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## The Lived Experiences of Minority Millennial Interns Who Reject Federal Employment Offers

Darlene Cunningham  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Darlene Cunningham

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

The Lived Experiences of Minority Millennial Interns Who Reject Federal Employment

Offers

by

Darlene Cunningham

MBA, American InterContinental University, 2007

BA, University of the West Indies, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Public Administration

Walden University

August 2021

## Abstract

In the U.S. federal government, low retention levels of minority millennial interns i.e., women and men of color, in the Honors Internship Program have reinforced a lack of diversity and the negative image associated with some federal organizations. Although researchers have examined aspects of this issue, they have not yet examined minority interns' perspectives on why they chose not to accept a position with the federal government after completing the internship program. The purpose of this research was to understand the gap exhibited in low minority retention levels in federal organizations in relation to minority millennial inclusivity from the perspective of the individuals who completed the honors internship program. This gap was best explored using a qualitative approach and supported by Cox's theory on creating the multicultural organization. Individual interviews were conducted with 10 minority millennial participants who had completed their internship program. The aim was to ascertain and analyze, through manual coding of the meaningful data, their perspectives on the diversity phenomenon. The data analysis revealed six themes: motivation to serve, expectations of interns, internship challenges, realized rewards, realities of finances, and beyond financial. This research has the potential to facilitate positive social change by informing policy makers and human resources (HR) professionals about recruiting policies that impact minority retention. Improving minority retention could result in a more accurate representation of the communities that host these federal organizations.



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## Dedication

In dedication to the *triangle*, a source of love, comfort, and strength.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Fostering greater diversity in U.S. government organizations is a longstanding problem. Cox (1991), who developed a theory on creating the multicultural organization, is one expert who has advocated for greater diversity in government organizations. Through his exploratory research, Cox deduced the benefits wrought by inclusion of diverse groups, ranging from their decision-making skills and process to creativity and innovativeness. This need to increase diversity in hiring in traditional agencies such as federal organizations is but one aspect of a two-part problem, however. The second is retention of diverse employees (Fletcher, 2015; Miller & Tucker, 2013).

Knowing the apparent value women and men of color bring to an organization, leaders of federal organizations have employed myriad strategies to not only attract but also retain minority employees. Some of these strategies include recruitment, mentorship programs, and mandatory supervisory trainings. Such diversity-focused strategic efforts were bolstered by Executive Order 13,562 on December 27, 2010, enacted by the Obama Administration's Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The executive order captured the essence of Cox's theory (1991) from almost two decades earlier. One of the most impactful strategic tools that came out of the diversity and inclusion mandate was to use the Honors Internship Program as a primary hiring pool. In its early years, the Honors Internship Program targeted current college students who primarily fell within the millennial generation (Ferri-Reed, 2014). The primary goal of the internship tool is to increase the number of minority interns with the hope that these interns will transition into permanent positions after successfully completing their program (Conley-Tyler et

al.2015; “RCoA Cultivates the Future Through Internship Program,” 2018). However, some minority interns have chosen not to retain permanent employment with the federal organizations where they completed their internship. In this study, I sought to elucidate the perspectives of minority millennial interns who decided not to accept permanent positions with the federal organizations where they interned.

### **Background**

I examined peer-reviewed articles as foundational literature to ascertain the extent to which these studies covered the issues of increasing and retaining minorities in the federal government. These articles also provided the basis on which to build and align this research, based on areas they did not cover in their respective studies. The following keyword searches were conducted using Walden University Library databases and Google Scholar to locate peer-reviewed articles and books: *federal internship program, diversity retention, internship in government, retention in government, millennials retention, minority retention in government, and millennial government internship.*

Fletcher (2015) and Miller (2016) emphasized using the internship programs within government organizations as viable mechanisms for attracting and recruiting more minorities. Although there are other commonly utilized hiring sources in federal government such as direct hire through websites like USAjobs.gov, referral programs, and critical hires for hard-to-fill specialized occupations, the internship programs are comparatively more feasible as an entry-level hiring pool. It is the sustainability of this program to continuously recruit competitive millennials from colleges that make them a viable option for these organizations. The colleges from which interns are recruited also



benefit from federal organizations' investments of time, talent, and finances for intern recruitment.

Other researchers have examined federal internships from the perspectives of the interns themselves. Henstra and McGowan (2016), for instance, explored millennials' motivations for wanting to intern in the public sector and their expectations. Their research provides insight into interns' choices to transition as a permanent employee after their internship ended with their federal organization and if their motivation evaporated and expectations were not met during the internship. Also, interns who successfully transitioned into permanent roles from the internship program due to a call for service can provide insight into HR recruitment and public policies and practices that work.

Satisfaction is a key focal area for intern retention, some research shows. Ko and Sidhu (2012) focused on the satisfaction and dissatisfaction interns experienced with their internship program and how this affected their retention within their respective federal organizations. Because dissatisfaction arguably has an impact on interns' retention rates, practitioners should learn the expectations of the interns who chose not to transition into permanent positions, Ko and Sidhu concluded. This will allow practitioners to obtain interns' perspectives and further deduce if any unmet expectations fostered dissatisfaction resulting in their decision to leave the organization.

To address these issues, some researchers have proposed strategies that, if implemented, might improve intern retention in the U.S. federal government. Miller (2016) and Langbein and Stazyki (2018) both addressed the significance of retaining minorities in government organizations. Miller provided possible solutions to increase

retention, such as performance-related pay. This solution would entail increasing the employee's pay based on evaluation of how their performance exceeded expected requirements. Therefore, the increase in employee's pay, based on good performance, should encourage employees to retain employment in that organization. Langbein and Stazyki later countered Miller's performance-related solution, by stating that it is difficult to measure good performance to generalize for reward, as good performance is relative. As this research illustrates, intern retention in federal government organizations is challenging for recruiters and hiring managers to address.

### **Problem Statement**

Low retention levels of minority interns have resulted in a lack of diversity in federal organizations (Fletcher, 2015). Many women and men of color who completed the Honors Internship Program, a federal internship for college students, are not choosing to accept employment with the federal organizations at which they interned (Miller, 2016). In this research, I sought to explicate the determining factors that are influencing minority interns' choice to leave the government organizations immediately at the end of their internship or shortly after accepting permanent positions, thereby resulting in low minority representation in these organizations. Many federal organizations use their internship programs as a sustainable method of diversifying the hiring pool (Fletcher), although challenges remain within some HR offices engaged in diversity training for hiring officials and general staff.

Prior researchers proposed challenging factors such as the government's inability to compete with the lucrative and technologically advanced private sector and the

negative image of some federal organizations (Miller & Tucker, 2013). Other researchers investigated this problem and proffered factors such as dissatisfaction with the job, minorities lacking a voice, and brain-drain derived from attrition (Goodman et al., 2015; Langbein & Stazyki, 2018). None of the literature reviewed included an examination of minority interns' perspective on why they chose not to accept a position with the federal government after completing the internship program. This research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on this problem by focusing on interns' motivations, expectations, unique experiences and challenges, and the deterministic factors behind their choice to refuse permanent employment with a federal organization. The findings from this study may provide information to public policy decision-makers to aid formulation and/or reformulation of policies on effective retention practices for transitioning minorities to permanent positions in federal organizations.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of former minority millennial interns who choose to leave federal organizations immediately or soon after completing their internships. Although researchers such as Fletcher (2015) and Miller (2016) have examined the use of internship programs within the federal government as viable staffing sources for attracting and recruiting more minorities into these traditional organizations, there is a gap in the body of knowledge on the personal deterministic factors that cause attrition among minority interns. I focused on filling the gap by analyzing the perspectives of those former minority interns on why they chose to leave the federal organizations where they completed their internships between 2015 and

2018. I also sought to ascertain the perspectives of former minority interns who completed their internships and successfully transitioned into permanent positions in the federal organizations where they interned within the same time period. In addition to interviews, I used secondary data from select federal organizations to ascertain the number of minorities who transitioned through their internship program between 2015 and 2018. Peer-reviewed articles and books were used to complete the triangulation of data sources.

Such results could provide insight into effective HR recruitment and mentorship programs and public policies and practices, as well as provide information that administrators can use to reform or create policies to improve minority retention. An increasing minority retention rate has positive social change implications such as more minority visibility in leadership roles and a more accurate representation of the communities that host federal organizations. Furthermore, greater minority visibility may aid in building trust and lasting relationships within these communities.

### **Research Question**

What is the perspective of former minority interns who choose to leave federal organizations after completing their internship program?

### **Interview Questions**

- Q1. What motivated you to apply to the Honors Internship Program?
- Q2. What were your main expectations from working for this organization as an intern?
- Q3: Tell me about a typical day in your internship experience?
- Q4. What would you describe as most challenging in the internship program?

- Q4b. Thanks for sharing your view of what constitutes a challenge, could you provide me a personal example while in the internship program?
- Q5. What would you describe as most rewarding in the internship program?
- Q5b. How did this experience make you feel?
- Q6. Describe your relationship with your assigned squad or unit and its supervisor, and if you were made to feel included?
- Q7. What was your relationship with the other interns or new employees who recently completed their internship?
- Q7b. Please share an example of how you were made to feel, whether included or not included, with your fellow interns or new employees during your internship?
- Q8. Were your expectations realized at the end of the program?
- Q9. What influenced your decision to leave/stay in the organization immediately or shortly after the Honors Internship Program ended?
- Q10. Is there anything additional you would like to tell me before I conclude this interview session? or What would you recommend or like to see changed or included in the organization that could have resulted in you staying?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The theory on creating the multicultural organization by Cox (1991) was the conceptual framework on which this research was based. Cox exposed other factors than generic demographic differences that affect diversity in organizations and expanded into the organizational status and culture that are impacted by the uniqueness of diverse groups. He further brought to the forefront how such diversity can manifest positive

outcomes, as well as negative impacts such as high labor turnover that adversely affects the organization's mission. However, when the same diverse groups are managed, more positive than negative results are yielded, ensuring benefits of competitive advantage, enhanced creative performance, diversity of cognition, and innovation (Cox, 1991). One of Cox's recommendations for managing diversity is changing organizational culture through positive reinforcement of norms, practices, and policies within organizations.

In relation to this study, such changes to organizational culture could take the form of diversity leadership training and internship programs promoting inclusivity through vehicles such as mentorship programs. Wrench (2016) echoed Cox's (1991) point that strategic diversity management can bolster minority representation in employment and improve organizational competitiveness and efficiency. Wrench proposed doing so through differentiating between earlier affirmative action equity approaches to employment and management of diversity. Wrench further lent insight into diversity management recognizing cultural differences exhibited in the diverse groups and making practical allowances. This approach resonates with this study's exploration of a generational perspective involving leadership trainings, internships, and mentorship programs for minority employees.

Millennial interns' perspectives can enrich study of the concept of multiculturalism in government organizations. Cox's (1991) exploration of high labor turnover in relation to increasing diversity and recommendations for managing diversity complemented this study. Cox's theory thus was an appropriate framework for this study of why minority millennials are not choosing to remain in organizations where they

interned. Because the Honors Internship Program used by federal organizations recruiting diverse interns, there is the question of why these minority interns reject offers of permanent employment after their internship concludes. It is unknown whether how the interns are managed results in the diversity turnover. To answer this question, I interviewed participants for their perspective on the internship program.

Cox (1991) explored the benefits (decision-making, creativity, and innovation) derived from integrating diversity within the traditional workforce in general and the organizational culture in particular. Later, Cox (1995) further examined the integration of diversity within the organization, which revealed diversity not only as an enhancement but also a hindrance to the performance of the organization when lacking. In accordance with Cox's (1995) findings, Ferri-Reed (2014) later translated the hinderance found in integrated diversity as conflicts of work teams within the organization marked by generational variances. Such variances are in alignment with the generational context explored in this study, especially from a millennial standpoint. An example of this generational variance is exhibited in millennials' direct approach with leadership and baby boomers' hierarchical interrelationships; either approach could be perceived as an enhancement or hindrance to the organization and its mission.

Cox's (1995) diversity theory on creating the multicultural organization is rooted in three foundational themes. The first is identifying the broad multilevel strata of diversity: the types and degree of diversity displayed within set work teams within the organization and how they hinder or enhance organizational performance. The second is delving into the complexity of diversity in relation to how members interact with one

another within work teams (Cox, 1995). Cox's third theme concerns the impact that the social-cultural environs outside the organization has on the diversity exhibited within the workgroups within the organization. This third theme from Cox's theory also aligns with this study, and, therefore, it follows that the communities in which the minority millennials are entrenched, beyond that of the federal organizations, do emanate from them when working in work teams/intern groups, depicting the diversity. This could further be a factor in their decision to not remain with the organizations with which they interned based on community impact outside the organization, thereby reinforcing social implications.

To effectively use Cox's (1995) theory on creating the multicultural organization in this research, a generational context, especially from a millennial standpoint, was necessary to better understand the issues relating to generational variances. It required consideration of cultural identity going beyond ethnicity or demographic categorization and inclusive of commonalities experienced by a distinct group (here, generational groups such as millennials, Generation X, baby boomers, traditionalists, etc.), members of whom were born during a certain year time frame and have shared experiences (e.g., war, natural disasters, technological innovations, etc.). Such stratification of the generational groups (work teams) supporting Cox's multicultural organization is depicted in Table 1.



**Table 1***Overview of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Generational Cohorts*

	Cohort				
	Silent	Baby Boomers	GenX	Millennial	GenZ
Years	1925–1946	1947–1965	1966-1982	1983–1994	1995–now
Age	72–93	53–71	36-52	24–35	0–23
Adulthood historic events	World War II, Great Depression, Fixed gender roles, started Civil Rights Movement, children “seen, but not heard”	Vietnam War, Cold War, Cuban Missile Crisis, assassinations (John F. Kennedy Jr. and Martin Luther King Jr.), election and resignation of Nixon	AIDS, end of Cold War, Challenger explosion, fall of Berlin Wall, end of apartheid, MTV	9/11, Oklahoma City bombing, Terrorism, Internet revolution, Columbine, Iraq and Afghanistan wars, Exxon Valdez spill	Great Recession, Terrorism, Swine flu, Hurricane Katrina, social media, school shootings, Presidents Obama and Trump, cyberbullying
Aspirations	Home ownership	Job security	Work-life balance	Freedom and flexibility	Security and stability
Technology	Not as engaged	Early IT adopters	Digital immigrants	Digital natives	Dependent on technology
Career	Loyal to their jobs	Committed to organization, careers defined by employers	Loyal to their profession, not necessarily to employer	Entrepreneurs, multitaskers work “with” organization not “for”	Multitaskers, will move seamlessly between organizations

*Note.* **Error! Reference source not found.** was compiled by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (2019).

Because such life-altering events tend to influence the thought process of the group(s) involved in the shared experiences, it is understandable why Cox's (1995) theory posits managing diversity to minimize potential conflicts that could arise from diverse workgroups. In using Cox's theory to manage diversity, organizational leaders could facilitate a working environment that promotes the reinforcement of values, norms, work practices, and interpersonal relationship skills. This includes organizational culture for optimal performance from the diverse workgroups within the organization (Cox, 1995).

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a generational context to explore intern retention issues from a millennial standpoint. Specifically, I used the qualitative method based on a phenomenological design to examine the lived experiences of the millennial interns who participated in the Honors Internship Program of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). I used purposive sampling to recruit 10 participants to reach the point of saturation. Rigorous, in-depth data are of more importance for qualitative studies than the number of participants for generalization (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Nevertheless, Dukes' (1984, as cited in Creswell, 2007) recommended three to 10 participants for phenomenological research as a guide. The final number of participants for this research was within this range. To adequately facilitate a pool for optimal data collection, half of the participants had completed the internship program but elected not to accept employment with the FBI and the other half had accepted permanent positions with the FBI. The actual number was dependent upon reaching the point of saturation. Data were collected using in-depth face-

to-face and telephone interviews. The interview questions were open-ended, which allowed me to probe with follow-up questions to ensure that I was able to collect rich and meaningful data until I reached saturation and there were no new ideas occurring (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data were analyzed using coding to develop themes.

### **Assumptions**

According to Marshall and Rossman (2014), an assumption refers to the perceptions a researcher has on a topic that are not verified as truthful. In this study, I assumed that the participants would contribute truthful data without fear of reprisals and feeling pressured to say what they thought I wanted to hear. The confidentiality clause in the consent form addressed potential fear of reprisal by noting that participants would not be identified as participants in the study. Furthermore, the consent form also made it clear that there were no benefits to be obtained from participation in the interview sessions.

Another assumption of this study was that the participants' perspectives would be ideal to answer the research questions. To ensure optimal representation of the lived experience of minority millennials, I was strategic in recruiting and selecting participants for the study. The population sample consisted of former minority millennial interns who participated in the Honors Internship Program between 2015 and 2018. The participants selected further consisted of former minority interns who chose not to accept permanent positions with the federal organizations they interned, as well as those former minority interns who transitioned by accepting a permanent position where they completed their internship.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Certain boundaries are necessary to make certain that objectives of the research are both obtainable and realistic. I used certain criteria in canvassing the minority millennials as delimiters. Prospective participants self-identified as minority millennial former interns on the consent form, which helped to fulfill the diversity element of the research. Using Dukes' (1984, as cited in Creswell, 2007) recommendation as a guide, I included a sample size for this study ranging from six to 12 participants; the emphasis of the data collected in this research was on reaching saturation.

