

THE IMPACT OF STRESS, DEPRESSION, AND ANXIETY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN
STUDENT SUCCESS DURING THEIR FIRST UNDERGRADUATE SEMESTER: A
QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

Anthony Jerome Howard
Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students' success during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The terms stress, depression, and anxiety were defined respectively as the feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome. Schlossberg's transition theory, which defines transitions as events or experiences that result in changed interactions, habits, expectations, and responsibilities, framed this study. The study's central research question was designed to elicit participant descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact the first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The research sub-questions were designed to search for a deeper understanding of the specific ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact university students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. Data collection included screening questionnaires, documents, semi-structured individual interviews, and a single focus group interview. The data collected were manually analyzed. The results from the study comprised data collected from the 10 participants. The responses from the participants address the three research questions on the impact that stress, depression, and anxiety have on African American student success. Future research on this topic may be beneficial to those interested in the literature related to the study.

Keywords: anxiety, depression, stress, transition

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Dedication

I will dedicate this to God for providing the tools and strength to complete this journey. Without God, I would have never mustered up the courage to begin my doctoral journey.

To my wife, Asia, and son, Anthony, for motivating me to overcome the challenges I faced over the past few years.

And, to my Father and Mother for raising a strong and ambitious son. Thank you for always telling me that I could accomplish anything.

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I would like to acknowledge the work of the university staff and faculty members who take time out of their day to develop the students at the university daily. The field of education may be one of the noblest career fields a person can pursue. Also, I want to thank Dr. Sharon Michael-Chadwell for her advice throughout my doctoral journey. Her guidance and support gave me the confidence to continue this journey during difficult times. Lastly, I would like to thank Dr. Tamika Hibbert for being a model to emulate.

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List of Abbreviations

American College Health Association (ACHA)

Critical race theory (CRT)

First-generation (first-gen)

Grade point average (GPA)

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

JED Foundation (JED)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Predominantly White Institution (PWI)

Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS)

Socioeconomic status (SES)

Stroop Color and Word Test (SCWT)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Research regarding African American university students' success during their first semester as undergraduates reveals that the students' success is impacted by stress, depression, and anxiety (JED Foundation, 2015). Ross et al. (2016) noted that African American students experience uniquely first-year university life situations, making it difficult for them to adjust to life away from familiar environments. Furthermore, based on a recent JED Foundation (2015) survey, 48% of African American students are likely to rate their experiences as good or excellent compared to 62% of Caucasian students. In addition, 75% of African American students are likely to keep feelings of depression or anxiety to themselves as compared to 61% of Caucasians (JED Foundation, 2015; Primm, 2018). These findings highlighted the problems African American students face due to their unique culture and upbringing when navigating between their home environment and the newly dominant university life (Primm, 2018). Moreover, Ross et al. (2016) noted that African American students often feel displaced and socially isolated during their first years as university undergraduate students. While there is an emerging base of research on the unique problems encountered by African American students during their first year as university undergraduate students, research on the topic is limited and requires further investigation.

Chapter One includes the historical, social, and theoretical background of the study. Also, my role as the researcher and the significance of the study are acknowledged. The problem statement, purpose statement, and the research questions are explained. Finally, the definitions relevant to the study are listed. The chapter concludes with a concise summary.

Background

Researchers note that understanding the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African Americans during their first undergraduate semester is essential to African American college students, parents, and university administrators. For example, according to Eakins and Eakins (2017), a sense of belonging, family support, preparation, and finances are key contributors to stress for African American college students. African American students are faced with many issues as they enter university life due to emotional distress and loneliness (Nicpon et al., 2006). Students' stress, depression, and anxiety during the first year of university life can cause students to experience isolation and loneliness, and a lengthy acclimation process (Berman & Sperling, 1991). The following sections include background information regarding the historical, social, and theoretical contexts of stress, depression, and anxiety.

Historical Context

Traditionally, the opportunity for African American students to attend a university at any level has been marginal in the United States (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014). The historical lineage of Black institutions began as early as 1837 with the establishment of Cheyney University, followed by Lincoln University and Wilberforce University, which were founded in 1854 and 1856, respectively. There were more than 200 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) by 1890 (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014). By 2014, there were 105 HBCUs established (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014). African American university students may not choose to attend an HBCU, but may decide to attend university based on preference, location, or financial affordability (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014).

When attending a university other than an HBCU, such as a predominantly White institution (PWI), African American university students encounter issues less likely to be

experienced by African American students attending an HBCU (Sinanan, 2016). A PWI is any college or university where Caucasian students account for 50% or more of the institution's student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010).

Social Context

African American college students may experience depression upon their arrival at university due to their inability to connect with other students attending the institution (Mitchell & Fuller, 2019). Other scholars can perceive low social connectedness as a social stigma (Aspelmeier et al., 2012; Gasman & Arroyo, 2014). The overall findings of the JED Foundation survey showed lonely individuals that were disconnected from others were perceived to have a more negative outlook. According to Shields (2002), first-year students, especially those who lack social connection, may notice adverse effects on their mental health and behavior. Shields also noted that low-connected students might recognize how their peers perceive them, which may cause low-connected students to reflect on how their attitudes and behaviors affect themselves and those around them.

R. M. Lee and Robbins (1998) found that social connectedness is related to anxiety when an individual perceives the world as aggressive, menacing, and unfriendly. Based on similar studies, lonely students experience homesickness and have a negative view of their school, roommates, and the activities hosted on campus (JED Foundation, 2015; Smith, 2014; Sun, 2015). Researchers note that this negative view could also lead to students viewing themselves negatively, contributing to anxiety, stress, depression, and other destructive habits (Sogari et al., 2018). While the prevalence of mental illness among African Americans is uncertain, mental health research that involves African Americans provides evidence that young African American adults are at risk of experiencing mental illness. They are also more likely to be persistently ill

once diagnosed and are less likely than other groups to utilize mental health services when needed (Broman, 2012).

According to Eisenberg et al. (2007), mental health issues within the student populations are global. Mental health issues include anxiety and depression as primary contributors to the most common concerns reported by students who visit counseling centers (Smith, 2014; Sun, 2015). Several studies showed that mental health issues are becoming more prevalent in the college student population than in the overall population (Primm, 2018; Rice et al., 2017; Ross et al., 2016; Smith, 2014).

One factor noted by Ross et al. (2016) that contributes to the anxiety experienced by students of color is that they feel they must withdraw from their cultural habits and adopt those of the White majority to fit in with academic life. Abnegating their cultural origins or practices often leads to thoughts of remorse, depression, and identity uncertainty (Ross et al., 2016). Results from other studies suggest that confirm the overarching destabilizing problem for first-year students of color (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2015; JED Foundation; 2015; Primm, 2018). Based on the JED Foundation (2015) survey results, first-year university life presents unexpected difficulties for African American students. If students do not have familial support, are first-generation or first-gen college entrants, or financial stressors are part of their attendance equation, anxiety becomes a significant concern (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014; Mitchell & Fuller, 2019; Primm, 2018).

First-gen college students may face obstacles that could impact their families if they do not achieve academic success (Stephens et al., 2014). Often, African American students are the first family members to attend an institution of higher education. Families tend to attach their goals to their children's success, investing in finances and making other sacrifices so their

children can reap the benefits of higher education (De Brey et al., 2019; Dulabaum, 2016; Guiffrida, n.d.; Mitchell & Fuller, 2019). This pressure may cause the students to feel the added responsibility of families hoping for their success, which if not fulfilled, can lead to deepening anxiety, stress, and depression (Aspelmeier et al., 2012; Benton, 2018; Mitchell & Fuller, 2019; Primm, 2018).

Theoretical Context

Underpinning this proposed qualitative case study is Schlossberg's transition theory (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Creswell, 2012; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Transition theory is used to illuminate the problems minority students encounter when facing their new academic environments and to determine the issues faced by minority students by understanding the student's background (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009). Change is a factor in transition, and transition refers to any event that results in changed relationships and roles (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Schlossberg's transition theory addresses the development of individuals as they proceed through a sequence of transitions. The transitions may affect individuals differently due to each person using different styles to cope with their anxiety, which becomes evident through the issues faced by minority students (Brammer, 1992).

Sanford (1962) developed the theory of challenge and support. Sanford found that the college environment significantly impacts the students' personal growth and development and the environment influences students' interactions within the classroom and outside of the school. In addition, the researcher believed that a student needs to balance challenges and support for growth and personal development to take place. Sanford's (1967) third factor, added in 1966, is readiness because it will be difficult for a student to grow physically or psychologically if they are not ready to grow.

Because many anxiety disorders begin in the early childhood stages, identifying those at risk is essential for treatment considerations. Anxiety is an anticipation of a future threat rather than a present and current threat (Barlow, 2002). An individual's anxiety heightens due to their inability to control that threat. Iacovou (2011) discovered that clinical anxiety appears when an individual's response is persistent and disproportionate to a supposed threat, and the incapacity for coping becomes skewed. In addition, Iacovou found that existential anxiety signifies a type of anxiety that reveals concern, dismay, and panic.

Each form of anxiety may play a role in students' development, and although the types of anxiety may be similar, their causes can be quite different (Iacovou, 2011). For example, normal anxiety may be present in students who discover that they did not get accepted into the program or college major they intended and may have to choose a different program or major (Iacovou, 2011). Internally, many students may sense a fight-or-flight response linked with anxiety due to the students realizing that their future goals could be altered. Murguia and Díaz (2015) discussed how modifying the educational plan and altering the event's severity could lead to prolonged and intensified anxious feelings, thus resulting in neurotic anxiety.

From an existential standpoint, students are aware that they are ultimately responsible for choosing the school, program, and major that offers them the opportunity to live a productive life. The students' responsibility for making multiple decisions crucial to their academic journey may result in a protracted anxious state of mind. The differences in these causes of anxiety suggest different techniques for managing these anxieties (Iacovou, 2011), requiring that counselors put more effort into understanding the context of school-related anxiety.

Some scholars suggested that low social connectedness is professed as a social stigma (Booth & Peker, 2017; Brandy et al., 2015; De Brey et al., 2019). In studies that measured

different factors such as adjustment, attractiveness, and friendship worthiness, university students rated themselves as lonely or non-lonely individuals (Booth & Peker, 2017). Booth and Peker (2017) showed that lonely individuals who are disconnected from others were perceived to be more violent. R. M. Lee and Robbins (1998) noted that this social stigma explains why first-year students negatively judge their social environments. In addition, R. M. Lee and Robbins found that low social connectedness may be related to anxiety, leading an individual to perceive the world as aggressive, menacing, and unfriendly. Similar studies suggested that lonely students experience homesickness and negatively view their school, roommates, and campus activities (JED Foundation, 2015; Smith, 2014; Sun, 2015).

In addition to anxiety, stress-related issues impact minority students, particularly during their initial university life stages. Chan et al. (2010) defined stress as a biochemical reaction to negative influences that increases the probability of displaying rage or depression. An African American college student's new environment is stressful due to being away from home, lacking social connections to their peers, and feelings of isolation because of their racial identity (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014; Smith, 2014).

The new college environment introduces African American college students to unique circumstances, such as the freedom to select their classes for the semester, choosing what degree they would like to pursue, and figuring out where to live (Sogari et al., 2018). The transition from high school to life as a first-year university undergraduate also challenges young African American students to take care of their finances, maintain academic standards, and adapt to a new social environment (Keup, 2008). These decisions can make African American students feel vulnerable, which could negatively impact their mental health. The constant pressure of being evaluated while attending the university can cause the students to be anxious and intense,

heightened by the high costs and expectations to achieve upon receiving a degree (Loewenthal, 2019).

Situation to Self

The motivation for this study is my experiences as a residence coordinator. I have personally faced the impact of transitioning to higher learning institutions on African American college students. As African American students transition into university life, I have witnessed the students battle stress, depression, and anxiety due to their daily regimen change. I have witnessed faculty members working in the residence life department express their concerns regarding the challenges African American students face as they transition into the university. These challenges impact the study because the study will allow the participants to articulate their experiences while transitioning into the university. The faculty members also believe the current orientation program does not explicitly prepare the African American students with the support needed to succeed in their new way of life. This proposed study will allow the participants to create a shared understanding between them and the university. The shared experience will be established by giving the students a voice and enabling the university to understand the issues African American students face.

Ontological and axiological philosophical assumptions guided the proposed study. Ontological assumptions allow many researchers to accept different perspectives (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas noted that ontological assumptions are utilized to display multiple perspectives, including multiple forms of evidence using participants' actual words and introducing different viewpoints. When conducting research, axiology is used to focus on worth or self-worth (Brandy et al., 2015). Knowledge and theoretical premises intertwine in the study of issues faced by African American college students. Thus, it is difficult to isolate these factors while creating

an awareness of the problem faced by first-semester undergraduate students. The application of a qualitative research methodology approach using the paradigm of constructivism and participatory research brings a powerful combination to the importance of understanding the mental health issues impacting first-year African American college students.

Past knowledge of the issues faced by African American students as they enter the university phase of life encouraged me to assess their situations from their experiences. Dennick (2016) evaluated constructivism as a viable research tool that incorporates other methodological approaches but builds on the idea that the most crucial component of influencing learning is the learner's experience. Further, Dennick suggested that the constructivist approach can include other methods in a qualitative case study. Participatory factors will impact the proposed study, such as initial questionnaires and interviews with participants to help formulate the foundation regarding the problem and research questions (Creswell, 2012).

African American students believe that there are insufficient counseling services and awareness of stress, depression, and anxiety as they transition into the university (Newbigging & Ridley, 2018). Students experiencing stress, depression, and anxiety are at risk of hermeneutical injustices due to their experiences not being well understood by others. The social stigma associated with stress, depression, and anxiety may result in assumptions of irrationality and unreliability (Newbigging & Ridley, 2018). To prevent hermeneutical injustices, faculty members must witness how stress, depression, and anxiety impact the students. This study is aimed to spark more public conversation, which some may be hesitant to embrace. As mental health issues become more prevalent in society, students entering the university should become a primary focus for researchers, which may help university administrators understand the mental health issues suffered by incoming minority students (Chessman & Taylor, 2019).

Problem Statement

The problem to be addressed in this proposed case study is the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on undergraduate African American students' success during their first semester at House A&M University. Many African American students experience a lack of counseling or mentorship support during their first year at higher education institutions. These support services mainly apply to counseling services and mentorships that help these students understand and cope with their anxiety, stress, and depression as they transition into the university. Few studies have been conducted on stress, depression, and anxiety African American students face while at the university. Therefore, this study will provide a foundation for further investigation of how stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students.

Mental health issues are increasingly significant, particularly those that impact academic success for college students. According to Hart Abney et al. (2019), approximately 30% of college students have stated that anxiety and depression negatively impacted their lives and academic performance. Current research focuses on many areas surrounding mental health. Still, few understand the impact of stress and anxiety on college students during the first semester of their first year. Rice et al. (2017) suggested that first-gen college students' precollege economic cultures are likely to influence their transition to the university and their ability to cope with associated challenges. Currently, anxiety has surpassed depression as the reason college students seek help at counseling centers. Hart Abney et al. found that only one third of college students receive treatment for anxiety, and only one fourth of college students receive treatment for their depression.

University students often encounter a lack of services provided at higher education institutions that support student transition into the university. According to Primm (2018), less than one fourth of college faculty members are people of color, which is a disadvantage for students of color. The lack of services has created a shortage of faculty role models and a lack of faculty members aware of the psychosocial challenges that many African American students face. The premise of the proposed study is the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American student success during their first undergraduate semester.

Past studies provided some rationale for the lack of awareness by the counseling services, but there is a gap in determining why universities do not bring attention to this specific topic (Brammer, 1992; Bruffaerts et al., 2018; Primm, 2018). Researchers have disclosed that underutilization of mental health services is related to the students' attitudes toward seeking help from the counseling services (Picco et al., 2016). In the current study, student participants were asked to discuss their perceptions regarding stress, anxiety, and depression during their first year of university life. African American students, especially first-gen college students, have reported lower use of counseling services and greater negative self-stigma and attitudes toward seeking counseling than do other college students (DeFreitas et al., 2018). As stated previously, the problem examined in this study was the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on undergraduate African American students' success during their first semester at House A&M University.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to understand participants' descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impacted the success of African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. Within the study context, anxiety was

defined as a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease; typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome (Hart-Abney et al., 2019). The study was guided by Schlossberg's transition theory, which was used to understand how individuals cope with various transitions during their life cycles (Schlossberg et al., 1995). In this case study, the focus transition was from home life to the first year of university life for African American students (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Stress experienced by African American students referred to extraordinary pressure or tension placed on the student due to external, nonacademic circumstances that lead to unusual distress (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018). Both anxiety and stress in combination lead to depression, with the impact of lessened success and often withdrawal from university (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because African American student success has been impacted due to stress, depression, and anxiety. There is a shortage of research conducted on stress, depression, and anxiety. This study was aimed to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety during these students' first semester at the university. For many reasons, African American students face the feeling of being overwhelmed while attending higher learning institutions (JED Foundation, 2015). In a survey, the JED Foundation (2015) questioned first-year college students on various topics regarding their emotional and mental preparedness for their first year of entering the university. The survey results illustrated how various interventions by educators, caregivers, and parents correlated with the students' mental and emotional health during their first year at the university.

In early 2015, the JED Foundation, along with the Steve Fund (JED Foundation, 2015), conducted another survey that provided additional findings of first-year college students and

their emotional and mental preparedness for college. This second survey, conducted by JED Foundation (2015), focused on African American students. Based on the survey results, over half (51%) of African American students reported feeling overwhelmed most or all the time, compared to 40% of Caucasian students reporting the same feelings. Less than half of African American students characterized their overall college experience as good or excellent, versus 62% of Caucasian students. Less than a quarter of African American students said they felt more emotionally prepared for the university than their peers, and 77% did not feel more emotionally ready than did Caucasian students (JED Foundation, 2015).

The ACHA (2018) conducted a survey (i.e., the National College Health Assessment) focused on anxiety. The survey results showed that 63% of college students in the United States felt overwhelming anxiety in the past year (ACHA, 2018). In the same survey, the ACHA (2018) also reported that 23% of students had been diagnosed or treated by a mental health professional for anxiety. Counselors must educate themselves in various theoretical approaches to transitioning from dependent to independent life.

The transition theory may be utilized when trained professionals provide support to African American students (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Schlossberg et al., 1995), but students must have counseling facilities available to receive the benefits of utilizing a counselor. Along with the transition theory, the critical race theory (CRT) is another relevant theoretical concept that will be beneficial for the faculty member to implement. However, the present study's topic was the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on undergraduate African American students' success during their first semester at House A&M University.

While the CRT indicates the disparity in resources for minority students, often leading to academic failure, this study was a qualitative assessment of students from one university about

their experiences regarding stress, depression, and anxiety. The CRT was first used as an analytical framework to assess inequity in education (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). In the past, many scholars have used CRT to analyze and critique educational research and practice. The current study will provide practical evidence that explains the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American college students.

African American university students face being victims of perceived prejudices, stereotypes, and the extreme change in their environment, which can negatively impact African American students (Solorzano et al., 2000). The effects may worsen when students lack a supportive team that can help them overcome these challenges. Although this case study was conducted at one university, stress, depression, and anxiety affect students at many higher learning institutions (Smith, 2014; Sogari et al., 2018; Stephens et al., 2012). The results obtained from this research will bring awareness to the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University.

Research Questions

This case study addressed the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American student success during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University, guided by one central research question (CRQ) and three additional subquestions (SQs).

Central Research Question (CRQ)

How do stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University?

Attending an institution of higher learning offers the students a pathway to discovering more about themselves, including their likes and dislikes. Universities also allow students to increase

their social and cultural experiences that can be used to develop greater social coherence. Specific amounts of stress can be produced within African American students as they transition into the university (Pengilly, 1997). The pressures of leaving home, meeting new people, and attaining a high academic achievement level can be daunting to the students (Brandy et al., 2015). School integration and a population shift have increased African American students' presence at higher learning institutions (Pitre & Pitre, 2009). African American college students experience stress, depression, and anxiety during their time at the university. However, African American students face unique challenges, including a lack of preparation for college, support, and finances (Wilkins, 2014).

Research Subquestions (SQs)

SQ1

What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by stress during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M? African American students who came from parents who did not have college experience will feel less social support than students whose parents went to a university (Engle, 2007). African American college students enter the university lacking the tools to adapt to a higher education setting (Wilkins, 2014). Social support is critical in helping individuals deal with stress while adjusting to different environments (Schwitzer et al., 1999).

SQ2

What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by depression during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M? A significant cause of depression experienced by African American college students is financial (Freeman & Thomas, 2002). Launier (1997) found that finances were the most common stressor for African American

college students. According to Freeman and Thomas (2002), financial aid is one of the biggest concerns that African American students consider when choosing which university to attend. Without financial assistance, many African American college students would not have the opportunity to attend a university (Freeman & Thomas, 2002). The lack of finances can cause students to work full time while attending the university to pay off loans and family dependence on their income (Bers & Schuetz, 2014). Some African American students feel uneasy in the collegiate environment because some students are ill-prepared for their obstacles.

SQ3

What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by anxiety during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M? According to Martin (2020), putative causes for anxiety are organized into three categories: societal, relational, and egoistic factors. Martin described societal factors as macro-level changes in the economic and political realms, relational aspects are micro-sociological changes in how people work together, and egoistic factors are individual psychological methods. Faculty members may play an essential role in the success of their African American college students (Marsh & Hattie, 2002). Helpful early encounters with college faculty and staff can develop a student's confidence as they transition into the university, improving the students' academic performance (Bers & Schuetz, 2014). Instructors who are helpful and accessible increase the first-semester college students' connection to university (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014).

Definitions

The following are the terms and their definitions used in this dissertation.

Anxiety—A feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, primarily related to a new event; in this case, the transition to college life away from home (Hart-Abney et al., 2019).

Attentional control theory—Suggests that anxiety disrupts top-down endogenous control of attention by impeding the central executive inhibition and shifting functions (Eysenck et al., 2007).

Critical race theory (CRT)—Indicates the disparity in resources for minority students, often leading to academic failure (Decuir & Dixson, 2004).

Depression—Feelings of severe despondency and dejection accompanying anxiety and a sense of hopelessness as students transition into college life (Gilbert, 2007).

First-generation (first-gen) students—Students whose parents do not hold a bachelor's degree (Dennon, 2020).

Minority student—This term is used for this study to refer to students whose races are lesser in numbers than the main groups of those classifications (Healey et al., 2019).

Nigrescence—Refers to the process of developing a racial identity (Cross, 1991).

Perception—The organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information used to understand the presented information or the environment (Schacter, 2011).

Personality disorders—A class of mental disorders characterized by enduring maladaptive patterns of behavior, cognition, and inner experience exhibited across many contexts and deviating from those accepted by the individual's culture (Berrios, 1993).

Sanford theory of challenge and support—Argued that for growth and personal development to occur, a student must develop a challenge–support balance (Sanford, 1967).

