this study brought to light the importance of motivations, resilience, and student success through the recognition of the humanity element of education.

The human connection factor included the importance of parental involvement, peer interactions, and professor relationships. Educational formats can become so technologically astute, the basics of the social bond may be forgotten. Although much of education is virtual and supported through internet programs, all participants discussed specific people who were influential in their lives rather than a specific computer program. This study reiterated parents and family ties were the primary motivator for attending college. Secondly, this study demonstrated throughout college education, peer relations through physical groups and virtual groups gave a sense of belonging by association and alliance to help students persevere during the ups and downs of college. Finally, the impact of a respectful relationship with the professor encouraged interactive engagement with course material. Students mentioned the personalities of

professors through using words such as "passionate and excited," to "boring and robotic."

Alfonso's interactions represent the norm from participants, "Professors were a mixed bag. There were some I really loved and spurred me on in my passions to continue, but others went as far as to tell me I would never accomplish the goals I had set for myself." Professors are more than just instructors; rather, they are mentors and guides to emerging adults. A recognition of the power of a kind word or encouraging comment would be beneficial for educators to acknowledge and promote in professional development.

Finally, pedagogy should be current and relative. Nikolai recalled, "when professors were largely theoretical rather than practical, it was difficult to discover my preferred course of study." Nathaniel noted, "professors who are more theoretical promote graduate school and research; whereas, professors who gave real world examples promote getting a job." Curriculum developers would be wise to explore heutagogy to encourage students to be interdependent and practice working together with peers to advance relevance and knowledge attainment in course design. The findings and implications of this study indicate the classroom pedagogy should embrace virtual mastery, but also promote collaboration between peers and professors in an authentic and meaningful learning community.

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Appendices

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

2020-10-23

Nona Reynolds
Michael Patrick

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY20-21-105 The Lived Experiences of Male Generation Z
Collegians: Transcendental Phenomenological Approach

Dear Nona Reynolds, Michael Patrick:

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission

Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Consent

The Lived Experiences of Male Generation Z Collegians: Transcendental Phenomenological Approach

Nona Reynolds

Doctoral Candidate at Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the collegiate academic experiences of Generation Z men. You were selected as a possible participant because you are: (1) 18 years of age or older and born between 1995-2012, (2) male, (3) reside in Northern Virginia, either Loudoun County or Fairfax County, (4) have a minimum of one semester of college experience, and (5) no longer attend undergraduate college.

Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Nona Reynolds, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to examine and describe the lived academic experiences of Northern Virginia Generation Z males born between 1995-2012. This is a concerted endeavor to recognize the encounters and challenges of male college students in an effort to identify shared themes.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an audio-recorded ZOOM interview. The interview will take approximately 1-2 hours to complete.
2. Review your interview transcript. The transcript will be emailed to you 1 week after the interview, should take about 30 minutes to review, and will need to be returned by email within 1 week of the date of receipt.
3. Complete 3 writing prompts. The 3 writing prompts will be emailed to you 1 week after the interview and should take about 30 minutes each. The prompts will need to be returned by email 1 week after the date of receipt.
4. Possibly participate in an audio-recorded ZOOM focus group. Participation will be dependent on participants' responses to interview questions. It should take approximately 45 minutes to complete.
5. Review the focus group transcript. The transcript will be emailed to you 1 week after the interview, should take about 30 minutes to review, and will need to be returned by email within 1 week of the date of receipt.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include increased awareness of the male gender viewpoint in higher education. This increased awareness may help to advance the study of the male perspective. By chronicling the male voice, a deeper understanding of the essence of Generation Z's experience may occur and assist course designers to improve collegiate curriculum to reach male students.

Liberty University IRB-FY20-21-105 Approved on 10-23-2020

As the demographic of college populace shifts, so must the educational design to accommodate the evolving challenge of less men enrolling in college.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. If I publish any of my findings, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data.

- Participants will be assigned pseudonyms and the interview and focus group will be conducted in locations where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-protected computer and a locked filing cabinet. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all physical records will be shredded.
- The interview and focus group will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then deleted. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings and transcriptions.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Compensation: Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Each participant will be mailed a \$100 Amazon gift card upon conclusion of the study. Participants that complete the focus groups will not receive extra compensation.

Voluntary nature: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact Nona Reynolds at noreynolds@liberty.edu. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Nona Reynolds. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 703-727-5126 or at noreynolds@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Michael Patrick, at mpatrick2@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix C

Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GENERATION Z MALE COLLEGIANS: TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

- Are you a male, and 18 years of age or older, and born between 1995-2012?
- Are you from Northern Virginia, either Loudoun County or Fairfax County?
- Have you had at least one semester of the undergraduate college experience?
- Are you not currently an undergraduate student?

If you answered **yes** to all of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in an educational research study.

The purpose of this research study is to identify common themes from the lived college academic experiences of Northern Virginia male Generation Z students. This study aims to explore beliefs, motivations, and perceptions of male members regarding college experience. Participants will be interviewed with the researcher, potentially participate in a focus group, review their interview, and focus group transcripts, and complete 3 writing prompts.

The study is being conducted virtually through ZOOM and email.
Participants will be compensated with a \$100 Amazon gift card.

Nona Reynolds, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Nona Reynolds, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University at (703)727-5126 or nonaoshrey@gmail.com or noreynolds@liberty.edu for more information.

Appendix D

Instrument: Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. Please describe your experience with elementary education. Tell me about your middle school education. Can you describe your experience during your high school years? Can you describe how education played a role in your life? What stands out?
3. Of your educational experiences, which would you say were the most significant in your life choices regarding education? Why?
4. Please describe what motivated you to attend college.
5. Explain whether your parent's/parents' or society's view of college affected your viewpoint. How?
6. Tell me about the struggles you have experienced, since graduating high school, as you have worked out your life choices.
7. How would you describe your college classes? Were any of them more enjoyable than others? Did you think you attained more knowledge in them? If you do think you learned more in some classes than others, why do you think you learned more in those specific classes?
8. Please describe your feelings on specific professors or topics such as why they were memorable or not. Did they challenge you and how?
9. Please describe if and how technology played a role in your collegiate experience. Did technology challenge you or inhibit your growth? Why do you think that way? How do you define technology?
10. Tell me about your college major or degree. Can you tell me why you chose that area to study?
11. What would you change about your experience? How could the educational design become more effective?
12. Reflecting on your college experience, what advice would you give to teenagers when they are considering attending college?
13. Please describe your thoughts on how colleges are doing in reaching the needs of all students.
14. What else would you like to tell me about your college experience?

Appendix E

Instrument: Focus Group Questions

1. What motivated you to attend college
2. Tell me about your high point and low point in your college experience
3. What was your perception of the college curriculum?
4. Tell me how about your experience with technology in your education? Your academic experience?
5. Tell me about your college environment?
6. Tell me about your socialization in college? Contemporary Social trends?
7. What challenges have you experienced in higher education?
8. What is your opinion of the college culture?
9. What kinds of suggestions do you have for future college curriculum developers?

Appendix F

Instrument: Writing Prompts

Writing Prompt Questions:

1. What challenges did you encounter while going to college?
2. Describe your opinions and thoughts of the college environment.
3. Describe your perspective of the professors, course work, technology, and social aspects of your lived experience.