### **Limitations**

The first challenge was gaining access to data because employee information is protected and not subject to the Freedom of Information Act of 1966. The second challenging aspect of the design was getting approval and guidance from the institutional review boards (IRB) of the FBI and Walden University to move forward into data collection (interviews). The third challenge was identifying and mitigating my bias in conducting the research, especially because I intended to use my place of employment as one of the federal organizations to collect data. Last, I faced the challenge of getting in touch with those minority former interns who chose not to continue employment with the federal government after completing their internships.

### **Significance**

Researchers such as Fletcher (2015) and Miller (2016) have conducted studies on internship programs within the federal government as viable staffing sources for attracting and recruiting more minorities into these traditional organizations. Also, Miller

and Tucker (2013) and Langbein and Stazyki (2018) have addressed the significance of retaining minorities in government organizations as minorities bring with them unique perspectives and creativity that give organizations a competitive edge. The benefits of diversity form the foundation and focus of Cox's (1991) theory on creating the multicultural organization. It is within this theoretical vein that federal organizations have become enlivened with the mission to increase diversity and attain such sought-after value and competitive edge, as evidenced in the Obama Administration's Executive Order 13,583 (2011) related to OPM's diversity and inclusion policy. Furthermore, previous researchers who have documented diversity in the public sector have argued for further evaluation to build on the understanding of organizational outcomes in relation to diversity management. Riccucci's (2018) description of managing diversity in government organization was seen as a strategic system created to provide leadership programs and policies to effectively manage same diversity within the organization. One of the areas in which Riccucci, and Van Ryzin, (2017), advised that government organizations needed improvement was in the promotion of minorities in upper management hierarchy. Minority underrepresentation in the senior executive sector within government organizations has become more apparent.

Despite documenting the use of internship programs as a tool to increase the number of millennials, especially minority millennials, in federal organizations, there remains a gap in the body of knowledge on the reasons for poor retention among minority millennials who did not accept permanent positions offered to them after their internship. Therefore, I sought to explore the reasons for poor retention rates among minority

millennials who sought employment elsewhere. My aim was to supplement current research with a comparative assessment of minority millennial interns who completed their internships but accepted permanent positions where they interned, collating both groups' perspectives.

### **Implications of Social Change**

The findings garnered from the perspectives of the minority millennial participants of this research do have the potential to effect positive social change within the FBI and other federal agencies within the Department of Justice. Through strategic actions utilizing the concept of patterns depicting interaction and social network analysis as described by Kezar (2014), the research will be presented to the school of administrators who can implement the necessary social change sought. Social change could emerge through the research inspiring administrators to implement policies and engender an organizational culture that is sensitive to the use of the internship tool to increase diversity in their organizations. Then, over time, there may be increased visibility of minority millennials who chose to stay with the federal organizations where they interned and move up the ranks to executive management. Such changes may extend into the communities that host the many field offices and headquarters divisions of the FBI. Greater representation of community members in federal organizations such as the FBI may stimulate a more trusting and cooperative relationship between federal organizations and the communities that host their offices.

## Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological research was to explore the deterministic factors that contribute to low retention rates of minority interns who participated in the Honors Internship Program, from the former interns' perspective. Although researchers, such as Fletcher (2015) and Miller (2016), have explored the use of internship programs within the federal government as viable staffing sources for attracting and recruiting more minorities into these traditional organizations, there is a gap in knowledge on retaining these minority interns. In this research, I focused on filling the gap by analyzing the perspectives of those former interns who chose to leave the federal organizations where they completed their internships. I also sought to ascertain the perspectives of minorities who completed their internships and successfully transitioned into permanent positions in the federal organizations where they formerly interned. Such data could prove valuable for gaining insight into effective HR recruitment, mentorship programs, public policies, and practices, as well as provide information that administrators can use to reform existing policies and create new policies that could facilitate improved minority retention. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature on the phenomenon of diversity and inclusion in relation to federal organizations' use of internship programs as a tool to recruit and retain minority millennial interns. In this chapter, I will identify the gap in the literature in relation to the problem of lack of diversity and low retention levels of minority interns.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

In this study, I used a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological design to understand why millennial minorities who completed internships with their respective federal organizations are choosing not to transition and retain permanent positions with these organizations. I will examine the internship programs utilizing a generational context from a millennial perspective to explore the aforementioned gap. The objective of this literature review is to examine the body of work by scholars on federal organizations' efforts to attract and retain diversity within their workforce. Section 2 also includes overviews of the literature search strategy and conceptual framework.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In searching the literature, my strategy was to identify the tools leaders of federal organizations have employed, such as the internship program, to facilitate their recruitment efforts. I also sought to discern any conflicting concepts, recommendations, or limitations introduced by scholars within this theme on retaining diversity in federal organizations. I searched for this information to clarify the gap in the literature and offer compelling relevance for further exploration to bolster this study.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Delving into the foundational research, I gained a more profound understanding, which set the groundwork for this study while highlighting the existence of gaps to stem and thereby add to the existing body of work. From a theoretical perspective, Cox (1991) initially explored the benefits (decision-making, creativity, and innovation) that result



from amalgamating diversity within the traditional workforce especially regarding organizational culture. Later, Cox (1995) further examined the integration of diversity within the organization within the realm of discovery with diversity deduced as both an enhancement when diversity is effectively managed and a hindrance to the performance of the organization when same management is lacking. Gardenswartz and Rowe (2015) followed by highlighting that the reality of diversity in today's business environment requires leaders to not merely deal with diversity but to manage diversity. Doing so may allow them to increase successes and minimize challenges and conflicts in relation to managing employees from different generations.

Gardenswartz and Rowe (2015), in tandem with Cox (1995), saw changes to an organization's culture as a primary method for managing diversity successfully, which consisted of the following: (a) individual attitudes and behaviors, (b) managerial skills and practices, and (c) organizational values and policies. In accordance with Cox's (1995) findings, Ferri-Reed (2014) later translated the hindrance found in integrated diversity as conflicts of work teams within the organization marked by generational variances. Such variances are in alignment with the generational context explored in this study, especially from a millennial standpoint.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

#### **Federal Internship Program: History to Present**

The strategy of using internship programs as a recruiting tool for many federal organizations is not a novel concept. The U.S. Army launched its Wounded Warrior Program for transitioning disabled and rehabilitating veterans in 2003, after the

September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States (Kennedy, 2018). The service members who participate in the Wounded Warrior Program internship program have to fulfill the requirements of having service-connected injuries and attending college or seeking to sharpen their skillsets prior to transitioning as a civilian (Goldberg et al., 2015). Because military services are predominantly male, the effectiveness of this internship tool for encouraging diversity within federal organizations is not assured.

Regarding other internship programs, the OPM (Hiring Information Students & Recent Graduates, n.d.) identified three of the more prominent internships used by federal organizations, two of which were introduced in the Obama administration with Executive Order 13,562 on December 27, 2010. The third was an older but recently reformed internship program under Executive Order 13,562, the Presidential Management Fellows Program, to give federal organizations the tools to generate competitive advantage from these hiring pools. The two new internships consisted of the internship for current college students (Honors Internship Program) and the recent graduate program (College Hiring Initiative) for those students who had graduated within the past 2 years. The findings have indicated that over the years, many federal organizations have used specific internships to strategically bolster a perceived lack in their workforce, for example, the need to recruit more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) personnel (Archuleta, 2015). Officials implemented the three internships largely to increase diversity in traditional federal organizations (Hiring Information Students & Recent Graduates, n.d.). Other objectives included facilitating technological

advancements and improving the visibility and accessibility of federal organizations in a globalized world (Missoni & Alesani, 2014).

Leaders of federal organizations perceive internships to be helpful recruiting tools to select, train, and retain the next generation (Conley-Tyler et al., 2015). However, many interns who participate in the Internship Programs, though they see it as a great training ground, are not committed to remaining with the organizations in which they interned (Conley-Tyler et al.). The rate of diversity transitioning into traditional public organizations is slow, which is evident in the Obama Administration Executive Order 13,583 (2011) pertaining to OPM's diversity and inclusion policy, signed two decades after Cox's (1991) theory confirmed the significance of diversity in such organizations.

#### **Federal Organization Transitions: Traditional to Diverse Workforce**

Although it can be argued as to whether an increase in the number of diverse minorities really leads to change in the organizational culture and ergo integration and inclusion within the workforce of a once traditional organization. The impetus for U.S. federal organizations' endeavors to increase the presence of minorities in the workforce which correlates with theories such as Cox's (1991) theory on creating the multicultural organization.

Despite the inconclusive outcome of increased diversity in traditional organization changing their organizational, there are other notable benefits derived from such integration of diversity. Researchers such as Bikson et al. (2003) have explored why traditional government organizations have been moving from a workforce consisting of mostly White men to a more diverse workforce of women and men of color.

Globalization and competitive advantage are some of the notable outcomes derived from the benefits of diversity spearheading this transitional wave from a traditional to a more diverse organization(Missoni & Alesani, 2014).

### **Federal Organizations' Use of the Internship Program to Recruit Diversity**

Fletcher (2015) and Miller (2016) researched government organizations' use of internship programs as viable sources for attracting and recruiting more minorities into those organizations. These internship programs targeted current college students who primarily fell within the millennial generation (i.e., born between 1982 and 1999; Rajput et al., 2013). The significance of incorporating more minorities, especially from the millennial generation, in the federal government was further echoed by Miller and Tucker (2013) and Langbein and Stazyki (2018). These researchers explored the unique perspectives, technical savvy, and creativity innate to these minority millennials, thereby giving the associated organizations a competitive edge.

All federal agencies must provide OPM information on their internship programs and are required to post information on their internship program publicly, whether utilizing external websites such as USAJOBS and/or the respective agencies' public websites for the populace at large to access (Hiring Information Students & Recent Graduates, n.d.). Additionally, federal organizations can engage in recruiting ventures to recruit minority millennials through job fairs, career fairs at colleges, and public community events where they are invited for information sessions (Hiring Information Students & Recent Graduates, n.d.). These are the more widely used mediums by which federal organizations ascertain the pool of interns for potential permanent hires.

### **Millennial Minority Interns**

A recent study by Brookings Institute (2018) reported that millennials occupied the largest generational cohort in the United States, consisting of 75 million individuals, which is approximately a quarter of the generational population. The study authors further broke down millennials' ethnic diversity as follows: 55.8% identifying as White, 20.8% Hispanic, 13.9% Black, and 6.4% Asian. It is from within this diverse cohort that the majority of minority intern population was sourced to complete the internship programs for a variety of federal agencies in 2018. DOJ, FBI (2019) used the data from Brookings Institute, focusing on the FBI millennial interns in relation to national security, job satisfaction, and job turnover. DOJ, FBI noted a lack of diversity in the sample with White individuals accounting for 75% of FBI millennial (DOJ, FBI, 2019). An earlier 2011 federal employee viewpoint survey also concentrated on millennial interns was used by Ertas (2015) to further delve into millennial interns' motivations and turnover. The authors explored whether there was a correlation between the interns' work motivation and their intention to leave or stay with the organizations where they interned (DOJ, FBI, 2019 & Ertas, 2015). It is important to note that millennial interns' intentions to leave or stay with their respective organizations do not provide statistical verification in lieu of the millennials who left or remained with the organizations they interned. DOJ, FBI, like Ferri-Reed (2014), also revealed that millennials had a higher turnover rate due to intrinsic and extrinsic factors relative to older workers who expressed satisfaction in work meaningfulness.

Henstra and McGowan (2016) explored millennial motivations for wanting to intern with the public sector and examined their expectations. This provided insight on whether interns chose not to transition as a permanent employee after their internship ended with their federal organization and if their expectations were not met during the internship. Also, millennial interns who successfully transitioned into permanent roles from the internship program due to a call for service can provide insight into HR public policies and recruitment practices that worked (Henstra & McGowan, 2016).

Ko and Sidhu (2012) focused on the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of interns with their internship program, which affected their retention within their respective federal organizations. Ko and Sidhu noted a limitation to the research and called for practitioners to ascertain the needs of the interns who chose not to transition into permanent positions, to get their perspectives. It is also important for an organization to know how to determine an intern's quality work life and workload balance, which ties into derived satisfaction in the workplace (Ertas, 2015; Lai et al., 2012). An imbalance can result in emotional, stress, and health problems (Alvi et al., 2015).

### ***Value of Minority Millennials***

Knowing the value of minority millennials is seated in understanding who they are as a generational group. Kleinhans et al. (2015) stated that organizations that were able to identify the differences in diverse generations, such as their values, beliefs, and motivations, were better poised to minimize conflict and rather motivate and retain said groups. The impetus is for leaders within these organizations to manage diversity by identifying and understanding the culture of these millennial minorities in order to

improve competitiveness and efficiency while minimizing conflicts. This finding is further supported by Gardenswartz and Rowe (2015). Such motivation and thereby, retention is evident in Carpenter and Charoris's (2014) elaboration on organizational cultural adjustment. All of these organizational initiatives are implemented to attract these highly sought-after minority millennials, with the hope that they can bring their unique perspective, innovation, creativity, and technological savvy to the workplace (Langbein & Stazyki, 2018; Miller & Tucker, 2013).

### ***Expectations of Minority Millennials***

Leaders in federal organizations have certain expectations of minority millennials who participate in internship programs ranging from stemming attrition (retirements and resignations) to increasing diversity and retention (Bacon et al., 2015). Minority millennials also have expectations of extrinsic and intrinsic benefits of internship programs, whether it is to receive career advancement, high pay level, mentorship, motivation, or civic duty (Henstra & McGowan, 2016). It is therefore imperative for organizations to understand millennials, as Ertas (2015) posited, in relation to their beliefs, expectations, inclusivity, and thoughts on whether they are being challenged, as they could all be valid reasons why they are leaving the organizations. Yet, such efforts to better understand this diverse generation could prove a formidable challenge for HR departments within these organizations. Ferri-Reed (2014) brought to light this fact, that the values and expectations that millennials as a generation differ from those of the other generations with whom HR is more acquainted, such as traditionalists (born 1922-1945),

baby boomers (born 1946-1964), and Generation X (born 1965-1979; Rajput et al., (2013).

There is a question as to whether recruitment programs play a role in the number and quality minority interns in relation to the types and number of diverse colleges recruiters visit. Wallace et al. (2014) noted that getting to know what the millennial generation prioritizes will aid in the organization's efforts to retain them. Groden (2016) offered some suggestions of what he considered to be millennial priorities that aid the organization's recruitment and retention. Some of the suggestions include incorporating flexible work schedules, offering relevant job training, giving regular feedback, assigning work that offers a sense of purpose, and offering perks such as free food and team outings.

### **Federal Organizations' Efforts to Retain Minority Millennials**

#### ***Human Resources Practices***

Employing different management styles for millennials than those used with other generational groups could aid their retention. HR managers need to not only attract but also train lesser-skilled younger employees, even though recruiting and training new employees can be very expensive. For the private sector, average turnover costs have been estimated to range between 50% and 200% of the employee's annual salary (Partnership for Public Service & Booz Allen Hamilton, 2010). If members of the youngest generation do not plan to stay in their jobs for long, replacement costs or financial drain and knowledge loss or brain drain will be exacerbated.

#### ***Change in Organizational Culture***



The leaders within the organizations must go beyond just getting in the diversity numbers, and progress towards facilitating inclusivity to aid retention. Gardenswartz and Rowe (2015) established this viewpoint by bringing awareness to the reality of diversity in today's business environment which require leaders to become actively involved in diversity and inclusion, to not merely *deal with* diversity, but to *manage* diversity to glean the potential benefits same diversity when effectively managed, is known to ensue. Phillips (2016) intimated that the responsibility is that of the management within the organization to identify generational differences and foster effective transitions of said diversity. Such value found in inclusivity could account for intern retention. It is within this vein that Moore (2015) advised management to delve into educating themselves on the expectations of their diverse generational workforce to better facilitate diversity retention. This novel approach by leadership will undoubtedly change their leadership style and organizational culture. This corresponds with the three factors – technology, cultural contracts, and economic changes Campbell, Campbell, Siedor, & Twenge, (2015) expounded on which resulted in said cultural changes.

Although Rose and Gordon, (2015) posited that baby boomer and traditional generations who work pass their standard retirement are perpetuating aging trends, deteriorating economic conditions, and skill shortages. The argument can be raised in favor of those said prevailing generations on the many benefits an organization can derive from having the older generations alongside millennials. Wesolowski (2014) confirmed such benefits on the collaboration among the multigenerational workforce - building on each one's strengths. This collaboration includes the transition of

organizational culture, from older generations to younger generations, also integration of older generations' technical know-how with millennials tech-savvy. Such amalgamation of generations not only aligned with Cox theory of managing diversity but in addition, one can deduce, could realize a better hybrid product or service within the transitioning organization. One such way in which this amalgamation of generations can bring about effective collaboration and cooperation is through mentorship programs within the organization which can develop a diversified organizational culture. Block (2016) went further with his study by recommending a mentorship program that not only engaged newly hired employees in their probationary term but continued throughout their careers.