Schlossberg transition theory—Used as a guideline for professionals to explain the necessary actions that should be taken during the transition to help young adults progress in their new environment (Evans et al., 1998).

Stress—A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances (Yusoff, 2011).

Summary

Chapter One provided introductory information about this qualitative case study. Background information relating to the different contexts of stress, depression, and anxiety was provided, as well as the study's philosophical assumptions. The problem addressed was the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on undergraduate African American students' success during their first semester at House A&M University. Chapter One also introduced the problem and how stress, depression, and anxiety impact these students' university experiences. The purpose of the study was to give further insight into African American first-year students. Chapter One also included the research questions that guided this case study.

The existing research reveals a need to examine African American first-year students' descriptions of how stress, depression, and anxiety impact their experiences at the university. Stress experienced by African American students refers to extraordinary pressure or tension placed on the student due to external, nonacademic circumstances that lead to unusual distress (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018). This research will provide further insight into African American college students' lived experiences and their transition to university.

In Chapter Two, the multiple resources that introduced theories and facts regarding the perceptions of stress, depression, and anxiety will be discussed. Chapter Two also includes a discussion of the theories selected as a framework and how they relate to the main topic of the study, as well as a synthesis of the recent literature about stress and anxiety sources, mental health services, and the challenges first-gen college students encounter upon their arrival at the

university. Chapter Three includes information about the design, research questions, setting, researcher's role, participants, procedures, data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter contains a thorough review of the research, illustrating the multiple resources that introduced theories and facts regarding the perceptions of stress, depression, and anxiety. However, an insufficient number of studies are available that describe the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact the success of African American students during their first undergraduate semester. While at the university, a student's stress, depression, and anxiety may heighten for many different reasons, posing a problem due to a lack of resources and awareness provided on college campuses to alleviate the students' issues (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018).

Chapter Two includes information from existing literature relating to stress, anxiety, and depression. The first section is a discussion of the theories selected as a framework and how they relate to the main topic of the study. The theories discussed in this chapter are the transition theory developed by Schlossberg (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1998; Schlossberg et al., 1995) and the theory of challenge and support developed by Sanford (1967). The second section is a synthesis of the recent literature about stress and anxiety sources, mental health services, and the challenges first-gen college students encounter upon their arrival at the university. After completing the review of related literature, the summary contains an overview of the literature discussed throughout the chapter. As stated previously, past theories and literature will be used to explain the impacts that stress, depression, and anxiety can have on college students.

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg's transition theory is based on the individual and what the individual considers to be a transition (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1998; Evans et al., 1998; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Transition theory helps to create a more thorough understanding of adults in

transition in terms of how the theory explains first-year college students' mental state upon attending an educational institution. Counselors trained to work with adults tend to apply principles from this theory to aid those transitioning into a university. Transition theory is used as a guideline for professionals to explain the necessary actions that should be taken during the transition to help young adults progress in their new environment (Evans et al., 1998).

Transitions result from changes in relationships, routines, assumptions, or even roles. The transition process requires reaction over time. Schlossberg's transition theory is one of the more applicable and versatile theories related to adults as they begin their transition process (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Transition theory applies to those individuals who are in a period that will impact the current routine of their daily lives (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1998; Evans et al., 1998).

According to Chickering and Schlossberg (1998), four significant factors influence an individual's ability to cope in transition. The four major factors are known as the four "Ss." The first S is referred to as the situation, which includes the incentive, timing, and views of the transition from the individual's perspective. The second S is referred to as the self, which includes the experience of the individual, personal demographic traits, and the personality of the individual before the transition having a better understanding of how one views themselves regarding their socioeconomic status, gender, age, and ethnicity is important during the transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The third S is for support, which includes the types of concepts used to assist the individuals during their transition. According to Wall et al. (2018), the establishment of directed support during a transition is vital to speak on these challenges and aid movement through to the next stage. The fourth S is for strategies, which includes the types of coping modes implement during the transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Sanford's (1962) theory of challenge and support involves the developmental growth of the students in a college environment. Patton et al. (2016) explained that the challenges students experience must be addressed with supports that can adequately endure the stress of the challenge itself. The Sanford theory of challenge and support reveals the challenges college students might encounter throughout their time at the university and the required support as they begin their college development (Strange, 1994). The Sanford theory of challenge and support addresses the relationship between the student and their university's environment. Sanford's theory proposed three areas for optimal student developmental growth, including readiness, challenge, and support (Patton et al., 2016). According to Sanford (1967), the ideal student development process entails an environment that offers a proper balance of challenge and support.

Sanford (1967) theorized that college students experience significant personal growth and development, much of which is influenced by the college environment itself (Patton et al., 2016). Sanford (1967) argued that for growth and personal development to occur, a student must develop a challenge–support balance. The support should be just enough to help the student deal with the stress. If there is too much of a challenge, the student will become frustrated and may quit. However, too much support may increase dependence. According to Sanford (1967), three conditions appear during developmental stages: readiness, challenge, and support.

The first condition is readiness, which is a significant factor for any changes in the situation or personality. Readiness can support a student's developmental growth if they are physically or psychologically able to make the necessary development (Sanford, 1967). If the student cannot make the required change for development, this inability may harm their developmental growth. The second condition is a challenge related to situations in which the

person cannot cope (Patton et al., 2016). The third condition is support, which refers to the system that helps the individual successfully overcome challenges (Patton et al., 2016).

Related Literature

In this section, the topics of discussion include African American first-year college students, sources of stress, levels of stress and anxiety, mental health services, and first-gen college students. Each section plays a vital role in helping the reader understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University.

African American College Freshmen

Attending college has become an attainable goal for African American students regardless of their background. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018), between the years 2000–2016, the total college enrollment rates increased for African American students from 31% to 36%. Upon arriving at a university, many students feel anxiety due to their lack of comfort with the new environment (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). African American students are faced with different experiences than those of their counterparts when in college (D. L. Lee & Ahn, 2013). Mentoring can be particularly vital to their persistence toward earning a degree (Freeman, 1999). African American first-year students may need mentorship from a role model to prevent these students from isolating themselves from their peers on campus. African American students transitioning to their college campus who cannot deal with the new stressors may believe they cannot persist long enough to obtain their degree (Irvine, 1991).

According to various statistical data, African American undergraduate enrollment increased by 57% from 2000 to 2015 (De Brey et al., 2019; Rice et al., 2017), but researchers do

not suggest that their issues of mental health anxiety and depression are alleviated (JED Foundation, 2015; Rice et al., 2017; Simiyu, 2012). However, the disparity in their success often arises from the familial background, SES level of families, the programs the schools' minority students select, and whether these students leave home to attend college. A significant matter of concern for the current study was the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American student success during their first undergraduate semester

While some fortunate minority students receive scholarships because of their athletic ability, they also face adapting to university life. The stressors faced by minority students may differ from those of the average students who were accepted based on their academic performance. These stressors may impact the student's success, whether in the classroom or the athletic field (Simiyu, 2012).

Faculty Involvement and Mentoring

The university faculty members' involvement plays a significant role in the students' welfare, both physically and mentally. Providing mentorship to the students may produce a positive outcome in their personal development while at the university. According to Blackwell (1989), mentoring is a means for development by which an individual of higher status, extraordinary achievements, and stature, educate, advise, manage, and facilitate another individual's personal or professional development. Blackwell implored academic society to share the obligation of mentoring an underrepresented African American student population that, according to Blackwell, manages to navigate the educational journey without ever having a genuine mentoring experience.

However, Atkinson et al. (1991) performed a study backing the implication that Euro American professors can effectively act as mentors to African American students. Sedlacek

(1983) noted that eight variables contribute to African American college students' success in higher education: (a) positive self-concept, (b) understanding and dealing with racism, (c) a realistic self-appraisal, (d) the preference of long-range goals to immediate needs, (e) the availability of a healthy support person, (f) successful leadership experiences, (g) demonstrated community service, and (h) nontraditional knowledge. Possible areas such as the few previously stated may help African American college students encourage success while increasing the retention of African American college students.

Academic and support services play a significant role in African American students' lives as they transition to college (Carey et al., 1981). There are multiple student services available to assist in the student's transition that Carey et al. (1981) identified as vital to academic success, including admissions, precollege services, orientation, general studies, financial aid, and African American social events. Furthermore, according to Trippi and Cheatham (1989), academic adjustment, skill deficiencies, financial assistance, course scheduling, information about the institution, and the initial interview are the six reasons African American freshman college students sought help.

First-Gen College Students

Families who may be unfamiliar with the collegiate culture and send their children to university as first-generation students may be unprepared for the challenges associated with college life, which places a high level of stress on both the families and their children (Orbe, 2004; Primm, 2018; Rice et al., 2017). Even though first-gen students often view their status as a motivator for success (Orbe, 2004), they tend to have fewer financial resources than their peers and often need additional academic and social support (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). These first-gen students typically spend more time on extra educational demands such as work and family

obligations (Shields, 2002), work more hours at a job, take fewer classes, and have a less collegiate association, therefore obtaining lower grades, which in the end, leads to anxiety and stress (Pascarella et al., 2004). Another mitigating factor is the language barrier. While most first-gen students are native English speakers, they may not be familiar with academic terms (Warburton et al., 2001). Other first-gen students may have an ethnic minority background so that English is not their native language. These factors lead to higher stress levels as students attempt to successfully integrate into collegiate life (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Shu et al., 2017).

Rice et al. (2017) suggested that many first-gen students struggle when transitioning to college because of the lack of knowledge and relationships with college graduates in their new environment. In terms of cultural capital, their parents are often less familiar with university life, therefore unable to support their college student children. Other stressors for parents and their students are the intricacies implicit in seeking financial aid and the inability to assist them in making decisions about their college experience (Engle, 2007; Mitchell & Fuller, 2019).

Having a basic understanding of the college process when transitioning into college may be essential because the students who possess less knowledge about the college process may underperform academically (Lehmann, 2007). Moreover, the mismatch between social and cultural norms may create dissonance and negatively impact academic performance (Stephens et al., 2012). With limited social capital, first-gen students may have difficulty connecting with peers and integrating into the university culture, leading to a sense of isolation (Lehmann, 2007). Researchers have found that first-gen students tend to feel intimidated by more affluent peers (Aries & Seider, 2005; Mitchell & Fuller, 2019), with the unfortunate causal effect of nonbelonging. Students who are navigating a social class transition may feel pressure to adapt

their dress and speech to match students in the new culture and downplay their working-class background (Granfield, 1991). Although there is research on first-gen students' outcomes, such as peer pressure and a sense of belonging, few studies exist on how the college transition shapes their identities and social class perceptions.

Sources of Stress

In academia, students, in general, feel stress due to various situations such as financial hardship, lack of family support, indecision about college study preferences, or insufficient preparedness for college requirements (Rice et al., 2017; Shields, 2002; Simiyu, 2012).

Additionally, the new generation of college students views the university experiences through a different lens than did earlier generations, which negatively impacts student success (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Patton et al., 2016). These differentiated demands challenge the human body and mind, an excess of freedom when away from parental guidance, and situational conditions. The university provides what they believe is enough support services, such as counseling or mentorship (NCES, 2018). When stress, anxiety, and depression affect any student, academic success is at risk, as is a student's eventual university career (Loewenthal, 2019; Martinez et al., 2009).

Stress is a highly discussed topic, regardless of one's life situation, age, ethnicity, or gender (Al-Tarawneh & Kahtoon, 2014). According to Al-Tarawneh and Kahtoon (2014), stress has become the primary concern in many college students' lives, with most wanting a stress-free experience, which is difficult to achieve because it is a part of life. Students are exposed to stress, some more than others, which was the substance of this present research. The underlying theme herein was to assess the level of stress, anxiety, and depression felt by minority students in their first year at university.

Due to its complexity, early researchers such as Hans Selye had a difficult time defining stress. The idea of stress was first introduced in 1936 by Selye, to describe the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture, and pain, and modern-day stress also implies mental distress as a type of torment (Al-Tarawneh & Kahtoon, 2014). Over time, the definition of stress changed. Selye (1936) defined stress as the body's reaction to any pressure it experiences. Two decades later, stress was defined as an external event or internal drive that threatens to upset the organism's equilibrium (Selye, 1956).

Stressful conditions can be real or perceived because our brains react the same way to both causes of stress by releasing stress hormones equal to the degree of stress that is felt (Al-Tarawneh & Kahtoon, 2014). According to Dalky and Gharaibeh (2018), stressors can have a considerable impact on the students' academic performance and their ability to develop and stay persistent while at the university. Students may also have an increased risk of depression, anxiety, substance use, personality disorders, and other negative consequences later in life (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018). Sources of stress can be caused by various circumstances, such as parental expectations, homesickness, social anxiety, financial burdens, and time management (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). Another negative factor for students may emanate from parents who may not be aware that they place substantial stress on their student to succeed (Aries & Seider, 2005).

Loneliness

Previous studies have shown the role of loneliness in mediating connections between social network factors, and results have been predominantly cross-sectional (Newsom et al., 2005). Events such as the students leaving their parents' home for the first time may increase their levels of loneliness due to the students losing touch with different aspects of their former

relationships, which causes them to develop new relationships (Newsom et al., 2005). Students are often faced with many other events that are likely to produce loneliness, and research shows that loneliness is highest in adolescence and young adulthood (Brage et al., 1993). Loneliness is an unpleasant feeling that occurs when the supportive network of social relations is inadequate in terms of quantity and quality (Peplau & Perlman, 1982). It is a personal experience that is dissimilar from objective social isolation (O. S. Kim, 1997). While loneliness is a general emotion that most individuals in everyday society experience at some point in their lives (Noh & Lee, 2015), loneliness can cause psychological health problems such as depression, personality disorders as well as lead to suicide. Loneliness may also cause physiological health problems such as sleep disturbances, obesity, cardiovascular health, and irregular immune functions (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010).

Those who understand the adverse effects of loneliness are aware that individuals who consider themselves lonely often perceive themselves as malicious, self-denying, self-deceptive, socially incompetent (An & Lee, 2011), and low self-loathing is a reoccurring event in their lives. Also, it is not uncommon for a person to develop an unstable attachment due to the lack of support from those for whom they have strong feelings, such as parents, spouses, or close friends (An & Lee, 2011). The individual experiencing loneliness may show signs of poor attitudes such as avoidance, aggression, and anxiety when dealing with other people or groups, thus experiencing loneliness while experiencing problems in developing personal relationships (N. Kim & Shin, 2017).

Recent research also implies that loneliness has a multidimensional composition (Weiss, 1987). Supporters of this perspective claim that individuals who experience different levels and different loneliness variations may require different types of care to react to their individual

experiences (McWhirter & Horan, 1996). Weiss (1987) recognized that emotional or intimate loneliness and social loneliness, as distinctive experiences, stem from insufficiencies in different relationships. Furthermore, Weiss depicted personal loneliness as an experience in which the individual feels completely detached from others without speaking with or sharing life experiences. This detachment may result from a lack of interpersonal connections or alliances. According to Vaux (1988), an individual may experience social loneliness when someone has relations with someone. Still, the individual may reside in a different location, making it challenging to develop the foundation necessary to establish stronger friendships. Scholars noted that due to a lack of social networks from which one might obtain support, personal and social loneliness have been distinctive experiences among college students, each with distinct social backgrounds and impacting unique characteristics (Vaux, 1988).

Sense of Belonging

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), a sense of belonging is the correlation to group members that offer a sense of community and several forms of support. Numerous scholars have examined Black college students' sense of belonging to academic institutions. In a study regarding a sense of belonging to the university and African American college students' intentions to continue college, Hausmann et al. (2007) found that a sense of belonging to academic institutions was linked with plans to continue attending college and lower levels of depression. Furthermore, Walton and Cohen (2011) effectively used a sense of belonging as an intervention to improve the individual's psychological well-being and found that increasing African American college students' belonging to their educational institution provided many benefits, such as higher grade-point averages (GPAs) and shifting the students' perceptions regarding the meaning of adversity at their respective academic institutions. The findings also

indicated improved self-reported health 3 years after the initial intervention. Walton and Cohen's results from the intervention are encouraging and have emphasized the importance of the sense of belonging as the objective of interventions in the future.

It is essential to understand that sense of belonging to the racial group is different from a sense of belonging to academic institutions. This difference may be due to the sense of belonging when referring to racial groups, which implies membership in a specific racial group. The racial group typically has historically been stigmatized, stereotyped, and marginalized within the community (Walton & Cohen, 2011). Researchers such as Carson (2009) are now seeking commonalities in the sense of belonging to academic institutions concerning becoming a respected and recognized member of the group. Carson advocated that a sense of community and assistance, which is primarily connected with a sense of belonging, was mutual and interactive when considered in the context of belonging to the racial group. When the individual's comprehension of sense of belonging to the racial group is merely well-versed by research, it may hinder the opportunity to conceptualize and enhance our comprehension of sense of belonging.

Stereotypes and Stigmas

Stereotypes and stigmas can harm African American college students upon their arrival to their respective institutions (Massey & Fischer, 2005). The researchers synthesized findings from previous laboratory experiments to develop an ordinary least squares stereotype threat model. The ordinary least squares model was implemented and projected using survey data. In Massey and Fischer's model specification, the presence of negative public views about a minority's intellectual capability was hypothesized to influence members' academic performance through two psychological pathways. Massey and Fischer's model displays two paths and the

direction of the effects hypothesized based on the stereotype threat theory. The two pathways arise to the magnitude that individual minority demographics internalize or externalize negative stereotypes about their demographic's intelligence. Externalization arises when minority students believe that the majority views their intellect as inferior to the majority, resulting in harsh judgment when performing academic tasks. Internalizations occur when minority students themselves begin to believe in the stereotype that they are intellectually inferior to their majority counterparts to some extent (Massey & Fischer, 2005). Internalization and externalization may cause concern that may refer to their academic abilities. The internalization and externalization of negative stereotypes produces two individual pathways to underachievement (Massey & Fischer, 2005).

African American college students may encounter obstacles when they separate themselves from their academic performance as a determining factor of self-esteem to dismiss the psychological distress of potentially approving the negative stereotype (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The reduction of effort allows a college student to reduce mental pressure while attending college. The stress is reduced when African American college students receive low grades because they can blame their poor academic performance on their lack of effort in the classroom rather than any apparent shortcomings of their intellectual capabilities. The students who embark on the externalization pathway tend to reinforce the negative stereotype rather than focus on the objective, which yields an academic performance burden.

Social Status

The social status of a group of individuals might dictate the amount of success they can achieve in an environment. According to Phinney et al. (1990), African Americans need to solve two primary issues or disputes that stem from their status as people of an ostracized group in

American society. The problem that African Americans must settle is society's prejudicial views while understanding the set of morals from the dominant culture and another from their own culture. According to Phinney et al., (1990) African Americans may discover solutions to these issues that end in an attained ethnic identity, or may disregard them, resulting in their identity diffusion. African Americans must recognize that prejudicial stereotypes can only impinge on their identity development if they acknowledge and trust the stereotypes to be true (Corbin & Pruitt, 1997). African Americans can deny these stereotypes and redefine themselves and African American society in more positive ways (Tajfel, 1978).

The second problem is with African Americans' thoughts of exclusion from the environment. While struggling to rediscover or define their ethnic-racial identity, they often struggle to define themselves as being African or American. Being excluded from their environment may promote feelings of anger and resentment (White, 1984). African Americans must struggle with adopting two different value systems. One system is African American, and the other system is European American (Corbin & Pruitt, 1997). Denying any of the two systems can limit their choices, personal growth, social interactions, and economic opportunities (J. L. White & Parham, 1990). If African Americans completely identify with European values of individualism, competitiveness, emotional suppression, and dominance, they may accomplish it at the cost of being excluded from the African American community and isolated psychologically from who they are as persons of African descent (Corbin & Pruitt, 1997).

Many parents pressure their children to make decisions that are in favor of their personal preferences. This mentality of parents wanting their children to accomplish more than they did can take a toll on children's stress and anxiety levels. This parental pressure can be true for many African American students who are first-gen college students. Receiving a college degree

is already challenging and having parents who remind one of the importance of obtaining a degree can drain the student mentally (Aries & Seider, 2005). As a first-gen student transitioning into college, the students are aware that everyone in their families expects them to excel in class and bring value to the family's name (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). High expectations may progressively add stress to the student's mental state because it may force them to deal with their parents' challenges. When a student cannot effectively cope with the pressures of their parent's expectation, the pressure may lead to increased stress, anxiety, and depression as they enter school. Entering a new situation, particularly if the student comes from a close-knit home environment, can cause them to feel the loss of family life (Skyfactor, 2016; Sun, 2015).

Homesickness is another source of student stress. Homesickness has been discussed in some literature, but the varying degrees to which homesickness develops require further consideration. Some students may feel the lack of parental support; others may not be emotionally developed enough to sustain independent living. In many ethnic homes, family connections are the embodiment of a student's life. Therefore, leaving a comfort zone can hurt student success (Aries & Seider, 2005; Sun, 2015). Based on past research, homesickness has been prevalent for decades (Skyfactor, 2016). The data used in a Skyfactor (2016) survey measured the students' separation homesickness levels as they enter a college, with 30% of students reporting high levels of separation homesickness.

Once students leave home to begin their undergraduate journey, their environment changes so drastically that many students struggle to adapt to their new life (Sun, 2015). According to Sun (2015), the level of homesickness may be intensified among minority racial groups. Higher levels of homesickness heighten the students' level of perceived discrimination (Benton, 2018). When African American first-year students enter the college environment that is

dominated by non-African American students, the students develop an increased level of perceived discrimination compared to their non-African American peers (AAC & U News, 2017; Benton, 2018; Bush & Bush, 2010; De Brey et al., 2019). These perceptions of being discriminated against often cause feelings of alienation and isolation, which will make their college adjustment difficult (Bush & Bush, 2010). Factors impacting the students' homesickness, such as their lack of familiarity in their new environment and control over the changes, destabilize a minority student's introduction to university life (Aries & Seider, 2005; Benton, 2018; De Brey et al., 2019).

In addition to feeling homesick, many students may feel uncomfortable leaving their friends and family behind because they did not have the opportunity to attend college (De Brey et al., 2019). Many African American students come from a lower socioeconomic status (SES), so they may believe that it is unfair for them to attend school while their family struggles financially at home (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). This feeling of guilt may cause more stress to the student because they may want to go home to financially support their families (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). Social anxiety, or the inability to fit into a predominantly White atmosphere, is another severe issue leading to stress and depression (Booth & Peker, 2017; Sun, 2015).

The introduction of new environments can cause the student to be intimidated and increase their anxiety as they enter college. While many students are instinctively sociable, a considerable number of students need to put in the effort to develop those connections. Students may experience anxiety from their social surroundings, causing isolation in fear of being rejected by peers (Booth & Peker, 2017).

Paying for college is a tremendous responsibility regardless of the student's economic status. Students and, by association, their parents can become overwhelmed during the process

of paying for college. The cost of tuition and its burden on students and their families, especially African American students, is a significant primary source of stress. Many African Americans struggle to pay for higher education due to their SES (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018), between the years 2014–2016, the pretax income varied by race and ethnicity. The average pretax income was highest for Asians with \$93,390, and the lowest average pretax income was African Americans with \$48,871.

The cost of tuition is not based on the family's income level; therefore, paying for the cost of tuition, books, room and board, parking fees, technology fees, and transportation fees is a difficult challenge for many African American students as they enter college unless they received a full-ride scholarship. These costs affect the students' ability to solely focus on academics (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). It is common for students to apply for part-time jobs to cover tuition costs, which may create a feeling of embarrassment due to their lower SES (Gibbons & Borders, 2010). Students who come from a lower SES background may wish to emulate their peers to not feel out of place socially, thus causing stress to the student because they may try to live above their means to fit in with their peers.

Students are also faced with the stress of time management. As students transition from high school to independent college life, time management is an imperative that may decrease their chances of success if not handled with forethought. The stress they create from mismanaging their time is often caused by increased coursework and expectations from their professors (Primm, 2018). In high school, students receive a detailed schedule that enables them to track their daily routines, but once students arrive at college, they may not handle the new autonomy (Primm, 2018). Time management stress can be a significant concern, especially for the students who are not used to self-regulation and timeliness. Creating a system to get from

one campus location to another can be stressful for a first-semester student, especially for the students attending large colleges.

Levels of Stress and Anxiety

During the England Education Service Advisory Committee conference in 1998, Chan et al. (2010) defined stress as a repulsive emotion, which occurs when people fear that they could not deal with the undue pressures or other types of pressures placed upon them. Chan et al. further defined stress as a reaction to adverse effects such as anger or depression, usually supplemented by potentially pathogenic, physiological, and biochemical changes resulting from facets of the students' condition. The two types of stress can be good stress and bad stress (Yusoff, 2011). Stress that pushes students to perform to their highest abilities is known as good stress, and optimal stress levels can enhance learning ability (Kaplan & Sadock, 2000). Alternatively, stress that causes a student to withdraw from learning is called bad stress. Bad stress must be prevented and avoided (Linn & Zeppa, 1984).

Issues relating to both types of stress have not been the focus of research on minority university students. The primary factors relating to stress, anxiety, and depressive problems regarding African American college students are the fundamental problems of isolation, nonsocial acceptance by White students, financial burdens regarding the high cost of university education, and the lack of preparedness for college academics (Mitchell & Fuller, 2019; Primm, 2018; Ross et al., 2016; Simiyu, 2012; Skyfactor, 2016). While the lack of acceptance, monetary funds, and preparedness are major contributing factors to minority students' anxiety disorders, they only begin to explain the widespread problems faced by these young people. As noted in Schlossberg's transition theory, young adults entering a new phase of life away from adult (parental) supervision and transitioning to any new phase is a process. To transition

successfully, students need to understand the elements of what it means to change a life's focus (Patton et al., 2016).

Anxiety Impairs Attentional Control

In juxtaposition to adopting new lifestyle habits, transitioning without understanding leads to attentional disorders, negatively impacting scholarship (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1998; Patton et al., 2016). Booth and Peker (2017) argued that when an individual exhibits anxiety, other issues intervene as inhibitors of attention or various emotional disorders that reduce success in any new or changing situation. It has long been suggested that anxiety negatively impacts cognitive performance, particularly awareness and cognitive control (Eysenck et al., 2007). While research has been focused on anxious individuals' performance in the presence of potential threats, Booth and Peker suggested it is more critical to understand anxious individuals' performance in nonaffective contexts.

If students are emotionally and academically prepared for college life, they can immerse themselves in academics and extracurricular activities with minimal anxiety issues (Sogari et al., 2018; Stephens et al., 2012). In the case of minority students, particularly first-gen university students from minority households, a university can appear unfeeling, cold, and impersonal (Stephens et al., 2012; Sun, 2015). These mitigating factors negatively impact unprepared and isolated students, especially those of color with little to no support systems embedded in a college setting (Rice et al., 2017; Shields, 2002).

The attentional control theory suggests that anxiety disrupts top-down endogenous control of attention by impeding the central executive inhibition and shifting functions (Eysenck et al., 2007). According to Condrón et al. (2018), those with attentional problems experience statistics anxiety primarily due to their lack of confidence in their ability to succeed. Booth &

Peker (2017) conducted a study using the results illustrating that Stroop interference was not significantly related to anxiety; conflict adaptation effects were explicitly related to state anxiety. According to Booth and Peker (2017), the findings indicate that state anxiety weakens attentional control, but only when other top-down control sources are diminished. The previous statement is especially true when top-down control relaxes following a low-conflict control trial. However, while the Stroop effect tests (i.e., the Stroop Color and Word Test [SCWT]) cognitive attention in a fast-paced situation, it can be argued that other factors such as dyslexia or color blindness might impact results (Scarpina & Tagini, 2017). Therefore, using the SCWT assessment for minority attention deficit does not necessarily fulfill the premise of anxiety and stress felt by minority students in their first year at a university.

Mental Health Services

Dalky and Gharaibeh (2018) noted that psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and stress, is becoming more common among college students. In most instances, college students are not actively seeking treatment for their mental health issues. Students may face potential stressors such as financial hardship, academic overload, competition against peers, continual pressure to succeed, and worries about the future. In the Dalky and Gharaibeh (2018) study, the factors indicated that most college students, 60.2%, did not know how to request social support at the university. Dalky and Gharaibeh noted that over half of the college students (51.2%) were unaware that specific counseling centers were provided on campus. Of the 51.2% of college students who did visit the counseling center, only 24.3% of the college students found the counseling services to be very helpful or helpful (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018). When asked if they had experienced psychological problems during their time at the university, 45.6% of the college students responded that they had (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018).

The discussion of mental health-related stigma and discrimination and its impact on people with mental health problems has been an increasing topic of interest by researchers over the past few years (Thornicroft, 2006). On a personal level, stigma and discrimination may produce an outcome that will cause people with mental health problems to socially exclude themselves because the larger population is less keen to interact with them (Sharac et al., 2010). Such stigma also impacts the students' willingness to seek help for mental health and other health problems, making it less likely that help is sought (Thornicroft, 2008). On an institutional level, Lauber (2008) explained how these negative attitudes could become expressed in the form of discrimination concerning civil rights, housing, employment, and financial arrangements. These negative attitudes, especially concerning the effectiveness of professional care, can also be harmful to mental health services' image and integrity (Ten Have et al., 2010).

Mental Health Problems

Mental health among college students represents a growing concern because of the large number of people who could be reached during a crucial period of life (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). According to Hunt and Eisenberg (2010), there are four primary topics of importance when considering mental disorders. The first is the current state of mental health in the college student population, second is the risk factors associated with college students, third is the noticeable decline in recent years of mental health in this population and probable reasons for this trend, and fourth is the limit to which students with mental health problems are seeking to receive treatment.

College campuses provide some services which might have a positive benefit on mental health; however, accessibility and information about these services are not often apparent, particularly to first-gen, minority students (Nichols & Evans-Bell, 2017). The college campus

represents the primary place where many young adults' academics and social lives are centered on one location. The college campus also provides health services and other support services. Within the college population, it has been shown that specific subgroups have a significantly higher occurrence of mental health problems, which is consistent with studies of the general population. Male undergraduates are at a higher risk for suicide, but female students are more likely to screen positive for major depression and anxiety disorders (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018).

Lack of Self-Care

Another issue that impacts students is self-care. Often, students collect laundry, bringing dirty clothes home for their mother to wash. Other personal hygiene issues have generally been cared for with parental guidance or discussion. While these factors do not provide an obstacle to most adults, first-gen students without familial guidance may descend into depression. The literature on these basics is limited, but these are all significant for collegiate success (Chatterjee et al., 2014). Self-care, financial disparity, and academic confusion are mitigating factors leading to depression, anxiety, and stress, particularly for first-gen students (Asai & Kato, 2014; Chatterjee et al., 2014; McCarron & Inkelas, 2006; Mitchell & Fuller, 2019). Stress, depression, and anxiety influence academic performance. According to Avenevoli et al. (2015), efforts to diminish the individual and public health burden of major depression are dependent upon finding accurate information concerning the scope and clinical features of this illness in the general populace.

Asai and Kato (2014) further suggested that an individual with a low sense of acceptance has high anxiety. Whether familial or institutional, loss of any support requires further investigation, particularly relating to minority first-gen students enabling a more stable and equitable educational system in the United States (Guiffreda, n.d.). Jensen and Nutt (2015)

argued that if a student feels isolated and disliked by colleagues, this feeling also leads to anxiety.

Academic Performance

According to Khubchandani et al. (2016), depression and anxiety are among the most frequent reasons for morbidity, social dysfunction, and reduced academic performance in college students. Bamber and Schneider (2016) noted that research on college students' anxiety stems back to the late 1950s when the measurement of anxiety was first introduced, but continues to be insufficient, particularly about the minority student population. Bamber and Schneider also discussed how these early studies suggested that many college students who were more anxious did not perform as well as the less anxious college students. However, exploring student anxiety in the 1950s was an entirely different phenomenon since the minority student population was isolated to traditional HBCUs and not integrated into White-only schools (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014). Overly anxious college students have difficulty completing tasks with the result of not achieving higher grades (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014). Based on ACHA (2015) results, 30% reported stress as the primary reason students performed poorly in a course, exam, or project, and 45.1% of the college students reported that academics were challenging to handle.

Emotional Openness

Harandi et al. (2017) conducted research on emotional openness or the lack thereof as unexamined barriers to seeking psychological help. The study results showed that greater emotional vulnerability was found to predict a more satisfactory perception of seeking psychological assistance. The factor that uniquely and significantly contributed to predicting reluctance to seek psychological services: males were less likely to seek support (Harandi et al., 2017). Males lacking the interest to seek support can cause negative stigma associated with

attending counseling, lack of openness to emotions, and the inability to understand the severity of their mental state; in addition, the resistance to seeking psychological help may stem from individuals' closed-minded attitudes regarding their emotions. Harandi et al. noted that public education efforts designed to increase the use of psychological services by the general population may be more effective if they were intended to improve comfort with and openness to emotions.

Coping Strategies

Since the 1980s, there has been an increase in research dealing with coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) created a large volume of evidence that helps to clarify the strategy people use to cope with stress. Stress has been linked with many diseases such as substance abuse, heart disease, and anxiety (Plummer & Slane, 1996). African Americans are more vulnerable to these diseases than other ethnic groups. Stress has also been associated with homicide and suicide, which happen at higher percentages in African American communities (Plummer & Slane, 1996).

While there are several ways to define stress, each definition consists of an external challenge that causes the individual to react. Stress is perceived as, at least, potentially exceeding the person's capacity or means to meet the challenges (Belgrave & Allison, 2010). According to Belgrave and Allison (2010), coping refers to attempts to conquer the external challenges when a prior reply is absent or ineffective. Stress and coping responses are associated with the cognitive appraisal of the stressor and the person's internal and external resources.

According to Belgrave and Allison (2010), cognitive appraisal refers to the importance and value of a stressor. The internal resources indicate the individual's factors, such as their character traits, cultural values, racial classification, and social class. The external resources refer to the family or social bonds, work associations, and organization affiliations (Belgrave &

Allison, 2010). The coping strategy is useful when the end state of the stressors, the appraisal of the stressors, and the person's internal and external resources, create a coping response that will produce an adaptive or distressful outcome.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted that researchers usually concur that there are two critical coping strategies. One type of coping strategy is problem-focused, which is used to transform a distressed person's situation by removing the problem's cause. The second key strategy is the emotion-focused coping strategy, in which an effort is made to change either commitment patterns or the understanding of what has occurred. The focused coping strategy may alleviate the stress, although the relationship's tangible reality has not altered (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-focused coping tends to be concentrated on planning strategies or repression of competing interests, while emotion-focused coping is concentrated on receiving emotional and social support from other individuals or organizations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The individual personality influences the use of specific coping styles and strategies and how they appraise the nature of an event and situational factors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Lemaire and Wallace (2010), specific coping strategies are more helpful than other coping strategies, according to the type of stress that is confronted. Plummer and Slane (1996) pointed out that some coping strategies may be perceived as adaptive under certain situations and vice-versa.

Academic Functioning

Bruffaerts et al. (2018) discussed the frequency of mental health problems and the extent to which these problems affect first-year students, including dropping out of school. Reasons for dropouts in the United States show comparability to that of European and Asian nations (Chan et

al., 2010; Walpole, 2003). Some issues include lower socioeconomic status (Walpole, 2003) or the overall lack of social resources (Chan et al., 2010). Also, mental disorders may contribute to college dropout, which is not an over-explored research topic that would benefit from new studies (Kosidou et al., 2014).

Previous studies show that college students with mental disorders are twice as likely to drop out without obtaining a degree (Hartley, 2010). Consistent with Hartley's (2010) finding, between 15% and 23% of college students with mental disorders suggest that they confer a negative academic impact (Kernan & Wheat, 2008). Studies that investigate the association between mental health distress and academic performance in college are much scarcer. Most evidence exists for the finding that depression and suicidal thoughts and behaviors are related to a lower GPA (De Luca et al., 2016).

Adjusting to College Life

Gibbons et al. (2019) examined how first-gen college students adapted and adjusted to college life and what resources would have helped first-gen students as they prepared to enter college. First-gen college students tend to experience considerable stress when transitioning to college (Ishitani, 2003). In addition, first-gen college students are more likely to work longer hours while having more responsibilities than their non-first-gen counterparts (Cutrona et al., 1994). Typically, first-gen college students are not expected to apply to college, attend college, or apply to a prestigious higher education institution (Phinney et al., 2006). First-gen college students also face the challenge of being less successful in their courses than are non-first-gen college students, and often they struggle to complete college (Ishitani, 2006). The first-gen status continues to be a statistically substantial sign of difficulty in adjusting to and achieving college success regardless of demographic and cultural differences (Ishitani, 2006).

Most research on first-gen students is focused on current college students. Still, there remains a dearth of data on African American first-gen students and their anxiety disorders during first-term attendance (Stephens et al., 2014). First-gen college students come to college with slightly lower ACT scores and typically rely on scholarships, grants, and loans to pay for schooling (Martinez et al., 2009). Also, first-gen students are less likely to attain their original educational aspirations than are their peers from college-educated families (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006), often because they must work part-time or full-time during college.

First-gen students struggle with college adjustment. Some students believe they do not matter to their university and often feel disconnected from their peers due to their first-gen status (DeRosa & Dolby, 2014). Lower self-esteem or an external locus of control also directly influences adjustment (Aspelmeier et al., 2012). Many first-gen college students feel underprepared for college, citing difficulties with time management and understanding college culture. Jan et al. (2017) found a negative, substantial correlation between college students' emotional intelligence and their test anxiety with moderate to severe symptoms of depression at $p < 0.01$. For example, the college student who has a high level of emotional intelligence possesses less test anxiety (Jan et al., 2017). Lastly, first-gen minority students have low emotional intelligence and feel insecure at PWIs, thus developing feelings of anxiety, stress, and depression (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018; De Brey et al., 2019; Primm, 2018).

Racial Identity

The perceptions African Americans students have regarding their racial identity may stunt their ability to perform academically as compared to an average college student (Cross, 1991). In explaining the nigrescence model of racial identity, Cross (1971) discussed how African Americans' experiences regarding racism initiates a developmental process through

which the individual discovers the significance of their race to their identity. In 1971, when Cross initially presented the model, it had five stages, then the model was redesigned to four stages in 1991 by merging the last two stages of the original model. The four stages of the Cross (1971) nigrescence model of racial identity are (a) pre-encounter (portrays the reformation of the identity), (b) encounter (an event that made the individual feel compelled to change), (c) immersion–emersion (detailed descriptions that took place throughout the change), and (d) internalization–commitment (describes the impact once the new identity has been accepted). When discussing African American college students, racial identity research findings have shown the impact that racial identity has on the students’ wellbeing, such as self-esteem, low levels of acculturative stress, coping, and academic performance (Smalls et al., 2007).

According to Yap et al. (2011), a sense of belonging is one component that mediates the connection between racial identity and life enjoyment among African American adults. Therefore, a sense of belonging is considered a detached element from racial identity. However, Neville et al.’s (2014) findings concerning adult Black Indigenous Australians indicated a sense of belonging is convoluted and involves multiple factors that apprise Black racial identity. As higher education institutions shift toward a more diverse student population, the institution’s faculty and staff professionals should be aware of the different stages of Black identity development. Cross (1991) believed that expertise in nigrescence for college departments such as student affairs would help gauge the impact of African American college students’ relationships with their peers and the faculty and staff. Pope-Davis et al. (2000) stated that an individual identifying with a racial and cultural group signifies a multifaceted process. The identification process enhances its rate of success as students intermingle with other individuals from different backgrounds.

Pre-encounter Stage

The pre-encounter stage includes a wide range of attitudes, which vary from low importance to neutrality of race to anti-Black (Cross, 1971). During the pre-encounter stage, race is not a primary focus in African American daily lives. Other facets, such as African American careers, hobbies, and personal lives, are more critical. During the pre-encounter stage, people do not recognize that their racial identity impacts their lives, while others understand by vicariously living through other individuals (Cross, 1991). Some African Americans also view their identity as necessary, while others carry a negative mindset toward their racial identity (Cross, 1991). According to Cross (1991), when non-African Americans opposed other African Americans, they felt isolated from them and did not see Blacks as genuine suppliers of personal support. The pre-encounter stage is relevant because it describes how understanding racial identity, or lack thereof, could impact how African American students integrate within their respective universities.

Encounter Stage

During the encounter stage, the African American encounters two steps: the encounter and personalized steps. These two steps may alter the significance of their ideology and worldview (events such as attending an African American museum, getting pulled over by the police, or attending a family reunion). The encounter step occurs when the individual experiences an event that influences how they perceive their race. The action the African American takes as a result of the event's personal effect on that individual's worldview is called the personalized step. Cross (1991) explained that the encounter does not need to be harmful for the event to have impacted a person toward nigrescence. What is essential is that the encounter must have a significant impact on the mechanism that provokes change in the way they see

themselves. For example, an African American residing in a region cohabited by non-Blacks attending an HBCU may view themselves differently after spending a certain amount of time at the institution.

Immersion–Emersion Stage

The immersion–emersion stage encompasses a remarkable facet of Black identity development because it represents psychological nigrescence (Cross, 1991). During the immersion–emersion stage, African Americans begin to discard their old worldview and assemble a new reference frame with the knowledge they have discovered about race. The person has not entirely changed, but they are committed to changing their worldview. Cross (1991) stated that immersion is a powerful, influential, and controlling sensation that is continuously energized by rage, guilt, and developing a sense of pride. A feeling of anger that occurs during the immersion–emersion stage can be a means for African American students to begin seeking out history that embodies a culture that they were never aware of in the past. Cross (1991) stated that an enigma conversion is that while protesting the broader population, the individual may willingly convert conform to Black organizations' demands.

Internalization Stage

The internalization stage consists of a transition phase in which the individual is working through a new identity's issues and problems (Cross, 1991). During this stage, the individual does not focus on how others view them, and they begin to focus on how they view themselves. Cross (1991) stated that the individual demonstrates a reconstruction of their stable state personality and cognitive approach to how they view themselves in the internalization stage. In the internalization stage, African Americans begin to think seriously about their racial identity from a different perspective and how it has affected their lives. As a result of their newfound

identity, they begin to accept what it means to be African American and have a self-love that they radiate into their environment. The internalization–commitment stage focuses on African Americans’ long-term interest over an extended amount of time (Cross, 1991).

Summary

The examination of the literature relating to African American students experiencing stress, depression, and anxiety exposed these students’ problems. What is not sufficiently explored are the different factors that mitigate emotional problems in African American students. These issues include financial resources, academic preparedness for college life, feelings of isolation, and lack of resources for seeking mental health counseling. Researchers have begun to collect information on these issues to understand and help institutions build more supportive networks for African American students. Still, more studies need to be conducted to further advance African American students at the university level. African American college students especially experience stress and anxiety due to several stressors. Stressors, due to moving away from home and transitioning to a new environment where they may feel excluded, increase the pressures of performing and their peers on the academic scale, and the stress of having to socialize with students from different backgrounds.

Student anxiety increases during the initial transition to college. College students in today’s world appear more stressed and anxious than in past generations. The first year of college is an especially high-risk time for the onset or worsening of anxiety. First-year college students who are unaware of the support services that can help them with their anxiety tend to suffer more than students aware of the services. First-gen students are not reduced to just excelling academically. They are also faced with the pressures of serving as role models for their friends and families back home. In many cases, these students are continuing to support

their family while trying to find out how they will support themselves in college. Gaps in the literature do not sufficiently explore solutions for these minority students or for the respective institutions that can enable student success.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to understand participant descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. Chapter Three includes information about the design, research questions, setting, researcher's role, participants, procedures, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter also includes an explanation of the steps I will take to ensure the findings' trustworthiness. Chapter Three concludes by addressing the ethical considerations of the study, followed by a concise summary.

Design

This study was a qualitative research methodology using a case study research design. The qualitative research methodology was appropriate for my study because it provided details about human behavior, which are challenging to obtain via quantitative research methodology. A qualitative research method can also provide an essential understanding of interpersonal relationships through interviews and participant observation (Agee, 2009). According to Agee (2009), qualitative research begins with a question stemming from an intellectual curiosity for a particular topic.

My interest in this topic started when I was in undergraduate school as I observed how stress, depression, and anxiety affected African American students. Furthermore, Creswell (2012) explained the use of a qualitative design is best when the researcher is unaware of the variables within a topic and further research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the issue. More research is needed on this topic because there is a lack of literature and research on how stress, depression, and anxiety impact undergraduate African American students.

Qualitative case studies focus on the characteristics of a specific group of people to provide detailed descriptions of human interactions during their worldly experience (Agee, 2009). I selected the qualitative design for this study to better understand the participants' descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students' success during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University.

The case study was an appropriate research design because it is valuable when seeking the answers to questions beginning with "how" and "why." Case study research designs are advantageous when theoretical models are tested by applying the models in real world situations. This offered more value due to the study involving a depth study of a particular event instead of a statistical survey. According to Crowe et al. (2011), the case study method is a strategy of inquiry that allows a researcher to explore a program, event, or one or more individuals in detail. Crowe et al. (2011) explained that case studies explore a topic over time using detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple information-rich sources in context. Case studies are also useful when the researcher describes a phenomenon, what is happening, and why it is happening (Crowe et al., 2011).

Research Questions

This case study of the ways that stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University will be guided by one CRQ and three additional SQs.

CRQ: How do stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University?

SQ1: What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by stress during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?

SQ2: What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by depression during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?

SQ3: What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by anxiety during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?

Setting

The setting for this qualitative case study was House A&M University. Founded in 1866, there are presently multiple campuses located throughout the state of Texas (Kimutai, 2017). House A&M University has an enrollment of 69,879, consisting of 54,582 undergraduates and 15,297 graduate students (NCES, n.d.). Of the total enrollment of the University, 25% of the students are first-gen college students. House A&M University provides students with many opportunities to receive higher education by offering online and traditional courses. The university has 19 colleges and schools on campus, providing over 130 undergraduate degrees, 175 master's degree programs, 92 doctoral degree programs, and five professional degree programs (Texas A&M University, n.d.). The surrounding metropolitan area has an approximate population of over 200,000 (Unipage, n.d.).