### ***Inclusivity of Minority Millennials***

Friedman and Gerstein (2017) alluded to the inclusivity of millennials into the organizational culture where they interned, and how feeling included in the mission of these federal organizations weighed largely on their decision to transition after completing internship – retain employment with these organizations. Therefore, the policies and practices these federal organizations employed in their internship program can shed light on their efforts, successful or not, to incorporate a feeling of inclusion in their internship program and thereby aid in their goals towards the retention of their high-quality interns.

In Cox's theory on creating the multicultural organization, he argued in favor of increasing minorities in government organizations considering the decision-making, creativity, and innovation benefits. Cox (1991) expanded further on how an organization can improve minority retention by way of changes to the organizational culture through

an increase in minority integration programs – such as internship and mentorship programs, as well as how it relates to labor turnover, which is a major factor in the gap of this research.

Cox (1991) highlighted the benefits diversity brings to an organization, such as decision-making, creativity, and innovation, and therefore argued in favor of increasing minorities in government organizations. This increase in minorities can serve as a springboard to delve deeper into how it contributes to an increase in minority retention in government organizations by way of the internship tool. In his theory, Cox further expands on the change in organizational culture, which comes with an increase in minority integration in organizations, and he further explored labor turnover, which is a major factor in the gap of my research.

### ***Retention Based on Pay***

Eilan-Shanir and Yankobi (2014) also advised that increasing a millennial's job status and pay in relation to their previous job would result in a more positive view for the retention of millennials. However, with the internship program where the majority of minority millennials are being introduced to their first substantial job status and pay, without a similar professional previous job with which to compare, their positive view would have no basis in favor of such pay based retention.

On the other hand, there are some researchers who see compensation as a viable option for retaining newly hired employees who exhibit good work performance stemming from the benefits of participating in a recommended mentorship program. Block (2016) not only recommended a mentorship program that engaged newly hired employees on a

continuous basis, but he also recommended compensation for good work performance. In addition, he proffered a 360 or two-way evaluation program in which both employer and employee rated each other's performance. Miller (2016) also provided possible solutions to increase retention, such as performance-related pay. However, Langbein and Stazyki (2018) later countered Miller's proposed solution of performance-related pay to increase retention, by stating that it is difficult to measure good performance to generalize for reward, as good performance is relative.

### **Summary**

Despite the increased attention diversity and inclusion has received over the years as more federal organizations seek to prioritize its mission (the Obama Administration Executive order 13583, 2011), the overall retention is marginal at best. Based on the findings, diversity and inclusion take time to be understood, appreciated, implemented, supported, and effective integration evaluated within federal organizations. It is incumbent upon these due processes to effectively exist to enable sustainable retention in said organizations, especially using a fluid tool such as the internship program. In the next chapter, I focus on the research methods I employed throughout this study to collect rigorous, in-depth data while using a qualitative approach. The chapter includes information on the interview instrument, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis involved in the research.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

As a researcher, it is critical for alignment to be exhibited throughout the phases and processes comprising of this study. Therefore, the research topic and question must correlate with the research method or design implemented, which further needs to tie into the sampling methodology used to generate the data and findings (Patton, 2015). I used a phenomenological approach (Patton) to explore the perspectives of former minority interns who choose to leave federal organizations immediately or soon after completing their internships. Their reasons for transitioning into permanent positions could reveal HR policies and practices used that are positively impacting employees and should be popularized. Achieving this connective thread should satisfactorily answer the initial research question for the research, which was, What is the perspective of former minority interns choosing to leave federal organizations after completing their internship program?

To improve my ability to answer the research question, I used Babbie's (2017) alignment concept and design tests for validity and reliability. Babbie's approach was helpful in determining the need for the research. I also evaluated the best-suited design, techniques, and sampling techniques for generating more accurate data collection, which would be reliable in representing the phenomenon in general (see Golasfshani, 2003). This is where I emerged as a scholar-practitioner, as the scholar-practitioner's ultimate goal is to take their research along with its findings and transfer it into the real world to effect positive social change and stem the gap in the literature. That is the ultimate goal of this study.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

A qualitative approach is, in essence, inductive, exploratory, and dynamic yet fluid as it allows the researcher to interact with participants to gain an understanding or derive meaning from their perspective (how they view the world) in relation to the phenomenon of interest (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used a qualitative approach for this study instead of a quantitative or mixed methods methodology (qualitative and quantitative elements). A qualitative approach was preferred for this study because I wanted to understand the perspectives of the participants and be immersed in their viewpoint of the world they live in (Patton, 2015). Quality, in-depth, and rich data were important to me as a researcher. Secondary statistical data would have offered quantity for generalization or cause and effect determinations using variables, but the lived human experience of participants would be lost. Mixed-methods research, because it entails the use of quantitative methods, was not appropriate for this study either.

Directly interviewing participants helped me to obtain insight into the true causes for the increase or decrease of the diversity and retention levels in federal organizations, thereby answering the research question. Moreover, the use of the qualitative approach better facilitated the exploration of the phenomenon of diversity and inclusion within the setting of a primarily traditional organization such as the FBI. I engaged former minority millennial participants who had interned within this traditional organization to see why they choose not to remain as permanent employees after their internships.

To further explore why minority retention rates of recent permanent hires in the organization are low, I considered additional observation and naturalistic engagement but

did not need to implement it as the interviews provided sufficient data needed, even though Ravitch and Carl (2016) noted, this naturalistic engagement can include physically working in the same locale. The importance of such supplemental data is found in its convenience, in that I work in the same organization as many of the minority millennials and is able to gather their perspectives outside the designated individual interview instrument for this research. I followed Ravitch and Carl's approach to collecting descriptive data in the interviews. This was helpful in finding the meaning through the complexity and contextualization of the realities revealed by the diverse participants in the individual interviews.

The findings from this study could influence administrators to reform and create more relevant HR strategies in relation to recruiting, sourcing, and retaining diverse permanent employees transitioning from the internship hiring pool. The results could also provide knowledge that stakeholders can use to enhance the inclusion of diversity in the organizational culture and structure, wherein more minorities will remain and take up more leadership roles in the organization. This evolution within the organization can further result in a shift from a traditional organization into a progressively diverse organization. In using the qualitative approach, reflexivity and bias refer to how the researcher identified with the research question relationally. This aspect of qualitative research sheds light on the researcher's bias and positionality/subjectivity in relation to the research study design, for example, how the participants were selected for the research, or how the data collected was interpreted (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The participants I selected for this research were former minority millennials interns (i.e. women and men of color who fell within the millennial generation; see Table 1). I engaged in semistructured, individual interviews with both current and former employees to attain unique, rich, robust, and in-depth perspectives in relation to the phenomenon for the research. These collection methods were needed to comprehensively answer the research question in relation to the phenomenon, which provided sufficient data for analysis, findings, and coding. However, I must acknowledge any personal bias that existed to increase the credibility of the data generated. I talked more about these issues later in this chapter.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

Sampling forms an essential part of any research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method), as it provides factual findings generated from the data to answer the research question. There are various sampling types a researcher can employ to aid in selecting participants, which Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) grouped as random and nonrandom sampling. Random, otherwise known as probability, sampling was not ideal for this research because the sampling size for this study was a small selection of minority intern participants. Both Teddlie and Yu (2007) and Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) agreed that probability sampling was dependent on the utilization of a large number of participants to offer generalization.

I used purposive sampling for this research primarily because of the small sample size of participants. I used Dukes' (1984, as cited in Creswell, 2007) recommendation of



three to 10 participants for phenomenological research. Because purposive sampling of former minority interns allowed for a small group of participants, I placed more emphasis on the quality of the data collected--in-depth responses from their perspective, rather than a large number (quantity) for probability generalizations. Furthermore, such purposive sampling in this research is in keeping with social science qualitative methodology (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016) and thereby reinforced the alignment of this research. Given that the geographical location in which participants interned nationwide could impact the richness of their lived experiences ergo perspectives, the population sample of former minority interns was taken from across the FBI's 56 field offices nationwide. Having attained approval from the FBI's IRB, I was able to generate a homogenous canvass through the organization's unclassified network that connects all 56 field offices'.

To recruit minority former interns who chose not to accept permanent positions with the federal organization they interned, I canvassed using social media (LinkedIn, etc.), liaisons from current employees, and the snowball method of getting additional referrals as last resort. The base criteria I used for this group included being a minority and having participated in the Honors Internship Program between 2015 and 2018. Lastly, these minority former interns must not have transitioned into permanent positions in the bureau through the internship program.

I disseminated an announcement through the field office's unclassified network via email for the purpose of selecting participants: those former interns who accepted permanent positions with the FBI where they interned. The base criteria I employed included being a minority and having participated in the Honors Internship Program

between 2015 and 2018. Lastly, these former minority interns must have transitioned into permanent positions in the bureau through the internship program.

The canvass for both groups of former minority interns included details on the study, criteria for volunteering, and how interested parties could contact me. I provided more detailed information on the study to individuals who contacted me; details included the purpose of the study and how they as participants can contribute to the research, their rights as volunteer participants, as well as included a brief demographic inquiry to further screen for minority criteria. Those minority former interns who passed the screening were provided a consent form prior to scheduling their individual interviews.

## **Instrumentation**

### ***Interviewing as the Data Collection Method***

In conducting my qualitative research and based on the research question, I chose to use semi-structured individual interviews, supplemented with participants' statistical data from secondary sources, and literature reviewed. The interviews consisted of 10 former minority millennial intern participants – the point of saturation was reached with nine participants. Nevertheless, Creswell (2007) does provide Dukes' (1984) recommendation of three to 10 participants for phenomenological research which I employed as a guide. Interviewing of participants was done via phone interviews based on what was most conducive to the participants after selection. Following the selection of the participants, the conversation to explain the details of the consent form, the confidentiality clause and answer any questions they might have pertaining to the research, was conducted over the communication medium that each participant chose for

the interview as way of testing reliability and validity of the systems used for data collection.

I used this dynamic yet fluid semistructured individual instrument as it allowed me to be less formal in my interaction with these participants and build rapport (see Bryman & Bell, 2015). This uninhibited interaction enabled me to gain in-depth understanding and drew meaning from the minority millennial's perspective (how they viewed the world) in relation to the phenomenon of interest (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To collect meaningful, in-depth responses from former minority interns, I repeated this interview process with each participant to encourage consistency and validity of the data until I attained data saturation.

Prior to the interview, I ensured that all participants were made aware of their rights and any risks associated with the interview – data collection process, as well as attain consent from all participants as their willingness to be interviewed (Palinkas et al., 2015). As the interviewer/researcher, I contacted each volunteer participant via phone or social media (e.g. LinkedIn) after the screening process and reiterated the purpose of the research and how they would contribute to the research. In addition, each participant received a detailed explanation of what the informed consent form was and the confidentiality clause within the form. The participants were also provided an opportunity within the conversation, for any questions they might have had regarding the research, the interview process, and/confidentiality in handling the data provided, answered. Following the conversations, I emailed each volunteer participant the informed consent

form to be read and returned with a response of “I consent” if they wanted to be interviewed, to me via email, prior to scheduling the interview sessions.

I tested all media (recorder, phone connectivity, etc.) prior to the commencement of each interview, which demonstrated preparation and added to the flow of the session. Therefore, I conducted a demo recording on the recording device on the phone that was used to record the interview and ensured that phone signal was strong in the location interviews were held. In accordance with Ravitch and Carl (2016), I sought to remain cognizant of any personal biases that could impact the data collection and to identify any personal bias prior to the interviews. Bringing to light such personal views and opinions further added to the credibility of the data collected, as one can navigate around any biases and hone in on the pertinent data collected from the participants’ perspective. As the interviewer-researcher I stated my role in the initial stages of each interview, and reiterated to the participants, the research topic and how the data collected would be used while protecting the interviewee’s identity in the research, all the while being respectful of the participants’ time.

For the interview portion of the data collection, I aligned the interview questions with the research question as advised by Rubin and Rubin (2012) so that when the interview questions are answered by the participants, they comprehensively cover the research question. To achieve this end, I created 10 open-ended questions (see Appendix) that was clear and easily understood by the participants.

### ***Data Sources***

The data sources utilized throughout this research consisted of semi-structured individual interviews of former minority interns. These interviews were conducted using the phone, as that medium was most conducive to the participants. I also used secondary data of statistics from the sample federal organization (FBI and OPM), depicting the rates of increase/decrease of minority interns accepted into the internship program relative to the rates that transitioned into permanent positions. Thirdly, I used the Walden Library and Google Scholar to locate peer-reviewed articles and books used to complete the literature review in Chapter 2 and further conduct triangulation for transferability, confirmability, and data saturation (Patton, 2015).

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Data collection is essential to qualitative research, and the methodology used to collect the data is equally as important and determined by the research question. Techniques I will employ for data collection will range from the germane interviews with its multiple variations (individual or face-to-face, Skype, FaceTime, and phone interviews – depending on what is available to the participant post testing devices) to observation and field notes, even the use of documents and data from the archives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure I collect rigorously rich data from the participants, I inserted follow-on probing questions that aligned with the research question, in the interview questions (see Appendix) and interview protocols which also served to mitigate personal bias.

The research was conducted in San Francisco, California, where I reside. However, the exact location of the interviews varied since the canvass flyers were

disseminated throughout the bureau and on social media for minority millennials who accepted, and those who did not accept permanent positions in the organization they interned. As a result, all of the interviews were conducted over the phone. The phone interviews were conducted with a recorder which required consent from each participant prior to interviews and use of the general interview guide. All participants were asked the same questions to ensure each participant was afforded the same opportunity to share their lived experiences and further reinforce the credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected. The raw data was collected using the Temi App for recording interviews, as well as transcribe data. The Temi App is on my phone with double password verification. The transcribed data will be stored on my computer, which is protected by password, for analysis and coding. Only my committee chair and I have access to the raw data, to ensure confidentiality of the data. After 5 years, I will purge the raw data collected from interviews from all protected electronic devices.

I also tested the trustworthiness, credibility, and dependability of the data collected to determine whether there was sufficient context to explain the phenomenon accurately (see Shenton, 2004). I implemented member checking by having each participant review the data collected from their interviews to ensure the accuracy of the data captured and transcribed (see Harvey, 2015). Member checking was an effective way to guarantee reliability, trustworthiness, and validity of the data collected and transcribed, as well as negate personal bias and my interpretation of the participants' perspectives.

I reviewed peer-reviewed articles, data from the bureau, and data collected from the participants to complete triangulation. This was done to allow for transferability, replication of the study under mirrored conditions, confirmability, and data saturation (Patton, 2015). Based on the research question being researched, the individual responses to the interview questions in the appendix proved conducive to the alignment of the research and qualitative methodology, in bringing about saturation in the research data collected (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

### **Data Analysis Plan**

For this research, I conducted the analysis and discussion of the findings from the raw data collected from the participants using manual coding. Despite the fact that this method is time-consuming and challenging with verbatim transcriptions, coding, identifying patterns, and themes, it was my preference for this research. This manual coding method was preferable although computer software like NVivo aids quicker processing, Rubin and Rubin (2012) explained that such software can overlook important themes when coding, whereas a researcher is more likely to identify with manual coding. Ravitch and Carl (2016) further emphasized the main shortcoming of computer software, despite its optimal usefulness in processing and analyzing large data sets, is the system's inability in the sense-making process of coding, which is the job for the analyst/researcher. To foster immersive engagement with the data (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016), I manually transcribed the interview responses, which made it easier to code and identify patterns and themes. This task was made easier because of the small number of participant responses.

Coding is an essential facet of conducting comprehensive research, and although the incorporation of this vital element is among the many steps a researcher implements, it sometimes gets overlooked by inadvertently getting mixed in as a part of the general analysis of research. After the data was collected from the participants, I had to make head or tail of this raw data by deciphering the details. Therefore, I utilized coding as the medium through which translation or interpretation of the raw data was transformed into more recognizable formats (word or phrase) that lent itself to the creation of thematic keywords. This systematic process was in line with Ravitch and Carl's (2016) explanation as giving meaning to the data and answered the research question. Through the coding process, I interpreted the raw data – not by inserting my perspectives on the phenomena, but rather clarifying, summarizing, making connections (mapping) of the participant's perspective of the phenomenon of interest (Ravitch, 2016). Such interpretation allowed me to deduce whether the interview questions could provide rich, in-depth responses to answer the research question and achieve saturation, where no new ideas or themes emerged from the data.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

I notified all volunteer participants of their rights in conjunction with the ethical obligation that I, as a researcher/interviewer, must uphold with regards to ethics and confidentiality. Therefore, from the canvass, to providing them a copy of the consent form including the confidentiality clause, having conversations prior to the interview, are all measures I implemented to ensure the participants are made aware that their privacy will be respected and protected. As a result, participants were not identified by name or



social security numbers. In addition, I reiterated that as volunteers, they can choose to stop the interview if ever, they felt uncomfortable.

As an interviewer and researcher forming a bond with participants was desirable to getting them comfortable in providing rich, in-depth data. However, there is much sensitive information that I might be exposed to and entrusted with sensitive information by the participants (White & Hind, 2015). Patton (2016) also commented on interviewees' willingness to divulge all types of illicit and illegal experiences based on the notion that their personal information will remain confidential, except when the researcher is subpoenaed. Therefore, as a researcher, I was bound by an ethical framework to report any information received that puts others and the interviewee at risk, to appropriate authorities for aid to all parties involved. Upholding such ethical practices reinforce the reliability and validity which was essential to this study.