House A&M University is one of only 17 institutions in the nation to hold the triple designation as a land-grant, sea-grant, and space-grant university (Unipage, n.d.). House A&M University was recognized in 2019 with the Higher Education Excellence in Diversity award (Texas A&M University, n.d.). House A&M credits their establishment to the Morrill Act, which was approved on July 2, 1862 by the United States Congress (Texas A&M University, n.d.). According to Simons (2000), the Morrill Act of 1862 allowed the donation of public land to the states for funding higher education whose leading reason shall be to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and mechanic arts.

In 1871, the Morrill Act allowed the University to accept an offer of 2,416 acres of land from Brazos County (Simons, 2000). The Morrill Act required that all students attending the university must participate in military training. The military program, referred to as the Corps of Cadets, is well known for being the largest uniformed body of all academic programs on campus, producing more officers than any other institution in the nation other than the military academies (i.e., West Point, Citadel, Virginia Military Institute; Texas A&M University, n.d.). House A&M University has a robust global presence due to establishing collaborations and providing education for countries such as Qatar, Mexico, and several countries in Europe (Texas A&M University, n.d.). As stated on their website, the mission of the institution is that Texas A&M University is dedicated to the discovery, development, communication, and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields (Texas A&M University, n.d.).

Participants

This qualitative case study's targeted participants encompassed 10–12 African American freshman, first-year undergraduate students at House A&M University, who were selected using purposeful sampling techniques. The participants chosen for the study had to meet the study criteria to provide information that is most relevant to the study. Palinkas et al. (2015) explained how purposeful sampling enables a researcher to use information-focused cases for in-depth study. Information-focused cases provide a great deal of information that individuals could learn from regarding the subject of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposeful sampling entails the selection of participants for a qualitative study who fit the required profile. In this case study, African American first-year undergraduate students matched the required criteria.

Procedures

Following a successful proposal defense, I gained approval for the study from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix A). Upon IRB approval, I contacted House A&M University for consent to complete the study at their university. Once permission was granted, I contacted the dean at each college for approval to contact their students. Participants were contacted using university email databases. Participants were provided information about the purpose of the study and information related to admissibility for participation in the study (see Appendix B). To obtain qualified candidates for the study, I emailed screening questionnaires to the students who attend the university. The students had to complete and return the questionnaires.

Once 30 submitted questionnaires were received, I reviewed the questionnaires to choose the participants who were best suited for the study. This screening process continued until 12 participants who met the criteria were selected. During the initial contact, the participants were briefed about their role in the study and provided a consent form (see Appendix C). Once 12 qualified participants were chosen, I signed the informed consent form from each participant, then contacted the each participant to schedule a time to conduct an individual interview. I informed the participants about their right to refuse to participate in an interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

Semistructured individual interviews were the primary means of data collection (see Appendix D). Each interview was audio-recorded. After completing and transcribing all interviews, 5 of the participants were selected for participation in a focus group interview. The criteria for selecting the individuals for the focus group interview was based on how the participants answered the questions during the individual interviews. The essential purpose of

the focus group interview was to expound upon the topics discussed during the individual interviews. The focus group interview also helped me to examine a shared understanding between the individual interview responses to the focus group interviews.

The focus group interview were video-recorded to ensure that participants are appropriately acknowledged for their responses during the transcription process. The transcription software was used to ensure an accurate account of the recorded interview. The recorded file will be kept in a locked safe for three years that only I, as the researcher, can access. After the interviews, the participants were contacted to ensure that the transcription accurately reflects what they stated during the interview. Once all the interviews were conducted, the notes and transcripts were used to compare the interviews.

The Researcher's Role

I selected House A&M University due to the diverse group of students enrolled at the institution. I served as a residence coordinator at the university in the past, which allowed me to use my experience to develop probing questions. Due to the likelihood of my experiences being similar to those of some participants, I took the proper steps to prevent biases from impacting the interview process and data analysis. My self-reflection involved my engagements, experiences, preferences, assumptions, and relationships related to the study.

The purpose of self-reflection is to determine how much the study related to my experiences. I was focused on describing the participants' experiences during the first semester of college at House A&M University. I protected the privacy rights of participants. I did not have any prior knowledge or personal connection with participants to reduce bias during the semistructured and focus group interview process. The role of the researcher is to monitor, develop, collect, analyze, and present findings. As the researcher, I reduced bias to ensure that I

could internalize multiple perspectives. As the only researcher, I analyzed the data. While not being personally acquainted with the participants, the students participating in the study had the qualities required to conduct the study efficiently. A similar cultural background, ethnicity, and economic or social upbringing might have caused natural biases throughout the interview process.

Data Collection

For this study, I explained African American students' problems during their first undergraduate semester. To ensure that I collected data that pertained to the study, I incorporated logic linking, which is the process of linking the logical data to the propositions, therefore, confirming the correct type and amount of relevant information was collected. A criterion for interpreting the findings was established, and all pertinent data collected during the data collection phase ensured that the study was appropriately developed. The data collection process consisted of a screening questionnaire, administrative documents from the university, individual interviews, and a single focus group interview. Each form of data collection had an important role. The participants received questionnaires to which they could reply anonymously. Numerical identities supplanted the names of the participants. I used the questionnaires to gather preliminary information from each participant before the interviews. After gathering the information from the participants, I conduct one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with each participant. Following the individual interview and with the participant's approval, six of the total participants were asked to participate in a video-recorded focus group interview (see Appendix F).

Screening Questionnaire

Screening questionnaires were an essential component of the selection process. During the screening questionnaire process, the participants received a document with a predetermined set of questions designed to select the study participants. The questionnaire was appropriate because it allowed me to screen the potential participants to ensure the students met the criteria before conducting the semistructured interviews. The students had to be a first-year undergraduate, African American, and must have experienced stress, depression, and/or anxiety.

The screening questionnaire included a variety of multiple-choice questions. Using multiple-choice questions provided the participants with several options to select. The screening questions for the surveys are listed below:

1. What is your classification?
 - a. Freshman, first semester
 - b. Freshman, second semester
2. Would you classify yourself as African American?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Indicate which of the following conditions you have experienced as a freshman.
 - a. Stress
 - b. Depression
 - c. Anxiety
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above

Documents

Documents were the second type of data collected for this study. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a form of data collection in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give value to the topic discussed in the study. I analyzed the administrative documents from the university during data collection. Documents were considered public records and included memos, formal policy statements, or documents displayed on the institution's website. Other documents were official university statistics relating to the ratio of counseling appointments scheduled to appointment attended, number of appointments attended by gender, and the major reasons for attending the counseling services. I analyzed the university's official documents regarding the counseling service; specifically, the ratio of staff to students receiving counseling services. The counseling services were contacted to provide interviewing strategies I could implement with the group I interviewed for the study. I also used my notes taken during the individual interviews with each participant.

Individual Interviews

The participant selected the location, date, time, and method of the interview. The interview could be held in a small-sized room or via teleconference due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The purpose of choosing a small-sized room was to create an intimate setting that would allow the students to feel more comfortable and allow the proper safe distance throughout the interview. The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to provide knowledge based on the values that life experiences held for the interviewees (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). If the participants were uncomfortable meeting in person, the interview was conducted via teleconference. Pilot testing was conducted before the individual interviews. According to Malmqvist et al. (2019), pilot studies are used as a smaller version of studies and pretest a

particular research instrument. Pilot testing the questions allowed me to test my interview questions on three individuals before the main study was conducted. Piloting the questions assisted in detecting potential issues that might have occurred during the interviews. Throughout the pilot interview, I assessed how each participant responded to the question and noted if the participant could comprehend the question being asked. The pilot testing for the individual interviews was held via teleconference to expedite the piloting process.

Following are the standardized open-ended interview questions with the CRQ and/or the research SQ noted in parentheses for each.

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another.
2. What impact has stress, depression, and anxiety had on your first semester as you transitioned into college? (CRQ)
3. Please explain a scenario(s) in which you have experienced anxiety, stress, or depression during your first semester in college. (RQ2)
4. Of the experiences you identified, which would you say was the most significant experience? (RQ2)
5. What involvement did the counseling services have during your first semester of college at House A&M University? (RQ3)
6. Please describe the counseling services on campus. This may include the hours of operation, appointment hours, numbers of sessions allotted, and anything else you may deem relevant. (RQ3)
7. At what stage of stress, depression, or anxiety do you believe you should begin to seek help? (RQ1)

8. Describe your stress, depression, and anxiety during your first semester in college.

What are some triggers that placed you in a state of stress, depression, or anxiety?

(CRQ)

9. Describe how your parents perceive your transition into college. (RQ1)

10. Describe a time during your first semester in college when you sought help for signs of stress, depression, and anxiety you experienced while in college.

11. Tell me about the struggles you have experienced regarding your mental health since graduating high school as you transitioned to college. (RQ2)

12. What else do you think would be vital for me to know regarding your experiences with stress, depression, and anxiety?

Question 1 was designed to develop a rapport with the participants by allowing the participant to feel comfortable, which enhanced the quality of the interview as it progressed. Asking questions regarding their personal experiences also allowed for a significantly higher degree of intimacy (Seidman, 1998). Because I had limited knowledge regarding the person being interviewed, it was essential to ask Question 1 before asking intimate questions.

Question 2 was asked to understand the participant's experiences during their freshman year, in juxtaposition to adopting new lifestyle habits; transitioning without understanding leads to attentional disorders, negatively impacting scholarship (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1998; Patton et al., 2016). Each participant has their own experiences, so it was essential to allow them the opportunity to recount their experiences during the interview.

Question 3 allowed the participants to discuss the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety during their first undergraduate semester, which established the foundation for the individual interview. Overly anxious college students have difficulty completing tasks resulting

from not achieving higher grades (Gasman & Arroyo, 2014). Question 4 was valuable because it gave the participant a chance to reminisce about their past. Question 4 also prepared the participants for subsequent questions during the interview. Chan et al. (2010) defined stress as a repulsive emotion, which occurs when people fear that they could not deal with the undue pressures or other types of pressures placed upon them.

Question 5 allowed the participant to evaluate and rate the counseling services at their university. However, accessibility and information about these services are not often apparent, particularly to first-gen, minority students (Nichols & Evans-Bell, 2017). Universities provide the students with an opportunity to seek help, but some universities may have difficulty promoting the services they have to offer these students.

Question 6 was asked to gain a better understanding of the counseling services provided on campus. Answers to this question will help the readers understand how the participants viewed counseling services and what it would take to seek help. According to Furr et al. (2001), college students who present with depressive symptoms to college counseling centers attribute their symptoms to academic difficulties more frequently than they do to any other reason. Question 6 provided transparency between the students and the university and answers to this question may help the university to prioritize services that directly impact the students.

Question 7 was asked once I believed that the participant had given me enough information regarding their views on the counseling services the university provides to the students. Dalky and Gharaibeh (2018) found that most college students (60.2%) did not know how to request social support at the university. Question 7 helped create a shared understanding of the participants' perceptions of anxiety, stress, and depression in their first college semester. Question 7 was essential because it placed the participant in a vulnerable state. This

vulnerability might have caused the participant to express their opinions on what could potentially be the causes of their stress, depression, and anxiety.

Question 8 allowed the participant to describe their stress, depression, and anxiety, which affects students in various ways. The attentional control theory suggests that anxiety disrupts top-down endogenous control of attention by impeding the central executive inhibition and shifting functions (Eysenck et al., 2007). According to Condrón et al. (2018), those with attentional problems experience statistics anxiety primarily due to their lack of confidence in their ability to succeed. Question 8 was essential because it might reveal how the participant interprets their stress, depression, and anxiety.

Question 9 allowed the participant to explain their experiences regarding the transitioning process from high school to college. According to Schlossberg et al. (1995), a transition is any event or situation that results in changed relationships, routines, and roles. The participants were asked to describe their experiences and how they were able to adapt to their new environment. Question 9 relates to Schlossberg transition theory, which focuses on the transitions that adults experience throughout life and the strategies used to cope with the transition.

Questions 10 offered the participant the opportunity to describe how they sought help for their stress, depression, and anxiety. Researchers have disclosed that underutilization of mental health services is related to the students' attitudes toward seeking help from the counseling services (Picco et al., 2016). African American students, especially first-gen college students, have reported lower use of counseling services and greater negative self-stigma and attitudes toward seeking counseling than have other college students (DeFreitas et al., 2018).

Questions 11 allowed the participant to discuss the struggles they have experienced. Other stressors for parents and their students are the intricacies implicit in seeking financial aid

and the inability to assist them in making decisions about their college experience (Engle, 2007; Mitchell & Fuller, 2019). Question 11 also enabled the participant to explain how they dealt with their struggles and to provide advice to future students attending the university. In general, students feel stress due to various situations such as financial hardship, lack of family support, indecision about college study preferences, or insufficient preparedness for college requirements (Rice et al., 2017; Shields, 2002; Simiyu, 2012).

Question 12 was open-ended to allow the participant to answer in detail. Question 12 gave the participant the freedom to make any statement they deem essential for the interview. The participant could also answer any question previously asked in detail, which might have helped qualify and clarify their previous responses. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), interview questions may help develop an understanding of experiences and reconstruct events in which one did not participate. Question 12 might have encouraged the participant to discuss any topic not discussed during the interview.

Focus Group Interview

A focus group interview was used as another method of data collection for this study. The questions were designed to help the participants articulate their detailed personal and group experiences (Rust, 2001). Focus group interviews allowed the participants to build upon how others respond. Pilot testing was conducted prior to the official focus group interviews. Similar to the pilot testing conducted during the individual interviews, I assessed how each participant in the focus group responded to the question and noted if the participants were able to comprehend the question being asked. The focus group interview questions were determined by the responses given during the individual interviews. However, I developed questions to help guide the focus group interview if the participants were uncomfortable with the initial conversation.

The intent of the group focus interview was not to ask every question I developed. I only asked the questions to assist in the dialogue between the participants when needed. The semistructured nature of the following focus group interview questions allowed the participants to expound upon the responses they articulated during the initial interviews. The questions were structured in a manner that created an in-depth conversation between six participants. Following are the standardized open-ended focus group interview questions with the CRQ and/or the research SQ noted in parentheses for each.

1. Describe any specific moments when you were anxious, depressed, or stressed during your first college semester. (SQ1)
2. What are your thoughts regarding dropping out of college due to the overwhelming feeling of anxiety, depression, or stress? If so, why?
3. What services do you believe would have been helpful to use on campus during your first semester in college? (SQ3)
4. What are your descriptions of the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on your experiences during their first college semester? (CRQ)
5. Explain how you would feel if you knew one of your peers was battling stress, depression, and anxiety. What support would you believe you could provide for the fellow student? (SQ2)
6. Please describe your perceptions of the orientation process you had upon arrival at the university. (SQ2)
7. What other experiences would you like to share regarding the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety during your first semester in college that were not discussed in the other interview questions? (CRQ)

The questions listed above were answered by those participating in the focus group interview. Follow-up questions were asked in combination with the predetermined questions. The follow-up questions allowed the participant to elaborate on the questions they were asked from the individual interviews.

Question 1 included recognition of the symptoms of stress overload. Researchers have found stress overload to be linked with cognitive disturbances, including complications in focusing on, recollecting, and accomplishing responsibilities (Lunney, 2006). Stress is a common topic among college students, and when the stressful encounters surpass the coping resources available, multiple issues frequently occur (Sharon, 2005).

Question 2 related to the participants' dropout intentions, the approximate chances of postponing studies, resulting from the dropout syndrome within the student attrition model developed by Bean (1982). This question delved into information from studies in which the relationship between dropout intention and actual dropout has been consistently stressed (Cabrera et al., 1993).

Question 3 allowed the participants to describe the benefits of particular services provided on campus for incoming first-year students. This question also explored the campus resources such as orientation leaders and mentors who are committed to and engaged in ensuring the first-year students are acclimated to the university (Okun et al., 1996).

Question 4 clarified the impact stress, depression, and anxiety had on the experiences of students currently in their first semester at the university. Students experience an increase in new demands and rising academic pressures from the university, which provokes an array of emotions among students, which can positively or negatively impact their academic success (Pekrun & Stephens, 2010)

Question 5 explored the importance of providing support to a peer while at the university and gave the participants the opportunity to describe their course of action if they witnessed a peer experiencing a traumatic event that may lead to stress, depression, or anxiety. The question was used to bring awareness to the growing mental health problems the students face while in college, which increases the demand for the implementation of counseling services offered by professionally qualified and trained personnel for the students attending the institution (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010).

Questions 6 and 7 helped inform the CRQ related to the ways stress, depression, and anxiety affect participants' experiences at House A&M University. Questions 6 and 7 allowed the participants to explain their experiences regarding their adaptation to life transitions and how they perceived the orientation process upon their arrival at the university.

Data Analysis

In this case study, data were analyzed to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to focus on the primary propositions (Yin, 2003). In a qualitative case study, the researcher must conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously. Due to several data sources and simultaneous collection and analysis, I created a system to manage the data collected. The management of data collection expedited the initiation of the analysis process, by tracking codes and themes. Each interview was recorded via audiotape and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. After the interviews were transcribed, an exact copy was used for member checking. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is a technique used to validate results' credibility. After the interviews were conducted, I sent a copy of the interview

transcript to each participant, allowing them to review the transcript. Member checks are conducted to ensure participants have an opportunity to review and clarify what they stated (Birt et al., 2016).

The transcribed version of the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews showing significant findings, themes, and descriptions were presented for member checking by the participants. Once member checking was completed, I analyzed data from each interview to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on the participants.

Tracy (2013) explained that coding is the dynamic process of identifying, labeling, and systemizing data related to a phenomenon. During the coding and reducing stage, the different categories and themes are identified. When analyzing data, the researcher needs to illustrate the differences that exist within the study's topic. For this study, I am looking for the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that the art of comparison concerns the creative processes and the interplay between data and researchers when gathering and analyzing data.

The analysis process for this study consisted of a five-phased cycle. The five phases are (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling (and arraying), (d) Interpreting, and (e) concluding (Yin, 2011). Upon receiving data, I sorted the data to establish a database of the study's information. Once I compiled the data, the data were dissembled and assigned to different codes. Coding the data is one of the most important stages in the qualitative data analysis process, and involves creating labels for allocating identified themes or topics from the data compiled (Wong, 2008). As previously stated, I manually coded and utilized to code data.

I coded the data in the order in which the data were received. I created codes based on the recurring themes that come up in the various types of data collected. I began by formatting and reviewing the raw data files in detail to become more familiar with the data and to understand the data collected. Once the data were reviewed, I assigned themes manually and through the utilization of special software. Butina (2015) advised that when manually coding, one should be cognizant that individual sections of the data may be coded into more than one category. A considerable amount of the data may not be assigned to any category. During the analysis, I detected consistency within the data to establish the themes and categories. After disassembling the data, I began rearranging the data. Rearrangements may be simplified by representing the data graphically or displaying them in lists (Yin, 2011). I interpreted the reassembled data. According to Yin (2011), the initial interpretations may lead to the desire to recompile the data differently. I tracked the codes in a codebook via a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for organizational purposes throughout the data analysis process. Last, I explained the participants' perspectives on the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impacted them during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University.

For analyzing the screening questionnaire, administrative documents from the university, individual interviews, and a single focus group interview, I used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program available from QSR International. QSR International provides many advantages that may significantly improve research quality (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). The benefits of NVivo software are that it enables a researcher to manage data and ideas, query data, and assist in modeling data to graphics or tables (Hilal & Alabri, 2013). NVivo 10 was not utilized as the primary coding source and was only used to solidify data analysis.

Throughout the analysis process, I implemented the proper steps to monitor and reduce bias. During the interview process, I actively listened to each participant to assimilate data without bias. I was open to receiving data even if contrary to my personal beliefs. The pursuit of contrary findings may reduce the likelihood of bias (Yin, 2018). Each interview was transcribed and coded to ensure a deep understanding of the interview's content. I structured each question to offer participants the opportunity to answer the questions at their prerogative. Yin (2011) suggested that establishing clear rules may help minimize bias in research. Another step to reduce bias throughout the study was not interviewing a participant with whom I had a direct relationship, to prevent a conflict of interest.

Trustworthiness

As a qualitative researcher, it was vital that I ensured the data were accurate. Trustworthiness is the primary criterion for excellence in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), there are eight validation strategies to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative research findings. The eight validation strategies are prolonged observation and engagement in the field, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias from the outset of the study, member checking, providing a detailed and thick description to allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability, and external audits. Clarifying research bias from the outset of the study was the first validation strategy I used. I have explained my purpose for this strategy in a previous section of this chapter. The second validation strategy I used was to conduct member checks. Conducting member checks will be helpful to ensure internal validity. By allowing the participants to review their transcripts, they can validate the accuracy of the interview content. The last strategy I used

was to provide a detailed description of the data through semi-structured interviews, allowing readers to decide transferability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the validity of the information gathered from the participant (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Credibility information must be both believable and appropriate, mainly showing agreement between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2012). To prove that my findings are credible, I used member checking. According to Koelsch (2013), member checking has been used to gauge the exactness with which a researcher has represented a participant's point of view. After I obtained and reviewed the transcripts, I contacted each participant and invite them to verify the transcripts, ensuring each transcript matched the audio record.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data. In this case, using the data from the selected participants, there should be the consistency of the research findings and the clarity to which research procedures are documented (Sandelowski, 1986). This consistency allows someone outside the study to audit and critique the research process (Sandelowski, 1986). I also audited the findings to establish dependability, which ensured that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. I maintained an audit trail of the process, highlighting every step of data analysis to provide a rationale for the decisions made. A detailed description was used to show that the findings apply to other contexts.

Confirmability ensures that researchers interpret the outcomes without any personal bias (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and signifies the extent to which the findings could be confirmed or validated by other individuals. There are several strategies for confirmability. When implanting

confirmability, the application of an audit trail is an advocated method (Schwandt, 2015). Audit trails are one of the most popular methods used to verify confirmability because confirmability is valuable when the researcher is transcribing the findings. An audit trail is a description of the process of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the data described by the researcher (Given, 2008). Along with dependability and transferability, triangulating results with other studies will demonstrate that the collected data are confirmed by other research studies and has research validity (Creswell, 2012).

Transferability

Transferability refers to how qualitative research findings can be transferred to other circumstances or situations (Given, 2008). The study data should be similar to that gathered from different participants who have experienced the same phenomenon (Schwandt, 2015). Qualitative data from one study should be stable and dependable for transference to other studies by different researchers. If the data do not substantiate other studies, then they are neither dependable nor transferable. The data from this study will enable other researchers to conduct further studies (Creswell, 2012).

Ethical Considerations

While conducting the study, I adhered to the practice standards to guarantee the individuals participating in the study were informed of their rights. I also informed them that their identity would remain anonymous. At Liberty University, the IRB is in charge of assuring participants' human rights and welfare while involved in the research (Liberty University, n.d.). Tracy (2013) noted that it is vital for participants to understand the possible risks and benefits of a study. The present study followed the guidelines linked to informed consent. Clear and concise information was delivered verbally and in written form to confirm that the participants

fully understood the procedure, outcomes, and purpose of the research (Tracy, 2013). The participants were informed that the interview would occur at a convenient time to prevent the study from negatively impacting their daily academic schedule. The participants had the opportunity to discontinue participation in the study, upon request, without any adverse action.

Ethical considerations for each participant included preserving each questionnaire and survey with anonymous coding. Each document was numbered to match coded numbers on recorded and transcribed interviews. Until the dissertation is accepted by the university, results and original documents will be kept in a locked file for a period not to exceed 3 years. As the sole researcher, I have the only access to these documents. I will strictly follow guidelines from the Liberty University IRB to protect the participants' rights.

Summary

Chapter Three included thorough information related to this study about African American first-year student descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact their experiences at House A&M University. Chapter Three began with the overview, followed by a detailed description of the research design and research questions.

This study took place at House A&M University, and participants were first-year, first-semester students. Chapter Three included detailed discussion of the procedures to be used when conducting the study as well as the researcher's role. Data were collected to initiate the screening process to select the participants who best fit the study requirements. Semistructured interviews and focus group interviews served as sources of data collection. Chapter Three also included a detailed description of the different methods that were implemented to analyze the collected data. The trustworthiness of the data was summarized to ensure the validity of the data

collected in the study. Last, the chapter concluded with an explanation of the ethical considerations that prevented violation of the participants' rights throughout the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students' success during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The themes were revealed based on individual interviews, group interview and administrative documents. Chapter Four introduces the study participants and presents their perceptions of the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students' success during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. After introducing the participants, the three research questions will be discussed based on data analyzed from individual and focus group interviews. The development of themes and other graphics will be shown based on the significance of the three research questions. Finally, the responses given by the participants will be analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These coding techniques assist in establishing the common themes within the interviews.

Participants

The 10 participants gave their consent to participate in the case study. After they provided their consent, the participants were assigned pseudonyms selected from the top names over the last 100 years (Social Security Administration [SSA], 2021). Each participant was made aware that their identity would remain confidential during and after the study. The students who decided to partake in this study included eight males and two females. The participants' demographic breakdown was African American freshman, first-year undergraduate students at House A&M University that experience stress, depression, and anxiety. The

academic majors of the participants encompassed English, engineering, math, education, and so on.

James

At the time of the study, James was an engineering major in his first year of college, and an active student in his school's department. Academically, James excelled, and he belonged to several organizations that allow him to exploit his natural talents. James had a calm personality when discussing issues that may be deemed sensitive.

Robert

At the time of the study, Robert was a math major in his first year of college. This student had the voice and physical presence that gained the respect of the student body. Robert was interested in politics and planned on becoming a member of the student government association. Robert already had an understanding of how important mental health can be to the people within the community. He had a bright personality and passion that can motivate many people through conversations.

John

At the time of the study, John was a student who had begun the journey in academia later in life. John was a valued member of the community and a strong leader within the local church, which he attended every weekend. John believed all things can be accomplished through Christ. John grew up with family members who were aware of the impact of mental health. He was well known for taking the initiative to develop those who were without a mentor.

Michael

Michael has been deemed a true lover of wisdom by his colleagues. At the time of the study, Michael was pursuing a degree in business while taking the initiative to obtain a minor in

finance. Michael's hobbies were playing video games and sports on the weekends. He did not have many Family members in his personal life who have attended college. Michael was absorbing college life one step at a time and had plans on joining the school's honor society the following year.

William

At the time of the study, William was an education major who was strongly influenced by the work of John Dewey and Booker T. Washington. William had a reserved personality with a work ethic that overshadowed his reserved nature. William admitted that his timid nature was due to the things and events he experienced when growing up; however, he continues to make an effort to become more sociable while in college.

David

At the time of the study, David was a student-athlete who prioritizes academics above sports. He is an education major that understood how education can contribute to career success after college. Due to being a member of a collegiate team, David does a lot of traveling, which conflicts with the amount of time available to socialize with peers on campus. David has become accustomed to balancing his attention between sports and academics.

Emma

Emma was a very disciplined person who understood what must be done to accomplish each goal. Emma is an information technology major. At the time of the study, Emma had already developed a vision board that described 5- and 10-year goals for her professional and personal life. Emma's primary focus was to graduate college as soon as possible and secure a job working for a technology company. Emma has multiple certifications in the field of technology and meets with peers weekly to discuss their goals.

Joseph

Joseph was a bright student with a colorful personality. Joseph is a political science major who is social media-savvy person who was intrigued by being aware of the latest news. At the time of the study, Joseph was interested in the entertainment business and had been networking with multiple companies. Joseph was highly invested in campus life and had many ideas for making the campus more sociable.

Olivia

At the time of the study, Olivia was a student whose primary focus was self-development. Olivia had suffered high levels of stress and anxiety in high school, giving her previous experience with handling challenging events. Olivia perceived stress and anxiety as severe disorders if therapy is not sought appropriately. Olivia has already established a voice in the community regarding stress, depression, and anxiety.

Charles

At the time of the study, Charles was a student who worked on campus and had a work ethic that exceeded those of others on campus. Charles had experienced the stress that life can inflict on a person through personal experience. Charles was a first-generation college attendee who had to work to pay for school. Even though Charles had a job while in school, Charles still found a way to get involved.

Results

The results from the study comprised data collected from the 10 participants. The responses from the participants supported the three research questions on the impact that stress, depression, and anxiety have on African American student success. The collected data were derived from interview questions, and the focus group questions were completed via

triangulation (Creswell, 2007). While each interview was being conducted, common themes began to emerge. The interview responses given by the participants were analyzed using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. These coding techniques assisted in establishing the common themes within the interviews. As previously stated, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcribed version of the semi-structured individual and focus group interviews showing significant findings, themes, and descriptions were presented for member checking by the participants. Once member checking had been completed, I began analyzing each interview transcript to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on the participants. The data were analyzed by examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence to focus on the primary propositions (Yin, 2003).

Theme Development

The purpose of this case study was to understand participants' perceptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact the success of African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The data collected and coding themes were established through individual interviews, focus group interviews, and administrative documents. The data were analyzed using open coding, followed by selective coding, and then further axial coding. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed during the interviews. When gathering and analyzing the data, each interview underwent a thorough process to develop a theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The qualitative data analysis process is recurring without determinate interpretation and involves researchers constantly returning to data and the coding process throughout the analysis process.

Jones et al. (2016) proposed four phases of theme development: initialization, construction, rectification, and finalization. Initialization consists of reading transcriptions,

coding, observing for abstractions in the participants' interviews (Jones et al., 2016). During the construction phase, the researcher must classify, compare, label, translate, and describe the data. The rectification phase requires relating themes to existing information. Lastly, the finalization phase develops the storyline. During the coding process, the raw data are reduced to utilize the data that are pertinent to the research question.

Coding entails the breaking down of the data into controllable sectors. Using controllable sectors allows the researchers to transform raw data to higher-level abstractions to develop themes (Jacoby & Siminoff, 2008). This transformation should expedite the researchers' ability to understand the content within the study (Bradley et al., 2007). When determining a response to the research questions, a high reliance may be placed on deciding on the relevant section of the transcription for coding. Researchers will then address significant codes for further reflection while withholding any final decision until the final data analysis steps (Jacoby & Siminoff, 2008).

From coding, five common themes inductively emerged and were further researched to saturation using individual and focus group interview questions located in Appendix E. From the 10 participants' data, the six common themes for the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American student success were as follows (a) transition, (b) pressure from external sources, (c) feeling homesick, (d) adapting to a new environment, (e) lack of support/presence, and (f) pressure to succeed. Table 1 shows the themes, supported by participant quotes, while Table 2 shows each research SQs with corresponding themes. Table 3 shows the thematic categories aligned with research by participant.

Table 1*Theme Development*

Themes	Student Quotes
Pressure to succeed	Robert: "If I do not excel in college, my family will be disappointed."
	Michael: "My family member has told her friends how successful I will be once I graduate from college."
Adapting to a new environment	Olivia: "It took some time to adjust to the university."
	Charles: "Adapting to the amount of coursework given was a challenge for me."
	William: "It was stressful accepting the new responsibilities that came with attending college."
Feeling homesick	David: "I did not realize how much I'll miss my family so much."
	Joseph: "I go visit home every chance I get."
Transition	James: "I was not prepared for college as I felt I should have been."
	William: "Transitioning from high school to college was stressful."
	John: "I had to learn an entirely new way of life."
Pressure from external sources	Emma: "My friend made me feel bad for going to college."
	Olivia: "I could not stop thinking about how I am going to pay for college."
Lack of presence/support	Joseph: "I wish I had more help during my arrival to the university."
	Robert: "I should have asked for help."

Table 2*Thematic Categories Aligned with Research*

Research Question	Thematic category
SQ1: What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by stress during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?	Pressure to succeed Transitioning
SQ2: What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by depression during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?	Feeling homesick Adapting to a new environment
SQ3: What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by anxiety during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?	Pressure to succeed Lack of presence/support

Table 3*Thematic Categories Aligned with Research by Participant*

Theme	James	Robert	John	Michael	William	David	Emma	Joseph	Olivia	Charles
Pressure to succeed	X		X	X	X				X	X
Adapting to a new environment	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
Feeling homesick	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Transition	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pressure from external sources	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lack of support/presence	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X

Interviews

I conducted 10 interviews for this qualitative case study. Due to COVID-19 precautions, the individual interviews were conducted via Zoom. The participants were all interviewed from various locations where they felt more comfortable communicating. The students were selected

based on the following criteria: the students had to be first-year undergraduates, African American, and had to experience stress, depression, or anxiety. The individual interviews were scheduled at a time convenient to the participant, and upon receipt of the signed consent forms from participants who agreed to participate.

A focus group was formed using five of the 10 interview participants and was conducted via Zoom at a time that was convenient for the five participants. The focus group interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Common themes were identified throughout the interview. There were a few additional themes created that were not included during the analysis of the individual interviews. The participants were allowed to review their transcripts to ensure what was transcribed was accurate.

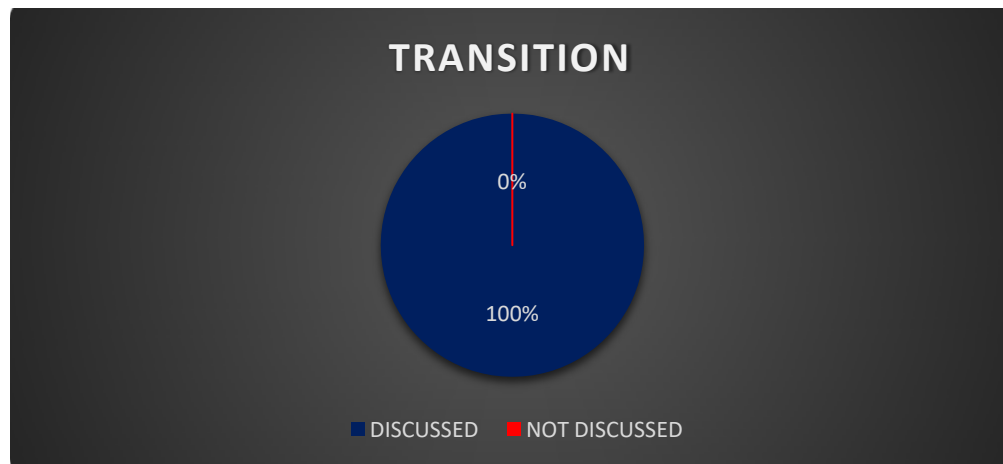
Transition

The theme “transition” was the number one common theme mentioned during the interviews (see Figure 4). Every student admitted that transitioning from home to the university had the most significant impact on their mental health. Few of the students were first-gen college students, and they agreed that they experienced stress while transitioning to college. Michael mentioned, “I never knew what anxiety felt like until the summer before attending college.” In the focus group interview, the students discussed that they were not prepared for transitioning to the university. Olivia said, “The transition caused changes in her friendships, lifestyle, and work ethic.” In the focus group interview, 3 of the 5 students were aware of the counseling service on campus, but few knew the staff who worked in the counseling service department. The students who lived on campus did agree that their resident staff provided forums about mental health services. Still, they also decided that mental health awareness is prevalent for only a month. Over half of the students wished that the counseling services were

consistently present to help them cope with their anxiety, stress, and depression as they transitioned into the university.

Figure 1

Common Theme 1: Transition



Pressure from External Sources

Pressures from *external sources* was a common theme that all students referenced during the interviews. The term external sources entailed a wide range of categories. Many students made statements regarding the impact that external sources had on their mental health. The primary external source of students' stress was financial.

Each student agreed that they had concerns about finances. David said, "I worry about how I will pay for my college courses, especially as an student paying out-of-state tuition." The cost of tuition the students must pay to receive an education has affected the students mentally. Charles stated, "I was so stressed when I arrived at the university because I did not have the funds at the time to pay for college." Students began conversing about how stressed they were once they realized that they would have to pay bills while having insufficient funds. Other students discussed the stress they felt thinking about how they will repay loans upon graduation. Less than half of the students relied on their parents to pay the cost of their tuition. The few

students who did have parents who could pay a significant amount of their tuition felt depressed due to the burden they felt they had placed on their parents who paid for their education. Many of the students agreed that they were slightly depressed even though they knew they needed financial help. To paraphrase, multiple students agreed that they used more financial aid to pay for school because they felt guilty asking for money from their parents. The students who struggled academically recollected the anxiety they felt throughout the school semester because they worried, they might have to accept additional loans to retake a course. A few students chose to work part-time both on and off-campus as soon as they arrived at school to assist them in paying for classes, books, and other necessities. During the focus group interview, the students commented that the lack of finances almost forced them to leave the university. They also mentioned how challenging it was to focus on their academics due to their pressures to make more money while in college.

For many of the students, the first semester was challenging. The students commented how they noticed an increase in the coursework tempo and they all agreed that the university coursework requirements surpassed the coursework in high school. Only a few students were prepared for the pressure they would feel from the university coursework. Joseph noticed that the professors ask students to complete homework assignments, group projects, and write papers while preparing for an upcoming test just for one class. Many students also agreed that not all academic stress comes from the faculty members; however, many students decided that some stress developed due to the inability to manage their lives wisely.

Many students during the interviews felt that parents intentionally and unintentionally placed stress on them. Most of the students agreed that they understood their parents had good intentions when they placed high expectations on them, but the expectations increased the

students' stress levels. Many students noted they were first-generation college students, which affected their anxiety levels. Emma remarked, "My mom continues to brag about me to her friends ever since I arrived at college, but she does not know that her bragging makes me depressed because my current grade is not meeting their expectations."

A quarter of the students were dealing with issues at home. The topic of imperfect families was introduced into the conversation, and a few students elaborated on how problems at home can impact a student while in college. The students agreed that issues which occur at home have led to stress. They continued to discuss deaths in the family, family finances, and behavioral issues that keep them mentally attached to their lives back home. Michael said, "I was unable to focus on my schoolwork because I received calls from home continuously regarding the trouble my family was facing daily."

Besides the stress students felt from their coursework and families, they mentioned feeling stress from not knowing what they wanted to do with their lives. More than a quarter of the students felt pressure in choosing a major while in college. They admitted that they were unsure of their career path before choosing their major. John stated, "My parents told me to choose engineering as a major because they make a lot of money I truly enjoy sports management, but my mom said that it would be a waste of time getting a degree in sports management." The other students agreed with John, mentioning how depressing it is to pursue a degree without passion.

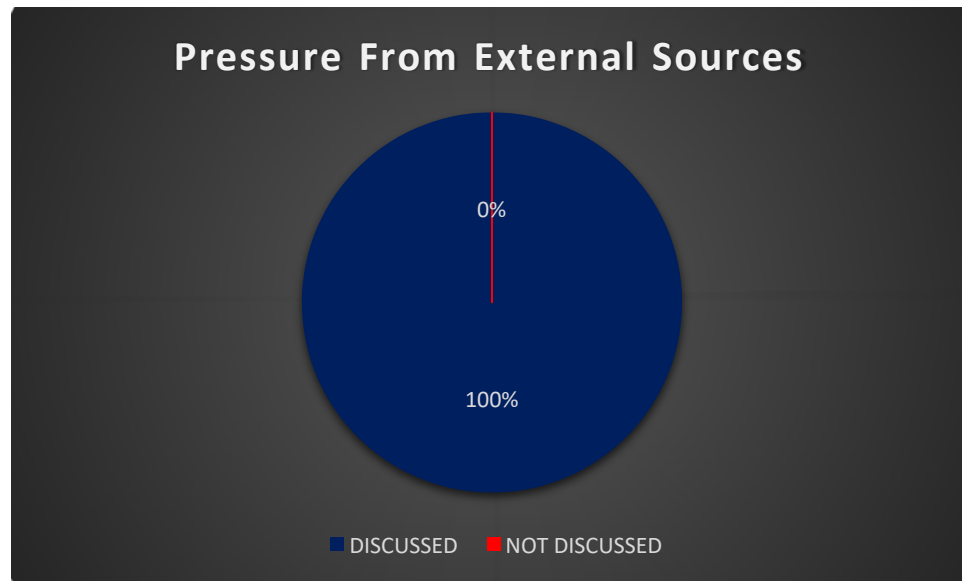
During the focus group interview, the students discussed not using counseling services due to the stigma associated with counseling. Many of the students mentioned that they did not visit the counseling services offered on campus. Still, they did feel comfortable confiding in a close friend regarding their experience with stress, depression, and anxiety. The students

provided many scenarios of them conversing with their friends about struggles they faced while in college. The students mentioned confiding in their roommates, family members, and close friends in hopes of receiving advice that would help them cope with their issues. The students continued to make remarks regarding their comfort in talking to their close friends instead of a counselor. Over half of the students agreed they would utilize the counseling services more frequently if the campus promoted mental health as more acceptable and less stigmatized.

Less than a quarter of the students utilized the counseling services to seek strategies to cope with stress, depression, and anxiety. The students were asked, “Explain how you would feel if you knew one of your peers was battling stress, depression, and anxiety. What support would you believe you could provide for the fellow student?” In response, many students agreed that they would do their best to support their peers in their time of need. They also agreed that they were sure exactly how to help their peers if they were experiencing stress, depression, or anxiety. James said,

I had a friend who was homesick and had zero intention of staying in school. I tried to talk him out of wanting to drop out of school, but his mind was already made up. I wish I could have done more, but I honestly did not know what to do or say to talk him out of being homesick.

Three fourths of the students worried their records might be tarnished if they visited any counseling services (see Figure 2).

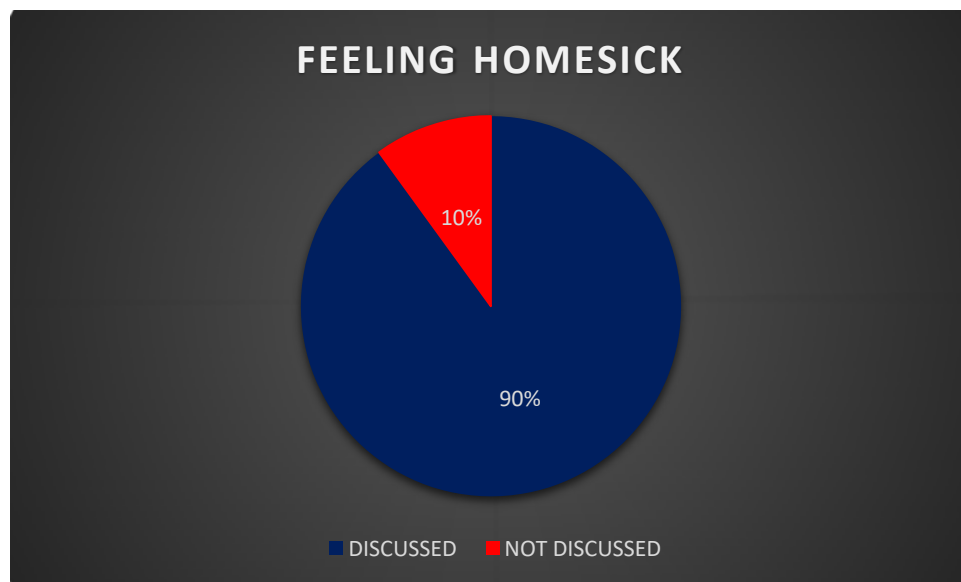
Figure 2*Common Theme 2: Pressure from External Sources****Feeling Homesick***

The students' feelings of being homesick was the third most common theme after analyzing the interviews. During the interviews, over four-fifths of the participants mentioned feeling homesick. Many of the students said that they had been away from home to visit family or go on vacation. Still, many of the students mentioned that being away from home while attending college had a different effect on them mentally. The students agreed that leaving home to attend college felt permanent. Joseph said, "I leave my mother every summer to go live with my aunt and uncle during the summer during my middle school years but leaving my mother to attend college felt as though I might never come back." Many of the students suggested that the anxiety and stress levels increased once they began to feel homesick. The students also agreed that their anxiety increased due to being separated from home. Three fourths of the group said that feeling homesick decreased their passion for attending the university. Robert mentioned, "I felt like going home because I felt that everyone back there had forgotten about me ever since I

left.” Robert later said, “I felt a lack of support from my friends and family while at college.” Many of the students made statements during the focus group interview about thoughts of dropping out of college after feeling homesick. The students later mentioned the happiness they felt upon arriving at the university, but some students hit a state of depression within a week. Most of the students openly admitted that their homesickness was not related to the university, but to a specific person they missed back at their home residence (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Common Theme 3: Feeling Homesick



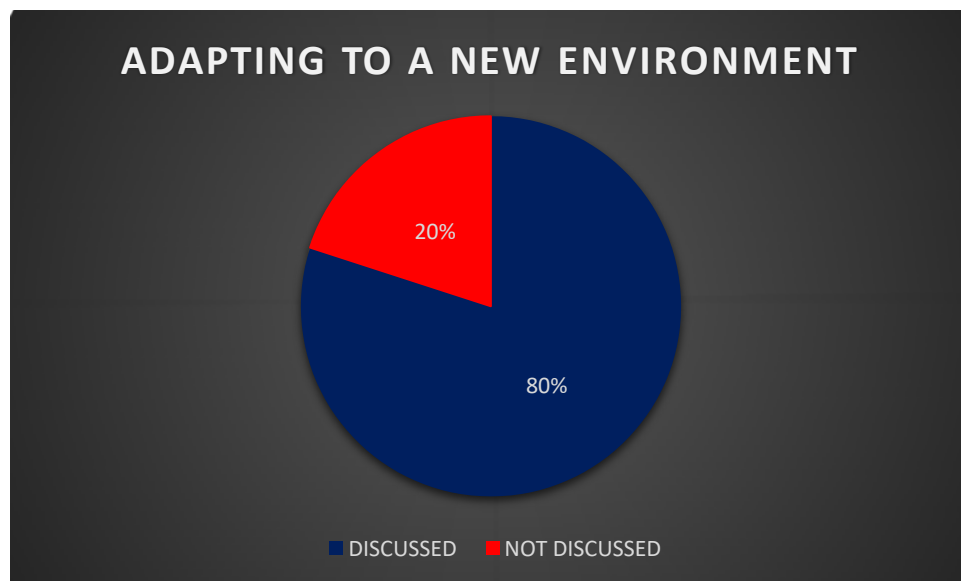
Adapting to a New Environment

Over three fourths of the participants mentioned the theme of adapting to a new environment, during individual interviews and focus group interviews. Adapting to a new environment may pose a challenge to any person. When asked, “Describe a time during your first semester in college when you sought help for signs of stress, depression, and anxiety you experienced while in college,” William mentioned “being in an environment that is different from what I was accustomed to, which eventually made me depressed.” The participants briefly

compared their lives before college to their lives upon arriving at the university. All of the participants agreed that coming to a new environment made them feel uncomfortable. The participants also mentioned that making the adjustment to college caused a lot of stress. Joseph said, “I became stressed out during my adjustment to college.” The participant later mentioned that he began to look for ways to cope with stress during the focus group interview. Less than half of the students said they experienced mental health issues such as stress, depression, and anxiety before attending the university. Over half of the students had not lived away from home before their arrival at the university. Over one-quarter of the students decided to seek help after realizing they were mentally affected while adapting to the university environment (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Common Theme 4: Adapting to a New Environment



Lack of Support/Presence

Lack of support/presence was the fifth common theme (see Figure 6). Many students felt that they did not receive a sufficient amount of support during their academic journey. Over three fourths of the students agreed that they did not receive the support they should have upon arriving at the university. The few first-generation college students agreed they received minimal help from their parents when enrolling in college. John said,

It was stressful to attend college because my parents did not have much knowledge of the admission process. . . . My anxiety had risen upon my arrival to the university. I felt that I was as prepared as the other students attending college.