### **Summary**

The study sought to add to the body of research on the retention of minority millennials in federal organizations. Even more, this study utilized the aforementioned research methods involving sample selection, data collection through the utilization of the interview instrument, and data analysis to provide insight from the perspective of the minority millennials why they are not choosing permanent employment with the federal organizations they interned. In Chapter 4, I delved into my execution of the research methods discussed in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I provided an overview of the data collection and analysis processes, then discussed the findings from the data.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings resulting from the data collection and analysis. I conducted semistructured phone interviews with 10 minority millennial former interns, a blend of both current and former employees of the FBI. Although 10 participants were interviewed, data saturation was reached with nine participants. In this chapter, I presented data collected from the participants to answer the research question: What is the perspective of former minority interns who choose to leave federal organizations after completing their internship program? The interview structure and analysis of data results were in alignment with the conceptual theory, Cox's (1991) theory on creating the multicultural organization, and initial literature used to ensure validity and reliability and thereby answer the research question.

Before delving into the findings and the data analysis derived from executing the research methodology outlined in Chapter 3, it is imperative to reiterate the purpose of the research to solidify the alignment of the research and the answers attained from data collected. The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of minority millennial interns who chose to leave federal organizations where they interned and thereby gain an understanding on why they decided to leave. I also sought to ascertain the perspectives of minority interns who completed their internships and transitioned permanently into the federal organizations where they interned, to supplement the former data. Such supplemental data could prove valuable for gaining insight into HR recruitment, mentorship programs, public policies, and practices that work and should be

propagated. In addition, such information could provide a source from which administrators can reform existing policies and create new policies that could facilitate improved minority retention.

### **Demographics**

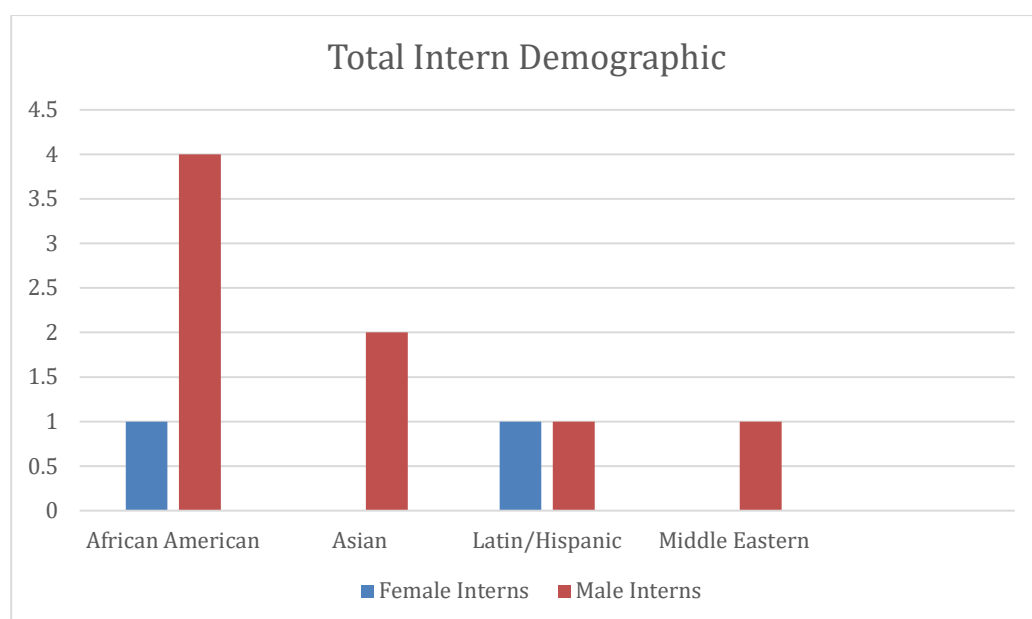
The use of minority millennial former interns as participants to focus the study was meaningful and intentional based on the lack of such employees in traditional organizations highlighted in Chapter 2. Earlier researchers have confirmed that using an internship program to target current college students who primarily fall within the millennial generation (i.e., being born between 1982 to 1999) is of strategic importance (Rajput et al., 2013). Miller and Tucker (2013) further founded what great significance resulted from incorporating more minorities, especially the millennial generation in the federal government through the internship program. Other researchers, such as Langbein and Stazyki (2018), also explored the unique perspectives, technical savvy, and creativity innate to these minority millennials, who, when sourced through the internship program, gave the associated organizations a competitive edge. To attain a holistic view of the nature of the internship tool, the perspectives of these minority millennials participating in this internship program was necessary to clarify their motivations, expectations, and challenges.

For the data collection process, I conducted telephonic interviews with a total of 10 participants, all of whom were former interns of the FBI with some leaving the FBI after completing their internships and others transitioning into permanent positions within the organization. The demographics of these intern participants consisted of all minority

millennials. A more detailed overview of demographic information is exhibited in Figure 1. The y axis shows the total number of former intern participants in the study, while the x axis exhibits both the minority ethnic groups and their gender.

**Figure 1**

*Total Intern Demographic*



### **Data Collection**

I asked each participant the open-ended questions in the appendix to generate rich robust answers to the interview questions. Data analysis was completed by way of manual coding employing pattern matching (Pearse, 2019).

### **Data Analysis**

To ascertain more focused themes, I implemented narrative synthesis (Briner & Denyer, 2012; Popay et al., 2006). This method involved manual coding that allowed me

to fully immerse myself in the data collected. Such data analysis ultimately enabled me to highlight, optimize and explore the perspectives of the participants.

## **Results**

The data collected from the participants when analyzed unearthed findings that were consistent with results highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 2. Findings reinforced previous research showing that talented, tech savvy, and innately creative minority millennials choose to participate in federal internship programs as a training ground for development and networking but then leave the organizations (Conley-Tyler et al., 2015; “RCOA Cultivated the Future Through Internship Program,” 2018). Other findings consistent with the literature revealed that participants left federal organizations due to unmet expectations, financial realities, and the desire of higher salaries with the lucrative private sector (Henstra & McGowan, 2016). On the other hand, the findings also highlighted that participants’ departures were due to inflexible relocation options in tandem with financial difficulties of relocating to new offices out of state, prioritization of family stability, and lack of diversity mentorship.

Participants’ responses to each interview question yielded six overarching main themes that I further categorized into subthemes. The first of the six main themes derived from the data analysis motivations to serve, which consisted of the following subthemes: (a) bureau brand, service to something bigger--country, mission, (b) law enforcement career goal, and (c) bureau family. The second theme, expectations of interns, had the following subthemes: (a) no pre-conceived expectations—curious, (b) discernment of career—niche, (c) exposure, networking, and experience, (d) mentorship, and (e) make a

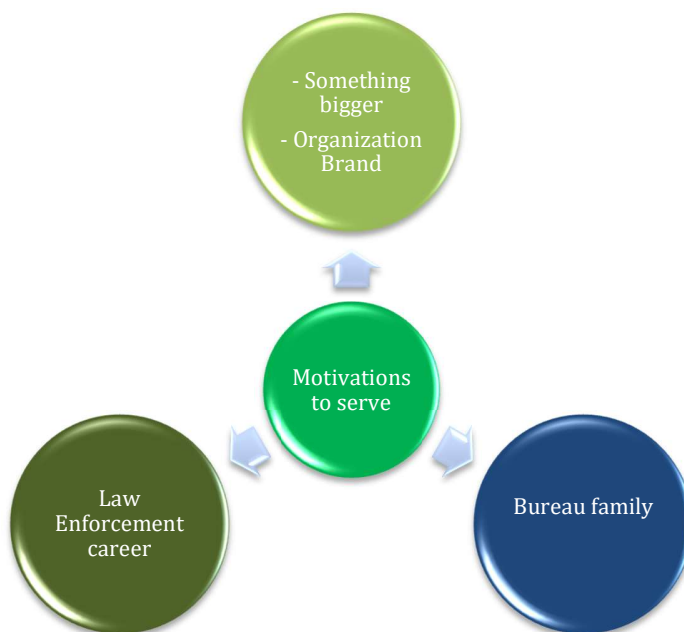
difference. The third theme, internship challenges, had the following subthemes: (a) balancing internship and school, (b) nondisclosure of work information, (c) adapting to organizational culture, (d) networking, (e) feeling underutilized, and (f) administrative challenges. The fourth main theme comprised realized rewards with subthemes consisting of (a) team involvement--inclusivity, (b) meaningful work, and (c) made a difference--add value to work and minority representation. The fifth main theme consisted of realities of finances with the subtheme, financial need. The sixth main theme was beyond the financial, and its subthemes constituted (a) stability and family, (b) lack of mentorship, (c) inflexibility with location options, (d) career possibilities, and (e) expectations.

#### **Theme 1: Motivations to Serve**

Theme 1 derived from the data collected from the minority millennial interns showed that outside the effective recruitment strategies employed by the FBI, the interns possessed intrinsic motivation to serve (Ferri-Reed, 2014). Based on the transcribed data, all nine participants expressed motivation to serve their country and embark upon a lifelong dream career in law enforcement with this organization, as well as to become a part of the bureau family and serve the mission of the organization. These motivational factors and subthemes are categorized in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Theme 1: Motivations to Serve and Associated Subthemes*



***Subtheme 1: Law Enforcement Career***

It is important to note that of the nine participants whose responses were analyzed, six of them were motivated to pursue internship opportunities with the FBI to advance their career goal in law enforcement. Int4 who shared this same goal with the other five participants, recounted his persistence in the competitive and lengthy application process by reapplying until he was selected to be an intern in the program, for he perceived the internship to be the gateway to commencing his federal law enforcement career. Int1 expressed that his motivation to continue service with a career in law enforcement, was birthed from the stark similarities of core values and mission this organization had with the military branch in which he formerly served, and therefore viewed such alignment in transition as ideal.

Although Int3, Int5, and Int9 attended different military colleges, all described their desire to pursue a law enforcement career apart from the military. For Int3 and Int9, it was the information provided by FBI recruiters at their respective schools that connected with them how their career goals in law enforcement can be realized at such a credible organization through the internship program. Int5 was privy to more personable source of information from his father and friends of the family who worked for the FBI, as they provided insight into their law enforcement careers which served as an impetus for him being motivated with a desire to serve this organization. Int2's motivation to serve was spurred on by his personal career goals, as he always wanted to work in national security and intelligence and therefore, concentrated in those areas in college. He knew the FBI had robust intelligence and national security programs which made interning there most desirable and hoped to seg-way into a permanent career. Int2 further described other influences that resonated with him such as the credibility of the organization in which he stated his personal ideals and morals aligned with the FBI values and mission.

***Subtheme 2: Something Bigger and Organizational Brand***

Of the remaining three participants who shared their motivations for participating in the internship program, two were motivated to serve in hopes of impacting a cause that was bigger than themselves and their immediate circle of influence. Int6 explained that through the words of a minority recruiter's presentation at her school's career fair, she not only connected with her as *one who looked like me* but also her words of "minorities being underrepresented in the organization and how they [potential interns] could



positively impact the organization and the world,” resonated with her. It was this singular event Int6 attributed to her motivation to serve and make a difference for a cause that was bigger than herself.

The FBI is the largest domestic federal law enforcement organization in the United States with 56 field offices located nationwide to include Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico (Our Locations. (n.d.). With its mission to protect the American people and to uphold the constitution, which covers all American interests and citizens residing on either foreign or domestic soil, the mission and brand is unmistakably distinct. Therefore, the FBI is also considered a global organization with over 60 Offices and installations located throughout the world and operates like a fortune 500 organization. It is this renowned branding that many interns are interested in, to include Int8, who after gaining knowledge of the FBI’s “multi-mission” brand as a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) intern, decided to end his DEA internship for the multi-mission, multi-program focused FBI internship. Int8 explained that his motivation to serve as an intern in the FBI rather than continue with the DEA was based on him wanting a more diverse exposure beyond just drug violations, and the FBI, he discovered, covered an expansive criminal program from white collar to violent crimes which encompassed drug violations. It is within this scope that Int8 was motivated to serve having perceived such exposure would broaden his experience and enable him to contribute meaningful work add value to the organization’s mission.

Although Int4 was initially unaware of the internship program offered by the FBI, the distinctive brand of the FBI was not lost on him and was motivated to serve as a

career employee based on his knowledge of such a credible organization. Int4 revealed that he was very interested in working for this organization as a permanent employee and had always thought favorably about the organization because of the brand. Learning about the FBI's internship program which could potentially lead to permanent hire was ideal for Int4, despite the competitive and lengthy hiring process involved. In fact Int4 stated: "to be able to work for an organization as prestigious as the Bureau was something that I thought was an experience that I couldn't really miss out on."

### ***Subtheme 3: Bureau Family***

It was interesting to note that three of the participants who were motivated to intern for the bureau due to the family environment it fostered, all had some military affiliation – was active-duty military, had family members who served in the military, or attended a military college. Each participant shared a sense of brotherhood, sense of belonging, a protective connectivity or bond within which one felt safe, informed, mentored. Int1 drew parallels between his military branch of service and the FBI in relation to the shared core values – "what they stood for and the way in which they took care of their own." It was these similarities that Int1 discussed solidified his motivation, in him not only being interested in becoming an intern in the bureau, but also establishing a sustainable career path.

Int5 also with military influences by way of his father and father's friends, wanted to either join the military or the federal government after college. After both father and father's friends from the military and from the FBI shared with Int5 similarities of how the FBI included you as their own once you are in the organization, and more so the

benefits that could be obtained embarking on the internship route towards a career of service, Int5 was motivated to participate in the FBI's internship program.

after talking to my dad and hearing about some experiences that some of his peers had in the Bureau combined with a little bit of research I did online, I kind of heard the calling.

Int9 who like Int5 attended a military college was motivated to serve and was on the path the military path until a presentation from FBI recruiters at his school's career fair would embolden his resolve for service. Nevertheless, Int9 expressed he was still unsure what to expect initially with working at the FBI, after which he made inquiries of friends and family he knew worked for the organization. The feedback he received largely described the FBI as a big family. The similarity of *family* in his military college and the FBI resonated with Int9 which motivated him to serve in a bureau internship program that functioned like a big family, which he attested "proved true."

From the data collected there was a cogent currency established among the minority millennials of being motivated to serve in this organization in hopes of establishing a life-long career goal and being a part of the prestigious distinct brand of the FBI, as well as being a part of an organization that is characterized as a big family. The motivation to serve through the internship program also presented these interns an opportunity to serve the organization's mission and thereby the country. The service driven motivations expressed by all nine interns spread across the three subthemes (law enforcement career goal, bureau brand and service to something bigger, bureau family) confirmed earlier literature referenced in this study on interns' motivations to work in

government organizations. Henstra and McGowan (2016) aptly delved into motivations that elaborated on interns in government institutions who, “answered the call to serve.” It was established that such intrinsic motivations were likely to impact and fuel one’s decision to stay with an organization out of civic duty (Ferri-Reed, 2014) amidst professional challenges and competitive financial opportunities in the private sector. Despite the likelihood for interns exhibiting such motivations to serve, to decide to retain employment with the organizations they interned per the afore mentioned literature, the data collected showed that while the interns expressed their motivations to serve, there were those who still decided to leave same organizations after internship was completed. The reasons interns decided to not accept permanent jobs where they interned can be partly found in their expectations in the following theme2, and largely focused on theme 5 and 6.

### **Theme 2: Expectations of Interns**

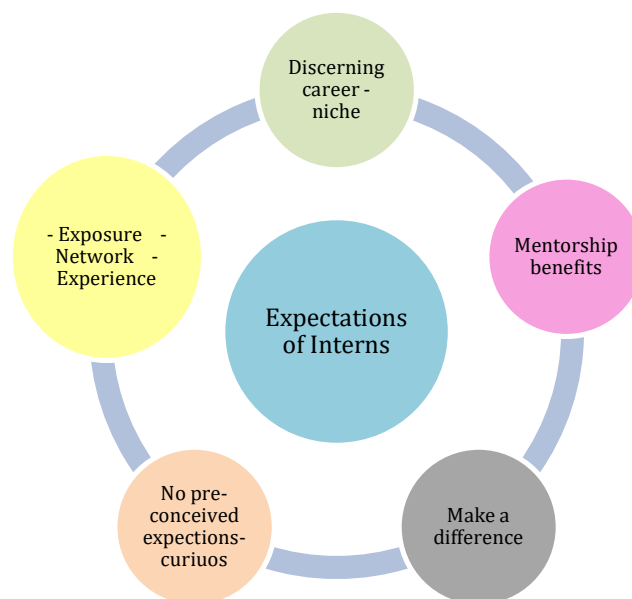
Theme 2 expectations of interns is another critical facet similar to the previous theme on motivations to serve, that will provide the impetus the interns cogitated in order to participate in the internship program. Henstra and McGowan (2016) established that millennials all have expectations when accepting and commencing an internship whether intrinsic or extrinsic benefits (career advancement, high pay level, mentorship, motivation, or civic duty). Within the same vein Ko and Sidhu (2012) elaborated that unmet expectations experienced by interns could lead to dissatisfaction resulting in one of the factors impacting turnover rates. It is imperative that organizations understand these millennials in relation to their expectations, inclusivity, and even whether they are being

challenged, as these could provide validity into why minority millennials are leaving the organizations (Ertas, 2015).

Therefore, in agreement with Ertas (2015) point of view from the literature review, all nine participants' expectations of the internship program were queried and revisited at the end of the program to determine if any unmet expectations were liable for interns leaving the organization after completing internship. The expectations of the nine interns and the supporting subthemes are illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

*Theme 2: Internship Expectations and Associated Subthemes*



***Subtheme 1: Exposure, Network, and Experience***

While all except one intern had expectations spanning this subtheme labeled in Figure 3, that one exception who was initially unaware of the FBI having an internship program and therefore expressed he did not know what to expect as an intern and was the

more curious embarking on this adventure. It is noteworthy that five of the participants expected to gain exposure to the various programs operated by the FBI and the organizational culture that personified the FBI. Int8 who left another federal internship to participate in the FBI internship program provided an explanation of his expectations of the FBI: “expected a broader experience, not just focus on one violation, exposed to violent crimes. Wanted to learn something different and understand what my best fit would be”

Int8 whose previous internship was a specialized one at the DEA, based on one criminal violation due to the specificity of that federal organization’s role – specializing in a single violation. He found that his expectations were not being met at this federal organization, since he was seeking exposure in a multiplicity of criminal violations rather than that solitary violation. Therefore, he left that initial federal internship with the DEA not having his expectations met and applied to the FBI’s internship after learning that the FBI had criminal programs which worked multiple violations that were more aligned with his expectations. This practice confirmed Ko and Sidhu’s (2012) determinant that unmet expectations could bring about dissatisfaction in millennials resulting in them leaving the organization, as was demonstrated by Int8, who left his first federal internship for the FBI internship, with the expectation to be exposed to their multi-program operation.

Int2 of the aforementioned five, also sought exposure in concert with the organizational culture of the FBI, the work and how to contribute meaningfully to it, as well as the general work life of an employee.

My expectations were mostly around exposure. I was hoping to learn what the daily life of an FBI employee would look like and the different opportunities that I would have as an FBI employee, both someone new out of college and over time be able to develop within the organization and learn what my future would look like if I stayed there.

While the afore mentioned interns had very specific expectations regarding exposure to the FBI's criminal programs, organizational culture and daily work, Int3 had more unbridled expectations in relation to exposure. He described initially expecting to get involved into every aspect of the FBI as seen on television shows. However, was keen to manage his expectations when he commenced his internship and realized one's access to and involvement in operational and administrative missions of the FBI hinged on your *need to know*, as well as your employee status as a permanent employee or temporary employee such as interns. Int3 nevertheless shared his excitement in being exposed to squad meetings with senior management and contributing meaningful work to his squad's missions daily. Although he was not exposed to everything in the FBI which was his initial thought, his revised expectations allowed for more realistic exposure to the FBI which were met through his assigned squad.

In addition to gaining exposure from the internship, there were those interns who explicitly wanted to develop a network with current employees and other interns during their internship as they saw future value in such connections.

Int7 expressed such networking expectation from participating in the FBI internship program. "...if I did enjoy the internship, I could network and make

connections that way, for future purposes, I could go back to those contacts and use as a resource.”

Int1 also had networking expectations from seasoned employees but through mentorship. Drawing a parallel between the FBI and his former military branch in terms of the value systems they shared coupled with a sense of belonging, Int1 had expectations to be mentored. It was through this mentorship that Int1 expected to build his network, which he recounted, he would come to rely on greatly as he decided to transition from an intern to a permanent employee when the job was offered.

Regarding experience, these minority millennial interns all expected to gain experience from their internships though at varying levels. Int5 succinctly stated his expectation as an intern in the FBI internship program.

“...to gain work experience, period.” He further followed up this answer to explain why gaining work experience from the program was so important to him. “...do work that made a difference, I wanted to be part of the mission to help protect the American people.”

Other interns such as Int9 expected to gain experience in his scholastic area of specialty from the internship. By doing work that was in alignment with his current degree program, he expected to produce relevant work that would be meaningful to his assigned squad, as well as experience increasing his knowledge, skills and abilities by employing his theoretical knowledge in a relevant practical sense.

There were those who had uninhibited expectations – wanting to be exposed to and experience everything both interns and permanent employees were engaged in, and



to a lesser extent a few influenced by Hollywood's depiction of the FBI. Nevertheless, the interns exhibited expectations to learn about the organization and their assigned jobs so they could add value to their assigned teams – make meaningful contributions through their newfound experience.

### ***Subtheme 2: Discerning Career, Finding Niche***

Minority millennials are known to exhibit a burgeoning drive to gain information and evolve their creativity which translated in the internships they pursued. Such findings further showed that many who interned in this type of program saw it as a great training ground but not necessarily committed to remaining with the organizations when their programs ended (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015 and RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018). Though the overwhelming majority of participants were already committed to a clear career goal when they decided to participate in the FBI internship program, it is then not surprising that only a few interns expected to discern their careers or get closer to identifying where their niche or expertise would lie.

Int8 openly declared he was interested in a career in law enforcement but was undecided on a specific career choice, therefore his internship was in pursuit of a career that best suited his scholastic background and career goals. "I did know that I wanted a career in law enforcement, so I was trying to navigate myself through to understand what was the best fit for me, what type of investigations I will be more interested in and just learning something different." From the onset Int9 expectations of the internship program was that of a training ground which substantiated the literature review findings (Conley-

Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015 and RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018).

### ***Subtheme 3: Mentorship Benefits***

Mentorship is described as a developmental relationship between a senior knowledgeable mentor and a protégé, wherein the mentor supports the protégé's personal and professional development (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). Although mentorship programs tend to be limited especially in government organizations, it is seen as a necessary strategic tool to facilitate the recruitment, development, and retention of future leaders within these organizations (Bodkin, 2016). With a dearth in minority senior leadership in the traditional FBI one can deduce that minority mentorship would be less than prevalent. Nevertheless, some of the participants expressed their expectations as to the importance of having a good mentor. Int1 explained the similarities in core values of the FBI and his former military branch of service led him to expect other similarities such as their mentorship program. Therefore, his expectations of the internship program was, "just kind of start from the beginning and just basically be taken in under someone's wing and be taught how the organization works basically from the bottom up. And that's mostly what I expected."

Int9 based his expectation for mentorship on experiences relayed to him by former FBI friends and family members, who described the FBI as a family-oriented organization – that once you are an employee you become a part of the "big bureau family." This expectation Int9 attested proved to be true of his experience after the internship program completed.

Int6 who connected with her FBI recruiter at her school's career fair recounted how the recruiter's presentation resonated with her as she delved into informing the group with statistics that minorities were underrepresented in the DOJ. Int6 not only saw herself mirrored in the recruiter – African American female, but also wanted to know how she an intern, can help change that demographic representation and aid in positively representing her community in law enforcement. Commencing the internship her expectation was to connect with her recruiter, who was in the same building but different from her assigned squad, to receive mentorship from her on the organizational culture and guide her on becoming a positive representation as a minority in the organization, but also as a positive representation of law enforcement to her community.

It is needful to relate that all these afore mentioned interns had expectations of being mentored in their internships, and their expectations were realized in that they received mentorship. However, this was not the outcome for all interns with shared expectations. Int5 relayed the experiences of other interns within his network who did not have minority mentors to guide them during their internships which not only resulted in unrealized expectations but also a challenging internship of trying to assimilate to an organization's culture and work without representative guidance. This reported unmet expectation experienced by those interns led to dissatisfaction in the program, resulting in them leaving the organization after they completed the internship. These cases followed the vein of Ko and Sidhu (2012) on dissatisfaction of interns stemming from unmet expectations that can negatively influence labor retention.

**Subtheme 4: Make a difference.** The expectation to make a difference to contribute meaningful value to a venture or an organization is indeed altruistic especially in the public sector where pay and compensation for making a difference is not equitably matched as in the private sector. Miller and Tucker (2013) described such resolution as interns exhibiting their civic duty toward working in government organizations. This civic duty was confirmed in Int2 response conveying his expectation of the internship program was to, “learn more about the different threats that the FBI worked on and how I could be of help as an intern.” Having a desire to work intelligence and national security which influenced his major in college and knowing of the FBI’s active programs in these areas Int2 was expecting to use his passion and knowledge of these programs to make contributions to these FBI priorities in hopes of making a difference.

Similarly, Int5 expected to be able to contribute to relevant work during his internship program. Based on information he received from his father’s friend who worked for the FBI, he understood his internship would not comprise of doing work with little value or influence on the organization. Therefore, he was expecting to get hands on work that was meaningful – not only attaining on the job training, but also contributing valuable work that would aid the organization’s mission. Int5 further shared his expectation as an intern, “to make a difference just based on what I've seen what [FBI] its mission is, I wanted to be a part of helping protect the American people.”

While there were those interns who thought more in general terms on how they expect to make a difference throughout their internship program, there were others who were more definite in how they expected to make a difference. Int6 had no connections in

law enforcement aside from the minority Agent from the FBI who presented at the information session her school attended. Int6 shared that she was struck by the presenter's revelation on the disparity with minorities being represented in the FBI in relation to White men, especially in leadership. It was from this information that she not only was motivated to participate in the FBI internship program, but her expectation was to make a difference as a minority increasing the representation within the organization: "I wanted to learn how they operate. I wanted to learn what I can do to help push forth as a minority and make a difference." Her later involvement in recruiting events representing the FBI as an intern alongside the recruiting team at schools with large diversity populations, confirmed appropriate action was taken on her expectation.

***Subtheme 5: No Preconceived Expectation, Curious***

It is common knowledge from literature that many students utilize the internship program as a training ground of which there are those who have no preconceived trajectory as to their career of preference and ergo have no set expectation beyond general curiosity and absorbing all they are encounter or is exposed (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015 and RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018). This practice can prove very beneficial for the intern who through development experience and good mentorship can hone in on a viable potential career with the same organization where they interned. The converse can be true also, wherein the intern after absorbing the training, financial investment, and exposure from the internship can then leave for other more suited or lucrative organizations, to include the private sector (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015).

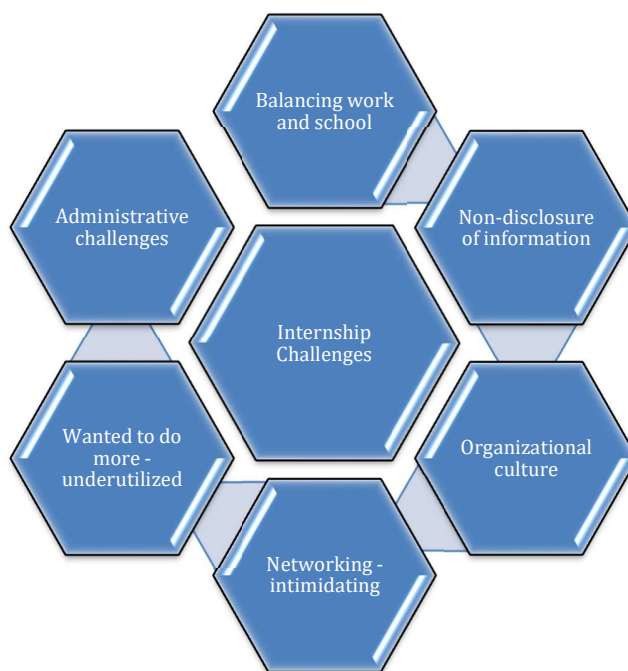
Nevertheless, such curiosity when developed and positively nurtured tend to yield the sought-after results of transitioning that intern into a permanent position after internship is completed. This was true for Int4 who knew about the FBI brand and the programs the Agents worked, however, saw the non-Agent employees as a mystery. He was not aware that the FBI had an internship program until he attended a career fair at his college and was informed by one of the presenters. Therefore, he had, “no set expectations of the internship program,” save for his curiosity and will to absorb all he can as an intern.

### **Theme 3: Internship Challenges**

It was imperative to collect data on the challenges faced by the interns during their internship program, to garner whether they were related to either or both of the interns’ motivations and/expectations. In addition, having knowledge of the challenges experienced by the interns during their internship could also aid in deducing if they had bearing on the interns’ decision to either leave the organization after the internship program, or remain and transition as a permanent employee. The subthemes categorized in Figure 4 constitute the various challenges experienced by all nine participants as depicted from the data collected.

**Figure 4**

*Theme 3: Internship Challenges and Associated Subthemes*



***Subtheme 1: Balancing Work and School***

The internship program for the FBI normally commenced in the summer for 10 weeks when students are out of college and for this duration the interns are engaged in fulltime employment (Hiring Information Students & Recent Graduates, n.d.). However, there are some exceptions in which some interns especially when nearing the end of their degree program choose to accelerate said program by taking extra courses during the summer in conjunction with their fulltime internship. Such undertaking can cause undue stress and strain on an individual as they endeavor to balance well-meaning yet demanding schedules which will undoubtedly impact their quality of life – both work and school.

Int1 was involved in a similar challenging situation in which he decided to accelerate his degree program and registered for courses during his last summer as an intern. He admitted that “balancing work as an intern fulltime during the summer and attending school during the summer simultaneously proved challenging for him.” It is therefore imperative that an organization knows how to determine an intern’s quality work life and workload balance, and guard against the intern becoming overwhelmed and burned out, which ties into derived satisfaction and exhaustion in the workplace (Ertas, 2015 and Lai et al. 2012). Alvi, Hues, Tahir, and Gondal further confirms that such an imbalance can result in emotional, stress, and health problems.

***Subtheme 2: Nondisclosure of Information***

Part of the application and orientation process as an employee of the FBI is to sign a nondisclosure agreement form, on which the employee basically agrees not to disclose work related information to persons who do not have a *need to know*. Such persons without a need to know are both inside and outside of the bureau and other government agency partners but primarily friends and family members who are not employed by the FBI. For Int9 it was not the workload that proved challenging for him, as he clarified, his military college basically prepared him for such demands due to similarities in cultures. However, it was enforcing the requirements of the Non-Disclosure Agreement form and guarding against any spillage of information to persons who should not be privy to sensitive information he had to access. Not being able to share with his girlfriend, details of the cases he was working on with the Agents from his squad was what he considered to be a challenge. He explained, “she would ask me how work



went, and I just had to say. Oh, it's fine.” Trying to avoid conversations about work was almost a daily feat for Int9.

### ***Subtheme 3: Organizational Culture***

The organizational culture is part of the foundation of any organization as it includes the traditions, policies, expectations, and norms entrenched in the way people operate within an organization and normally take their cues from the established hierarchical structure i.e. the leadership: executive and senior leadership through to entry level employees and interns.

It also depicted the functionality of the programs and special groups within the organization, and how information is passed throughout the structure. Therefore, when the former Director Comey instituted a Diversity and Inclusion branch within the FBI, in accordance with the Obama Executive Order (Obama Administration Executive order 13583, 2011), the traditional culture began to change due to leadership example. Such changes were seen in the increased diversity trainings made mandatory for all supervisors and increased special emphasis – Equal Employment Opportunity programs, as well as implementation of targeted recruitment for diversity in federal organizations.

Int6 conveyed that as the only African American female in the internship group in her assigned field office, and not having any military or law enforcement connections it was challenging initially for her to adapt to the bureau’s organizational culture. She explained the challenge was, “between going into an office setting where there's an expectation of how you behave... and an expectation of the work you would produce. There's an expectation of what you should say, where you should go, how you present

yourself, how you represent the bureau to others, everything was new to me.” Int6 would then benefit from having a minority Agent as a mentor to guide and help in her development as an intern and later, a transitioned employee.

Int4 who was coming from a prior private sector internship and had no contacts to provide insight into the life of an FBI employee, and similar to Int6, also found it challenging at first to maneuver the bureau’s organizational culture. “Being able to navigate meeting the bureau’s expectations, getting your name out there by having your work noticed among competing interns all the while maintain a family unity on the squad had its challenges.”

Kleinhans, et al. (2015) stated that organizations that were able to identify the differences in diverse generations, such as their values, beliefs, expectations, and motivations, were better poised to minimize conflict and challenges to thereby motivate and retain these groups. Such motivation and retention were further elaborated on in relation to organizational culture adjustment by Carpenter and Charoris (2014).

#### ***Subtheme 4: Networking--Intimidating***

Although the data shows that many interns expected to make good connections and develop a network with permanent employees and other interns during their internship, there were few who thought of such networking prospects as intimidating and a challenge. Int5 was one such intern whose assigned Unit at Headquarters consisted predominantly of supervisors and senior executives, which could prove daunting for any new employee without the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities to engage and effectively maneuver this senior group. He had to learn to effectively communicate with

this team within weeks of commencing his internship. In addition, he soon learned that to do his regularly assigned tasks, he also had to connect and coordinate with similar level supervisors in outside Units, which he described as being initially unnerving and challenging in navigating their circles to engender their cooperation and action to meet his Unit's mission. "I was a bit timid when trying to network and connect with individuals who were outside of the team, especially if they were senior supervisors."

***Subtheme 5: Wanted to Do More, Underutilized***

The literature shows that interns have expectations to not only gain experience from the internship, but also utilize their creative and innovative abilities in conjunction with the newfound experience to generate meaningful contribution (Ertas, 2015). These interns often times more than not relish in the challenge as training and the feeling that they are making a difference (Chawla, Dokadia, & Rai, 2017). Take away that by underutilizing them, they feel no longer needed, not productive, and that they are wasting their time.