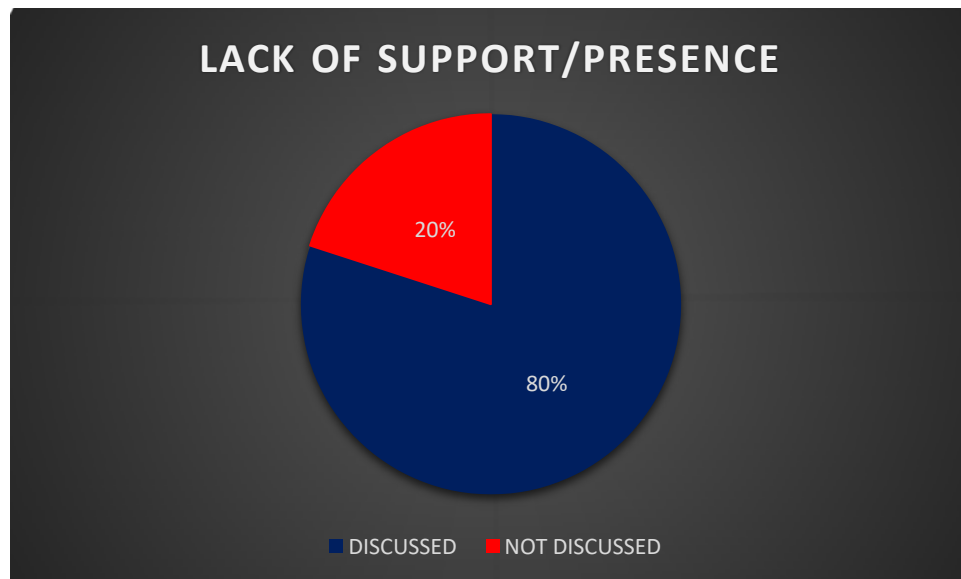
The students were asked, “What involvement did the counseling services have during your first semester of college at House A&M University?” The students provided multiple answers regarding the counseling services involvement on campus. Many students were aware of the counseling services on campus, and they understood the duties and responsibilities of the counselor services. In terms of presence, the students wished the counselor services were more present during their first semester. The students admitted that they would not know how to initiate seeking help when faced with stress, depression, and anxiety. James said, “I knew the location of the counseling services on campus, but I’m unaware of the personnel who works at the department. I don’t know their appointment policies or if there are costs to receive help.” Students were also asked, “At what stage of stress, depression, or anxiety do you believe you should begin to seek help?”

All of the students experienced stress, depression, and anxiety during their freshman year, but admitted that they were unsure exactly when they should begin seeking help. Half of the students believed that most mental health issues could be resolved amongst themselves or

through close friends. Charles said, “I will only go visit the counseling services on campus is if the pain of depression is too much to handle.” The students agreed that the counseling services are for those who are psychologically in need of help.

Figure 5

Common Theme 5: Lack of Support/Presence



Pressure to Succeed

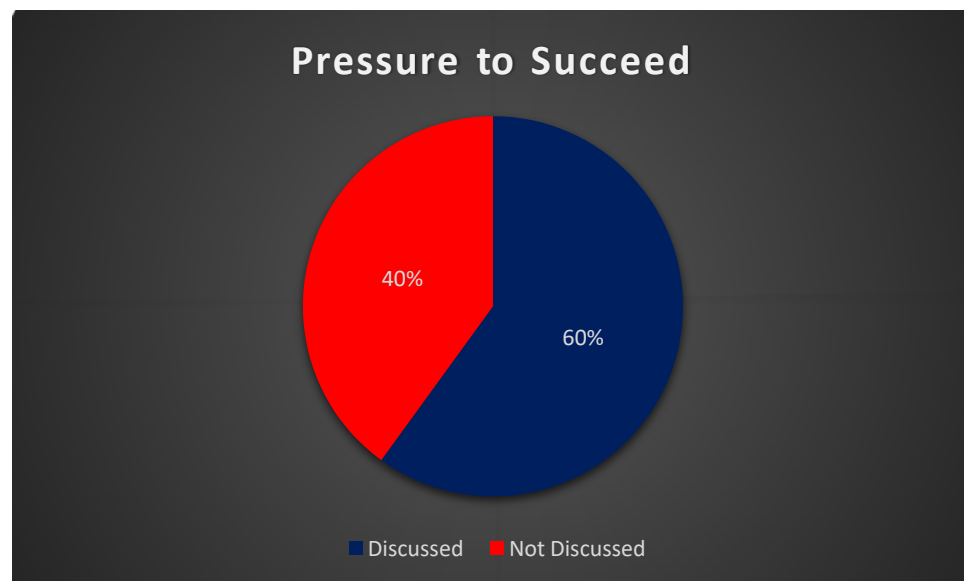
Pressure to succeed was the final common themes that emerged was that the students felt they encountered stress, depression, or anxiety due to the pressure to succeed. Over half of the participants admitted that the pressure to succeed stemmed from being the first in their families to attend college. David stated, “Back at home, I’m called the Einstein of the family, and I am afraid to let them down by not succeeding in college.” The participants who mentioned pressure to succeed as a contributor to stress, depression, and anxiety had similar responses regarding how their parents perceived their transition into college. During the focus group interview, over half of the students noted that the pressure to succeed heightened their anxiety. The students were asked, “What are your descriptions of the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on your

experiences during their first college semester?” Charles responded by revealing that the student believed that fear of the unknown as to how their academic career would turn out, resulted in their anxiety.

The pressure to succeed also caused stress in the lives of the participants. Charles stated, “The changes in the amount of coursework, along with the additional responsibilities, has begun to stress me out.” The same participant said, “My family paid too much money for me not to succeed in college.” Many students agreed with this statement because they also related to having parent(s) who have provided considerable resources to afford their child the opportunity to succeed in college. Figure 6 illustrates the percentage of participants who mentioned the theme of pressure to succeed.

Figure 6

Common Theme 6: Students Feeling the Pressure to Succeed



Documents

Data collected from the university's website and counseling services were analyzed to understand how frequently counseling services are utilized. The university offers counseling services that assist students who encounter mental health issues. The student counseling services include individual counseling, couples counseling, group counseling, and educational workshops.

Counseling Services

Individual counseling includes sessions in which the student visits the therapist individually to discuss current issues and concerns. The students are allowed a maximum of 10 sessions per academic year. Couples' counseling includes sessions in which the student and their significant other visit the therapist to discuss their current issues and concerns. The couples are allowed a maximum of 10 sessions per academic year. To attend couples counseling, at least one student must be currently enrolled during the semester, which means the non-enrolled member of the couple cannot participate in counseling without the presence of the enrolled member during the session. Group counseling can be an innovative tool in addressing the concerns of students. Group counseling can create an atmosphere in which students can address their concerns while enhancing their understanding of self. Group counseling allows the individuals in the group to receive feedback and support from peers who encountered similar situations. Group counseling tends to entail five to 10 individuals who meet weekly. There is not a maximum set on the number of sessions a group can make during the academic year.

Workshops are offered on campus for both students and faculty members upon request. The students can receive workshops on various topics to provide information designed to enhance students' well-being and acquire skills and strategies to cope with difficulties in life. On

average, the workshops are typically one session, lasting about 1 to 2 hours. Workshops do not require an appointment with a counselor to attend, but it is suggested that one makes a reservation in advance because of space limitations.

The student health counseling services can develop presentations to on-campus organizations, academic classes, resident halls, faculty, and staff. Lastly, the student counseling services offers information regarding services such as mental health and academic skills concerns.

Incident Reports

The RSVP program manager is a confidential resource at the university who views all incident reports. Students have the opportunity to communicate with the program manager via an online app. Through the app, students can receive vital information and answers to any questions or issues. Students may submit incident reports anonymously online through the university website or app. Students who are uncomfortable attending a counseling session may utilize these documents if the student or their peers encounter symptoms of stress, depression, or anxiety. The incident reports are available online for all personnel at the university to use any time. The university's faculty and staff are trained to educate the students on how to correctly fill out the form and the necessary steps that must be taken after submitting an incident report. Appendix F and G are examples of the incident forms students may fill out and submit if necessary.

Counseling Reports

The university's counseling services provided counseling reports that were used in the data analysis. The data consisted of the number of individuals entering counseling, which was 246 students; the number of appointments, which were 844 (see Figure 9); gender of the students

attending counseling services, which was 169 females and 77 males (see Figures 10 & 11); and the primary reasons for visiting the counseling services. Based on the reports provided, the students attended counseling due to depression, grief, anxiety, trauma, and stress.

Figure 7

Counseling Appointments to Attendance Ratio

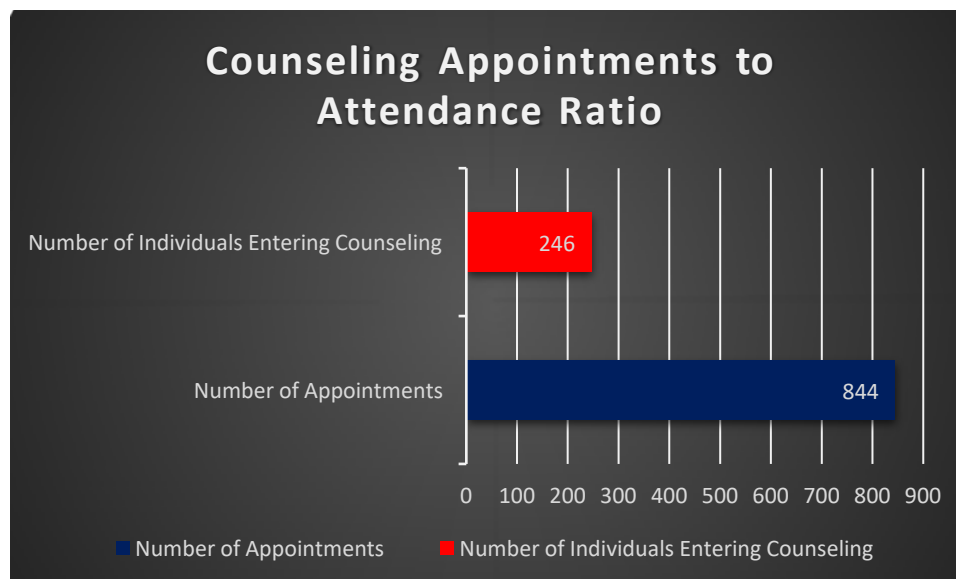
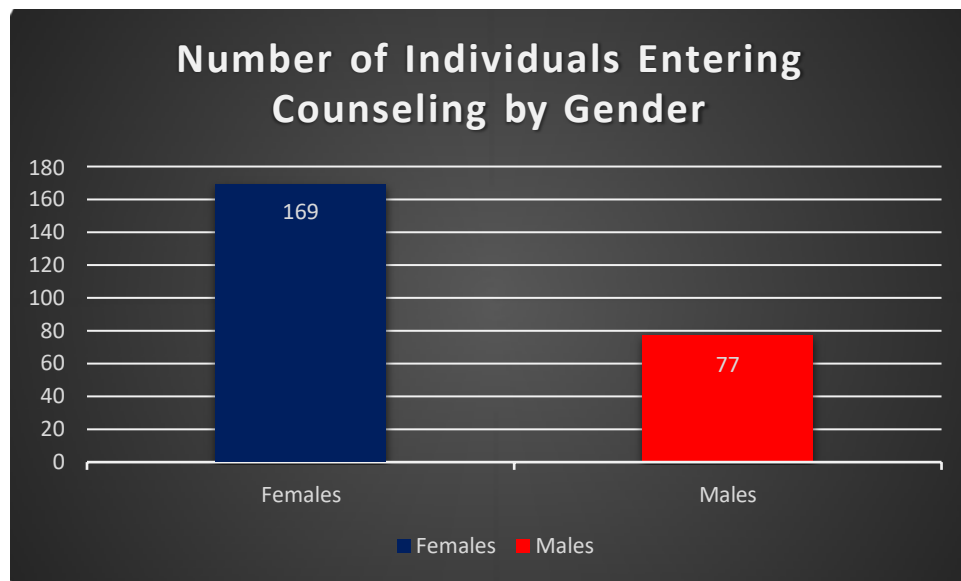
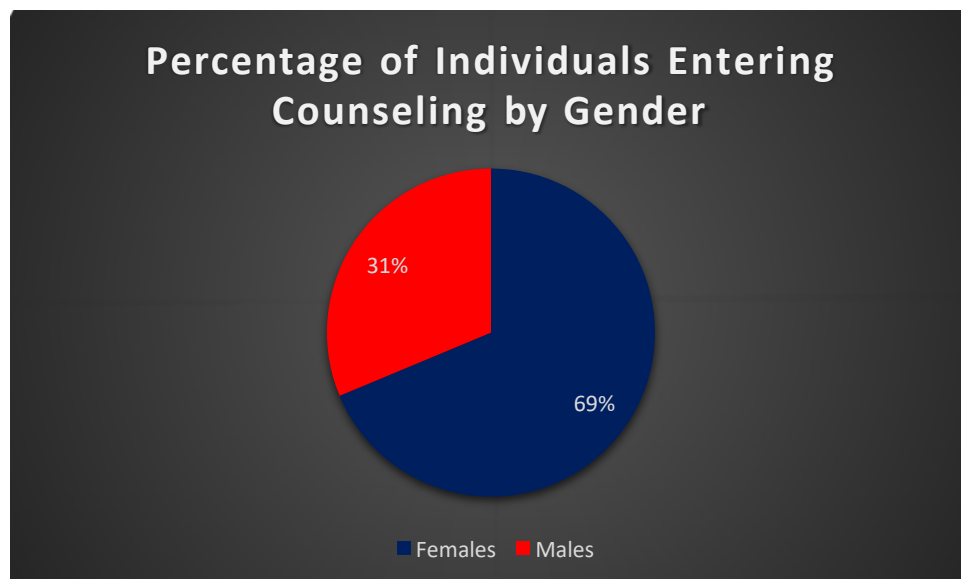


Figure 8

Number of Individuals Entering Counseling by Gender: Bar Graph

**Figure 9**

Percentage of Individuals Entering Counseling by Gender: Pie Chart



Outlier Data and Findings

Many of the findings established after collecting were related to the research questions and themes developed during the analysis process. While analyzing the data, there was one

outlier finding that separated itself from the findings. The finding was that the increased levels of stress, depression, and anxiety might lead to the student committing suicide

While conducting individual interviews, one of the students discussed the negative impacts stress, depression, and anxiety have on academic success. Suicide may be a vital topic for the university faculty and staff because it brings awareness to the impact stress, depression, and anxiety have on students' academic journeys. Olivia mentioned, “I have been stressed for a long time, and I have broken down many times because of the constant pressure I am dealing with every day, which makes me contemplate if being here is even worth it.” It was rare for a participant to accentuate suicide as an option due to stress, depression, and anxiety. Suicide was not a reoccurring topic mentioned by the other participants during the interview process, making suicide an uncommon finding.

Research Question Responses

This section of this case study provides direct insight to understanding the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on academic student success. This section includes description of the central research question as well as sub questions one through three. Along with the research questions, responses from the participant relevant to the research question were provided.

Central Research Question

How do stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University?

The participants discussed how the impact their mental health issues had caused them during their first undergraduate semester. The participants further discussed how stress, depression, and anxiety can affect your priorities while being a student in college. James said, “the stress that I developed while in college has made me procrastinate on completing

assignments because the workload felt unbearable at times.”

Sub-Question One

What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by stress during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?

SQ1 asked students to describe the ways African American students are impacted by stress. Some students were aware of the term “stress” and how it can impact a daily part of life. Some students understood before attending college that stress could take a toll on their physical, emotional, and mental health, affecting their academic success if not managed properly. Joseph noted, “I experienced stress due to the transition, increased level of school work, accepting more responsibilities, and a different degree of peer support.

The students agreed that stress decreased the amount of sleep they achieved. The majority of the students indicated that stress affected their concentration, which further impacted their ability to learn, listen, and solve problems while in class. The students noticed that stress made them angrier than usual. Many students noticed that they began directing their anger toward their colleagues. The anger also, at times, was directed toward the faculty, which made the students appear to be aggressive. The students agreed that the anger stress caused reduced their overall performance. The reduction in their performance reduced the students’ willingness to participate or attend class. Few students stated that the stress they experienced from sources external from the school, such as home and work, caused them not to place school as a top priority.

Sub-Question Two

What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by depression during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?

SQ2 asked students to describe the ways African American students are impacted by depression. The students mentioned that depression could negatively affect their mental health. Few students discussed feeling so depressed that it became a challenge to execute their daily routine. Some of the students mentioned that being away from home and their immediate support system made them feel homesick, which caused them to fall into a state of slight depression. Some students admitted that the first time they felt depressed occurred when they began attending college. Olivia mentioned, “ my feelings of depression stemmed from living independently without my parents, which forced me to make decisions that impacted my everyday well-being. Few students revealed that adjusting to a new daily routine, roommates, and classmates made them depressed. The majority of the students noted that not having the financial support they once had, placed them in a state of depression.

Sub-Question Three

What are participant descriptions of the ways African American students are impacted by anxiety during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M?

SQ3 asked students to describe the ways African American students are impacted by anxiety. Most of the students understood the term “anxiety,” but they were unaware of how impactful anxiety was to their lives until they transitioned to college. Charles stated, “ anxiety almost led to me not go to college away from home. The majority of the students agreed that they began missing class and taking frequent trips home during the school year when they felt anxious. The students decided that anxiety harmed their academic performance. Some students

noticed that the pressure of being a college student became too much for them. The pressure came from many areas, such as managing large course loads, being active in extracurricular school activities, and working part-time to ensure they have the financial support to survive independently. The students realized that they must learn to address their anxiety to accomplish their educational goals.

Summary

Chapter four reviews the themes and highlights significant findings related to the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact the success of African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. Chapter four gave a brief description of each participant in the study. This chapter also displayed the results from the study, which entailed theme development. The themes mentioned in chapter four are: transition, pressure from external sources, feeling homesick, adapting to a new environment, lack of support/presence, and pressure to succeed. Chapter four later discusses the outlier data and finding gathered from the data collected and analyzed. Lastly the chapter concludes with the responses to the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to understand participants' descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact the success of African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. Chapter Five contains discussion of the process of the data analysis as well as the findings of the study. The data collected and analyzed came from individual interviews, a focus group interview, and administrative data. This chapter also includes a summary of findings obtained from the research questions. After the summary of findings, the empirical and theoretical literature will be discussed, followed by the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study. The delimitations and limitations of the research are covered and recommendations for future research will be addressed, then Chapter Five will conclude with a summary.

Discussion

This section includes a discussion of findings from the study and how they align with the empirical and theoretical literature relating to the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students during their first undergraduate semester. The themes were established to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety. The literature in the upcoming sections supports the case study findings, which relate to mental health.

Interpretation of Findings

Three significant themes develop from the data analysis of the study results that align with the central research question; How do stress, depression, and anxiety impact African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University? The

three major themes were: a) Transition, b) Pressure from External Sources c) Feeling Homesick. The following is the summary of thematic findings with interpretations.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Theme one covers the impact stress, depression, and anxiety have on the students while transitioning to college. Transitioning involves the students taking the initiative to prepare themselves for the changes that will occur in the future. The students must prep themselves for a new lifestyle routine, class schedule, living arrangements, and financial responsibilities. Students may face challenges in managing their mental disposition while making this transition, making it more challenging to transition to the university. Theme two highlights the impact the pressure from external sources has on the students. Pressures from external sources can stem from friends and family members, financial obligations, and work commitments while at the university. Theme three reveals the impact that students feeling homesick has on the students. Students may experience stress, depression, and anxiety due to students feeling homesick while at school.

Transition. Past research has shown that students are vulnerable to stress during transitions (Juster et al., 2011). The first-year college students may experience stressors while transitioning due to the new lifestyle routine, class schedule, living arrangements, and financial responsibilities. Students transitioning from high school into college is a crucial period in the students' lives. During that period, students experience changing roles, new challenges, and increased responsibilities. Students must also adjust to focusing on academic performance, developing social roles, and establishing independent decision-making (Kerig et al., 2012). Previous research has shown that transitioning from high to college may cause disruptive shifts in structure, roles, and expectations, negatively impacting the students' ability to adjust to the

university (Newman, 2007). Based on the challenges previously mentioned, the challenges the students encounter during their transition to college are vital in their academic success.

According to Tinto (1993), students are more likely to persevere in college when they detach from their home setting and integrate academically and socially into the university. Although detachment and integration are desired to preserve in college, students also acknowledge the need to negotiate their transition to an extent (Pascarella et al., 2004). Astin's (1999) student involvement theory provides a perspective to understanding issues pertinent to students transitioning to the university. The student involvement theory relates to the student and their ability to make their collegiate experience a priority while at the university. Astin's (1999) research compared students who stayed in college with those who dropped out, and the research suggested that successful transitions were improved by several types of college involvements.

Pressure from External Sources. Mental health issues are common among college students (Blanco et al., 2008). Mental health issues may occur due to the challenging obstacles many students experience in college. Students from various backgrounds experience different challenges while in college. Students who attend college immediately after high school (traditional students) may encounter other external pressures than those who attend college later in life (non-traditional students). After completing high school, students who attend college are stereotypically younger and seek more support from family (Pedrelli et al., 2015).

In addition, the younger students may feel the stress linked to the increased academic load and accept more responsibilities without learning the skills and mature into adulthood (Pedrelli et al., 2015). Many traditional college students may experience external pressures include working, being in a serious relationship that becomes the students' main priority, or having roommates with different cultures and belief systems from their own (Arnett, 2000). Non-traditional college

students or students who attend college later in life often have full-time employment, are mature, and have established families (Arnett, 2000). Thus, non-traditional students may have to cope with external pressures due to the demands from work and family while achieving their academic requirements.

Feeling Homesick. Students adjusting to the university has become essential among college administrators, faculty, academic advising, and mental health counseling (Crede & Niehorster, 2012). In society, the transition students experience when attending college has been regarded as a positive journey and opportunity for personal development (Thurber & Walton, 2012). As the student begins adjusting to college, the students may experience a feeling of discomfort due to the sudden change from their former environments (Sun et al., 2016). These emotions caused by separation are identified as homesickness, producing negative social consequences (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Intense homesickness can decrease concentration and academic performance (Stroebe & Schut, 1999). Due to the students lack of experience being away from home, when homesick, college students may be particularly subject to cognitive and emotional impairment (Van Tilburg et al., 1999).

Implications for Policy or Practice

The implications of this case study supported the literature. Previous research has been primarily from a theoretical standpoint and from a higher education background. This case study served as an attempt to provide clarity by understanding the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on academic student success. This section includes description of the implication for policy and implication for practice of this study. These implications are drawn from the findings of this case study.

Implications for Policy

The integration of education and mental health will be innovative when mental health goals include effective schooling and effective schools that have the healthy functioning of students (Atkins et al., 2010). To establish a basis for this mutual plan, a transformation in the fundamental context of the university mental health is conceptualized (Atkins et al., 2010). This transformation requires the acknowledgment of the importance placed on mental health. According to Atkins et al. (2010), this may include using natural resources within higher education institutions to implement and maintain suitable supports for students' learning and behavioral health, the presence of integrated models to improve understanding and promote health and strengthening the active involvement of parents.

Parental involvement of parents regarding their child's education and participation in school has been active (Atkins et al., 2010). However, many institutions reduce parental involvement to a fine set of activities, such as assessment and problem solving (Atkins et al., 2010). Institutions are currently developing options to increase parental involvement by examining different approaches and strategies through targeted engagement processes (McKay & Bannon, 2004). Higher education institutions may also utilize specialized outreach programs delivered by the parents of students with mental health needs and use parental support techniques (McKay & Bannon, 2004). Some students also revealed that people external to the students college has negatively affected them (Per-Åke Rosvall, 2020). These individuals external to the students' college life may affect the students' presence and concentration in school (Per-Åke Rosvall, 2020). According to Gordon et al. (2000), a suitable theoretical framework for analyzing the students' expressed views regarding how they deal with tensions between emancipation and regulation is by making themselves into certain kinds of individuals regularly

in the process of becoming. This envisioning includes analyzing their past, present, and future selves (Gordon et al., 2000).

Implications for Practice

Universities can prioritize mental health for students, even with inadequate resources, by assessing the needs of the students (Lipson et al., 2019). Assessments can be accomplished methodically via forums that provide students a voice in an informal environment. According to Lipson et al. (2019), students of color and first-generation students experience unique mental health obstacles to receiving care. The reception of multiple views coming directly from the students is vital to informing mental health services on campus (Lipson et al., 2019). Assessing the university's mental health services would help administrators identify areas of weakness. Universities can improve the accessibility of their clinical services by considering facility locations and the capacity of available services. University administrators may make mental health services more feasible by motivating counselors to make their clinical expertise more present. To serve the students more efficiently, administrators may have to employ more clinical staff to provide services to their students. Administrators should develop opportunities to promote mental health through proactive messaging and communication, norm-setting, and prevention through creative partnerships with stakeholders on and off the university premises.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

This section will discuss the theoretical and empirical implications related to this case study which is to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students' success during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The theoretical implication section will mention the tension on mental health is placed on students

upon their arrival at the university. The theoretical implication section will also discuss the likelihood of facing common psychological problems

Theoretical Implications

Many students leaving their home and support networks for the first time, can affect the mental health and well-being of higher education students (Cleary et al., 2011). Sanford (1967) argued that for growth and personal development to occur, a student must develop a challenge–support balance. As mentioned in chapter two, there are many factors that place tension on the mental health of the students upon their arrival to the university. As previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, the Schlossberg’s transition theory impacts the students’ ability to adapt to unfamiliar environments (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1998; Evans et al., 1998; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Adapting to a new environment, increased course load, and financial responsibilities can place tension on the students. Evidence has shown that tension on mental health is placed on students upon their arrival at the university. Even though tension on the students’ mental health decreases throughout their academic journey (Mey & Yin, 2015), it does not return to the levels experienced before arriving at the university (Bewick et al., 2010). The likelihood of facing common psychological problems, such as stress, depression, and anxiety, rises throughout puberty and is at its highest in early adulthood (Kessler et al., 2007). The interest in mental health and well-being in university students is likely due to many interconnected challenges (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020). University faculty and staff must develop and incorporate strategies to assist students as they encounter challenges upon their arrival to the university. According to Lipson et al. (2019), recent studies noted an increase in the severity of mental problems in university students worldwide in the last decade.

Some researchers refer to these inclinations as a developing crisis in higher education (Evans et al., 1998). Psychological distress in the later teenage years is connected with adverse short-term outcomes, such as a lack of attendance in college, academic performance, and degree completion (Antaramian, 2015). There is a prevalent arrangement that higher education institutions promote the well-being of the college students' mental health as they deliver a sole cohesive setting that includes academic, professional, and social activities, along with other support services (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). The challenge is that some students experiencing mental health problems are not receiving treatment (Lipson et al., 2019), which is concerning due to students' support not developing at an equivalent rate (Davy et al., 2012).

Empirical Implications

The life of a college student can cause stress and mental distress in other students (Grotan, 2019). Mental distress can impact students' academic performance. Many stressors can have a considerable impact on the students' academic performance and their ability to develop and stay persistent while at the university (Dalky & Gharaibeh, 2018). The purpose of this case study was to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on African American students' success during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The transition from high school to college involves significant financial, housing, and social changes in several areas. This transition period can lead to personal encounters that some students experience as stressful (Grotan, 2019). It has been consistent that the percentage of students who perceive college as mentally stressful is steadily rising (Nedregård & Olsen, 2014). This inclination may suggest that students perceive college as challenging and may directly cause mental illness (Nerdrum et al., 2009).

Anxiety and depression may negatively impact students' ability to participate academically and socially (Byrd & McKinney, 2012). According to Knudsen et al. (2009), the outcome of depressive disorders can be lowered mood, reduced cognitive functions, lack of being able to deal with trauma events, well as a decrease in levels of energy. Grotan (2019) noted that depression and anxiety often affect an individual's ability to concentrate. Depression and anxiety may threaten the college student due to depression and anxiety, affecting the ability to acquire new knowledge and cope with challenging situations. These challenges may often emphasize perceptions of hopelessness and inadequacy, and if sustained, the feeling of anxiety and depressed mood in a brutal cycle (Stallman, 2008). Nedregård and Olsen (2014) also noted that depending on the level of severity, anxiety in the academic area may contribute to improved work effort and perhaps improved academic performance.

Throughout the study, the interviews were analyzed to observe the connection between mental health and academic success during college. Higher education has become a vital component of human capital and is connected with noticeably higher earnings (Jaeger & Page, 1996). Previous studies have shown that various factors, such as financial aid and academic and social involvement affect the chances of staying and completing college (Tinto, 1998). According to Kessler et al. (2007), mental disorders often have first beginnings just before or during the typical age of the average college student (i.e., 18–24 years old). Developing an understanding of this connection could be treasured due to the many ways the university can support young people. The university may also signify the few occasions in an individual's life when a single environment involves their main activities, social networks, and a range of supportive services Kessler et al. (2007).

Delimitations and Limitations

A qualitative case study is valuable when seeking the answers to questions beginning with “how” and “why.” The participants who participated in this study were African American students between the ages of 18–24 years old. The purpose of this case study was to understand participants’ descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact the success of African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The justification for this delimitation was that there was not a plethora of literature regarding this demographic. Previous literature was not directed toward African Americans in the higher education setting.

Delimitations are essentially the limitations deliberately established by the author (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). Researchers create delimitations as boundaries within their study to prevent the objectives from becoming unachievable. According to Theofanidis & Fountouki (2019), delimitations inform the scope of the study’s main topic relating to the research design. The first delimitation of this study was that participants were freshman students. The second delimitation of this study was that the case study methodology was used for this study. The final delimitation was the number of participants that participated in the study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), using a larger sample size may provide more accurate results, but it is more time-consuming and costly.

There were some limitations in the study. The first limitation was that the study was limited to African American students located at one university. The sample size in this study was a limitation because larger sample sizes are needed to ensure the results are accurate. According to Ochieng (2009), It will be difficult for a sample size of fewer than 15 participants

to display a reliable picture of how African students are impacted by stress, depression, and anxiety.

Another limitation was that the data collected and analyzed were not statistically illustrated because the research was perspective-based. The question asked in the study are open-ended given the participants more control over the content of the data collected (Radu, 2019). The data analysis can be a limitation because qualitative studies cannot be replicated and verified (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). According to Ochieng (2009), the main disadvantage of data analysis in a qualitative study is that their findings cannot be extended to broader populations with the same level of certainty in comparison to a quantitative study. Findings captured in a qualitative study are not tested to discover whether they are statistically significant (Ochieng, 2009). Some participants had a better understanding of stress, depression, and anxiety before the interviews, while others were not able to comfortably express themselves.

The last limitation of this case study was that the execution of the study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic reduced class sizes because the students were able to attend class on campus and via online learning, meaning that some students participated in the classroom while some participated online. The lack of attendance at the university made it challenging to communicate at times. Due to the pandemic, face to face opportunities were limited which made an impact on how the participants were recruited. Also, observing the emotions of the participants was difficult to observe during the interviews because they were conducted virtually.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on this topic may be beneficial to those interested in the literature related to the study. This study could benefit from a phenomenological approach. The goal of

phenomenology is to describe the meaning of this experience in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced (Teherani et al., 2015). A phenomenological approach would involve multiple universities and classifications. Freshman college students are very new to college and may experience many things they have not experienced before entering college. These new experiences can be overwhelming for a student to process early in their academic career. First-year students may struggle with processing and articulating their current emotions compared to their higher-grade counterparts, who have had more time to adjust to college. Higher-grade college students tend to recall their past more efficiently in comparison to the freshmen college students. It is also recommended to replicate this study with African American students who meet the same criteria at a variety of universities to explore if the same factors contribute to the students' level of stress, depression, and anxiety.

Conducting this study as a quantitative research study is recommended. Conducting a quantitative research study on this topic may be advantageous because the quantitative method allows for a larger sample size. Larger sample sizes may produce a more accurate conclusion while increasing the credibility of the study. According to Black (1990), quantitative studies can be very consistent, precise and reliable. Quantitative research can produce rapid analysis, which is beneficial when larger sample sizes are required. Quantitative research on this topic should be considered in the future because the data collected from quantitative research is based on measured values (McLeod, 2019). The measured values collected from quantitative research can be verified by other researchers and replicated in the future, which can produce value literature for the future researchers. It would be beneficial to conduct this study after the COVID-19 pandemic when all students can attend and live on campus. The COVID-19 pandemic has

altered how students attend college and increased students' desire to attend school away from the campus.

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to understand participants' descriptions of the ways stress, depression, and anxiety impact the success of African American students during their first undergraduate semester at House A&M University. The findings indicated that stress, depression, and anxiety affect students' academic performance while attending college. The students are overwhelmed mentally due to the new obstacles they encounter as they transition to college. Students must deal with the new environment, classes, financial responsibilities, and events that occur at home. Students' ability to experience and overcome the moments of stress, depression, or anxiety has allowed them to develop self-awareness, reducing the reoccurrences of experiencing stress, depression, or anxiety.

The COVID-19 pandemic altered how these students attended college. This alteration has increased students desire to attend school away from the campus, which became a limitation for this study. The reduction of students on campus had an effect on peer interaction that the students in the previous years encountered. Future research needs to be done with multiple universities and classifications to determine if other African American students are impacted by stress, depression, and anxiety in the same manner.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPLICATION

APPLICATION FOR THE USE OF HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

IRB APPLICATION #: *(To be assigned by the IRB)*

I. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. Complete each section of this document by using your tab key to move your cursor to each gray form field and providing the requested information.
2. If you have questions, hover over the blue **(?)**, or refer to the [IRB Application Instructions](#) for additional clarification.
3. Review the [IRB Application Checklist](#).
4. Email the completed application, with the following supporting documents (as separate word documents) to irb@liberty.edu:
 - a. Consent Forms, Permission Letters, Recruitment Materials
 - b. Surveys, Questionnaires, Interview Questions, Focus Group Questions
5. If you plan to use a specific Liberty University department or population for your study, you will need to obtain permission from the appropriate department chair/dean/coach/etc. Submit documentation of permission (email or letter) to the IRB along with this application and check the indicated box below verifying that you have done so.
6. **Submit one signed copy of the signature page (available on the [IRB website](#) or electronically by request) to any of the following:**
 - a. Email: As a scanned document to irb@liberty.edu
 - b. Fax: 434-522-0506
 - c. Mail: IRB 1971 University Blvd. Lynchburg, VA 24515
 - d. In-Person: Green Hall, Suite 2845
7. Once received, the IRB processes applications on a first-come, first-served basis.
8. Preliminary review may take up to 3 weeks.
9. Most applications will require 3 sets of revisions.
10. The entire process may take between 1 and 2 months.
11. *We cannot accept applications in formats other than Microsoft Word. Please do not send us One Drive files, Pdfs, Google Docs, or Html applications. **Exception:** The IRB's signature page, proprietary instruments (i.e., survey creator has copyright), and documentation of permission may be submitted as pdfs.*

Note: Applications and supporting documents with the following problems will be returned immediately for revisions:

1. Grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors
 2. Lack of professionalism
 3. Lack of consistency or clarity
 4. Incomplete applications
- **Failure to minimize these errors **will** cause delays in your processing time***
-

II. BASIC PROTOCOL INFORMATION

1. STUDY/THESIS/DISSERTATION TITLE (?)	
Title: THE IMPACT OF STRESS, DEPRESSION, AND ANXIETY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT SUCCESS DURING THEIR FIRST UNDERGRADUATE SEMESTER AT HOUSE A&M UNIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY	
2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR & PROTOCOL INFORMATION (?)	
Principal Investigator (<i>person conducting the research</i>): Anthony Howard	
Professional Title (<i>Student, Professor, etc.</i>): Student	
School/Department (<i>School of Education, LUCOM, etc.</i>): School of Education	
Phone: [REDACTED]	LU Email: [REDACTED]
Check all that apply:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Faculty	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Online Graduate Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Residential Undergraduate Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Residential Graduate Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Online Undergraduate Student
This research is for:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Class Project	<input type="checkbox"/> Master's Thesis
<input type="checkbox"/> Scholarly Project (DNP Program)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doctoral Dissertation
<input type="checkbox"/> Faculty Research	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
If applicable, indicate whether you have defended and passed your dissertation proposal:	
<input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (<i>Provide your defense date</i>): <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (Proceed to Associated Personnel Information)	

3. ASSOCIATED PERSONNEL INFORMATION (?)	
Co-Researcher(s):	
School/Department:	
Phone:	LU/Other Email:
Faculty Chair/Mentor(s): Dr. Kenneth Tierce	
School/Department: School of Education	
Phone: [REDACTED]	LU/Other Email: krtierce@liberty.edu
Non-Key Personnel (<i>Reader, Assistant, etc.</i>):	
School/Department:	
Phone:	LU/Other Email:
Consultant/Methodologist (<i>required for School of Education EdD/PhD candidates</i>):	
School/Department: [REDACTED]	
Phone: [REDACTED]	LU/Other Email: [REDACTED]

4. USE OF LIBERTY UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANTS (?)	
<p>Do you intend to use LU students, staff, or faculty as participants <i>OR</i> LU student, staff, or faculty data in your study?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (Proceed to Funding Source)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (<i>Complete the section below</i>)</p>	
# of Participants/Data Sets:	Department/Source:
Class(es)/Year(s):	Department Chair:
Obtaining permission to utilize LU participants (<i>check the appropriate box below</i>):	
SINGLE DEPARTMENT/GROUP: If you are including faculty, students, or staff from a	

<p>single department or group, you must obtain permission from the appropriate Dean, Department Chair, or Coach and submit a signed letter or date/time stamped email to the IRB indicating approval to use students from that department or group. You may submit your application without having obtained this permission; however, the IRB will not approve your study until you provide proof of permission.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> I have obtained permission from the appropriate Dean/Department Chair/Coach and attached the necessary documentation to this application.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> I have sought permission and will submit documentation to the IRB once I receive it from the appropriate Dean/Department Chair/Coach.</p>
<p>MULTIPLE DEPARTMENTS/GROUPS: If you are including faculty, students, or staff from multiple departments or groups (i.e., all sophomores or LU Online), the IRB will need to seek administrative approval on your behalf.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> I am requesting that the IRB seek administrative approval on my behalf.</p>

<p>5. FUNDING SOURCE (?)</p>
<p>Is your research funded?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (<i>Proceed to Study Dates</i>)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (<i>Complete the section below</i>)</p>
<p>Grant Name/Funding Source/Number:</p>
<p>Funding Period (Month & Year):</p>

<p>6. STUDY DATES (?)</p>
<p>When do you plan to perform your study? (<i>Approximate dates for collection/analysis</i>):</p> <p>Start (<i>Month/Year</i>): Finish (<i>Month/Year</i>):</p>

7. COMPLETION OF REQUIRED CITI RESEARCH ETHICS TRAINING (?)
<p>List Course Name(s) (<i>Social and Behavioral Researchers, etc.</i>):</p> <p>Belmont Report and Its Principles (ID: 1127) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>Populations in Research Requiring Additional Considerations and/or Protections (ID: 16680) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research (ID: 14928) 03-Nov-2019</p> <p>Research with Prisoners - SBE (ID: 506) 03-Nov-2019</p>
Date(s) of Completion: 03-Nov-19

III. OTHER STUDY MATERIALS AND CONSIDERATIONS

8. STUDY MATERIALS LIST (?)	
Please indicate whether your proposed study will include any of the following:	
Recording/photography of participants (<i>voice, video, or images</i>)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Participant compensation (<i>gift cards, meals, extra credit, etc.</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Advertising for participants (<i>flyers, TV/Radio advertisements</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
More than minimal psychological stress?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Confidential data collection (<i>participant identities known but not revealed</i>)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Anonymous data collection (<i>participant identities not known</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Archival data collection (<i>data previously collected for another purpose</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Extra costs to the participants (<i>tests, hospitalization, etc.</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
The inclusion of pregnant women (<i>for medical studies</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
More than minimal risk?*	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Alcohol consumption?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Protected Health Information (<i>from health practitioners/institutions</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
VO ₂ Max Exercise?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Pilot study procedures (<i>which will be published/included in data analysis</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Use of blood?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Total amount of blood:	
Blood draws over time period (<i>days</i>):	
The use of rDNA or biohazardous material?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
The use of human tissue or cell lines?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Fluids that could mask the presence of blood (<i>including urine/feces</i>)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Use of radiation or radioisotopes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

***Note: Minimal risk** is defined as “the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in everyday life or during the performance of routine physical or physiological examinations or tests. [45 CFR 46.102(i)]. If you are unsure if your study qualifies as minimal risk, contact the IRB.

9. INVESTIGATIONAL METHODS (?)

Please indicate whether your proposed study will include any of the following:
<p>The use of an investigational new drug (IND) or an approved drug for an unapproved Use?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (<i>Provide the drug name, IND number, and company</i>):</p>
<p>The use of an investigational medical device or an approved medical device for an unapproved Use?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (<i>Provide the device name, IDE number, and company</i>):</p>

IV. PURPOSE

10. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH (?)
<p>Write an original, brief, non-technical description of the <u>purpose</u> of your research.</p> <p>Include in your description your research hypothesis/question, a narrative that explains the major constructs of your study, and how the data will advance your research hypothesis or question. This section should be easy to read for someone not familiar with your academic discipline: The purpose of this case study is to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety has on first-year, first-semester, African American freshman students' transition during their first semester of college at House A&M University</p>

V. PARTICIPANT INCLUSION/EXCLUSION CRITERIA

11. STUDY POPULATION (?)
<p>Provide the inclusion criteria for the participant population (<i>e.g., gender, age-range, ethnic background, health status, occupation, employer, etc.</i>): Participants who classify as African American. Participants who hold the classification ranging from a freshman to first-semester sophomore.</p>

<p>Provide a rationale for selecting the above population (<i>i.e., Why will this specific population enable you to answer your research question?</i>): Participants who hold the classification ranging from a freshman to first-semester sophomore will have a higher chance of recollecting their experiences regarding the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety has on African American freshman students transition during their first semester of college at House A&M University.</p>
<p>Will your participant population be divided into different groups (<i>i.e., experimental and control groups</i>)?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (<i>Describe the groups and explain how groups will be selected/assigned.</i>):</p>
<p>Are you related to any of your participants?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (<i>Explain</i>):</p>
<p>Indicate who will be excluded from your study population (<i>e.g., persons under 18 years of age</i>): Students who are not considered African American and participants who hold the classification as a second-semester sophomore or higher.</p>
<p>If applicable, provide rationale for involving any special populations (<i>e.g., children, ethnic groups, individuals with impaired decision-making ability or low socioeconomic status, or prisoners</i>):</p>
<p>Provide the maximum number of participants you plan to enroll for each participant population and justify the sample size (<i>You will not be approved to enroll a number greater than the number listed. If at a later time, it becomes apparent that you need to increase your sample size, submit a Change in Protocol Form, and wait for approval to</i></p>

proceed.): 10-12. This sample size is a good sample size for a qualitative study.

**ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION ONLY IF YOU ARE CONDUCTING A
PROTOCOL WITH NIH, FEDERAL, OR STATE FUNDING:**

Researchers sometimes believe their particular project is not appropriate for certain types of participants. These may include, for example, women, minorities, and children. If you believe your project should not include one or more of these groups, please provide your justification for their exclusion. Your justification will be reviewed according to the applicable NIH, federal, or state guidelines:

12. TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS (?)

Who will be the focus of your study? (Check all that apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Normal Participants (Age 18-65)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant Women
<input type="checkbox"/> Minors (Under Age 18)	<input type="checkbox"/> Fetuses
<input type="checkbox"/> Over Age 65	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitively Disabled
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> College/University Students	<input type="checkbox"/> Physically Disabled
<input type="checkbox"/> Active-Duty Military Personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> Participants Incapable of Giving Consent
<input type="checkbox"/> Discharged/Retired Military Personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners or Institutional Individuals
<input type="checkbox"/> Inpatients	<input type="checkbox"/> Specific Ethnic/Racial Group(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Outpatients	<input type="checkbox"/> Other potentially elevated risk populations
<input type="checkbox"/> Patient Controls	<input type="checkbox"/> Participant(s) related to the researcher

Note: Only check the boxes if the participants will be the focus (for example, ONLY military or ONLY students). If they just happen to be a part of the broad group you are studying, you only need to check "Normal Participants." Some studies may require that you check multiple boxes (e.g., Korean males, aged 65+).