Int7 expressed that what she felt was challenging during her internship was feeling underutilized even to the point of being given only limited access, as she wished she could have been more involved. Although interns are included in receiving on the job training and contributing meaningful work on current cases on their assigned squads, the access provided to interns is limited as they are considered temporary employees, coupled with the *need-to-know* requirements. Therefore, interns such as Int7 who enter their internship with expectations to deep dive into all things FBI, develop the notion that they are not being fully utilized and challenged as they have all these limitation, which

limits their ability to do more for the organization. “I guess the challenging part would be feeling like I wasn't doing enough.”

### ***Subtheme 6: Administrative Challenges***

The administrative challenges unearthed from the data collected has shed light on some areas of communication that calls attention to more flexibility and cogent dissemination of information from administrators to the internship population and their assigned supervisors. Moore, Everly, and Bauer (2016) postulated that to guard against miscommunication in organizations it is imperative that effective communication strategies be established and employed to facilitate a successful organization.

Int1 who after having two great years of internship experience at one of the 56 field offices, described the administrator’s communication of his permanent job offer as “leaving a bad taste in his mouth.” Int1 described being told by personnel in the Recruiting Sourcing Unit (RSU) at headquarters to select five out of the 56 field offices where he would potentially like to work. The communication breakdown was first identified by Int1 when he was next told by the same Unit after he completed his internship, “no, the office that we assigned you to, that's the office you have to go to.” Int1 who lived in Georgia state as an intern was offered a job in California. Int1 expressed experiencing an attitude of inflexibility by the representatives in RSU further when he shared their message conveyed, “an attitude like, well take it or leave it. You either take the job or you don't work for us anymore.” He shared that the Unit had not expressed any interest in employing any additional efforts to accommodate him at any of his chosen field options initially selected, to prevent a cross-country traverse. Int1 who

accepted the offer, attributed his decision to the strong and effective mentorship he received from his assigned squad as an intern in Georgia, and being financially stable from his military career, which enabled him to absorb the cost of relocating to realize his career goal.

Int2 also accepted a permanent position after his internship was completed, however, his communication challenge with the representatives in RSU was not at the end with a job offer like Int1, but rather during the internship program. He endeavored to get answers to both his and his squad supervisor's questions on policy and expected practices and evaluation processes for interns. Int2 recounted that, "there were several times as an intern I was confused on certain administrative policies. I asked about what would happen when the 10 weeks were over, how I would be transferred to another office, questions regarding the pay that was assigned to me." The communication challenges his squad supervisor experienced with this Unit, Int2 further explained, "the challenges that translated to the supervisor, was him not being given the right instruction from the RSU team like how to evaluate me. So, there was a of lack of information coming down from RSU, and we were all just struggling to get information."

Int9 shared he had experienced administrative challenges; his challenges ran parallel to Int1 as it related to the RSU inflexibility to offer any reasonable accommodations with job offers in his surrounding locale. When Int9 had completed his internship in one of the offices in Charleston, SC, he was offered a permanent position by the RSU team at headquarters in DC. However, having just gotten married immediately after graduation to a wife who had recently gotten a comparatively better job there in

Charleston, Int9 explained that it was not financially feasible to relocate his new family to DC. As a result Int9 shared his situation with RSU in hopes of receiving reasonable considerations but to no avail. RSU was not able to accommodate him in a location in or closer to South Carolina. Therefore, with no other location options open to work permanently other than relocating to DC, this location inflexibility was one of two reasons why Int9 rejected the offer to permanently work where he interned. The other reason will come into focus within the later theme: beyond financial.

#### **Theme 4: Realized Rewards**

Ertas (2015) stated that generational employees such as millennials, are more likely to improve their retention with organizations in which managers foster organizational culture through inclusivity and a work environment that recognizes and rewards the meaningful contributions they bring through their differences. These are strategies managers implement to promote non-monetary rewards through challenges, training programs and professional developmental opportunities for their employees (Chawla, Dokadia, & Rai, 2017). Such managerial strategies not only convey to the millennials that they are valued by the organization, but also aligns seamlessly with Cox's (1995) theoretical tenet of managing diversity to reduce labor turnover. The subthemes in Figure 5 illustrated the non-monetary rewards experienced by the nine millennial participants in this study that provided insight into their decisions to remain or leave the organization where they interned.

**Figure 5**

*Theme 4: Realized Rewards and Associated Subthemes*



***Subtheme 1: Inclusivity***

Diversity and inclusion is indeed a governmental obligation for federal organizations, what is more, it is increasingly sought after as a strategy to gain competitive advantage attributable to its notable benefits (the Obama Administration Executive order 13583, 2011 and Kundu & Archana, 2017). In addition, Moore (2015) advised management to delve into educating themselves on the expectations of their diverse generational workforce, in an effort to better facilitate diversity retention. In keeping with these strategic obligations, and in order to stimulate an organizational culture exhibiting inclusivity many diversity programs have been instituted in the FBI from mandatory diversity training for all supervisors at varying levels to targeting colleges with a highly diverse population for recruitment ventures. Such emphasis on

diversity and inclusion not only heightens the awareness of the non-diverse employees in the organization, but it also conveys to the diverse employees that they are important to the organization and therefore brings value to same organization.

From the data collected four of the nine minority participants denoted their experience of such inclusivity during the internship program as their most rewarding experience. These four participants interviewed, reportedly expressed how good it felt to be included by their assigned Units and Squads as they were not only invited to the metaphorical *table*, but also allowed to *speak* – contributed. Int1 shared his rewarding experience of feeling included in his assigned squad drug take-down as he witnessed the communication and movements of all the elements within a mobile command center. He saw the seamless transfer of intelligence to executive management who in turn issued commands to the operators making the arrests and was further included in assisting with collecting DNA samples for the case. Int1 described that he, “experienced the reward of a culminating event spanning months of preparation, executed.”

Int2 recounted his most rewarding experience when he like Int1, felt included in the work carried out by his assigned Unit. He was allowed to work alongside Agents and Intelligence Analysts on projects which gave him a sense of the breadth of bureau work, but more importantly he, “felt he contributed to the mission and felt included.” It was from this inclusiveness he garnered the belief that his contribution to his Unit’s projects added value to their outcome, and therefore, he made a difference. It was on that premise stemming from feeling included that Int2 decided to remain with the organization as he felt he could continue to make a difference.



Int3 similarly viewed feeling included on his assigned squad as his most rewarding experience. For him it was more on a personal level wherein he explained that from he arrived on the squad everyone from the Supervisor, the Agents, everyone welcomed him and treated him with respect. He shared that his squad would take him to meetings and encourage him to interact even in meetings with other government agency (OGA) partners present. As a result of feeling included Int3 stated, “it just made me feel great all the time. It really solidified my feeling of love and passion for the job.” This level of inclusivity substantiated and emphasized from the literature Goodman et al. (2015) and Langbein and Stazyki ‘s (2018) discourse on minority having a voice.

Int5 who was initially apprehensive from being forewarned of potential diversity issues in the FBI, described his diverse assigned Unit as, “extremely inclusive.” He further expressed that being enveloped in such a diverse Unit allowed him to become more comfortable in this new environment which aided in him building camaraderie and a network with permanent members from this Unit. Int6 later credited his decision to remain in the organization and current position to the network he built from interning with this diverse and inclusive Unit. The case of Int6 coincides with Friedman and Gerstein (2017) who alluded to the inclusivity of millennials into the organizational culture where they interned, and how feeling included in the mission of these federal organizations weighed largely on their decision to transition after completing their internship program.

***Subtheme 2: Make a Difference***

This subtheme refers to the reward in not only adding value by making meaningful contributions to the mission of the organization or with assigned tasks on a squad, but more so being able to identify the difference your contribution(s) made to the outcome of the mission or in the life of another person. Of the nine participants there were two such interns who relayed their rewards by way of their specific contributions.

Int6 volunteered to join her mentor – the FBI recruiter for her field office and her team on visits to various colleges with a high diverse population, for recruiting. She described her recruiting experiences as most rewarding in her internship as she was able to make a difference as a representative for the FBI at these colleges, where she shared the internship application process and a synopsis of her life as an intern with the students. Int6 also impacted other minorities' decision to work for federal organizations such as the FBI from these recruiting events. She described that as the only African American female in the group of interns at her field office, she felt that in volunteering for these recruiting events and community outreach events, she was doing something right and making a difference through minority representation. Int6 further relayed, “being able to speak to minds that are so profound and so complex and introduce them to the fact that for us [minorities] there aren't only two or three jobs here. There are a million jobs out there and you can create your own avenues here, you don't have to limit yourself.”

Int7 who was assigned to Resident Agency (RA) a subdivision of the field office with all the same operational components but on a much smaller scale with approximately one to four full squads on location. The size of the RAs do allow much amalgamation of operational roles and responsibilities, as well as heightened visibility. It

is against this backdrop that Int7 was able to witness and also be a valuable contributor in environment wherein everyone was involved in synergistic operations, working towards a set mission. Int7 expressed, “ it was rewarding seeing everybody in action and helping each other. It helped solidified my desire to work for the FBI, as I wanted to join the work permanently and continue make a difference.”

### ***Subtheme 3: Meaningful Work***

One of the most rewarding experiences some of the millennial participants allude to is knowing that their contribution added value to the outcome of an assigned task or project or closing of a major case. This was true for Int9 who as an intern with an Accounting scholastic background was assigned to a White-Collar Crime squad, where he was able to make valuable contributions to major cases with his data analysis skills. He recounted his rewarding experience as going to court with some of the Agents on his squad and also witnessed a major case on which he had made valuable contributions, went to trial and conviction arrived. For the latter case Int9 shared that, “I was actually brought onto that case towards the end. So I got the really cool opportunity to start on a case do some meaningful work there and then see that go to court all within the same summer. So yeah, it really felt like I was doing something meaningful.”

While Int8 and Int4 were reminiscent of their contributions to their assigned squads with Int8 referenced his bilingual skillset to aid his and other squads decipher transcriptions for current cases, as one of his rewarding experiences, as well as learning that one did not have to be an Agent to effectively contribute to the mission. Int4 similarly mentioned contributing meaningful work to his assigned squad which sparked

good competition amongst the other two interns also assigned to the same squad.

However, both Int8 and Int4 highlighted that through contributing meaningful work to their assigned squads and non-assigned squads, they were able to develop a viable network which would aid in both interns career paths later on.

## **Theme 5: Realities of Finances**

### ***Subtheme 1: Financial Need***

It is not novel the fact that federal organizations find it difficult to compete with the lucrative and technologically savvy private sector (Miller & Tucker, 2013), although it is common knowledge that one does not embark on a career in federal government to get rich. Nevertheless, it is not surprising when employees and, in this study, millennial interns choose to leave federal employment opportunities after they have completed training as an intern (RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018) for the financial and technological upgrade with the private sector. Despite the prestigious brands of many federal organizations and the civic duty among the non-financial rewards that motivate the millennials, the reality is financial stability for a good standard of living is highly sought after. For millennial interns with possible student loans to repay, living and sundry expenses to sustain, they will require living on more than an entry level position government salary. Without career advancement coupled with the aforementioned theme – realized rewards (inclusivity, make a difference, meaningful work) the likelihood of millennials remaining with that organization in the long-term with only non-financial rewards would be unlikely.

Conversations with some millennial interns revealed there were those Information Technology based interns who lived in high-cost locations like Silicon Valley who after gaining security clearance from the FBI, training, exposure, and experience as an intern sought financial upgrade with those technologically savvy private organizations in their locale. Such need for financial advancement acquiesce the literature wherein interns often used their internships as a training ground for career advancement (RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018).

The data collected also revealed two interns who decided not to accept permanent job offers due to likely financial burden to relocate out of state to those job locations which did not include receiving FBI relocation assistance. Int7 who was living and attending school in South Carolina, had only received offers that were not only far from her state of residents, but comparatively higher in cost of living. In addition, these offices were offering her these jobs with a n-cost transfer clause which meant she would not receive any assistance from these offices or the bureau financially – all relocation costs would her responsibility. Just graduating from college, she expressed, “I didn't really have enough like a stable financial situation to make a move somewhere else.” Therefore, she made the decision to reject the job offers and found a non-federal job in close proximity to her home to meet her financial needs.

Int9 was faced by a similar financial dilemma which also encapsulated family stability and administrative inflexibility. After Int9 completed his internship in Charleston, SC he was told by RSU there were no vacancies available in the office he interned, and hence received an offer in DC at FBI headquarters. Although he relayed his

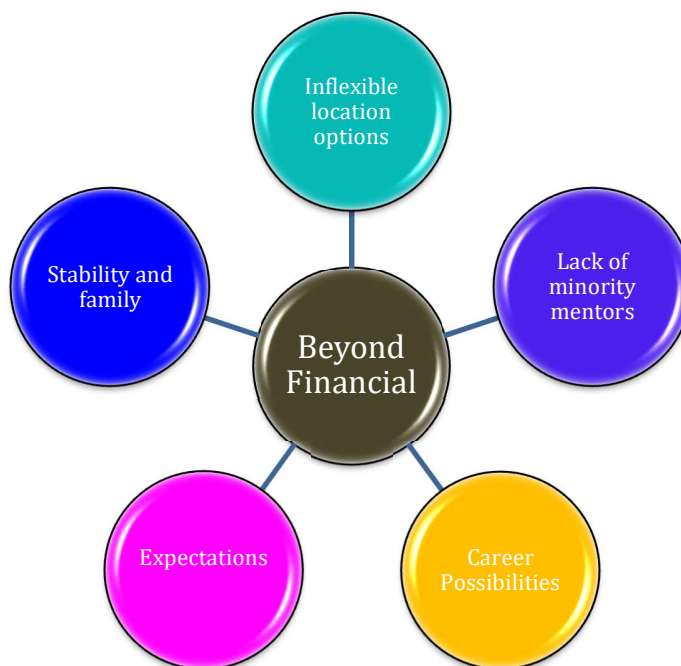
situation to RSU of being a newlywed whose wife has a comparatively lucrative job in Charleston, SC, in hopes that RSU would attempt to relocate him within state or neighboring states, or aid in covering cost transfer, but it was to no avail. Faced with the financial realities that he could not realistically support relocating his new family to DC on an entry level position salary, Int9 said, “as much as I hated to go, I decided to turn down the job offer and keep my family local.”

### **Theme 6: Beyond Financial**

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of the minority millennial interns, and by analyzing their perspectives, seek to discern why interns chose to leave the federal organizations where they completed their internships. The deduction from the data collected from the participants, exhibiting financial need as one of the factors that influenced participants to reject federal job offers, which is expected, as that is supported by the literature which pertains to competitive financial career advancement (Miller & Tucker, 2013). However, the non-financial factors unearthed from the data collected went beyond the germane financial realities. These non-financial factors were gathered from four of the nine participants as these consisted of the interns who rejected job offers and in one case shared information of friends who also rejected job offers. All responses from these four participants are categorized in Figure 6 with its supporting subthemes: (a) inflexible location options, (b) lack of minority mentors, (c) career possibilities, (d) expectations, and (e) stability and family.

**Figure 6**

*Theme 6: Beyond Financial and Associated Subthemes*



***Subtheme 1: Inflexible Location Options***

The FBI has 56 field offices located nationwide to include Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, over 350 resident agencies nationwide, and more than 60 international offices located in US Embassies worldwide, providing over 35,000 jobs (Our Locations, n.d.). Amidst being the largest domestic criminal investigative agency in the United States, the internship program though overwhelmingly popular and hence extremely competitive, occupies a small number that generates employment nationwide. In addition, it is important to note that these field offices nationwide vary in sizes from large, medium, and small offices which affect the number of employees they can accommodate. Therefore, it follows that the larger offices would have the capacity to extend offers of

permanent employment to more interns completing the program versus smaller offices with comparatively smaller bandwidth.

From the data collected three of the participants who received permanent job offers to relocate to far large field offices, all completed their internships in small and medium size field offices. Only one of the three participant was able to accept his permanent job offer in a cross country move from Georgia to California, having to experience the less than accommodating RSU representative, when they stated, the office we assign you to, you have to go.” Int1 shared that the FBI through RSU would not provide aid with relocation expenses and further expressed, “I'm not saying I expected to be treated special or anything like that, but I would've thought they would have tried to at least accommodate me better.” In light of the fact that the majority of large offices are located on the east coast and could possibly accommodate another intern rather than a large office on the other side of the country in California, does cast a shadow as to whether any viable attempts were made by RSU at relocating Int1. Nevertheless, Int1 accepted his job offer in California after his mentor on his assigned squad encouraged him to continue with his career goals. Moreover, he was financially capable due to his military career prior to his internship. “I'm actually in that position because being in the military, I had a career before and then I had money saved up.”

However, the other two participants who received permanent job offers that required them to relocate also to field offices far out of state, had to reject those offers as they were not financially equipped to initiate or sustain such relocation expenses having no prior careers. Int9, who interned and lived in South Carolina was offered a permanent



job in Washington DC, and at the time he had just gotten married and graduated from college. His wife he shared, “she already had a good job that was set up well here in Charleston. And at the time it didn't make sense for us to move.” Although he hated having to turn down the offer, he was provided no other alternative for offices in closer proximity to South Carolina or assistance with cost transfer after unsuccessful talks with RSU representatives. Such inflexibility of the administrators sourcing the locations for the interns, goes to show the lack of minority voice described by Goodman et al., (2015).

The third intern In7 also tried to remain in the bureau after her internship was completed, however her current office was a small one in the RA and had no openings. The offers she received were all far out of state locations, and she just graduated with no prior career and student loans, also no assistance forthcoming from the FBI for relocation expenses, therefore, she was not financially capable to accept any of the offers to relocate. She shared, “I didn't really have enough like a stable financial situation to make a move somewhere else.” Therefore, Int7 made the decision to reject the job offers and found a job in the private sector that was in close proximity to her home which could meet her financial needs.

### ***Subtheme 2: Lack of Minority Mentors***

While a social change impact of this study remains to have a true representation of the community hosting the field offices reflected in the respective offices to encourage trust and collaboration, it was interesting to learn that interns had similar expectations of their internship experiences. Many former minority interns expressed their view and expectations of having a good mentor from in earlier theme 2: expectations of interns.

While the majority of the participants had their expectations met by having good mentors who poured into their personal and professional lives which made them feel included in the assigned Units and facilitate meaningful teamwork, there were those interns whose experiences were dissimilar.

Int5 who described his mentorship experience as being vital to his internship and current career, credited his minority mentor with overcoming his timidity to network and collaborate with Supervisors and Senior Executives from his and other Units on assigned projects. He further attributed his permanent job offer after his internship to his mentor, who would continuously encourage him to be curious and experiment with other projects outside his assigned team. "I was allowed to kind of extend myself outside of our Unit and experimented, finding other opportunities which I would argue, helped me get my first full time job."

On the other hand, Int5 also shared that there were other interns he knew who chose not to remain with the organization after their internship was completed, as they did not have a positive mentorship experience. Those interns within his network who lacked minority mentors to guide them during their internships resulted in unrealized expectations, as well as a challenging internship of trying to assimilate to an organization's culture and job without representative guidance. It can be deduced that the lack of representation in minority mentors resulted in their dissatisfaction in the internship, which culminated in them leaving the organization which. These recounted instances mirrored Ko and Sidhu (2012) findings in the literature on interns leaving their internships due to dissatisfaction.

### ***Subtheme 3: Career Possibilities***

Having career aspirations of being trained, feeling like mentors are investing into one's development, being able to identify where one is positively adding value to the mission, and career advancement are all synonymous with the millennial outlook and involvement in internship programs (Henstra and McGowan, 2016). In addition, the literature further supports the case that millennials also perceive such federal internship programs as a training ground but are not committed to remaining with the organization (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015 and RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018). Therefore, it falls within the grain of same practice wherein participants in this study embark upon an internship with the FBI for job experience, networking, and exposure to the various career opportunities within which to identify their niche, not necessarily to permanently put down roots.

Int8 was clear about his expectations going into the internship program, wanting to learn something different and get exposure to multiple violation crimes, and in so doing, develop a network and be able to identify his niche. At the end of his internship although he chose not to accept permanent employment with the FBI, he did convey that his expectations were largely realized throughout his internship. From his training and exposure to Intelligence Analysts on his assigned squad and the work they did, he realized that he developed an affinity to intelligence and would rather that career path than his initial career path with narcotics or multiple violation crimes. In addition, he was able to develop a supportive network which survived beyond leaving the FBI, from which

he still received guidance. “They pretty much took me under their under wing. Showed me the ropes. I still keep contact with them, and use as job references, and even advise.”

#### ***Subtheme 4: Expectations***

In agreement with Ertas (2015) it is imperative for organizations to understand the millennials, in relation to their beliefs, expectations, inclusivity, whether they are being challenged, since these could all be valid reasons why the interns are leaving the organizations. Also, being mindful of Ko and Sidhu (2012) similar caution which alluded to the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of interns with their internship program, born out of their expectations, which can influence retention within their respective federal organizations. However, it is interesting to learn that expectations were met for the majority of participants that rejected job offers. This finding gave rise to the thought - that met expectations or even satisfaction within the internship program does not guarantee retention outcomes.

This is where other factors that materialized during the internship need to be analyzed to garner their impact on the resultant rejection of the employment offer. The inflexible location options is a factor that was unearthed from the data that partly resulted in two of the intern participants rejecting their job offers which required them to relocate out of state. Financial realities was the other factor partly responsible for the same two interns rejecting the job offers received to relocate, as firstly they were not financially capable to afford relocating to a state with a higher cost of living. Secondly Int9 could not financially support his family on an entry level position salary. Stability and family – next subtheme, is another factor the data showed impacted the interns’ decision to reject

the job offer of permanent employment, which along with the aforementioned factors were not included in their initial expectations of the interns.

***Subtheme 5: Stability and Family***

Inasmuch as setting career goals seem unchanging and are considered priority, there are a few exceptions that trump career goals, and family is one such exception. For an intern participating in the internship program, the priority might be to gain experience, acquire firsthand knowledge of the organization, its mission and priorities, as well as learn how one can contribute or add value to that organization. When that intern starts a family as in the case of Int9, the focus is no longer on the intern's individual goals and expectations, but more so the family goals as a unit.

It is essential for the intern to balance work life and workload with personal life as attaining balance and stability there is derived satisfaction, and workplace exhaustion is minimized (Ertas, 2015 & Lai et al., 2012). Alvi et al., 2015) further posited that an imbalance can result in emotional, stress, and health problems.

Therefore, Int9 after graduating college and getting married in Charleston, SC, when he was offered Washington DC as his only job offer for permanent employment after his internship, he had to reject the offer to preserve the stability of his family – “family considerations.” With his wife already established in a good job in Charleston, and no potential FBI offers in or surrounding states of South Carolina, “it didn't make sense for us to move” relocating to DC on his entry level salary would not be financially feasible to support his family.

Of the participants in this study it is noteworthy to mention that six of the nine shared recommendations for improving the internship program for future interns. Int1 and Int9 similarly suggested a more flexible process for job location assignments by RSU headquarters. Int2 expressed that although as a permanent employee the internship program was less diverse during his time as an intern, “but now seems to be going in the right direction.” He further added that more could still be done in efforts of getting more diversity in the organization via the internship program. Int 5 and Int6 suggested similar commentary based on their reported experiences of minority mentors as an integral part of their internship success and current careers. They therefore advocated for more minority mentors to be assigned to minorities in the internship program. Lastly, Int7 expressed the importance of building a network with other interns but especially with permanent employees. This she developed while she participated in the program, and it was this network she credited her return to the organization some years after she rejected her initial job offers, due to inability to financially support distant out of state relocations.

### **Summary**

This chapter explored the findings uncovered in the data collected from the nine minority millennial interns and the themes and subthemes generated from the data analysis. Much of the literature was revisited to provide support of the data collected and confirm alignment with the research.

The next chapter will delve into the discussion of the findings and its implication on positive social change. I will also proffer recommendations based on the findings and

recommendations proffered by some of the participants, as well as state any limitations or uncovered areas for potential future research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusions

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of minority millennial interns and learn why they are choosing to leave the federal organizations immediately or shortly after completing their internship. It is important to revisit findings from the literature review and the subsequent gap that formed the basis for this study and the related findings unearthed. The findings concur with Miller and Tucker's (2013) and Langbein and Stazyki's (2018) research showing minority millennials can offer unique perspectives, technical savvy, and creativity to improve an organization's competitive edge. Not every minority intern offered a permanent job in a federal organization after their internship will accept such an offer. Ertas (2015) stressed that it is vital for organizations to understand millennials and learn what is important to them, in relation to their beliefs, expectations, stance toward inclusivity, and thoughts on whether they are being challenged, as any or all could be perceived as valid reasons why they left the organizations.

The data findings for the reasons why participants did not accept federal job offers concur with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Some of the participants in the study chose not to remain with the organization where they interned due to financial aspirations. As Henstra and McGowan (2016) noted, interns do have certain expectations, such as receiving career advancement and high pay levels, when embarking on the internship program. Private sector competition was another finding from the data analysis which aligned with the literature review. Miller and Tucker (2013) and Langbein and



Stazyki (2018) explained, for instance, how interns transitioning to the more competitive, lucrative, and technologically advanced private sector was a challenge to federal organizations' retention efforts. The literature also includes evidence that interns view federal organizations as a training ground but are not committed to remaining for permanent employment (see Conley-Tyler et al., 2015; "RCOA Cultivated the Future Through Internship Program," 2018). Last, the findings revealed the dissatisfaction some of the interns experienced in the internship program that resulted in them leaving the organization after the internship, which was supported in the literature review. Ko and Sidhu (2012) focused on interns' dissatisfaction with their internship program, where the implication was that dissatisfaction affected the retention within their respective federal organizations. I will now delve deeper into the findings categorized in the six themes and supporting subthemes derived from the data analysis and discuss whether they are supported in the literature review or can be categorized as new knowledge. My aim is to answer to why interns are choosing to leave federal organizations where they interned.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

#### **Theme 1: Motivations to Serve**

The data analysis exhibited that all the participants expressed motivation to serve their country and embark upon a lifelong dream career in law enforcement with this organization, as well as serve the mission of the organization. The following subthemes categorize the participants' motivation to serve. This first theme, motivations to serve, consisted of the following subthemes: (a) bureau brand of service to something bigger--country, mission, (b) law enforcement career goal, and (c) bureau family.

***Subtheme 1: Law Enforcement Career.***

The findings showed that participants were motivated to serve to fulfill dream career goals of working in law enforcement. Participants who were former active military were influenced by the same values and saw this federal organization as an extension into law enforcement. The finding regarding former millennial interns' motivations to serve in federal organizations was confirmed in the literature review wherein Henstra and McGowan (2016) highlighted interns' who sought out careers in government organizations with intrinsic benefits motivated by civic duty. They further proffered that the implications of interns who answered a call for service could provide insight into HR public policies and recruitment practices that worked towards recruitment and retention efforts (Henstra & McGowan, 2016).

***Subtheme 2: Something Bigger and Organizational Brand.***

The findings showed that participants were motivated to serve and be a part of a cause that was bigger than themselves, as well as work with a renowned organization such as the FBI with a notable brand in the law enforcement community. Although the literature from Henstra and McGowan (2016) on answering the call to service does support this findings, there is no literature to support the finding of interns participating in internships due to the organization's brand. The only reference found in the literature concerning brand or image of an organization is one of caution in which Miller and Tucker (2013) highlighted the negative image associated with some federal organizations which resulted in interns leaving those organizations after they completed their internships.

### ***Subtheme 3: Bureau Family***

The findings referenced participants who were motivated to serve in the organization as a result of being informed of the family and relational culture that pervaded throughout its hierarchy. However, this finding is new to the body of knowledge as the literature review did not provide any information on interns being motivated to serve on an account of a family type organizational culture. It is noteworthy to state that all the participants within this subtheme not only became a part of the bureau family but also stayed with this family by transitioning into permanent positions after completing their internships.

### **Theme 2: Expectations of Interns**

It is clearly indicated in the findings that all the participants had expectations of what they envisioned their internship would be, which Henstra and McGowan (2016) corroborated from the literature, in relation to the intrinsic or extrinsic benefits that interns anticipate the program to provide. Furthermore, Ko and Sidhu (2012) explored the realm of unmet expectations that could lead to dissatisfaction experienced by these millennials. Such dissatisfaction in the former interns' expectations does have implications for interns leaving these organizations and further impacting the retention rates lowered. This second theme, expectations of interns, has the following subthemes: (a) no preconceived expectations--curious; (b) discernment of career--niche; (c) exposure, networking, and experience; (d) mentorship; and (e) make a difference.

### ***Subtheme 1: Exposure, Network, and Experience***

The data findings highlighted that many interns expected to get exposure to the mission of the organization, while developing a network of peers and mentors, as well as attaining new skill set through experience gained. Ertas (2015) addressed beliefs, expectations, and inclusivity concerns and whether interns are being challenged in terms of gaining experience. To this point, Ko and Sidhu (2012) contended that any dissatisfaction in the aforementioned expectations could serve as valid reasons why interns are leaving the organizations.

### ***Subtheme 2: Discerning Career-Finding Niche***

The findings showed that many interns participated in the program to develop new knowledge, skills and abilities but not necessarily committed to remaining with the organizations after internship was completed. This finding aligned with other works (Conley-Tyler et al., 2015; “RCOA Cultivated the Future Through Internship Program,” 2018) that described interns as viewing internship programs as a great training ground to hone their skills and gain exposure, but not to commit to permanent employment.

### ***Subtheme 3: Mentorship Benefits***

Despite the dearth in senior minority leadership in the FBI, the data analysis indicated that many of the participants had expectations and expressed an interest in being mentored in general, and for some minority mentorship was specified. The literature does support the findings wherein Lapointe & Vandenberghe (2017) put this expectation into perspective starting with definition – the mentor supports the protégé’s personal and professional development. Bodkin (2016) in accordance with the limited mentorship in government organizations, relayed that although mentorship programs

tended to be limited largely in government organizations, it is nonetheless a necessary strategic tool to facilitate the recruitment, development, and retention of future leaders within these organizations.

***Subtheme 4: Make a Difference***

From the data analyzed the expectation to make a difference and contribute meaningful value to the organization was articulated by the participants. These former interns were not oblivious to the fact that the compensatory difference between the public and private sector was not equitable. Nevertheless, the literature does support such altruistic characteristic in which Miller and Tucker (2013) described such resolution as interns exhibiting their civic duty toward working in government organizations.

***Subtheme 5: No Preconceived Expectation, Curious***

Many students participated in the internship program as a training ground especially if they have no set trajectory as to their career of preference and therefore, have no set expectation beyond exploratory and absorbing all they encountered or was exposed (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015 and RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018). This aligned with the findings of a participant who had no expectations of the internship program and just wanted to absorb everything he could be exposed. Note this practice can prove very beneficial for the intern who through development experience and good mentorship can hone in on a viable potential career with the same organization where they interned. The converse can be true also, wherein the intern after absorbing the training and exposure from the

internship can then leave for other more suited or lucrative organizations, to include the private sector (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015).

### **Theme 3: Internship Challenges**

Having knowledge of the challenges the interns experienced during their program could provide valuable insight into deducing whether they impacted the decisions made by the interns to either leave the organization after the internship program or remain and transition as a permanent employees. This third theme: internship challenges has the following subthemes (a) balancing internship and school (b) non-disclosure of work information (c) adapting to organizational culture (d) networking (e) feeling underutilized (f) administrative challenges.

#### ***Subtheme 1: Balancing Work and School***

The findings show that one of the challenges faced by participants was balancing internship work with their schoolwork. The literature highlights the responsibility of the organization in facilitating a balanced lifestyle for the intern, as well as outlining the outcome of an imbalanced work life. It is therefore imperative that an organization knows how to determine an intern's quality work life and workload balance, and guard against the intern becoming overwhelmed and burned out, which ties into derived satisfaction and exhaustion in the workplace (Ertas, 2015 and Lai et al. 2012). Alvi, Hues, Tahir, and Gondal further confirms that such an imbalance can result in emotional, stress, and health problems.

#### ***Subtheme 2: Nondisclosure of Information***

The findings showed that participants categorized their inability to disclose sensitive information to their family as a challenge. There is nothing found in the literature to support this challenge experienced by interns, which can be classified as new knowledge.

### ***Subtheme 3: Organizational Culture***

The data analyzed resulted in the finding that understanding the organizational culture of the FBI was a challenge for some of the interns, who had to quickly acclimatize to the traditions, policies, norms, and expectations. The literature does corroborate this point in that Kleinhans, et al. (2015) stated that organizations that were able to identify the differences in diverse generations, such as their values, beliefs, expectations, and motivations, were better poised to minimize conflict and rather motivate and retain these groups through making strategic changes to their organizational culture. Carpenter and Charoris (2014) further elaborated that organizational culture adjustment could bring about motivation and thereby, retention of interns.

### ***Subtheme 4: Networking–Intimidating***

The findings presented networking as an intimidating challenge participants experienced which took them out of their comfort zone. There is no literature available through my discoveries that pointed in support to this challenge.

### ***Subtheme 5: Wanted to Do More, Underutilized***

Participants in the data collection shared as part of the findings that although they wanted to contribute more to the squad, they were assign it was challenging as they were limited in their involvement as interns and not permanent employees, and therefore felt

underutilized at times. The literature connected with this challenge by showing that interns have expectations to not only gain experience from the program, but also utilize their creative and innovative abilities in conjunction with the newfound experience to generate meaningful contribution (Henstra and McGowan, 2016). Their take away that by underutilizing them, they felt no longer needed, unproductive – wasting their time.

### ***Subtheme 6: Administrative Challenges***

The findings showed millennial interns experienced administrative challenges during their internship program. The administrative challenges unearthed from the data collected have shed some light on some areas of communication that calls attention to more flexibility and cogent dissemination of information from administrators to the internship population and their assigned supervisors. Moore, Everly, and Bauer (2016) from the literature postulated that to guard against miscommunication in organizations it is imperative that effective communication strategies be established and employed to facilitate a successful organization. Such effective communication strategies become more essential when viewed from a generational standpoint wherein administrators communication with millennials in the internship program was perceived as challenging. Moore et al. (2016) further affirms that with effective communication strategies implemented generational gaps can be bridged and potential miscommunication curtailed and thereby reduce resulting conflicts, which promotes job satisfaction and increased retention.