VI. RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

13. CONTACTING PARTICIPANTS (?)

Describe in detail how you will contact participants regarding this study (include the method(s) used—email, phone call, social media, snowball sampling, etc.): Participants will be recruited via email.

14. SUBMISSION OF RECRUITMENT MATERIALS (?)

Submit a copy of all recruitment letters, scripts, emails, flyers, advertisements, or social media posts you plan to use to recruit participants for your study as separate Word documents with your application. [Recruitment templates](#) are available on the IRB website.

Check the appropriate box:

☒ All of the necessary recruitment materials will be submitted with my application.

☐ My study strictly uses **archival** data, so recruitment materials are not applicable.

If you plan to provide documents in a language other than English:

☐ I will submit a translated copy of my recruitment materials along with the English version(s).

15. LOCATION OF RECRUITMENT (?)

Describe the location, setting, and timing of recruitment: The setting for this qualitative case study will be House A&M University that was founded in 1866 with multiple campuses located throughout the Southwest region of the United States of America. Recruitment email will be sent following IRB approval and permission from College Deans. If there are not enough participants recruited, a follow-up recruitment email will be sent after 10 days.

16. SCREENING PROCEDURES (?)

Describe any procedures you will use to ensure that your participants meet your study criteria (*e.g., a screening survey or verbal confirmation to verify that participants are 18 or older*): The potential participants must complete a screening questionnaire to ensure they meet the criteria.

17. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST (?)

Conflicts of interest are “situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, an investigator’s judgement in conducting or reporting research” AAMC, 1990.

Do you have a position of academic or professional authority over the participants (e.g., You are the participants’ teacher, principal, supervisor, or district/school administrator.)?

☒ No

☐ Yes (*Explain what safeguards are in place to reduce the likelihood of compromising the integrity of the research, e.g., addressing the conflicts in the consent process and/or emphasizing the pre-existing relationship will not be impacted by participation in the research.*):

Do you have any financial or personal conflicts of interest to disclose (e.g., Do you or an immediate family member receive income or other payments, own investments in, or have a relationship with a non-profit organization that could benefit from this research?)?

☒ No ([Proceed to Procedures](#))

☐ Yes (*State the funding source/financial conflict and then explain what safeguards are in place to reduce the likelihood of compromising the integrity of the research.*):

VII. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

18. PROCEDURES (?)

Write an original, non-technical, step-by-step description of what your participants will be asked to do during your study and data collection process. If you have multiple participant groups (e.g., parents, teachers, and students) or control and experimental groups, please specify which group you are asking to complete which task(s). **You do not need to list signing/reading consent as a step.**

Step/Task/Procedure	Time to Complete Procedure	Participant Group(s) (All, Group A, Group B, Control Group,
---------------------	----------------------------	--

	<i>(Approx.)</i>	<i>Experimental Group, etc.)</i>
1. Complete a screening questionnaire	10 minutes	All
2. Participate in a semistructured interview	45-60 minutes	All
3. Participate in a focus group	45-60 minutes	At least half
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
<i>Note: For complex study designs, additional diagrams, timelines, or figures may be submitted separately.</i>		

19. SUBMISSION OF DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS/MATERIALS (?)

Submit a copy of all instruments, surveys, interview questions, outlines, observation checklists, prompts, etc. that you plan to use to collect data for your study as separate Word documents with your application. Pdfs are **ONLY** acceptable for proprietary instruments.

Check the appropriate box:

☒ All of the necessary data collection instruments will be submitted with my application.

☐ My study strictly uses **archival** data, so data collection instruments are not applicable.

If you plan to provide documents in a language other than English:

☐ I will submit a translated copy of my study instrument(s) along with the English version(s).

20. STUDY LOCATION (?)

Please state the actual location(s)/site(s) in which the study will be conducted. Be specific (include city, state, school/district, clinic, etc.): College Station, TX and Killeen, TX

***Note:** Investigators must submit documentation of permission from some research sites to the IRB prior to receiving approval. If your study involves K-12 public schools, district-level approval is acceptable as opposed to submitting separate permission documentation from each school. If your study involves colleges or universities, hospitals, or prisons, you may also need to seek IRB approval from those institutions. You may seek permission prior to submitting your IRB application; however, **do not** begin recruiting participants. If you find that you need a conditional approval letter from the IRB to obtain permission, the IRB will provide one once you have completed all requested revisions.*

VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

21. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS/DATA SETS (?)

Estimate the number of participants to be enrolled or data sets to be collected: 12

22. ANALYSIS METHODS (?)

Describe how the data will be analyzed: NVivo software will be used for data analysis.

Data will be coded to help identify themes. As themes emerge, individual textural and structural descriptions will be compiled. Individual textural and structural descriptions will be used to compile a group textural and structural description.

Please describe what will be done with the data and the resulting analysis (Include any plans for publication or presentation.): Analysis will be included in the dissertation and, if possible, published in a scholarly journal.

IX. PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT

23. PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT REQUIREMENTS (?)

Does your study require parental/guardian consent? (If your participants are under 18,

parental/guardian consent is required in most cases.)

☒ No ([Proceed to Child Assent](#))

☐ Yes (*Answer the following question*)

Does your study entail greater than minimal risk without the potential for benefits to the participant?

☒ No

☐ Yes (*Consent of both parents is required*)

X. ASSENT FROM CHILDREN

24. CHILD ASSENT (?)

Is assent required for your study? (*Assent is required unless the child is not capable of assenting due to age, psychological state, or sedation OR the research holds out the prospect of a direct benefit that is only available within the context of the research.*)

☒ No ([Proceed to Consent Procedures](#))

☐ Yes

Note: *If the parental consent process (full or part) is waived (See XIII below), assent may also be. See the IRB's [informed consent](#) page for more information.*

XI. PROCESS OF OBTAINING INFORMED CONSENT

25. CONSENT PROCEDURES (?)

Describe in detail how and when you will provide consent/assent/parental consent information (*e.g., as an attachment to your recruitment email, as the first page participants see after clicking on the survey link, etc.*): Consent document will be attached to recruitment email, and a hard copy will be provided at the interview.

Unless your study qualifies for a waiver of signatures, describe in detail **how and when** consent forms will be signed and returned to you (e.g., participants will type their names and the date on the consent form before completing the online survey, participants will sign and return the consent forms when you meet for their interview, etc.): Participants will sign a consent form before the beginning of the interview.

Note: A waiver of signatures is only applicable if you will not be able to link participant responses to participants (i.e., anonymous surveys). See section XIV below.

XII. USE OF DECEPTION

26. DECEPTION (?)

Are there any aspects of the study kept secret from the participants (e.g., the full purpose of the study, assignment or use of experimental/control groups, etc.)?

☒ No

☐ Yes (Describe the deception involved and the debriefing procedures.):

Is deception used in the study procedures?

☒ No

☐ Yes (Describe the deception involved and the debriefing procedures.):

Note: Submit a post-experiment debriefing statement and consent form, offering participants the option of having their data destroyed. A debriefing template is available on our [website](#).

XIII. WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT OR MODIFICATION OF REQUIRED ELEMENTS IN THE INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS

27. WAIVER OF INFORMED CONSENT ELEMENTS (?)

N/A

Please indicate why you are requesting a waiver of consent (If your reason does not appear as an option, please check N/A. If your reason appears in the drop-down list,

<i>complete the below questions in this section): Click to select an option.</i>
<p>Does the research pose no more than minimal risk to participants (<i>i.e., no more risk than that of everyday activities</i>)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, the study is greater than minimal risk.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the study is minimal risk.</p>
<p>Will the waiver have no adverse effects on participant rights and welfare?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, the waiver <u>will</u> have adverse effects on participant rights and welfare.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the waiver <u>will not</u> adversely affect participant rights and welfare.</p>
<p>Would the research be impracticable without the waiver?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, there are other ways of performing the research without the waiver.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, not having a waiver would make the study unrealistic. Explain:</p>
<p>Will participant debriefing occur (<i>i.e., Will the true purpose and/or deceptive procedures used in the study be reported to participants at a later date?</i>)?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No, participants will not be debriefed.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, participants will be debriefed.</p>
<p>Note: A waiver or modification of some or all of the required elements of informed consent is sometimes used in research involving deception or archival data.</p>

XIV. WAIVER OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS TO SIGN THE INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

<p>28. WAIVER OF SIGNED CONSENT (?)</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Please indicate why you are requesting a waiver of signatures (<i>If your reason does not appear as an option, please check N/A. If your reason appears in the drop-down list, complete the below questions in this section): Click to select an option.</i></p>

Would a signed consent form be the only record linking the participant to the research?

☐ No, *there are other records/study questions linking the participants to the study.*

☐ Yes, *only the signed form would link the participant to the study.*

Does a breach of confidentiality constitute the principal risk to participants?

☐ No, *there are other risks involved greater than a breach of confidentiality.*

☐ Yes, *the main risk is a breach of confidentiality.*

Does the research pose no more than minimal risk to participants (*i.e.*, no more risk than that of everyday activities)?

☐ No, *the study is greater than minimal risk.*

☐ Yes, *the study is minimal risk.*

Does the research include any activities that would require signed consent in a non-research context (*e.g.*, liability waivers)?

☐ No, *there are not any study-related activities that would normally require signed consent*

☐ Yes, *there are study-related activities that would normally require signed consent.*

Are the subjects or their legally authorized representatives (LARs) members of a distinct cultural group or community in which signing forms is not the norm?

☐ No, *the subjects/their LARs are not members of a distinct cultural group or community in which signing forms is not the norm.*

☐ Yes, *the subjects/their LARs are members of a distinct cultural group or community in which signing forms is not the norm, and there is an appropriate alternative mechanism for documenting that informed consent was obtained.*

Will you provide the participants with a written statement about the research (*i.e.*, an information sheet that contains all of the elements of an informed consent form but without

the signature lines)?

☐ No, participants will not receive written information about the research.

☐ Yes, participants will receive written information about the research.

***Note:** A waiver of signed consent is sometimes used in anonymous surveys or research involving secondary data. This does not eliminate the need for a consent document, but it eliminates the need to obtain participant signatures.*

XV. CHECKLIST OF INFORMED CONSENT/ASSENT

29. STATEMENT (?)

Submit a copy of all informed consent/assent documents as separate Word documents with your application. [Informed consent/assent templates](#) are available on our website. Additional information regarding [consent](#) is also available on our website.

Check the appropriate box:

All of the necessary consent/assent documents will be submitted with my application.

☐ My study strictly uses **archival** data, so consent documents are not required.

If you plan to provide documents in a language other than English:

☐ I will submit a translated copy of my consent material(s) along with the English version(s).

XVI. PARTICIPANT PRIVACY, DATA SECURITY, & MEDIA USE

30. PRIVACY (?)

Describe the steps you will take to protect the privacy of your participants (*e.g., If you plan to interview participants, will you conduct your interviews in a setting where others cannot easily overhear?*): Interview data will be transcribed. Pseudonyms will be used in any print documents. Original recordings/contact information will be stored on a password-

protected computer and locked in a safe.

Note: Privacy refers to persons and their interest in controlling access to their information.

31. DATA SECURITY (?)

How will you keep your data secure (*i.e., password-protected computer, locked desk, locked filing cabinet, etc.*)? Password-protected computer and drive that will be locked in a safe.

Who will have access to the data (*i.e., the researcher and faculty mentor/chair, only the researcher, etc.*)? Only the researcher will have access to data containing original contact information.

Will you destroy the data once the three-year retention period required by federal regulations expires?

☐ No

☒ Yes (*Explain how the data will be destroyed.*): data will be deleted, recycle bins emptied, and drives reformatted.

Note: All research-related data must be stored for a minimum of three years after the end date of the study, as required by federal regulations.

32. ARCHIVAL DATA (SECONDARY DATA) (?)

Is all or part of the data archival (*i.e., previously collected for another purpose*)?

☒ No ([Proceed to Non-Archival Data.](#))

☐ Yes (*Answer the questions below.*)

Is the archival data publicly accessible?

☐ No (*Explain how you will obtain access to this data.*):

☐ Yes (*Indicate where the data is accessible from, i.e., a website, etc.*):

Will you receive the raw data stripped of identifying information (e.g., names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, social security numbers, medical records, birth dates, etc.)?

☐ No (*Describe what data will remain identifiable and why this information will not be removed.*):

☐ Yes (*Describe who will link and/or strip the data—this person should have regular access to the data and should be a neutral party not involved in the study.*):

Can the names or identities of the participants be deduced from the raw data?

☐ No (*Place your initials in the box: I will not attempt to deduce the identity of the participants in this study.*):

☐ Yes (*Describe*):

Please provide the list of data fields you intend to use for your analysis and/or provide the original instruments used in the study:

Note: If the archival data is not publicly available, submit proof of permission to access the data (i.e., school district letter or email). If you will receive data stripped of identifiers, this must be stated in the proof of permission letter or email.

33. NON-ARCHIVAL DATA (PRIMARY DATA) (?)

If you are using non-archival data, will the data be anonymous to you (i.e., Raw data does not contain identifying information and cannot be linked to an individual/organization

by use of pseudonyms, codes, or other means.?) **Note:** For studies involving audio/video recording or photography, select “No.”

☐ N/A: I will only use archival data. ([Skip to Media.](#))

☒ No: My data will contain identifiers. ([Complete the “No” section below.](#))

☐ Yes: My data will not contain identifiers. ([Complete the “Yes” section below.](#))

****COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU ANSWERED “NO” TO QUESTION 33****

Can participant names or identities be deduced from the raw data?

☐ No

☒ Yes (*Describe*): Original names will be on consent documents and for audio recordings.

Will a person be able to identify a subject based on other information in the raw data
(*i.e., title, position, sex, etc.*)?

☒ No

☐ Yes (*Describe*):

Describe the process you will use to ensure the confidentiality of the participants during data collection and in any publication(s) (*i.e., You may be able to link individuals/organizations to identifiable data; however, you will use pseudonyms or a coding system to conceal their identities.*): Pseudonyms will be given/chosen by participants. All data published will contain pseudonyms of participants in place of real names.

Do you plan to maintain a list or codebook linking pseudonyms or codes to participant identities?

☐ No (*Justify*):

☒ Yes (*Please describe where this list/codebook will be stored and who will have access to the list/codebook. Explicitly state that the list will not be stored with the data.*): Codebook

will be stored on a password-protected computer/drive. Computer/drive will be locked in a safe.

****COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU ANSWERED “YES” TO QUESTION 33****

Describe the process you will use to collect the data to ensure that it is anonymous:

Place your initials in the box: I will not attempt to deduce the identity of the participants in this study:

Note: If you plan to use participant data (i.e., photos, recordings, videos, drawings) for presentations beyond data analysis for the research study (e.g., classroom presentations, library archives, or conference presentations), you will need to provide a materials release form to the participant.

34. MEDIA USE (?)

Will your participants be audio recorded?

☐ No ☒ Yes

Will your participants be video recorded?

☐ No ☒ Yes

Will your participants be photographed?

☒ No ☐ Yes

****COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU ANSWERED “YES” TO ANY MEDIA USE****

Include information regarding how participant data will be withdrawn if he or she chooses to leave the study*: Interview data will be deleted should a participant withdraw. Should a participant withdraw after the focus group, data will not be used in analysis or write-up.

Will your participants be audio recorded, video recorded, or photographed without their knowledge?**

☒ No

☐ Yes (Describe the deception and debriefing procedures.):

**Note on Withdrawal: Add the heading "How to Withdraw from the Study" on the consent document and include a description of the procedures a participant must perform to be withdrawn.*

***Note on Deception: Attach a post-experiment debriefing statement and a post-deception consent form, offering the participants the option of having their recording/photograph destroyed and removed from the study.*

XVII. PARTICIPANT COMPENSATION

35. COMPENSATION (?)

Will participants be compensated (e.g., gift cards, raffle entry, reimbursement, food)?

☒ No ([Proceed to Risks.](#))

☐ Yes (Describe.):

Will compensation be pro-rated if the participant does not complete all aspects of the study?

☐ No

☐ Yes (Describe.):

***Note:** Certain states outlaw the use of lotteries, raffles, or drawings as a means of compensating research participants. Research compensation exceeding \$600 per participant within a one-year period is considered income and will need to be filed on the participant's income tax returns. If your study is grant-funded, Liberty University's Business Office policies might affect how you compensate participants. Contact the IRB for additional information.*

XVIII. PARTICIPANT RISKS AND BENEFITS

36. RISKS (?)

<p>Describe the risks to participants and any steps that will be taken to minimize those risks. (<i>Risks can be physical, psychological, economic, social, or legal. If the only potential risk is a breach in confidentiality if the data are lost or stolen, state that here.</i>): Breach of confidentiality. Password-protected computer/drives and securing of anything containing vital data behind a password and lock will be employed.</p>
<p>Will alternative procedures or treatments that might be advantageous to the participants be made available?</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (<i>Describe.</i>):</p>
<p align="center">ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION <u>ONLY IF</u> YOUR STUDY IS CONSIDERED GREATER THAN MINIMAL RISK:</p>
<p>Describe provisions for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to the participants (<i>e.g., proximity of the research location to medical facilities or your ability to provide counseling referrals in the event of emotional distress</i>):</p>
<p>37. BENEFITS (?)</p>
<p>Describe the possible <u>direct</u> benefits to the participants. (<i>If participants are not expected to receive direct benefits, please state "No direct benefits." Completing a survey or participating in an interview will not typically result in direct benefits to participants.</i>): No direct benefits</p>
<p>Describe any possible benefits to society:</p>

Evaluate the risk-benefit ratio. (*Explain why you believe this study is worth doing, even with any identified risks.*):

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Potential Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of this case study is to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety has on African American freshman students' transition during their first semester of college at House A&M University.

If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to fill out a screening questionnaire, participate in a face-to-face semi-structured interview, and possibly participate in a focus group. It should take approximately 40-60 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact the researcher, Anthony Howard, via phone or email within seven days to indicate your willingness.

A consent document is attached to this email and will be given to you at the time of the interview. The consent document contains additional information about my research, but you do not need to sign and return it.

Sincerely,

Anthony Howard

APPENDIX C: LIBERTY UNIVERSITY IRB INFORMED CONSENT FORM**CONSENT FORM**

THE IMPACT OF STRESS, DEPRESSION, AND ANXIETY ON AFRICAN AMERICAN
STUDENT SUCCESS DURING THEIR FIRST UNDERGRADUATE SEMESTER
AT HOUSE A&M UNIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY

Anthony Howard

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the impact that stress, depression, and anxiety have on African American freshman students' transition during their first semester of college at House A&M University. You were selected as a possible participant because you were impacted by stress, depression, and anxiety in your first year at House A & M University. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

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

Background Information: The purpose of this case study is to understand the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on first-year, first-semester, African American freshman students' transition during their first semester of college at House A&M University.

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

1. Contact the researcher via email or phone within 7 days to notify him of your willingness to participate.
2. Complete the prescreening questionnaire approximately 7 days prior to interview.
3. Participate in an interview, at your convenience, within 30 days of completing the questionnaire. This interview will be audio recorded.
4. If necessary, participate in a focus group, at the greatest convenience to the group at the university's library at approximately 2:00 pm, within 60 days of completing the individual interview. This will be video- and audio-recorded.

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

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

Benefits to society include an increased understanding the impact that stress, depression, and anxiety have on African American freshman students' transition during their first semester of college at House A&M University.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, 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.

- Participants will choose or be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-protected computer. Backup data will be stored on a password-protected hard drive and locked in a safe. After 3 years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Focus group proceedings will be audio- and video-recorded. Recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer for 3 years and then deleted. Only I will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: 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 the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Anthony Howard. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, [REDACTED]

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 Liberty University Institutional Review Board, [REDACTED]

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.

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

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we just met one another.
2. What impact has stress, depression, and anxiety had on your first semester as you transitioned into college? (CRQ)
3. Please explain a scenario(s) in which you have experienced anxiety, stress, or depression during your first semester in college. (RQ2)
4. Of the experiences you identified, which would you say was the most significant experience? (RQ2)
5. What involvement did the counseling services have during your first semester of college at House A&M University? (RQ3)
6. Please describe the counseling services on campus. This may include the hours of operation, appointment hours, numbers of sessions allotted, and anything else you may deem relevant. (RQ3)
7. At what stage of stress, depression, or anxiety do you believe you should begin to seek help? (RQ1)
8. Describe your stress, depression, and anxiety during your first semester in college. What are some triggers that placed you in a state of stress, depression, or anxiety? (CRQ)
9. Describe how your parents perceive your transition into college. (RQ1)
10. Describe a time during your first semester in college when you sought help for signs of stress, depression, and anxiety you experienced while in college.
11. Tell me about the struggles you have experienced regarding your mental health since graduating high school as you transitioned to college. (RQ2)

12. What else do you think would be important for me to know about?

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP PROMPTS

1. Describe any specific moments when you were anxious, depressed, or stressed during your first college semester. (SQ1)
2. What are your thoughts regarding dropping out of college due to the overwhelming feeling of anxiety, depression, or stress? If so, why?
3. What services do you believe would have been helpful to use on campus during your first semester in college? (SQ3)
4. What are your descriptions of the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety on your experiences during their first college semester? (CRQ)
5. Explain how you would feel if you knew one of your peers was battling stress, depression, and anxiety. What support would you believe you could provide for the fellow student? (SQ2)
6. Please describe your perceptions of the orientation process you had upon arrival at the university. (SQ2)
7. What other experiences would you like to share regarding the impact of stress, depression, and anxiety during your first semester in college that were not discussed in the other interview questions? (CRQ)

APPENDIX F: INCIDENT REPORT**Background Information**

Enable additional features by logging in. [🔗](#)

Your full name:

Your position/title:

Your phone number:

Your email address:

Your physical address:

Nature of this report *(Required)*:

Urgency of this report *(Required)*:

Date of incident *(Required)*:



Time of incident:

Location of incident *(Required)*:

Specific location:

APPENDIX G: ANONYMOUS INCIDENT REPORT

Background Information

Enable additional features by logging in. [↗](#)

Date of incident (Required):

mm/dd/yyyy

Time of incident:

Location of incident (Required):

Please select a location ...

Specific location:

Involved Parties

Name or Organization	Select Gender	Select Role	ID Number
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
DOB (YYYY-MM-DD)	Phone number	Email address	Hall/Address
<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>