#### **Theme 4: Realized Rewards**

Many people are of the notion that monetary rewards are the principal way in which organizations retain their employees, in fact Llorens and Stazyk (2011) posited that employees who are sufficiently compensated with monetary rewards are more satisfied and therefore, are more likely to retain their employment at such organizations. However, Eras (2015) determination of rewards counters such monetary centered rewards, thereby giving rise to the existence and importance of non-monetary rewards that influenced generational workers to remain, such as the millennials who participated in this study. The fourth theme comprised: realized rewards with subthemes consisted of (a) team involvement – inclusivity (b) meaningful work (c) made a difference – add value to work, minority representation.

##### ***Subtheme 1: Inclusivity***

From the findings, participants have identified inclusivity as a reward they experienced during their internship whether on the squads they were embedded on, or the meetings or the meaningful daily tasking with which they were involved. The literature explained that Diversity and inclusion is indeed a governmental obligation for federal organizations, what is more, it is increasingly sought after as a strategy to gain competitive advantage attributable to its notable benefits (the Obama Administration Executive order 13583, 2011 and Kundu & Archana, 2017). In addition, Moore (2015) advised management to delve into educating themselves on the expectations of their diverse generational workforce, in an effort to better facilitate diversity retention. In keeping with these strategic obligations, and in order to stimulate an organizational

culture exhibiting inclusivity many diversity programs have been instituted in the FBI from mandatory diversity training for all supervisors at varying levels to targeting colleges with a highly diverse population for recruitment ventures. Such emphasis on diversity and inclusion not only heightens the awareness of the non-diverse employees in the organization, but it also conveys to the diverse employees that they are important to the organization and therefore brings value to same organization.

***Subtheme 2: Make a Difference***

It was shared through the findings that former millennial interns who participated in the data collection felt rewarded when the work they did during the internship period, made a difference, especially those that participated in recruiting endeavors and was able to represent the organization as an intern. This tied into the literature wherein the interns expectations are met in producing meaningful contribution (Henstra & McGowan, 2016).

***Subtheme 3: Meaningful Work***

This finding runs along a similar vein as subtheme 2 above: Make a difference, as data showed those participants found the meaningful work they did on a daily basis with their Units and assigned squads as rewarding, especially those interns who were able to see some of the real cases they had made contribution go to trial or end in an arrest. As the previous subtheme 2, Henstra and McGowan (2016) from the literature explored how meaningful contributions experienced by interns does meet expectations, which has the implication to retain those interns.

**Theme 5: Realities of Finances**

***Subtheme 1: Financial Need***

The realities of finance with emphasis on interns choosing to leave the organizations they interned due to financial need was substantiated in the findings. The literature review identifying financial aspirations and private sector competition (Miller & Tucker, 2013). The known financial aspiration reasons provided in the literature review and federal organizations' competition from the lucrative and more technologically advanced private sector was confirmed in the findings of this study. Other results from the literature (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015 and RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018) was substantiated by the data findings in the theme – beyond the financial. This finding and the literature review that it corroborated, showed interns participated in this internship program as a mere training ground but not committed to remaining with the organizations.

#### **Theme 6: Beyond Financial**

The theme beyond financial resulted in some findings that were not found in literature. From the data collected from the participants of this study other meaningful reasons which influenced minority millennials' decision to leave the federal organizations where they interned, were unearthed. Such reasons further provided answers to the research question and associated research problem, which are further punctuated in the recommendations of this study. The non-financial factors unearthed from the data collected goes beyond the connected financial needs, they consist of the supporting subthemes: (a) inflexible location options (b) lack of minority mentors (c) career possibilities (d) expectations (e) stability and family.

***Subtheme 1: Inflexible Location Options***

The findings showed that inflexible options for job relocation resulted in many interns leaving the organization where they interned. The participants who chose to leave the organization after their internship ended reported the following reasons from the data: relocation option inflexibility in tandem with financial difficulties of relocating to new offices out of state and prioritizing family stability. This revelation served as new knowledge to this area of study as there is no literature found to corroborate these findings as relayed by the participants from their perspectives. Nevertheless, a case for dissatisfaction based on Ko and Sidhu's (2012) discourse, resulting in intern turnover could be argued in that the participants were not satisfied with the inflexibility of the office locations offered to them which entailed high relocation costs, as well as the instability of family life relocation.

***Subtheme 2: Lack of Minority Mentors***

The findings displayed that some millennial interns left the organization after their internship ended as they were dissatisfied with the mentorship they received or rather had not received. While there were those interns who benefited from having minority mentors to provide guidance from their perspective on the organizational culture and providing day-to-day support, there were those who admittedly were not mentored throughout their internship due to a lack of mentorship in government organization and therefore, expressed had a difficult time adjusting. The literature corroborated the lack of mentorship in government organizations wherein Bodkin (2016) described the limited mentorship in government organizations, and relayed that although mentorship programs

tended to be limited largely in government organizations, it is still a necessary strategic tool to enable the recruitment, and retention of these interns within the organizations.

### ***Subtheme 3: Career Possibilities***

The findings unearthed on interns leaving the organization where they interned to embark on other career possibilities. This reason for leaving the organization tied in with the literature which outlined that there are some interns who participated in the internship program not for permanent employment but as a training ground to gain exposure and hone skills, knowledge and abilities (Conley-Tyler, Rothnie-Jones, Cambridge, & Walsh, 2015 and RCOA Cultivated the Future through Internship Program, 2018).

### ***Subtheme 4: Expectations***

While Sidhu (2012) caution concerning the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of interns with their internship program, born out of their expectation, can influence retention within their respective federal organizations. It is important to note that the findings showed that the expectations of most of these interns who chose to leave the organization, were met. Which brings awareness to the fact that met expectations or satisfaction within the internship program does not guarantee retention outcomes for interns.

### ***Subtheme 5: Stability and Family***

Although for the majority of interns who participated in the program the priority might be to gain experience, acquire firsthand knowledge of the organization, its mission and priorities, as well as how one can contribute meaningfully to that organization, there are exceptions. The findings unveiled that preserving the stability of his family and not

uprooting them to the out of state relocation job option offered, was one of the intern's decision in reject his job offer. There is no literature available on interns sustaining the stability of their family by choosing not to accept the relocation job offer. Nevertheless, one can make a case for utilizing the essential benefit for the intern to balance work life and workload with personal life as attaining balance and stability (Ertas, 2015 & Lai et al., 2012).

### **Further Discussion of Theory**

Valcik and Benavides (2017) in accordance with Cox's (1991) creating the multicultural organization theory, iterated the importance for public agencies, including federal organizations, to strive in their employment for a diverse workforce and further provide fair treatment of employees in relation to promotional opportunities. Such sourcing of a diverse workforce in accordance with Cox's theory (1991) but by way of the internship program, was further supported in the literature review by Fletcher (2015) and Miller (2016) , as well as Conley-Tyler et al. (2015). Exploring the concept of multiculturalism in a government organization from a generational standpoint was executed by utilizing 10 minority millennial interns who interned in small, medium, and large offices throughout the FBI, as participants in this study. From the literature review Cox's theory stated that when diverse groups are managed, more positive than negative outcomes will supervene, resulting in the benefits of competitive advantage, enhanced creative performance, diversity of cognition, and innovation, subsequently yielding a desirable multicultural organization. Conversely, when diversity groups are not effectively and efficiently managed more negative outcomes pervade the organization,

which DOJ, FBI (2019) and Ertas (2015) studies supported as leading to high labor turnover.

To lower the labor turnover Cox (1991) recommended managing diversity by changing organizational culture through positive reinforcement of norms, practices, and policies within the organization. Such positive reinforcement was evident in the data collected from the minority millennial participants who accepted permanent job offers with the organizations where they completed their internships. The data showed that positive reinforcements in the form of having minority mentors, networking with fellow interns and permanent staff yielded positive outcomes which is synonymous with Gardenswartz and Rowe (2015) proposition for managing diversity. Also, working in an accommodating inclusive environment where they felt accepted and they made a difference with the work they contributed, all proved beneficial to not only the interns, but also to the development of a multicultural organization. Despite the nuanced perspective in some of these recommendations there is cogent congruence with the positive reinforcements from the data and Cox's (1995) three foundational themes derived from creating a multicultural organization. Therefore, the types and degree of diversity displayed within set work teams within the organization and how they hinder or enhance organizational performance does relate to the minority mentorship many of the participants who remained benefited from. On the other hand, the data showed that there were some minority millennial interns who left the organization after completing their internship because they did not have minority mentors to provide that afore mentioned positive reinforcement. Such converse reality does correlate with Cox's (1991)

determination, as well as Gardenswartz and Rowe (2015), that when diversity is not managed effectively and efficiently such shortfall can result in high labor turnover.

Secondly, the theme complexity of diversity in relation to how members interact with each other within work teams (Cox, 1995) draws parallel to the participants who benefited from developing a network among their peers (interns) and with permanent staff. Cox's (1995) third theme explored the impact the social-cultural environs outside the organization, had on the diversity exhibited within the workgroups within the organization. This third theme from Cox's theory highlighted the communities in which the minority millennials were entrenched, beyond that of the federal organizations. In the data collected from the participants there were those interns who voluntarily involved themselves in outreach programs and similar recruitment engagements with their Recruiters to act as a connective thread between the FBI and the communities they reside. Others saw themselves as a representative mirroring their community in the FBI and therefore sought to contribute meaningful work to make a difference in the FBI on behalf of their communities. There were those participants who used their knowledge of previous working relations with their community leaders to liaise and provide insight to their assigned FBI teams to enhance the mission.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Initial limitations were introduced in Chapter 1, in addition, the following limitations derived from the data collection and analysis process were also added for further transparency of this study. The sample size utilized in this study could be described as small despite being within Dukes' (1984, as cited in Creswell, 2007)



recommended sample size for qualitative methodology. Utilizing the FBI as the primary federal organization from which to select participants for this study is also a perceived limitation of the study. Being cognizant of my bias as an employee of the FBI, I ensured that none of the participants interviewed had completed their internship in her office location. Furthermore, the data collected for this study were gathered in compliance with the FBI IRB and Walden University IRB regulatory guidelines.

### **Implications**

The findings derived from the data analysis ascertained from minority millennial interns could prove valuable to inspiring administrators who can reform existing policies and create new policies that can effectively manage diversity and facilitate improved minority inclusion and retention. Such improved minority inclusion and social change opportunity could originate through the inspired administrators who can further engender an organizational culture that is sensitive to the use of the internship tool to increase diversity in their organizations. With minority retention rates increasing, the implication of positive social change would mean more former minority interns will remain in the federal organizations where they interned, becoming the future leaders. Therefore, more minority visibility will be existent in senior leadership roles within federal organizations such as the FBI.

Furthermore, expanding social change footprints beyond the federal government using this initial study, and into the communities that host the many field offices and headquarters divisions is another spinoff for social change. This social change would depict the populace at large as represented adequately by the increased minorities that

choose to remain and permanently transition into the federal organizations, where they interned in the locale of the various field offices nationwide. This visible minority representation could also work to stimulate a more trusting and cooperative relationship between the organization and the community which host its offices and forging lasting partnerships.

### **Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in the literature on why minority millennial interns chose to leave the federal organizations where they completed their internships between 2015 and 2018. Data was collected from participants who chose not to accept permanent offers of employment with federal organizations where they completed their internships, to explore their perspectives on what influenced their decision. Data was also collected from participants who accepted permanent job offers with the federal organization where they completed their internships, to supplement the former group's information, and further shed some light into HR recruitment, mentorship programs, public policies, and practices that work.

Based on the data collected and analyzed it is evident that interns highly valued having minority mentors with whom they can relate and be comfortable with interacting. Therefore, it is recommended that a bureau-wide minority mentorship program be implemented and for all new interns, consisting of permanent employees who do not necessarily have to be on their assigned squad or occupational specialty, to aid in broadening the intern's scope of reference on the organization and its culture. In addition, it is recommended that all Supervisors (Agents and non-Agents) participate in this mentorship

program and incorporate an evaluation as part of each Supervisor's performance appraisal, so that Supervisors can continue to hone their mentorship skills.

From the data collected it showed how one of the participants benefited from the office where they completed their internship, as that participant was contacted by the office they interned, with a job offer when they had an opening in the locale. This recall hire was uniquely practiced by this office but should be commonplace throughout the field offices and division within the FBI. It is recommended that the Recruiting and Sourcing Unit at headquarters which is responsible for hiring and sourcing all successful interns into permanent jobs, and/each respective field office create and source a regional recall list. This recall list will consist all the interns who were offered a permanent position at offices where they did not intern but had to reject it due to financial difficulties of relocating to that new offices. Then whenever entry level vacancies become available at or in close proximity (within the locale -region) where these interns reside, they will be one of the first candidates to be recalled if available for openings.

Since financial difficulties of relocating to new offices out of state was common in the data collected, it is recommended that special consideration in the form of a relocation incentive be given to interns who are offered permanent positions to offices exceeding 1000 miles radius from their original office where they interned, or if the new location is a high-cost area per the locality pay schedule. Probationary consideration could be added to further secure retention of this millennial group.

It is noteworthy to add that the data does show interns exhibiting a desire to serve and make a difference in their community and provide meaningful contribution to the

mission of the organization. Therefore, this recommendation is for all field offices to supplement their recruiting team with volunteer interns, in so doing all interns prior to completion of internship should participate in at least one recruiting or community event. This will not only enrich their internship experience as they reflect and give back to their communities, but their involvement will aid in accomplishing the organization's mission in recruiting more diversity like themselves into the organization.

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has affected the way traditional federal organizations currently do business. Whereas many private sector entities especially the dot.com businesses have long homed in on the flexible work schedule and work from home options, COVID-19 has forced more 9-5 traditional organizations such as the bureau to evolve into this flexible realm. It is recommended that organizations such as the FBI market such newfound work schedule flexibility as an option transcending COVID-19, and a way of competing with the private sector for the generational millennials, whose aspirations are known to favor freedoms and flexibility.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of minority millennial interns as to why they chose to leave federal organizations immediately or soon after completing their internships, as there is a gap in the literature to support this topic. Although the data collection provided information which supported existing literature, the data also shone light on new information that will add to literature, nevertheless, there remains uncharted areas to consider for future research.

Future research should consider using qualitative or a mixed methods approach to employ a larger sample size for generalizations, as well as comparing retention levels between two generational standpoints for example, millennials and generation Z. Conversely, a similar qualitative study could be done using just generation Z as the minority group of interest. Lastly, future research can be considered utilizing state organizations from which to ascertain sample for research.

### **Conclusion**

The existing problem in Federal Organizations comprising a lack of diversity especially in the executive and senior supervisory levels is supported by the literature review (Fletcher, 2015). Furthermore, such lack is exhibited through the low retention levels of former minority interns who transition from the internship program – hiring pool into permanent employment. It is this problem than spurred the need to answer the question on what is the perspective of minority millennial interns who choose to leave federal organizations after completing their internship program? This research asked and answered (findings from data collection) the determinants that influenced the minority intern's choice to leave the government organization immediately or shortly after the internship, thereby impacting low minority representation in these organizations.

This study provided insightful context into the decision-making process of the minority millennial interns from the data collected from the participants. Such findings delved into the motivations and expectations of the interns in relation to the internship program and the federal organization. Answers derived from the findings to the research question were also revealed in the challenges and realized rewards experienced by the

interns during their internship. It is clear that the following reasons – financial, private sector competition, and training ground use only highlighted in the literature review, remain the root for interns leaving the federal organizations after their internship. Yet it is imperative to note that many other factors are similarly influential in the interns’ decisions to reject offers of employment where they interned. To reiterate, some of the interns’ baseline comprise their need for minority mentorship, flexibility for work locations – innately millennial, and being comfortable in an environment that encourages their talents toward contributing to meaningful work. Nevertheless, the recommendations proffered for action in this chapter are such that if adopted by federal organizations as new and/or reformed policies and practices, ought to manifest meaningful results to aid retention of diversity in the respective organizations and guide future research.

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## Appendix: Interview Questions

- Q1. What motivated you to apply to the Honors Internship Program?
- Q2. What were your main expectations from working for this organization as an intern?
- Q3. Tell me about a typical day in your internship experience?
- Q4. What would you describe as most challenging in the internship program?
- Q4b. Thanks for sharing your view of what constitute a challenge, could you provide me a personal example while in the internship program?
- Q5. What would you describe as most rewarding in the internship program?
- Q5b. How did this experience make you feel?
- Q6. Describe your relationship with your assigned squad or unit and its supervisor and if you were made to feel included?
- Q7. What was your relationship with the other interns or new employees who recently completed their internship?
- Q7b. Please share an example of how you were made to feel, whether included or not included, with your fellow interns or new employees during your internship?
- Q8. Were your expectations realized at the end of the program?
- Q9. What influenced your decision to leave/stay in the organization immediately or shortly after the Honors Internship Program ended?
- Q10. Is there anything additional you would like to tell me before I conclude this interview session? or What would you recommend or like to see changed or included in the organization that could have resulted in you staying?

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